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**Meeting ACTFL/NCATE Accreditation Standards:
What World Language Teacher Candidates Reveal about Program Preparation**

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Abstract

Teacher Candidates in Foreign Language (FL) must be prepared to teach language, literature, linguistics, and culture as required by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) standards for teacher preparation. This investigation examines the perceptions of Foreign Language teacher candidates regarding program preparation for teaching a foreign language. The researcher created a survey based on the first two ACTFL content standards to find out what FL candidates in the three common languages of French, German, and Spanish believe about how well their content area programs prepare them to teach a foreign language at the secondary level. Seven candidates completed the survey prior to entering a Master of Arts in Teaching Program in Secondary Education. From this study, three areas of improvement are offered.

Introduction

Future teachers of a foreign language must know how to speak another language well, but speaking another language is only one aspect of teaching it. Future teachers must also know how to teach their language for candidate learning. Foreign language teachers use language to teach language, so they are learning a language and learning how to teach it.

Foreign language teacher candidates in one mid-south state have several K-12 licensure options. They can complete a traditional four-year program, a fifth-year masters program, or a state sponsored non-traditional two-year program. Licensed teachers may also add foreign language to their initial license through the ALP, Additional Licensure Plan. A traditional licensure program with four years of undergraduate classes combines content, pedagogy, and candidate teaching. The practical experience of candidate teaching lasts one semester for the undergraduate degree. A fifth-year program combines pedagogy with a year-long internship or with a concurrent program that offers pedagogy classes to employed teachers. In this state, the state department of education offers a non-traditional two-year program in which candidates enroll in an intensive pedagogy program for two three-week sessions in two summers and nine Saturday sessions for two years during the academic years with on-the-job training as in-service practicing teachers. The institution hosting this investigation offers a fifth-year Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree, which entails a three-semester program combining classes in pedagogy and methods of instruction with a two-semester, three-rotation internship. Teacher candidates spend a total of 33 weeks in a public school level at three different locales including middle, junior, and senior high schools in two large school districts and one rural school district.

The state requires national accreditation for tertiary institutions that offer programs of study for licensure. Every seven years, the National Council on Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) assesses all college or university programs of study for any area of public school teaching, prekindergarten/elementary to secondary, in all content areas. The state department of education wants to know if future teachers are prepared to be highly-qualified, effective public school teachers.

In order to verify that candidates are indeed well-versed in their content areas and graduates with strong pedagogical and practical foundations, NCATE visits tertiary campuses every seven years to collect evidence that programs are meeting the standards established by their Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs). This evidence is the “joint responsibility of

foreign language and education faculty if these are in different departments/colleges” (Phillips, ArACTE, 2008), which is the case at this institution.

In 2002, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the Specialized Professional Association (SPA) for foreign languages, established the Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers to ensure that teacher candidates meet NCLB’s requirements of “highly qualified,” which include a bachelor’s degree and “competence in all the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches based on a high objective uniform state standards of evaluation” set by the state and aligned with the state’s student academic achievement standards (Berk, 2005, p. 16). NCATE approved the standards the same year.

Six assessments are required as evidence for meeting the ACTFL/NCATE standards. At the researcher's university, two of these assessments are generated from the content areas of French, German, and Spanish in the World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Department (WLLC) housed in the College of Arts and Sciences. The remaining four assessments originate from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, housed in the College of Education and Health Professions (COEHP). Two additional assessments are optional and may be collected from either department.

The two ACTFL program standards that apply to the foreign language content areas are Standard 1: Language, Linguistics, Comparisons; and Standard 2: Cultures, Literatures, Cross-Disciplinary Concepts. Standard 1 includes three sub-standards: 1a) Demonstrating Language Proficiency, 1b) Understanding Linguistics, and 1c) Identifying Language Comparisons. Standard 2 also includes three sub-standards, but only two are applicable for the WLLC department: 2a) Demonstrating Cultural Understandings and 2b) Demonstrating Understanding of Literary and Cultural Texts and Traditions.

Because of the recent implementation of the ACTFL/NCATE standards, the research is mostly limited to collaboration and data collection between departments (Glisan, Smith-Sherwood, McDaniel, & Brooks, 2007; Colville-Hall, Fonseca-Greber, Cavour, 2007; McAlpine & Dhonau, 2007; McAlpine & Shrum, 2007).

An overlooked and critical component of the teacher preparation process concerns many undergraduate candidates who want to become foreign language teachers. Specifically, do they consider their undergraduate preparation sufficient for teaching a foreign language at the secondary level? To find out more about what candidates know, the researcher created a survey based on the two ACTFL/NCATE assessment standards for the WLLC Department asking for candidates’ perceptions on how well they consider their program of study to meet the ACTFL standards for preparing candidates to teach a foreign language.

Methodology

This investigation helps determine how well a WLLC department prepares future teachers in the three common languages: French, German, and Spanish. A self-report, Likert-scaled instrument was designed to assess participants’ knowledge of their undergraduate preparation in addressing ACTFL teacher preparation program standards 1 and 2. Survey results were informally compared and contrasted to candidate scores on their Oral Proficiency Interviews and Praxis II content scores. Because the surveys were collected anonymously, all analyses were examined and reported as aggregate numbers.

