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April 2007

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Recommended Citation

Citation Information: Boske, Christa A. EdD, "Assessing the Influence of Brain-based Instructional Methods and Its Impact on Systemic Change for Learning Communities" (2007).
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ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF BRAIN-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND ITS IMPACT ON SYSTEMIC CHANGE FOR LEARNING COMMUNITIES, Christa A Boske, Ed.D., UH, Houston, TX, 77058.

Background: As scholars who prepare future school leaders to be innovative instructional leaders for their learning communities, we are on the verge of a curriculum design revolution. The application of brain research findings promotes educational reform efforts to systemically change the way in which children experience school. However, most educators, school leaders, board members, and policy makers are ill prepared to reconsider the implications for assessment, pedagogy, school climate, daily schedules, and use of technology. This qualitative study asked future school leaders to reconsider how school leadership preparedness programs prepared them to become instructional leaders for the 21st century. The findings from this study will enhance the field of school leadership, challenging the current emphasis placed on standardized testing, traditional school calendars, assessments, monocultural instructional methods, and meeting the needs of diverse learning communities.

Design: This qualitative study used a purposive sample of 49 graduate students over two semesters enrolled in a required curriculum design and administrative internship courses from August of 2006 to April of 2007. Students participated in enriched community-based problem-solving activities promoting meaning-making, service learning, critical thinking, and reflection.

Findings: Two themes emerged from the study: 1) All of the students noted significant limited prior knowledge regarding brain-based instructional strategies/research finding and 2) Students grappled with the means to systemically impact the way in which children learn within traditional bureaucratic public schools, identifying how political, social, cultural, and economic contexts influenced their efforts for educational reform within their local school districts.

Conclusion: As scholars, we will reconsider how the school leadership preparedness program engages future school leaders in brain-based instructional strategies across the program, implementing opportunities for students to engage in dialogue with school executives, school boards, business representatives, politicians, policy makers and members of diverse learning communities who influence the way in which children experience school.

Type of Presentation: Research Paper/15 Minute Oral Presentation