

Summer 7-1-2002

Missing in Action: Research on the Accountability of Multicultural, Inclusive Teacher Education

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Recommended Citation

Taylor, Sheryl V. and Sobel, Donna M. (2002) "Missing in Action: Research on the Accountability of Multicultural, Inclusive Teacher Education," *Essays in Education*: Vol. 2 , Article 1.
Available at: <https://openriver.winona.edu/eie/vol2/iss1/1>

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**Missing in Action:
Research on the Accountability of Multicultural, Inclusive
Teacher Education**

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Abstract

While a substantial amount of research has been conducted on the effects of various teacher education programs to prepare teachers for multicultural, multilingual, inclusive classrooms, very little of it examines the impact of multicultural, inclusive teacher education on how pre- and inservice teachers actually teach children in the classroom. Few researchers have followed teachers into the classroom to find out if or what “carry over” exists from multicultural teacher education (Sleeter, 2001). Even if teachers show growth through their course work and learning experiences in multicultural education, what evidence is there that they are or are becoming strong teachers in culturally diverse classrooms? This article reports on a study “in progress” that is part of a longitudinal investigation of preservice and novice teachers’ classroom practices and behaviors to address the diverse needs of students whose backgrounds and abilities differ from their own. Specifically, the present study examines the impact of multicultural, inclusive teacher education on how novice teachers actually instruct children in multicultural, multilingual, and inclusive classroom contexts.

Introduction

Currently, the diversity of the school-age population is increasing (Educational Research Service, 1995; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000), while the diversity of the teaching force is decreasing (Simpson, Whelan, & Zabel, 1993; Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank & Leal, 1999). Hence, it is not surprising that teacher education programs have a sense of urgency to prepare future teachers with adequate knowledge about cultural differences and culturally relevant instruction in order to meet the diverse educational needs of all learners (Zeichner, 1993). Moreover, when we consider that elements such as “cultural dissonance and biased expectations can predispose culturally diverse students to failure,” (Voltz, 1998, p. 64), we concur that general and special education teachers alike need to be prepared to work together to meet the need of diverse learners (Tomlinson, 1999). Presently, in teacher education curriculum, multicultural and inclusive topics tend to be addressed through specialized courses, integrated content throughout the curriculum, community and cultural immersion experiences, and field experiences associated with course work (Blanton, Griffin, Winn, & Pugash, 1997; Grant, 1994; Sleeter, 2001).

It would seem that teaching preservice teachers about culture, cultural diversity, intercultural interactions and communication, and requiring preservice teachers to work with students in multicultural, multilingual, inclusive contexts are learning experiences that would contribute toward helping them become better teachers. In fact, when innovative structures and instructional approaches are implemented, there is evidence that college course work can be effective in changing teachers' attitudes about multicultural and inclusive issues (Chavez-Chavez, 1995; Greene, 1993). However, we know very little about how teachers' changed beliefs and attitudes about learners whose backgrounds and abilities differ from that of their own influence their actual teaching and classroom behaviors toward these learners (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Trent & Artiles, 1998; Webb-Johnson, Artiles, Trent, Jackson, & Velox, 1998). As pointed out by Sleeter (2001), even if pre- and inservice teachers show growth through their multicultural course work and field experiences, few data exist to indicate that they actually become better teachers when they enter a culturally diverse classroom.

In an extensive review, Sleeter (2001) examined 80 published data-based research studies on teacher preparation for schools that service multicultural student populations. She identified two distinct goals of teacher education programs as they address the cultural incongruence between teacher and student. That is, (1) program efforts to recruit teachers from culturally diverse communities; and, (2) program curriculum designed to develop attitudes, awareness, and multicultural knowledge base of preservice teachers from predominantly European-American White backgrounds. In the specific area of multicultural education curriculum – generally “stand-alone” courses, course work with a field experience, or redesigned teacher education programs with infused multicultural course content and field experiences – Sleeter found that studies focused on the preparation of mostly White preservice teachers' attitudes and awareness. One would assume this is due to the overrepresentation of White students in preservice teacher education programs, and the cultural mismatch between these future teachers and their students. At any rate, Sleeter points out that both students of color and White students need well-designed preservice teacher education. However, few studies have investigated the impact of multicultural teacher education on how preservice teachers deliver instruction to children in the classroom or their ability to meet the diverse needs of learners in multicultural, multilingual, inclusive classrooms.

In her review of multicultural course work, Sleeter highlighted two studies that focused on the impact of preservice teachers' learning in the classroom. Lawrence (1997) who followed preservice teachers into the classroom during their student teaching found that the amount of carryover from multicultural education course work varied considerably depending on the level of racial awareness students had developed prior to their student teaching experience. Sleeter (1989) conducted a follow-up survey of teachers in Wisconsin who had completed a state requirement of multicultural content infused in the teacher education curriculum with a related field experience. When responding to questions about their instructional strategies and their current teaching context, teachers were more likely to incorporate multicultural content into the curriculum when their students were of color and/or from low socio-economic backgrounds than when they were not. Sleeter herself admitted that it was not clear how much difference the multicultural education course work and field experience had made on teachers' use of multicultural content in the classroom.