Research Question

How do pre-MAT candidates perceive their programs of study prepare them for teaching a foreign language in K-12 settings? Candidates were asked to consider how well their

programs of study prepared them to meet the ACTFL/NCATE program standards for teaching a foreign language using the first two ACTFL assessment standards for reporting content knowledge in the ACTFL/NCATE accreditation report.

Limitations

- The data were not disaggregated by the program areas of French, German, and Spanish.
- The sample size (n=7) was small. However, this number of FL majors in one year is considered a generous number of majors for the size of the state. In the previous two years, the total number was six, with three candidates each year. This is the first year in the researcher's program for German representation.
- The data were collected as self-reported.
- Variables such as age, gender, and years out from graduation were not considered. The sample number was too small to add additional variables.
- Dispositions for teacher candidates were not considered.

Delimitations

- External validity: Because the sample represents only graduates from one university, the findings may not be generalized to other foreign language departments. The program is also a fifth-year program, whereas many programs use a traditional four-year model.
- Internal validity: Responses might have been affected by the language used in the survey that is peculiar to education and brief self-reporting protocol used in this instrument. The survey was administered at the beginning of their first semester in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program. However, the participants had a sufficient amount of time to consider their responses. It was also assumed that each candidate would answer the questions honestly without consulting with their classmates.

Participants

Nine candidates, eight female and one male, began their MAT program of study in July. Four candidates graduated with degrees in Spanish, three in French, and two in German. One candidate graduated from another university, so that survey was not included in the statistical analysis. One candidate failed to return the survey. Prior to July, the candidates' pedagogical knowledge consisted of five credit-hours of pre-requisite courses including a one credit-hour pre-observation course consisting of 60 hours of classroom observation, a one credit-hour capstone course in which candidates created portfolios to show evidence of target language proficiencies in the four skills of learning a foreign language, i.e., reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and in culture., and a three credit-hour course titled, "Teaching Students in an Inclusive Setting."

Instrument

A self-report, Likert-scaled instrument was designed to assess participants' knowledge of their undergraduate preparation in addressing ACTFL teacher preparation program standards 1 and 2. Thirty-one questions were constructed based on the two assessment standards required for content areas. The researcher, who was also the instructor of the course, created the questions based on her expertise in teacher education preparation and knowledge of the standards. The WLLC department chair read the first draft for appropriateness and quality of the items based on her expertise as a Spanish instructor and a foreign language methods teacher for tertiary instruction. The survey questions were divided into two groups as follows. Standard 1: Language, Linguistics, Comparisons had three sub-standards (21 questions) and Standard 2: Cultures, Literatures, Cross-Disciplinary Concepts had two sub-standards (10 questions). Participants were asked to assess their perceptions of how each language program addressed the standards using a 0-3 scale: 0= *don't know*, 1=*not at all*, 2=*sufficient*, 3=*very well*. Participants

were also given the opportunity to write comments after completing the survey instrument (see Appendix A). Four of the participants added comments.

Administration of Instrument

Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board to conduct the research. The instructor described the research project to the candidates on the first day of their methods class and asked them to take the survey home to complete it for the next class. One candidate was not included in the statistical analysis because the participant matriculated from another institution. Taking the survey implied consent to participate in the project. Seven surveys were returned the following class. Surveys were anonymous, coded 1-7, and used as aggregated data.

Analysis of Data

Once the surveys were collected, data were entered into an Excel file according to the participants' codes. Questions were coded according to the standard, sub-standard, and question number. For example, Standard 1, Sub-standard b, question six was coded as S1b.6. Scores were entered by numbers 0-3 with 0=*don't know*, 1=*not at all*, 2=*sufficient*, and 3=*very well*. Calculations were determined for the percentage and frequency of responses for each standard, sub-standard, and question. Only one question was unanswered, so the "n" for that question was lowered to six to calculate the mean.

Data were not disaggregated by language (French, German, Spanish) due to the limited number of participants and because the ACTFL standards apply to all languages. This report will focus on frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for all questions (see Appendix B).

Results

The survey included 31 questions divided between two standards—Standard One: Language, Linguistics, Comparisons and Standard Two: Cultures, Literatures, and Cross-Disciplinary Concepts--and five sub-standards, distributed as follows:

- Standard 1, sub-standard a, Demonstrating Language Proficiency: 10 questions,
- Standard 1, sub-standard b, Understanding Linguistics: 8 questions,
- Standard 1, sub-standard c, Identifying Language Comparisons: 3 questions,
- Standard 2, sub-standard a, Demonstrating Cultural Understandings: 4 questions, and
- Standard 2, substandard b, Demonstrating Understanding of Literary and Cultural Texts and Traditions: 6 questions.

The *Very Well* category received the highest percentages for each sub-standard. However, less than half the candidates felt *very well*-prepared to demonstrate their language proficiency (S1a-45%) or to understand linguistics (S1b-38%). Yet, over half the candidates felt *very well*-prepared to identify language comparisons (S1c-52%) and to demonstrate cultural understandings (S2a-56%). The majority of candidates, 83%, had the opinion that their programs of study prepared them *very well* in demonstrating their understanding of literary and cultural texts and traditions (S2b).

