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# The Benefits of an Innovative Literacy Assessment Field Experience

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# **THE BENEFITS OF AN INNOVATIVE LITERACY ASSESSMENT FIELD EXPERIENCE**

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ALER Conference 2023

# CLINICAL FIELD EXPERIENCES DEFINED

=> Clinical field experiences in education are defined as **a variety of K-12 opportunities in which teacher candidates observe, assist, and/or instruct**

(National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002)

⇒ In education, field experiences are most often utilized in instructional methods courses or student teaching

⇒ The length of time for a field experience varies from 5 hours to 16 weeks!



# EMBEDDED FIELD EXPERIENCES

- Rather than have students find their own placements, embedded field experiences take place **during class time and with supervision by the Professor(s)**
- Embedded field experiences **provide organic teaching opportunities** to pre- and in-service teachers as they connect content and instructional implementation while being in the presence of a literacy professor for **ongoing guidance, support, and feedback.**

*“Field placements that are isolated from coursework, as well as limited supervision during field placements, also lead to underprepared novice teachers” (Hilaski, Maxwell, & Jones, 2021, p. 23). Implementing more embedded field experiences with course content “provides a means to authentic, practical learning and varied levels of scaffolding for pre- & in-service teachers (p. 41).*

# RESEARCH QUESTION

- The combination of field experience while learning the content has many benefits.
- We sought to identify some of those benefits.....

## Research Question

**What are the benefits of an embedded field experience in a university literacy assessment course for preparing pre- and in-service teachers as they implement effective literacy assessments and instruction?**

# THEORETICAL FRAMES

- Experiential Learning: acquire, specialize, integrate (Kolb, 1984)
- Embedded field experience: “practice teaching” (Ronfeldt, Schwartz, & Jacob, 2014)
- Community-based field experiences: connecting classrooms to communities (Beaudry, 2015)



# INFORMAL LITERACY ASSESSMENTS

*Walvoord (2004) describes assessment as “the systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available, in order to inform decisions about how to improve learning” (p. 2).*

=> Informal literacy assessments give teachers an insight into individual students' literacy processes and can be used to record observations of the student learning and to drive instruction.

⇒ **Not standardized**

⇒ **Not given under controlled situations**

⇒ **Do not compare students or give percentile ranks**

⇒ **Can be given as needed (new student, progress monitoring, RTI/MTSS data, conferences, etc.)**

⇒ **Can be used to identify strengths or needs in various types of literacies – reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, visual**

*\*For our embedded field experience, informal literacy assessments were given during the first tutoring session, session 3 or 4, and the last tutoring session.*

# LITERACY ASSESSMENT IN THE FIELD: THE COURSE

- A course was created to enhance literacy knowledge and instruction for pre-and in-service teachers, consisting of both content learning AND field experience.
  - three-credit hour course for pre-and in-service teachers
  - examine, administer, & analyze data from formal and informal literacy assessments
  - implement instructional strategies and resources for classroom use
  - tutoring partnership was set up with a neighboring school district in which pre- and in-service teachers were placed in one-hour tutoring sessions for eight weeks with elementary students in grades 1-5



# LITERACY ASSESSMENT IN THE FIELD: THE COURSE

*The purpose of the tutoring partnership is for the pre- and in-service teachers to understand that teaching reading is the process of using literacy assessment data to guide the reading instruction.*

- In order to establish the instructional conditions that enhance learning, the needs of readers, their engagement in literacy activities, and their ability to construct meaning from text must be identified.
- Using an assessment cycle as a foundation, pre-and in-service teachers learn that assessments and teaching work hand in hand.
- Using information about the reader, the reading teacher establishes the instructional conditions for literacy knowledge to improve.

# LITERACY ASSESSMENT IN THE FIELD: THE COURSE

## Outcomes:

1. Pre- & in-service teachers understand the reading process.
2. Pre- & in-service teachers formulate hypotheses by collecting pertinent information from a reader in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
3. Pre- & in-service teachers create meaningful and engaging tutoring sessions based on the collected data that support that reader's literacy needs and skills.

=> Hence, the course emphasizes learning about and applying authentic literacy assessments in an embedded field experience.

# METHODOLOGY

Convergent Mixed Methods Design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018):



\*The two types of data provide different information but when merged, have similar findings.