Sleeter also reviewed three studies that centered on the impact of multicultural course content and field experiences in urban schools as infused curricular components in redesigned teacher education programs restructured for school-university collaborations. Two studies by Marsh (1975, 1979) focused on graduates of a Teacher Corp program where cultural awareness was highly emphasized and instructional skills were less emphasized. When comparing these graduates with newly hired teachers, the Teacher Corp graduates did not differ from the teachers in most cases. However, Teacher Corp graduates were more likely than the teachers to develop culturally relevant curricula, use community resources, make contact with parents, and show positive attitudes about reading development and causes of poverty. The third study (Stallings & Quinn, 1991) which followed graduates of the Houston Teaching Academy into the classroom found that the graduates used more effective teaching practices for inner-city classrooms than graduates of the traditional teacher education program (i.e., without school-university collaborations). Sleeter suggests that these three studies lend credence to teacher education programs grounded in school-university partnerships as having the potential for teaching the skills teachers can really apply in culturally diverse classrooms. However, the research about how well graduates of such programs learn to teach in culturally diverse and inclusive contexts is lacking.

The question we are prompted to ask addresses what actually happens in classrooms when graduates of a teacher education program begin teaching in multicultural, multilingual, and inclusive classroom contexts. Sleeter (2001) asserts that “research in teacher education needs to follow graduates into the classroom” (p. 102) beyond the preservice teacher education and field experience contexts. However, to date, the research in multicultural teacher education has not been designed to investigate the assumption that preservice teachers’ increased learning in multicultural education and experiences with learners in culturally diverse contexts will result in better teaching. In other words, the evidence to support or refute the accountability of multicultural, inclusive teacher education is missing in action.

What measures and methods do we use to assess the quality of a teacher’s ability to deliver effective instruction in multicultural, multilingual, and inclusive classroom contexts? Good teachers are generally good for a variety of reasons and the data should reflect this breadth and depth (Peterson, Wahlquist, Bone, Thompson, Chatterton, 2001). Leaders in the field of teacher education, assert the need to use differentiated methods resulting in multiple types of data when considering teachers’ performance (Cruickshank and Haefele, 2001; Peterson et al., 2001). For example, teaching portfolios, surveys and interviews involving parents and students, observation of classroom practice and behavior coupled with post-observations reflection by teacher and coach, documentation of professional activity, performance-based assessments. Such differentiated methods for collecting a body of evidence to substantiate quality teaching performance are especially needed in the area of culturally relevant teaching set within multicultural, multilingual, and inclusive classroom contexts

The Study

The present study set within the context of a redesigned preservice teacher education program reports on an examination – currently in progress – of teachers’ teaching practices and behaviors in multicultural, multilingual, inclusive classrooms during the preservice teachers’

practicum and their first year of licensed teaching. As one segment of an in-depth longitudinal study that is investigating teachers' classroom practices and behaviors to address the diverse needs of students whose backgrounds and abilities differ from their own (Taylor & Sobel, 2001; Sobel, Taylor, Kalisher, Weddle-Steinberg, 2002; Taylor & Sobel, manuscript in review), the present study focused on a subset of graduate students and their ability to address the diverse needs of all students. Using differentiated methods, the researchers collected a varied body of evidence in order to investigate the impact of multicultural, inclusive teacher education course work and practicum on teachers' ability to deliver instruction to children in multilingual, multicultural, and inclusive classroom contexts.

Setting the Context

Preservice Teacher Education Program

The present study is set within the School of Education (SOE) at the University of Colorado at Denver (UC-D), an urban teacher education program that admits students pursuing a combined licensure/master's post-baccalaureate degree. Since 1992 the UC-D SOE has undergone significant reform to become a model of instructional and learning excellence within a Professional Development School (PDS) design. Now called, "Teacher Leaders for Tomorrow's Schools," the program reflects UC-D's urban mission to ensure that new teachers are skilled in working with diverse populations (Association of Teacher Educators, 1998) by infusing multicultural course content into the curriculum and including field experiences in diverse school contexts. The program also reflects the four-part mission of the PDS initiative: (a) teacher preparation; (b) professional development; (c) exemplary practice that supports, enhances, and improves P-12 student learning; and, (d) ongoing applied inquiry that supports student and educator development (Goodlad, 1991; Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Teitel and Abdal-Haqq, 2000). Having undergone recent intensive curriculum reform, the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) university and PDS faculty addressed the values of inclusive practices and new state licensure standards through decisions to increase time spent in school internships and to closely align course work with performance-based assessments. Currently, in partnership with 16 PDSs that primarily serve students from low-income and ethnically diverse backgrounds, the newly-redesigned program has been renamed the Initial Professional Teacher Education (IPTE).