In the *Sufficiently* category, S1a: Demonstrating Language Proficiencies received the highest percentage with 39% of the candidates responding. Twenty-three percent of the candidates felt *sufficiently* prepared to understand linguistics (S1b), 29% felt prepared to identify language comparisons (S1c), and 25% felt *sufficiently* prepared to demonstrate cultural understandings (S2a). Only 17% felt *sufficiently* prepared to demonstrate understanding of literary and cultural texts and traditions (S2b).

In the *Not At All* category, the data reveal that 12% of the candidates felt unprepared to demonstrate language proficiency (S1a), but almost one-fourth of the candidates, 23%, felt that

they were not prepared to understand linguistics (S1b). Fourteen percent felt unprepared to identify language comparisons (S1c), and 21% marked unprepared to demonstrate cultural understandings (S2a). No one marked *Not At All* for Substandard 2b: Demonstrating Understanding of Literary and Cultural Texts and Traditions

Candidates reported *Don't Know* in three sub-standards and the percentages were miniscule: 4% for S1a, 2% for S1b, and 5% for S1c. No one responded to *Don't Know* in Sub-standards 2a and 2b (See Table 1).

Table 1

Percentages for ACTFL Sub-Standards

Sub-Standard	<i>n</i>	Percentage <i>Very Well</i>	Percentage <i>Sufficiently</i>	Percentage <i>Not At All</i>	Percentage <i>Don't Know</i>
1a: Demonstrating Language Proficiencies*	6	45.0	39.0	12.0	4.0
1b: Understanding Linguistics	7	38.0	23.0	23.0	2.0
1c: Identifying Language Comparisons	7	52.0	29.0	14.0	5.0
2a: Demonstrating Cultural Understandings	7	56.0	25.0	21.0	0.0
2b: Demonstrating Understanding of Literary and Cultural Texts and Traditions	7	83.0	17.0	0.0	0.0

*One student did not respond to one question in this sub-standard.

Average mean scores ranged from a low of 2.10 for Standard 1b: Understanding Linguistics, to a high of 2.83, 2b: Demonstrating Cultural Understandings out of a possible 3.0. The average mean scores for the remaining three standards include 2.22 for 1a: Demonstrating Language Proficiencies, 2.29 for 1c: Identifying Language Comparisons, and 2.32 for 2a: Demonstrating Cultural Understandings. Standard deviations ranged from .40 on Standard 2b: Demonstrating Understanding of Literary and Cultural Texts and Traditions to .92 on 1c: Identifying Language Comparisons. A standard deviation of .65 was the median for 1a: Demonstrating Language Proficiencies. Standards 1b: Understanding Linguistics and 2a: Demonstrating Cultural Understandings both received a .81 standard deviation (See Table 2).

Table 2

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Each ACTFL Sub-Standard

Sub-Standard	<i>n</i>	M	SD
1a: Demonstrating Language Proficiencies*	6	2.22	.65
1b: Understanding Linguistics	7	2.10	.81
1c: Identifying Language Comparisons	7	2.29	.92
2a: Demonstrating Cultural Understandings	7	2.32	.81
2b: Demonstrating Understanding of Literary and Cultural Texts and Traditions	7	2.83	.40

*One student did not respond to one question in this sub-standard.

In comparing and contrasting the survey results to other benchmark assessments, two assessments were used: the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and the Praxis II Content and Productive tests. Individual survey questions were examined to seek similarities of candidate perceptions and actual scored data.

Standard 1a1.1 asked candidates if their programs of study prepared them to score an advanced low on the OPI. One candidate failed to answer this question, so the mean response for six candidates was 1.00 with a standard deviation of .89. Two candidates marked *Don't Know*, two candidates marked *Not At All*, and two candidates marked *Sufficiently*. No candidate marked “3” or *Very Well*. The actual scores on the OPI point out the variance in this answer. Three candidates scored in the advanced range: one advanced mid and two advanced low. However, one of these candidates was a bilingual Spanish speaker and the other two candidates had extensive immersion experiences. The remaining five candidates who had matriculated from the university all scored in the intermediate range: one high, three mid, and two low. The latter scores would seem to indicate a more realistic representation of a 2+2 program model in which candidates study two years of language followed by two years of literature and have little or no immersion experiences. The WLLC does not require an immersion experience of its graduates (see Table 3).

Table 3

ACTFL Standard Rating / OPI Results

ACTFL /NCATE	<i>n</i>	OPI	<i>n</i>
Standard 1a1.1			
Very Well	0	Advanced Low	2
Sufficiently	2	Intermediate High	2
Not At All	2	Intermediate Mid	2
Don't Know	2	Intermediate Low	1

*One student did not respond to survey question in this sub-standard.

Benchmark Test Data

The other benchmark tests include the Praxis II Content and Productive tests. Teacher candidates in this mid-south state must pass the Praxis II series of test for licensure. Only Spanish candidates must pass three tests in their content area: Spanish Content Knowledge, Spanish Productive Language Skills, and Spanish Pedagogy. French candidates have two content tests to pass: French Content Knowledge and French Productive Language Skills. German candidates do not have a normed content test in this state at this time. French and German candidates must also pass the Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) test to indicate their pedagogical knowledge. For this study, five candidates took content tests in Spanish and French, each consisting of four sub-sets: listening, structure, reading, and culture. The Spanish and French Productive tests included two sub-sets: speaking and writing. The data are grouped according to ACTFL/NCATE questions and sub-scores results.

