

Perspectives In Learning

Volume 5 | Number 1

Article 5


1-2004

Preparing Teacher Candidates for Success in Diverse Settings

Cynthia Benator

Tina Butcher

Follow this and additional works at: <http://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/pil>

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Online and Distance Education Commons](#), [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Benator, C., & Butcher, T. (2004). Preparing Teacher Candidates for Success in Diverse Settings. *Perspectives In Learning*, 5 (1). Retrieved from <http://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/pil/vol5/iss1/5>

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at CSU ePress. It has been accepted for inclusion in Perspectives In Learning by an authorized editor of CSU ePress.

Preparing Teacher Candidates for Success in Diverse Settings

Cynthia Benator and Tina Butcher

Field experiences and clinical practice are essential elements in the preparation of teacher candidates. The College of Education (COE) at Columbus State University (CSU) understands the important role these components play in the development of successful teachers. Field experiences and clinical practice must adhere to the guidelines set forth by the governing bodies that accredit educator preparation programs. They must also reflect the philosophy of the individual institution. The philosophy at CSU is summarized in the following College of Education mission statement:

The College of Education at Columbus State University prepares highly qualified teachers, counselors, and leaders who promote high levels of learning for all P-12 students by demonstrating excellence in teaching, scholarship, and professionalism. Teachers, counselors, and leaders continually acquire, integrate, refine, and model these qualities as they develop proficiency, expertise, and leadership. COE faculty guide individuals in this developmental process. (College of Education Conceptual Framework Committee, 2003)

The College of Education is accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education

(NCATE), the Board of Regents (BOR) of the University System of Georgia, and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC). These agencies share common objectives when addressing the issue of diversity. Each one recognizes the importance of the teacher candidate's ability to bring P-12 students from diverse backgrounds to higher levels of learning. To this end, field experiences and clinical practice are designed to be congruent with the principles and/or standards that the accrediting agencies outline for their constituents.

The Office of College of Education (COE) Services and Field Experiences (SAFE) is responsible for the placement and implementation of all field experiences and clinical practice assignments for teacher candidates at CSU. Many measures exist to ensure that teacher candidates have diverse field placements throughout their teacher education programs. Elements of diversity which are considered in the placement process include, but are not limited to, the following: (a) socioeconomic status, (b) racial/ethnic makeup, (c) the percentage of students with special needs, and (d) geographic location. In addition to these elements, the placement coordinators must also be certain that the teacher candidate is placed at a variety of appropriate grade levels.

COE SAFE maintains an electronic database that tracks the placement history

of each teacher candidate. Each teacher candidate's placement information is reviewed each semester before new placements are made. This ensures that placements are not arranged in settings that duplicate previous experiences.

Experience in diverse settings equips teacher candidates with the necessary resources to educate diverse populations. During the capstone experience of student teaching, or clinical practice, teacher candidates are required to provide documentation that they are capable of bringing diverse students to high levels of learning. Teacher candidates provide evidence that they can plan and implement effective lesson plans that produce gains in learning for P-12 students. Each teacher candidate is required to plan and implement a unit of study which includes a pre-test and a post-test. The teacher candidate analyzes pre/post test scores to determine if his/her teaching strategies resulted in higher levels of student achievement. Data are analyzed by gender, race/ethnicity, special needs, language, and socioeconomic levels. The teacher candidate is responsible for creating and implementing individualized plans for remediation of students who do not demonstrate gains in achievement. This process addresses the Board of Regents Principle which states that candidates: "can demonstrate success in bringing students from diverse cultural, ethnic, international, and socio-economic groups to high levels of learning" (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, 2001).

The authors of this editorial believe that additional efforts should be made to dialogue with teacher candidates regarding the aspect of diversity throughout the teacher education program. Placement in

Experience in diverse settings equips teacher candidates with the necessary resources to educate diverse populations.

diverse, or unfamiliar, settings may cause a teacher candidate some initial anxiety or discomfort. However, when teacher candidates understand why they are strategically placed in diverse settings, we believe that they will accept these placements in a more positive manner. Additionally, classroom discussions that focus on the diverse nature of field placements or student teaching assignments will help to further expand the teacher candidate's understanding of issues related to diversity. It is not enough to place teacher candidates in diverse settings. We must help them to identify and appreciate the lessons learned from these assignments.

Research from the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that only 32% of teachers report feeling very well-prepared "to address the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds" (Parsaud, Lewis, and Farris, 2001, p.5). Pre-service teachers who complete teacher education programs in the College of Education at Columbus State University are provided with many opportunities to have realistic teaching experiences in a variety of settings. These opportunities contribute to the overall educational process that enables teacher candidates to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to meet the demands of teaching a diverse student population.

References

Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. (2001). Regents Principles for Preparation of School Educators. http://www.usg.edu/p16/tq/edu_prep.pdf

College of Education Conceptual Framework Committee. (2003).

Parsad, B., Lewis, L. & Farris, E. (2001). Teacher Preparation and Professional Development: 2000. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001088.pdf>

Cynthia Benator is the Coordinator of Student Teaching in the College of Education at Columbus State University. She holds an Ed.S. in Educational Leadership. She is currently serving as the President of the Georgia Directors of Field Experiences. Her research interests include reading education and success in student teaching.

Dr. Tina Butcher is Chair of the Department of Teacher Education in the College of Education at Columbus State University. She was recognized as the 1998 Outstanding Early Childhood Educator by the Georgia Association on Young Children. Her research interests include the developmental and educational needs of homeless students, science education and academic advising.