Longitudinal Study

The longitudinal study is an investigation of the ways in which preservice teachers give meaning to their beliefs about addressing the needs of students with backgrounds and abilities that differ from their own through the teachers' classroom behaviors and practices during the year-long practicum experiences and later during the first year and subsequent years of licensed teaching. It is set within the context of a cohort of post baccalaureate preservice teachers in the ITE program – a program built around the goal of preparing reflective teachers who are aware of issues of diversity for students and teachers.

The first study in the longitudinal investigation focused on (1) preservice teachers' beliefs about learners whose backgrounds and abilities differed from their own; and, (2) the preservice teachers' perceived abilities to address the needs of these students (Taylor & Sobel, 2001).

Demographic profiles revealed that the 129 subjects were predominantly White, European-American, monolingual English, females, raised in middle-class to upper middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds, and ranging in age from mid-20 to mid-40 years old, with the average age being 30.5. Additionally, over half of the subjects worked as trained professionals in non-teaching careers before applying to the ITE program.

When subjects entered the ITE program survey data was collected that consisted of belief statements (rated by likert-type scale) and responses to open-ended questions regarding beliefs and perceived abilities. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were implemented on the data. Complete results are reported and published (Taylor & Sobel, 2001). Briefly, the data analyses revealed subjects held beliefs that (1) all learners have the right to an equitable education; and, (2) it is the teacher's responsibility to support students toward this goal. Subjects' perceived their abilities to address the needs of all learners to be more than adequate reporting that (1) more than half of them felt competent to create a classroom atmosphere promoting a variety of learning styles; and, (2) nearly half of the them felt competent to adapt instructional methods for learners of diverse backgrounds.

A subsequent study also set within the longitudinal investigation analyzed data collected at the end of subjects' first year of ITE course work and first year of residency experiences. The study examined: 1) subjects' evolving beliefs and perceived abilities to address the needs of students whose backgrounds and abilities are different from their own; and, 2) subjects' feedback regarding the teacher education they received. Demographics of the 62 subjects paralleled those from the first study. Data were collecting using the same survey questionnaire with an additional set of open-ended questions that addressed specific elements of the ITE curriculum (e.g., course work, field experiences, and learning experiences).

Again, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data analyses were implemented. Complete results are reported and available (Taylor & Sobel, manuscript in review). In brief, the analyses indicated that at the conclusion of their first year of course work and practicum field experiences, subjects indicated a significantly stronger preference to teach in inner city schools and a significant increase in their meaningful interactions with a person from a diverse background. Subjects self-reported a significant increase in their ability to adapt instruction to meet the needs of learners from diverse backgrounds and to create a learning environment in which alternative styles of learning are allowed.

Present Study

The present study – currently in progress – is examining the following questions (1) What is the impact of multicultural teacher education course work and practicum on teachers' ability to deliver instruction to children in the classroom? (2) What teaching practices and behaviors do ITE graduates employ in multicultural, multilingual, and inclusive contexts?

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects included a group of seven ITE students who participated voluntarily in the present study. The seven subjects participated during their year-long practicum experience at a PDS and five of the seven were involved during their first year of licensed teaching. These individuals all participated as subjects in the first and subsequent aforementioned investigations of the longitudinal study. Subjects' demographic profile data for the present study are provided in Table 1. Prior to their year-long practicum experience, all subjects had completed a minimum of fifteen graduate credit hours of the same course sequence. These courses included Child Development, Integrated Elementary Teaching Methods (a two semester course), School Law, and Ethics. All subjects had completed two full semesters of course work.

Data Collection

The researchers collected data using a variety of sources following recommendations to use differentiated methods in order to analyze multiple types of data when considering teachers' performance (Cruickshank & Haefele, 2001; Peterson et al, 2001). Data sources included: journal narratives, email bulletin board entries, in-class observations, in-class videotaping, specialized coaching forms selected by individual subjects and used during the in-class observations (Sobel, Taylor, & Anderson, manuscript in review), lesson plans and reflections of the implemented lesson, focus-group conversations, and teaching portfolios submitted for partial completion of the MA degree.

Data were collected during two different periods of time: (1) the year-long practicum experience that subjects completed at one of the 16 PDS sites (August 1998 to May 1999); and, (2) subjects' first year of licensed teaching (August 1999 to May 2000). Subjects completed their year-long practicum experience at one of two PDS sites. Both sites were large, urban, elementary schools, serving predominately Latino students representing low socioeconomic status. Both schools provided an array of services, including bilingual and special education services such as sustained Spanish instruction, sustained bilingual instruction, diagnostic evaluations in students' dominant language, age-level grade placements, and district-wide inclusive policies.