In Standard 1a: Demonstrating Language Proficiency, survey questions 1a2.2, 1a2.3, and 1a2.4 relate to the reading and listening portions of the Praxis II Content tests. Candidates reported feeling better prepared in these areas with mean scores and standard deviations reflecting an agreement respectively of 2.57, 2.57, and 2.66 and standard deviations of 0.53, 0.53, and 0.49. Three of the five candidates scored in the upper range on the listening section, one in the lower range, and one below range. (See Table 4).

Table 4

*ACTFL Standard Rating / Praxis II Test Range Scores for Listening**

ACTFL /NCATE	<i>n</i>	ACTFL /NCATE	<i>n</i>	Praxis II	<i>n</i>
Standard 1a2.3		Standard 1a2.4		Content Test	
				Listening Comprehension	
Very Well	4		5	Upper Range	3

Sufficiently	3	2	Mid Range	0
Not At All	0	0	Low Range	1
Don't Know	0	0	Below Range	1

*German language candidates were not required by the state to take the Praxis II test.

On the reading section, one of the candidates scored in the upper range, two mid-range, and two below the range (see Table 5).

Table 5

*ACTFL Standard Rating / Praxis II Test Range Scores for Reading**

ACTFL /NCATE	<i>n</i>	Praxis II	<i>n</i>
Standard 1a2.2		Content Test	
		Reading Comprehension	
Very Well	4	Upper Range	1
Sufficiently	3	Mid Range	2
Not At All	0	Low Range	0
Don't Know	0	Below Range	2

*German language candidates were not required by the state to take the Praxis II test.

Questions 1a3.6 and 1a3.7 addressed speaking skills that compared and contrasted to the Productive test sub-section on speaking. Candidates reported feeling prepared in this category with mean scores respectively at 2.71 and 2.29 with standard deviations of 0.49 and 0.76 respectively. However, the Praxis results indicate a disconnect between perception and reality. On the speaking portion of the Praxis tests, two candidates scored in the low range, two in the mid range, and one high (See Table 6).

Table 6

ACTFL Standard Rating / Praxis II Test Range Scores for Speaking

ACTFL /NCATE	<i>n</i>	ACTFL / NCATE	<i>n</i>	Praxis II	<i>n</i>
Standard 1a3.6		Standard 1a3.7		Productive Test	
				Speaking	
Very Well	5	3		Upper Range	1
Sufficiently	2	3		Mid Range	2
Not At All	0	1		Low Range	2
Don't Know	0	0		Below Range	0

*German language candidates were not required by the state to take the Praxis II test.

The last two questions in Standard 1a relate to the writing section of the Productive test. Candidates indicated sufficiently prepared in this section with mean scores of 2.86 and 2.00 with standard deviations of 0.38 and 0.82 respectively. On the writing portion, two candidates scored in the low range, one mid, and two high (see Table 7).

Table 7

ACTFL Standard Rating / Praxis II Test Range Scores for Writing

ACTFL /NCATE	<i>n</i>	ACTFL / NCATE	<i>n</i>	Praxis II	<i>n</i>
Standard 1a4.9		Standard 1a4.10		Content Test	
				Writing	
Very Well	4	5		Upper Range	2
Sufficiently	3	2		Mid Range	1
Not At All	0	0		Low Range	2
Don't Know	0	0		Below Range	0

*German language candidates were not required by the state to take the Praxis II test.

Linguistic questions were addressed in Standard 1b: Understanding Linguistics. Candidates felt least prepared in this standard with an overall mean score of 2.10 and a standard deviation of 0.81. Questions 1b1, 1b2, 1b3, 1b4, and 1b5 relate to the Structure section on the Praxis II Content tests. Candidates' mean scores respectively stand at 1.71, 1.85, 2.29, 2.14, and 2.71 with standard deviations of 0.76, 0.90, 0.76, 0.90, and 0.49 respectively. On the Praxis tests, two candidates scored in the low range, two in the mid-range, and one above range (see Table 8).

Table 8

ACTFL Standard Rating / Praxis II Test Range Scores for Structure

	ACTFL / NCATE Standard					Praxis II Content Test	
	1b1	1b2	1b3	1b4	1b5	Structure (n=5)	
Very Well	1	2	3	3	5	Upper Range	1
Sufficiently	3	2	3	2	2	Mid Range	2
Not At All	3	3	1	2	0	Low Range	2
Don't Know	0	0	0	0	0	Below Range	0

*German language candidates were not required by the state to take the Praxis II test.

Culture questions were addressed in Standard 2a: Demonstrating Cultural Understandings. Candidates reported feeling better prepared in this area with an overall mean score of 2.32 and a standard deviation of 0.81. Questions 2a1, 2a2, 2a3, and 2a4 relate to the Culture section of the Praxis II Content tests. Candidates' mean scores respectively stand at 2.71, 2.29, 2.14, and 2.14 with standard deviations of 0.49, 0.95, 0.90, and 0.90 respectively. This section had the most variance with the second highest individual standard deviation in the entire survey of 0.95. The Praxis scores were also distributed with one each in the low and upper range and three in the mid range of scores (see Table 9).