- A side-by-side comparison of each data analysis was conducted, starting with the quantitative results and then discussing the qualitative findings.
- To ensure validity, mining of the data used the same concepts for both quantitative and qualitative themes.
- Data results in identifying the benefits of an embedded field experience for preparing pre- and in-service teachers as they implemented literacy assessments and instruction.

# METHODOLOGY

## Four sources of data collection:

- Online Qualtrics survey
- Grades from three separate fieldwork assignments:

- (a) a tutoring portfolio
- (b) a summative report
- (c) the tutoring reflection.

3-5 page narrative of the field experience overall including the connections between course content and tutoring sessions

9 statements using 3-point Likert scale  
3 multiple choice questions  
1 short response question

6 lessons plans  
Results from 3 informal assessments  
Work samples from the tutoring sessions

Written analysis of all five literacy components:  
phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, & writing  
Further recommendations for literacy instruction

- 17 participants (pre- & in-service teachers)  
- Data collected during last two weeks of course (after the embedded field experience was completed).

# DATA

Table 1. Numerical findings of the online survey

Question	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
The embedded field experience increased my understanding of literacy assessments.	15	0	0
Participating in the embedded field experience allowed me to plan effective instructional strategies for the assigned tutee.	14	1	0
Because of the embedded field experience, I can implement a continuous cycle of assessment for literacy instruction.	11	4	0
The creation of weekly lesson plans expanded my understanding of guided instructional practices as I participated in the embedded field experience.	12	3	0
The embedded field experience enhanced my collaboration skills as I was able to collaborate with a classmate.	13	2	0
The tutoring experience was meaningful in preparing me for administering literacy assessments.	14	1	0
The tutoring experience was meaningful in preparing me for analyzing literacy assessments.	13	2	0
The tutoring experience was meaningful in preparing me for applying literacy assessments.	14	1	0
Tutoring the elementary student(s) was beneficial to the elementary student(s).	14	1	0

One student added, “I believe the experience was beneficial to both me and the elementary student. I appreciate the experience that it provided, and our student’s assessment score improved between the beginning and the end of the sessions.”

Another student noted, “We knew exactly what (the tutee’s) frustration reading level was and what level was instructional and what level was independent. The (informal literacy assessment) can help students find a range of books they are interested in reading, including both difficult and easy-to-read books.”

# FINDINGS

The knowledge and experience the participants acquired assisted them in learning about their elementary students' literacy needs as well as administering assessments and implementing meaningful learning activities.

- **100%** of the participants agreed that the embedded field experience increased their understanding of literacy assessments.
- **93%** of the participants could effectively plan instruction for the assigned tutee
- **80%** of participants felt comfortable implementing a continuous cycle of assessment for literacy instruction.
- **87%** stated creating weekly lesson plans expanded their understanding of guided instruction
- **93%** indicated collaborating with a peer classmate was helpful
- **94%** of the participants found the embedded field experience to be a meaningful preparation for administering and applying literacy assessments.
- **88%** of the participants found the experience to be meaningful for analyzing literacy assessments.
- **94%** of the participants agreed the field experience was beneficial to the elementary student.

# FINDINGS

- The three course assignments highlighted observational notes about the embedded field experience and were analyzed in addition to the online survey data.
- The majority of students scored well on all three assignments, however, only five of the 17 scored 90% or above on all three assignments.
  - Some participants did not submit all three assignments; for example, one student omitted the reflection.
  - Other participants submitted assignments that did not include all sections of the summative report or did not include the minimum of five literacy strategies in the reflection.
  - It is important to recognize that the work was not incorrect, but simply not completed.

# CONCLUSIONS

1) Participants benefited from the embedded field experience during the literacy assessment course.

- Increased understanding of literacy assessments
- Allowed for effective planning & implementation
- Experienced a continuous cycle of assessment, instruction, & reflection

2) Embedded field experiences can be categorized as a toolkit for teacher education.

- Provides ongoing guidance, support, and feedback to pre- and in-service teachers.

3) A community-based field experience is beneficial for pre- and in-service teachers as well as the elementary students they serve.

- Additional literacy instruction at no charge
- Builds relationships between universities and local school districts



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Thank  
you!

Any  
Questions