At the time of the data collection, our roles as researchers were integrated within our assignments as "Site Professors" at a PDS site. Each of us were assigned to one of the two aforementioned PDS sites thereby spending a minimum of one day per week at the school where we worked as coaches and mentors to a group of preservice teachers and to the teachers at the school. As such, we had steady contact with the subjects since they were located at one of the particular PDS where we were each assigned. During the first year, we interacted with subjects in the capacity of "Site Professor" throughout their year-long practicum. Lastly, while each of us provided support in the PDS site and informal instruction in the area of our expertise (e.g., bilingual education and inclusionary practices), neither of us were involved in the instruction of the integrated elementary education teaching methods courses in which multicultural course content was infused in the ITE program.

For the purpose of this article, the researchers will address findings based on the preliminary analyses of two data sets: subjects' journal narratives (collected during the practicum experience) and subjects' email bulletin board entries (collected during subjects' first year of

teaching). We began our preliminary analyses with these data sets in order to access the subjects' "voice" through self-reports of their teaching and behaviors in multicultural, multilingual, and inclusive classroom contexts during the practicum experience and the first year of teaching. The remaining data sets are reported from an observer's perspective.

During the year-long practicum experience, subjects were invited to journal about their own beliefs, interactions, and practices regarding the following prompt: all students have the right to be welcomed and taught by teachers who are knowledgeable, capable, willing, and prepared to meet their needs. No additional prompts were given; subjects were simply asked to reflect on their beliefs, interactions, and practices relevant to the stated prompt as they moved through their practicum experiences. Weekly entries were encouraged, but not required. Next, during their first year of licensed teaching, subjects were invited to participate in an email bulletin board about their teaching practices and behaviors relevant to planning, curriculum, assessment, grouping, interactions with learner and parents in multicultural, multilingual, and inclusive contexts. Appreciating that this group of first year teachers would be extremely pressured to meet the demands of their new position, we sought to maintain regular communication by structuring a means of communication that allowed for flexibility and choice. At the beginning of each month, the researchers generated a prompt that represented issues that all teachers would be dealing with at that time of the school year (e.g., holidays, standardized testing). Sometime during the course of the month, each subject was to provide a written response to the posted prompt (See Table 2).

Data Analysis

As aforementioned, for the purpose of reporting on this study "in progress," we have focused our data analysis on two data sources: subjects' journal narratives (completed during the year-long practicum experience) and their email bulletin board entries (completed during their first year of licensed teaching). In the case of both data sets, we conducted a critical interpretive analysis of the written narratives by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods (Kuckartz, 1998). Transcribed narratives from the journal and email entries were analyzed by conducting multiple readings of all written entries. This enabled the authors to attain a thorough awareness of the content of all journals. Using interpretive content analysis (Baxter, 1992; Krippendorf, 1980), the authors examined subjects' entries for common themes. Lengthy time was spent comparing the identified themes and negotiating central themes that were agreed upon by the researchers. Words used to discuss the themes included but were not limited to the key descriptors provided in Table 3. Because of their extended length and detail, the texts from journal entries were analyzed a second time using winMAX software (Kuckartz, 1998) to detect the occurrence of specific words describing the themes. The repeated presence of key words (Table 4) served to contribute to the identification and later validation of themes in the journal entries.

Our analyses suggest that subjects' journaling and email entries revealed a strong, consistent, often passionate pattern of responding about their beliefs and practices as preservice teachers working toward meeting the needs of learners in multicultural, multilingual, and inclusive classroom contexts. We identified common themes relevant to the ways in which the preservice teachers' beliefs link to their current and future classroom teaching practice.

Preliminary Findings

We begin our discussion of preliminary findings with a focus on the results of the analyses of the journal entries followed by a discussion of the analysis of the email entries. An analysis of the journal texts revealed the clear presence of three shared themes amongst all subjects. These themes addressed the following issues: (1) equity in classroom planning and practices; (2) parental involvement and interactions; and, (3) cultural sensitivity and understanding in classroom instruction and interactions. Both qualitative and quantitative text analyses substantiated the presence of key words and or phrases associated with those identified themes. Words used to discuss the themes included but were not limited to the key descriptors provided in Table 3.

Journals varied significantly in length, from the required one entry per week to several per week. Also, there was vast variation in the length of an entry, from a few paragraphs to several pages of typed text. Hence, while the presence of key descriptors across each theme was tracked for each subject, the level of complexity of the problem or the degree of emotion was not. Immediately following is a summary of the thematic content analysis of the transcriptions of all subjects' journal reflections relative to the identified theme. Excerpts from individual journals are included to clarify the thematic findings.