Table 9

ACTFL Standard Rating / Praxis II Test Range Scores for Culture

	ACTFL / NCATE Standard				Content Test	
	2a.1	2a.2	2a.3	2a.4	Culture (n=5)	
Very Well	5	4	3	3	Upper Range	1
Sufficiently	2	1	2	2	Mid Range	3
Not At All	0	2	2	2	Low Range	1
Don't Know	0	0	0	0	Below Range	0

*German language candidates were not required by the state to take the Praxis II test.

Discussion

For candidates in this mid-south university, their program of study is completed in the college of arts and sciences. Candidates most likely graduate with a BA before applying for the fifth year MAT program. Most language education candidates do not take the five hours of pre-MAT courses until their senior year, with three of the courses delivered on-line. Teacher education frequently appears as much a mystery to the candidates as it is to the world language faculty. Candidates enter the MAT program with vague notions of how teachers are licensed and how classroom teachers use standards-based instruction. However, this group of candidates was enrolled in a one credit-hour pilot capstone course during the preceding spring semester, so they brought some background knowledge regarding the ACTFL standards for learning the "five Cs"

of foreign language standards (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities) and some background knowledge regarding state frameworks.

The mean scores of each standard indicate that the candidates felt sufficiently prepared in both standards. Standard deviations for each substandard also indicated little variation in the scores. It was no surprise to find the highest score with the least standard deviation fell to Standard 2b: Demonstrating Understanding of Literary and Cultural Texts and Traditions with a mean of 2.83 and a standard deviation of 0.40.

Based on the 2 + 2 model of undergraduate preparation (two years of language preparation and two years of literature and culture courses), the literary focus of the course work during the last two years of a language major prepare candidates more strongly in the receptive skills of reading and analysis. Candidate comments support these scores: “The (name of language) program...focuses on literature first and foremost,” and “The program focuses purely on writing proficiency and knowledge of culture and civic/history,” and “The program was very focused on literature and reading in the target language.”

The lowest score, found in Standard 1b: Understanding Linguistics with a 2.10 and a 0.81 standard deviation, was also expected. Candidates in the three language programs do not take a required linguistic course. The WLLC department offers an introductory course in linguistics but only Spanish has a language-specific linguistics course. Again, candidate comments support their assessment: “I learned (name of language) outside of the classroom in an immersion experience. Therefore, my formal education mostly dealt with culture and literature and not with grammar,” and “...I don’t recall ever learning about phonology, semantics, morphology, or syntax in any of my undergrad classes,” and “All of my understanding of linguistics is the result of our linguistics paper (research) for the capstone course. I did not learn any of this info in actual FLAN classes...”

Only 38% of the respondents felt *very well*-prepared for this standard with 23% marking *sufficiently* and 23% *not at all*. Of the eight individual questions on the survey, four questions received less than “2.” Praxis scores also support this rating. Of the six candidates taking the test, only two candidates scored above the range. Three scored in the lower range and one in the mid range.

Standard 1c: Understanding Language Comparisons showed the highest standard deviation of 0.92. The mean score of 2.29 was also the median score of the five mean substandard scores (2.10-2.83), so the higher standard deviation indicates some disagreement in the overall average regarding this standard. Question 1c.2, Sociolinguistic Variation, also had the highest standard deviation in the survey of 1.20 further supporting the greater variance in this standard.

Implications

Prior to the development of the ACTFL/NCATE standards, NCATE accreditation for foreign language teacher education programs involved minimal participation on the part of the content language instructors. Faculty usually provided evidence for the report in the form of syllabi and curriculum vitae. However, with the adoption of the *ACTFL/NCATE Program Standards for Foreign Language Teacher Preparation* by NCATE in 2002, cooperation between colleges becomes critical for accreditation. Evidence for the accreditation report is now performance-based. Programs must also include documentation in the report that they use this evidence to improve instruction in their own programs of study.

Regardless of the need for collaboration, little incentive exists for collaboration between colleges other than altruism due to time constraints, limited faculty commitment to teacher

education, and issues with regard to teaching distribution (Colville-Hall, Fonseca-Greber, & Cavour, 2007). Another issue regards the value placed on research in the social sciences by liberal arts colleges (Hopkins, 2005). Hopkins found that “too often faculty members from arts and sciences or professional schools who express interest in collaborating with education faculty on research are advised that their efforts will not count toward tenure or promotion” and “Too often research in teaching is seen as extraneous to career advancement” (p. 162).

In preparing for the ACTFL/NCATE report, the researcher found some similarities between the research and the context for her own institution although the small number of surveys with self-reported data narrows the implications to this locale. Most language faculty were unaware that program standards had been established for teacher preparation. Faculty were also disinterested in making curricular changes to provide assessment evidence for the report. They were satisfied with the state’s Non-Traditional Licensure (NTL) program for preparing foreign language teachers. It must be pointed out that the state-supported non-traditional licensure program does not require participants to take the OPI or any methods course in teaching a foreign language K-12.

Conclusion

In order to better prepare our candidates at the undergraduate level for a teaching profession, the survey results suggest three areas of improvement: oral proficiency, understanding of linguistics, and demonstrating cultural understandings. Candidate results on the OPI and the portfolio assessments also support the candidates’ perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of their undergraduate language preparation. However, faculty in the world language department are reluctant to make curricular changes at this time to better prepare candidates for a career in teaching foreign languages at the K-12 level.