Theme One: The Value of Equity in Classroom Planning and Practice

All subjects described their efforts to establish ongoing, meaningful opportunities for educational success and access to the curriculum through instructional accommodations and planning. Their experiences parallel the value held by the ITE program; that is, meeting the needs of individual learners through differentiated instruction and accommodations that are fair but not necessarily equal or the same. One subject's comments revealed insights into efforts aimed at accommodating for the unique language and learning needs of a student:

“I have been working with a student who is placed in a bilingual fourth grade, and is reading [in English] at a first grade level. I've begun making him a spelling list different than the other students. He takes that spelling test every Friday. It's only been a few weeks and he is now able to do the spelling homework and has been making great grades on this spelling tests. He gets excited every Monday for his list of words. When I gave him ten he asked for twelve the next week. His positive change in behavior has been very noticeable in the classroom.”

Another subject wrote about planning instruction for cooperative learning in order to accommodate for the learners' preferred learning style:

“One experiment in my electricity unit was to form a human circuit to show how switches worked. To include everyone in the class I designed three different switch circuits (light switch, doorbell, and Morse code). The switch would connect, the conductors shook because electrons were flowing through them, and then the light bulb came on (putting their hands in the air). For the Morse code exercise, we sent a message

to the class for them to decode. When announced that ‘science’ was over, there were actual groans [from students]. I now see the benefits of cooperative learning. There were no fights, normally quiet children were the most animated I had seen them, two of my students with special needs wanted to show the principal what they had done. This is why I want to teach, to truly engage each learner in my classroom.”

Theme Two: The Value of Family Involvement and Interactions

According to journal responses, the prevailing attitude professed by subjects was the belief that nurturing positive interactions with the learner’s family is a critical part of their role as teacher. Each subject revealed a genuine commitment to establish and maintain positive family connections. Sample comments from subjects include:

“What an incredible parent-teacher conference I just had with the mother of a student with behavioral needs. People in the school have expressed concern when dealing with her. She tends to be on the attack and immediately puts everyone on the defense, so she never sees herself having a role. During the conference, I made it clear that my feelings toward her son were strong and that I cared for him very much. I also discussed with examples, the improvements I have seen in his behavior. Even though is not where we want him to be, he has made some clear improvements and I highlighted these as much as possible. Within a half-hour, she was asking us questions and for our advice. Soon she was sharing family stories about her son’s father. Her stories created that awful lump dead in the center of my throat. I had to fight to keep my composure. Oh, but how telling this information was. Her son is depressed and has spoken of suicide. Listening provided many insights into her son’s behavior. By the end, we each hugged each other. I learned and sympathized with her needs. I understood her in a new way. I understood her anger – it covered up her pain. This is exactly what her son does. Information can change the way you behave with your students.”

Another subject shared eye-opening insights about family/parent factors:

“One mother of a little boy truly amazed me. I was taken back by how young she looked, I knew she was younger than I was and had a 6 year old. I know that her son is doing incredibly well in school. As we spoke I learned how difficult her life is, working two jobs, yet her devotion to her child was inspiring—it was clear that he always comes first. It felt wonderful to share all of her son’s accomplishment as nothing could have made her happier. After thinking about her for a few days, I came to the conclusion that I was particularly struck by our closeness in age and the huge gap between our lifestyles. She is a mother; I am in graduate school. She takes care of her son when he is sick, I have a cat. She has two jobs; my parents support me while I’m in school. I point out the differences not to judge but to demonstrate my sincere admiration for this woman. I may be able to handle a classroom, but I know that raising a child is far more difficult. Some people might look at the two of us and pass judgment but I think the mother of this amazing little boy has achieved things I can only dream of accomplishing.”

Theme Three: The Value of Cultural Sensitivity and Understanding in Classroom Instructions and Interactions

Analyses revealed subjects' statements of commitment to proactively create and use opportunities to gain an enhanced understanding of students' cultures, interests, and environment.

“What do I really know about students' backgrounds? And what do I want to know? I've designed a survey for students and their parents to take to help me answer these questions. A couple of responses mentioned an important value of caring about family. The holidays celebrated included birthdays, Christmas, Semana Santa, and 12 de Diciembre. They stated that they celebrated holidays with family and food. In my reading group, I've decided to address the Latino culture with the book, Chato's Kitchen by Gary Soto. I'll use Annie and the Old One by Miska Miles to incorporate relations with family. So far my reading group loves Chato's Kitchen. The story has parts in both English and Spanish. The jargon or hip parts are in Spanish. I think that the kids love this. They liked the story because of the language and because it relates to food that is from their culture.”

Subjects found that respectfully using naturally occurring school activities was an effective way to enhance their own understandings of individual students as well as students' personal understandings of culture and life experiences. Sample comments include:

“I spent time getting to know one child with special needs. He is receiving speech/communication services and is in the lowest reading group. He is also a Native American Indian and seems quite proud of his ancestry. In the library, I helped him find several books about Native American Indians. He had a writing project, where he was to write about an island that you were the king of. The student wrote that he didn't have to wear “white man's clothes: and he lived in a teepee, while his subjects had to live in “white man's house”. This really struck me. One might read anger into his writing. I though, saw no anger, rather a sense of pride. The boy told me that his parents participate in Native American dancing, I'll make sure I invite them in to class for a presentation.”

“During the after-school art program, we were making Thanksgiving books illustrating things we were thankful for. D. wrote and drew pictures of things he was thankful for. He pointed out two pictures—a Mexican flag and an American flag and said, Every time I draw an American flag, I have to draw the Mexican flag, because I'm Mexican American. What a neat kid. There were times as a child when I was ashamed, it is was always when someone discredited my culture and language. When other found my culture interesting, it made me feel proud.”

“Christmas is approaching, I wondering how all of the different cultures are being taken into account. What types of customs do my students have at Christmas? My clinical teacher is sending home a questionnaire asking different students to

talk with their families and find out their customs. I know I will be teaching the different customs and practices of Kwanzaa and Hanukkah.”

“I was working with a sub and teaching a lesson on “Main Ideas” and was using the example of different types of restaurants. I quickly realized the children had little frame of reference for ‘sit-down vs. fast-food’ restaurants, when the sub asserted, “I don’t think these kids have had any experience with the fancier restaurants. I don’t think they know what you are talking about.” I was humiliated, as I knew I had made a mistake. I felt the sub had judged the kids by her comment. This experience taught me the importance of putting myself in my student’s place. No I don’t live in this community, but I should have and I will now familiarize myself with the local restaurants in an effort to help my students make meaningful connections.”

For the purpose of our preliminary analysis of the email entries, we focused on subjects’ entries in response to the October and February prompts. That is, “What preliminary assessments have you given to your students: How have they driven your decisions about: instruction, materials, groupings, instructional units, accommodations?” (October). Subjects’ responses centered around their use of formal and informal assessments. For example, subjects administered formal literacy and math assessments during the first quarter of the school year (in most cases these were district required assessments). In the area of literacy, they administered the Qualitative Reading Inventory and the Directed Reading Assessment. All subjects indicated that they used the results to influence their planning and instruction as well as decisions about the composition of small groups. In addition, all subjects used their own choices of on-going informal assessments, such as in-class activities (e.g., students’ demonstration of number sense in response to questions about the daily calendar), homework, and teacher-made tests. Subjects used these informal assessments to reconsider the composition of small reading groups. One subject created and implemented an interest and attitude survey to facilitate getting to know students. She used the results to differentiate curriculum implementation in order more closely align core concepts with students’ interests and life experiences.

In February, subjects responded to the following prompt on email, “As your classroom routines have become more established during the school year, please reflect on the grouping arrangements that you have constructed.” Interestingly, all subjects mentioned using assessment results to influence their decisions about grouping and all discussed issues related to fluid grouping practices, in one form or another. One subject commented, “I grouped students differently across content areas in order to emphasize their strengths.” A second subject stated, “I saw students who self-proclaimed themselves as ‘stupid’ take more risks and begin to believe in themselves when groupings varied by content area and by learner need.” Another subject who only grouped in the area of reading expressed the concern that the kids knew which was the “top” group. She pondered about the need to make her grouping more fluid. Lastly, individual subjects noted having learned key concepts about grouping during the first half of their first year of licensed teaching. Concepts they identified included: (1) keeping in mind why students are grouped as they are, (2) the need to keep grouping fluid, (3) the need to provide structure and

guidance for cooperative learning groups, and (4) the importance of giving students the option to work independently.

Discussion/Implications

It would seem that teaching preservice teachers about culture, cultural diversity, intercultural interactions and communication, and requiring preservice teachers to work with students in multicultural, multilingual, inclusive contexts are learning experiences that would contribute toward helping them become better teachers. And, yet, research is lacking that indicate preservice teachers actually become better teachers in culturally diverse classrooms despite having shown growth in multicultural teacher education course work and field experiences (Sleeter, 2001).