However, in order to prepare for the NCATE accreditation visit, faculty did agree to two changes: 1) teacher candidates must take the Oral Proficiency Interview to assess their language proficiency, and 2) they must enroll in a capstone course to create a portfolio of their abilities to understand linguistics, identify language contrasts and comparisons, demonstrate cultural understandings, and understanding of literary and cultural texts and traditions. The capstone course was instituted one year ago in order to provide evidence in a portfolio of the two standards discussed in this article.

Four faculty, one each from French and German and two from Spanish, assisted with assessing the portfolios. Their comments supported the evidence found in the survey: candidates were weak in understanding linguistics (sub-standard 1c) and in demonstrating understanding of language comparisons (sub-standard 2a). World language faculty pointed out that candidates who wanted to be teachers were often weaker academically, yet the same group of candidates had overall average GPAs from their college above 3.0. Ideally, the world language department faculty would take a greater interest in teacher education standards and use this data to implement greater curricular changes that would benefit all language candidates as some programs have done (Colville-Hall, Fonseca-Greber, & Cavour, 2007; Glisan, Smith-Sherwood, McDaniel, & Brooks, 2007; McAlpine & Dhonau, 2007).

Further research regarding tertiary candidates’ perceptions of how well they are prepared to teach a foreign language would also benefit the profession as we seek to provide highly effective teachers for K-12 candidates. Language programs should reconsider how candidates view language learning in the 21st century and how their perceptions shape their expectations for a curriculum that is interactive and communicative. Immersion opportunities should be

integrated into the requirements for majors so that all candidates can exit a program with a minimum OPI score of Advanced Low as required by the ACTFL/NCATE standards.

This researcher would like to see the survey administered to all language candidates. Perhaps the candidates' input would alert faculty that a new paradigm for language learning is in the wind, one that emphasizes knowing and using the language along with learning about the greater and smaller cultures of the target language countries. The ACTFL/NCATE standards are reasonable guidelines for creating a well-rounded program of language learning for any candidate who wishes to communicate in another language and learn about another culture.

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Appendix A

Survey Instrument

Connect or Disconnect?

Meeting the Needs of Pre-Service Foreign Language Teachers in a Master of Arts in Teaching Program Part II

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) sets standards of compliance for all state-supported institutions of higher learning teacher education programs in order to assure quality instruction and preparation of teacher candidates. NCATE works closely with specialized professional associations (SPAs) to establish standards for preparing teachers such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The state of Arkansas only grants licensure to teacher candidates from NCATE accredited institutions.

Researchers in CIED and FLAN are also investigating the alignment of the ACTFL program standards for the preparation of foreign language teachers with program preparation. ACTFL holds that preparing foreign language teachers is the joint responsibility of both teacher education programs and foreign language

departments and lists eight requirements for teacher education programs and foreign language departments for preparing future teachers with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for this career. Please indicate your opinion regarding how well **you consider your program of study in French, German, or Spanish** meets the ACTFL requirements in preparing our students to teach foreign languages. **Circle** your assessment of each statement using the following scale: 1= not at all; 2=sufficiently; 3=very well. If you don't know the answer, mark DK=Don't Know.

Standard 1: Language, Linguistics, Comparisons				
Standard 1a: Demonstrating Language Proficiency:				
Candidates demonstrate a high level of proficiency in the target language, and they seek opportunities to strengthen their proficiency.				
Candidates exhibit evidence of ability in the following areas.				
1: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking:	1	2	3	DK
1a1.1. Advanced Low on ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview				
1a2: Interpretive Communication: Listening and Reading				
1a2.2. Infer meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases in new contexts	1	2	3	DK
1a2.3. Infer and interpret author's intent	1	2	3	DK
1a2.4. Offer personal interpretations of message	1	2	3	DK
1a3: Presentational Communication: Speaking				
1a3.5. Deliver oral presentations extemporaneously	1	2	3	DK
1a3.6. Topics are of personal interest, familiar literary and cultural topics	1	2	3	DK
1a3.7. Able to speak in connected discourse using a variety of time frames and vocabulary	1	2	3	DK
1a3.8. Extralinguistic support to facilitate audience comprehension (PowerPoint, posters, etc.)	1	2	3	DK
1a4: Interpersonal and Presentational Communication: Writing				
1a4.9. Advanced Low on ACTFL scale; routine social correspondence				
Willingness/openness for acquiring proficiency:	1	2	3	DK
1a4.10. Candidates seek out opportunities to strengthen proficiency by interacting in the target language outside the classroom.				
Standard 1b: Understanding Linguistics:				
Candidates know the linguistic features of the target language system, recognize the changing nature of language, and accommodate for gaps in their own knowledge of the target language system by learning on their own.				
Candidates exhibit evidence of ability in the following areas.				
1b1. Phonetics	1	2	3	DK
1b2. Morphology	1	2	3	DK
1b3. Syntax	1	2	3	DK
1b4. Semantics	1	2	3	DK
1b5. Rules for word and sentence formation—Example: Where does the object pronoun go?	1	2	3	DK
1b6. Discourse, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic knowledge (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills)	1	2	3	DK
1b 7. Changing nature of language—historical linguistics	1	2	3	DK