As we address implications resulting from the preliminary data analysis completed for the present study, we will consider the impact of multicultural, inclusive teacher education content infused in ITE course work as well as practicum experiences in culturally diverse contexts on teachers' ability to deliver instruction to children in the classroom. More specifically, we reflect on the teaching practices and behaviors reportedly employed by ITE graduates in multicultural, multilingual, and inclusive contexts. Despite a small sample size, we believe that the data and preliminary data analysis provide useful information in the aforementioned areas. We will organize our discussion using two current frameworks of culturally responsive teaching as articulated by Ladson-Billings (2001) and Villegas & Lucas (2002).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is based on three propositions about what contributes to success for all students (Ladson-Billings, 2001). That is, successful teachers: (1) focus on individual student's academic achievement (e.g., using clear goals, multiple forms of assessment), (2) have attained cultural competence and help develop students' cultural competence, and (3) have a developed sense of sociopolitical consciousness and foster students' sense of sociopolitical consciousness. Villegas and Lucas (2002) expand on this framework of culturally relevant teaching by articulating six characteristics that define the culturally responsive teacher. These include: (1) sociocultural consciousness (e.g., understanding that people's ways of thinking, behaving, and being are deeply influenced by such factors as race, ethnicity, social class and language; (2) an affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds (e.g., students who differ from the dominant culture); (3) the commitment and skills to act as agents of change (e.g., recognition that schools have served to maintain social inequities and the willingness to take action to change this); (4) constructivist views of learning (e.g., use and build on learners' prior knowledge and beliefs); (5) learned knowledge about their students (e.g., students' backgrounds, experiences, lives, communities); and, (6) culturally responsive teaching practices (e.g., involving all students in construction of knowledge, building on students' personal and cultural strengths, teaching students to examine the curriculum from multiple perspectives, making classroom cultures inclusive of all students).

Subjects' journal entries support evidence of their developing cultural competence or sociocultural competence and their attempts to affirm students' from culturally diverse backgrounds. While their reflections relevant to "cultural sensitivity" highlighted more surface level cultural elements (e.g., recognizing and honoring symbols and celebrations of ethnic

heritage), subjects reflections about “family” revealed deepened understandings of multiple perspectives. Through careful attempts to nurture positive family connections, subjects’ gained critical insights that allowed them to see the world through someone else’s cultural and experiential lenses. “Information can change the way you behave with your students,” one subject wrote. Perhaps it can also change the way we see reality thereby recognizing that multiple realities exist depending on an individual’s cultural perspective and life experiences.

Both subjects’ journal entries and email entries support their efforts to focus on students’ academic achievement. For example, subjects reflected on their use of multiple forms of assessment - both formal and informal. Also, subjects described using the assessment results to drive their decisions about instruction and grouping. Subjects’ keen insights and concerns about the need to vary grouping compositions by content, students’ current abilities, and students’ needs provided evidence of their heightened understandings of the connection between grouping practices and influences that may impact learner achievement. Additionally, one subject articulated her efforts to build on students’ strengths and experiences by attempting to learn more about students’ through an interest/attitude survey. The results of the survey allowed her to differentiate curriculum implementation thereby making decisions about how to teach and what to emphasize based on students’ interests and life experiences.

Subjects’ journal entries provided some evidence of their classroom practice approaching teaching that is truly inclusive and culturally responsive. First, based on their reflections, subjects seem to have grasped the understanding that addressing learners’ needs in an equitable manner involves accommodating or differentiating instruction fairly even though this might not be the same or equal for every learner. Second, subjects’ examples of addressing equity and grouping lend us to believe that their classroom environments may exhibit elements of inclusiveness for all students. Lastly, accommodating for students’ learning styles is another example of subjects’ demonstration of the attributes that align with teachers who are culturally responsive. What is not yet clear is the extent to which subjects involve all students in the construction of knowledge or how well they teach students to examine the curriculum from multiple perspectives. Our intent is to further examine these elements in the next stage of data analysis.

The characteristics of culturally relevant teaching that are not yet evident regarding subjects’ growth include those attributes that are less tangible; that is, the subjects’ broader rethinking of schooling, a deepened and developed sense of sociopolitical consciousness, and the recognition that schools have served to maintain social inequities. Clearly, teachers need to have fully developed these attributes themselves before they can foster students’ sense of sociopolitical consciousness. Coupled with sociopolitical consciousness are the skills teachers need to be able to act as agents of change. “Prospective teachers who learn to view themselves as agents of change see schools and society as interconnected” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 24). As such, they understand that as teachers they are also participants in the broader issues relevant to sociopolitical contexts, the struggle for social justice, and the effort to challenge inequalities in educational institutions.

Conclusion

A central feature of the current social and political context is the concern for accountability as evidenced by the emphasis on standards for teachers and teacher education developed by professional organizations and governmental agencies (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). It is not enough that teaching preservice teachers about cultural diversity and culturally relevant and inclusive teaching seems like an effort that could lead to preservice teachers becoming better teachers. Researchers in teacher education must generate the research to support or refute the accountability of multicultural, inclusive teacher education. We agree that good teachers are usually good for a variety of reasons (Peterson, Wahlquist, Bone, Thompson, & Chatterton, 2001). As such, data collection needs to employ differentiated methods that result in multiple types of data sources in order for teachers' performance to be thoroughly examined (Cruickshank & Haefele, 2001). These differentiated methods for collecting a body of evidence are critically needed in the area of culturally relevant teaching.