1b 8. Willingness/openness for accommodating for gaps in knowledge of target language system. Example: Student asks for grammar reference book	1	2	3	DK
Standard 1c: Identifying Language Comparisons: Candidates know the similarities and differences between the target language and other languages, identify the key differences in varieties of the target language, and seek opportunities to learn about varieties of the target language on their own.				
Candidates exhibit evidence of ability in the following areas.				
1c1. Comparisons between target language and first language	1	2	3	DK
1c2. Sociolinguistic variation—Example: gender, economic differences, etc.	1	2	3	DK
1c3. Willingness/openness for learning about target language varieties	1	2	3	DK
Standard 2: Cultures, Literatures, Cross-Disciplinary Concepts				
Standard 2a: Demonstrating Cultural Understandings Candidates demonstrate that they understand the connections among the perspectives of a culture and its practices and products, and they integrate the cultural framework for foreign language standards into their instructional practices. *Note. The foreign language standards for teachers have been established by ACTFL and are also used for the Arkansas K-12 foreign language standards.				
Candidates exhibit evidence of ability in the following areas.				
2a1. Cultural knowledge: Candidates cite key cultural perspectives (ex. Easter celebration) and provide through description of products (egg decorations) and practices (custom of celebration)	1	2	3	DK
2a2. Cultural experience: Candidates have spend time in target culture; personal experience connects to academic studies (Bastille Day, St. Nicolas Day, Dia de los Muertos)	1	2	3	DK
2a3. Process of analyzing cultures: Candidates demonstrate ability to analyze and hypothesize about unfamiliar or unknown cultural issues.	1	2	3	DK
2a4. Willingness/openness for cultural learning: Candidates integrate cultural insights into communicative functions and work to extend their knowledge of culture through interactions with native speakers	1	2	3	DK
Standard 2b: Demonstrating Understanding of Literary and Cultural Texts and Traditions Candidates recognize the value and role of literary and cultural texts and use them to interpret and reflect upon the perspectives of the target cultures over time.				
Candidates exhibit evidence of ability in the following areas:				
2b1. Knowledge of Literary and Cultural Texts:	1	2	3	DK
2b2. Interpretation literary texts that represent defining works in the target cultures	1	2	3	DK
2b3. Identify themes in a variety of texts that the cultures deem important in understanding the traditions of the cultures.	1	2	3	DK
2b4. Identify authors in a variety of texts that the cultures deem important in understanding the traditions of the cultures.	1	2	3	DK
2b5. Identify genres in a variety of texts that the cultures deem important in understanding the traditions of the cultures.	1	2	3	DK
2b6. Willingness/openness toward exploring literatures and other texts and media.	1	2	3	DK

Arkansas has a critical shortage of foreign language teachers. Without highly effective teachers in the classroom, students enter the tertiary classroom poorly or inadequately prepared for the rigor of learning second languages. It behooves us in both the Foreign Language Department and in Curriculum and Instruction to collaborate in preparing the next generation of foreign language teachers. Your comments on this issue will be helpful.

Appendix B
Percentages and Frequencies for Standards One and Two
and Sub-Standards 1a, 1b, 1c and 2a, 2b.

Standard One: Language, Linguistics, Comparisons

1a: Demonstrating Language Proficiency

Candidates demonstrate a high level of proficiency in the target language,
and they seek opportunities to strengthen their proficiency.

1a.1: Interpersonal Communication: Speaking

Candidates exhibit evidence of the ability to...

Interns 2009

<i>1a.1.1. ... Score Advanced Low on ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview.</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	2	33.0%
NOT AT ALL	2	33.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	2	33.0%
VERY WELL	0	0.0%
No response	1	

1a.2: Interpretive Communication: Listening and Reading

<i>1a.2.2. ... Infer meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases in new contexts.</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	3	43.0%
VERY WELL	4	57.0%

<i>1a.2.3. ... Infer and interpret author's intent.</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	3	43.0%
VERY WELL	4	57.0%

<i>1a.2.4. ... Offer personal interpretations of message.</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%

SUFFICIENTLY	2	29.0%
VERY WELL	5	71.0%

1a3: Presentational Communication: Speaking

1a.3.5. ... <i>Deliver oral presentations extemporaneously.</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	2	29.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	4	57.0%
VERY WELL	1	14.0%

1a.3.6. ... <i>Discuss topics are of personal interest, familiar literary and cultural topics.</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	2	29.0%
VERY WELL	5	71.0%

1a.3.7. ... <i>Speak in connected discourse using a variety of time frames and vocabulary.</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	1	14.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	3	43.0%
VERY WELL	3	43.0%

1a.3.8. ... <i>Use extra-linguistic support to facilitate audience comprehension (PowerPoint, posters, etc.).</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	1	14.0%
NOT AT ALL	1	14.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	4	57.0%
VERY WELL	1	14.0%

1a4: Interpersonal and Presentational Communication : Writing

1a.4.9. ... <i>Score Advanced Low on ACTFL scale; routine social correspondence.</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	1	14.0%
VERY WELL	6	86.0%

1a.4.10. ... Seek out opportunities to strengthen proficiency by interacting in the target language outside the classroom.	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	2	29.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	3	43.0%
VERY WELL	2	29.0%

1b: Understanding Linguistics

Candidates know the linguistic features of the target language system, recognize the changing nature of language, and accommodate for gaps in their own knowledge of the target language system by learning on their own.