In closing, as we complete the data analysis of the remaining data sources (e.g., in-class observations, in-class videotaping, specialized coaching forms selected by individual subjects and used during the in-class observations, lesson plans and reflections, focus-group conversations, and teaching portfolios) we will continue to consider the impact of multicultural, inclusive teacher education content infused in ITE course work as well as practicum experiences in culturally diverse contexts on teachers' ability to deliver instruction to children in the classroom. In doing so, we will examine the specific teaching practices and behaviors employed by ITE graduates in the classroom. Lastly, we anticipate that future data collection and analyses will involve metacognitive examinations by the subjects of the present data as well as new data to be collected as subjects continue their teaching in multicultural, multilingual, and inclusive classroom contexts.

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Table 1. Subjects' Demographic Profiles

Sub- ject	Age	Eth- nicity	Gender	Rel. Aff.	SES during child- hood	School Environ. during childhood	1 st Language & Other Languages	BA	Prior Work History
1	29	Cauc	Female	Cath- olic	Middle	Public Suburban	English	Educ	Preschool Teacher
2*	26	Cauc	Female	None	Upper- Middle	Public Urban	English	Soc.	Catering Director
3*	28	Cauc	Female	Presby- terian	Upper- Middle	Public Suburban	English	Psy & Eng.	Worked w/ persons w/ disabilities
4	31	African Amer	Male	Baptist	Low	Public Urban	English	Crim- inal Just.	Counseling
5*	27	Cauc	Female	None	Middle	Public Rural	English & Spanish	Huma n.	Restaurant & Forest Service
6*	28	Asian Amer	Female	None	Low- Middle	Public Urban	Korean, English & Spanish	Psy. & Ethnic Studie s	Preschool teacher

7*		Cauc	Female	Cath- olic	Low	Private Urban	English & Spanish	Soc.	Telephone Comp.
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* Subjects participating in Email Bulletin Board during their first year of licensed teaching

Table 2. Monthly Prompts for Email Bulletin Board

Month	Prompt
October	<p>What preliminary assessments have you given to your students? How have these driven your decisions about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instruction - Materials - Accommodations (e.g., for language of instruction, variety of abilities, etc.) - Groupings - Instructional Units
November	<p>As the holidays approach, please reflect on how you are planning to accommodate for diverse cultural representations for the holidays.</p>
February	<p>As your classroom routines have become more established during the school year, please reflect on the grouping arrangements that you have constructed in your class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -For which subject areas have you developed groups? -What considerations did you make as you grouped students? -Have you reconstituted the groups since the beginning of the year? If so, please explain why. If not, please explain why. -What are the 3 most important things you feel you have learned this year about grouping students?
March	<p>How are you preparing students for the standardized testing that you may be involved in? What are your concerns regarding testing, and individual learner's needs and backgrounds?</p>
April/May	<p>Please comment on what you see as being the "culture" of the school building where you are teaching. What cultural patterns/beliefs are explicit? What cultural patterns/beliefs are implicit?</p> <p>What is the school's mission statement? In what ways have you been able to apply the goals of the mission statement in your daily work?</p> <p>Describe ways that the culture of the school supports the school's mission statement and its intent.</p>
May	<p>What are you doing this summer that might heighten your awareness/sensitivity of students' needs and backgrounds?</p>

Table 3. Key Descriptors used by Subjects to Describe Themes

Theme	Descriptors
Equity/ Planning and Practice	lessons, materials, teach, learn, cooperative groups, literacy, literature, interest, motivate, behavior management, classroom management, testing bias
Family - Parental Involvement/Issues	parent, conference, mom/mother, dad/father, family, home, neighborhood, community
Language/Culture Issues	bilingual, Spanish, English as a second language/ESL, language, sustained, acquisition, Hispanic, multicultural, minority
Inclusionary Practices/ Differentiated Instructional Issues	inclusion, accommodation, disability, services, needs, modification, Individualized Educational Program/IEP, tracking, special education

Table 4. Text Analysis Report

Numbers represent the number of lines in each participant's journal where a word or words from an operational definition of a theme was identified in the text by the winMax software.

Subject	Inclusionary Practices/ Differentiated Instructional Issues	Language/ Culture Issues	Family/ Parental Involvement Issues	Equity/ Planning and Practice	# of Entries	Length of Passage Short = < 1 paragraph Medium = 2 to 3 paragraphs Long = > 3 paragraphs S = 0 M = 1 L = 16
1	40	12	35	56	17	S = 0 M = 1 L = 16
2	18	15	75	44	13	S = 0 M = 2 L = 11
3	43	17	41	138	23	S = 0 M = 11 L = 12
4	1	1	7	7	6	S = 0 M = 0 L = 6
5	21	28	39	85	19	S = 4 M = 3 L = 12
6	15	17	48	70	8	S = 0 M = 0 L = 8
7	18	9	20	39	9	S = 0 M = 3 L = 6