Candidates exhibit evidence of ability in...

1b.1. ... <i>Phonetics</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	3	43.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	3	43.0%
VERY WELL	1	14.0%

1b.2. ... <i>Morphology</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	3	43.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	2	29.0%
VERY WELL	2	29.0%

1b.3. ... <i>Syntax</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	1	14.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	3	43.0%
VERY WELL	3	43.0%

1b.4. ... <i>Semantics</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	2	29.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	2	29.0%
VERY WELL	3	43.0%

1b.5. ... <i>Rules for word and sentence formation.</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	2	29.0%

	VERY WELL	5	71.0%
1b.6. ... <i>Discourse, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic.</i>		<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
	DON'T KNOW	1	14.0%
	NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%
	SUFFICIENTLY	5	71.0%
	VERY WELL	1	14.0%
1b.7. ... <i>Changing nature of language—historical linguistics.</i>		<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
	DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
	NOT AT ALL	3	43.0%
	SUFFICIENTLY	2	29.0%
	VERY WELL	2	29.0%
1b.8. ... <i>Willingness/openness for accommodating for gaps in knowledge of target language system.</i>		<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
	DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
	NOT AT ALL	1	14.0%
	SUFFICIENTLY	2	29.0%
	VERY WELL	4	57.0%

1c: Identifying Language Comparisons

Candidates know the similarities and differences between the target language and other languages, identify the key differences in varieties of the target language and seek opportunities to learn about varieties of the target language on their own.

Candidates exhibit evidence of ability in...

1c.1. ... <i>Comparisons between target language and first language.</i>		<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
	DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
	NOT AT ALL	1	14.0%
	SUFFICIENTLY	2	29.0%
	VERY WELL	4	57.0%
1c.2. ... <i>Sociolinguistic variation.</i>		<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
	DON'T KNOW	1	14.0%
	NOT AT ALL	1	14.0%
	SUFFICIENTLY	1	14.0%
	VERY WELL	4	57.0%
1c.3. ... <i>Willingness/openness for learning about target language varieties.</i>		<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>

DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	1	14.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	3	43.0%
VERY WELL	3	43.0%

Standard 2: Cultures, Literatures, Cross-Disciplinary Concepts

2a: Demonstrating Cultural Understandings

Candidates demonstrate that they understand the connections among the perspectives of a culture and its practices and products, and they integrate the cultural framework for foreign language standards into their instructional practices.

Candidates exhibit evidence of ability in the following areas... Interns 2009

2a.1. ... <i>Cultural knowledge: Candidates cite key cultural perspectives.</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	2	29.0%
VERY WELL	5	71.0%

2a.2. ... <i>Cultural experience: Candidates have spent time in target culture; personal experience connects to academic studies.</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	2	29.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	1	14.0%
VERY WELL	4	57.0%

2a.3. ... <i>Process of analyzing cultures: Candidates demonstrate ability to analyze and hypothesize about unfamiliar or unknown cultural issues.</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	2	29.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	2	29.0%
VERY WELL	3	43.0%

2a.4. ... <i>Willingness/openness for cultural learning: Candidates integrate cultural insights into communicative functions and work to extend their knowledge of culture through interactions with native speakers.</i>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	2	29.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	2	29.0%
VERY WELL	3	43.0%

2b: Demonstrating Understanding of Literary and Cultural Texts and Traditions

Candidates recognize the value and role of literary and cultural texts and use them to interpret and reflect upon the perspectives of the target cultures over time.

Candidates exhibit evidence of ability in...

FLAN INSTRUCTORS

2b.1. ... Knowledge of Literary and Cultural Texts.

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	1	14.0%
VERY WELL	6	86.0%

2b.2. ... Interpretation of literary texts that represent defining works in the target cultures.

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	2	29.0%
VERY WELL	5	71.0%

2b.3. ... Identify themes in a variety of texts that the cultures deem important in understanding the traditions of the cultures.

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	1	14.0%
VERY WELL	6	86.0%

2b.4. ... Identify authors in a variety of texts that the cultures deem important in understanding the traditions of the cultures.

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	1	14.0%
VERY WELL	6	86.0%

2b.5. ... Identify genres in a variety of texts that the cultures deem important in understanding the traditions of the cultures.

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%
SUFFICIENTLY	1	14.0%
VERY WELL	6	86.0%

2b.6. ... Willingness/openness toward exploring literatures and other texts and media.

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DON'T KNOW	0	0.0%
NOT AT ALL	0	0.0%

SUFFICIENTLY	1	14.0%
VERY WELL	6	86.0%

Connect, Respect, and Reflect: A Teacher Case Study of Resolve
Angela Webster-Smith
University of Central Arkansas

Abstract

This case study reports the work of graduate level teachers who worked with selected K-12 students who were experiencing some level of complication in school. The teachers were charged with implementing three strategies per week taken from the course content. The objective was for each practicing teacher to give attention to a student that needed the most attention and in the area it was most needed. Teachers reported categorical and descriptive data once per month. By semester's end, the project afforded astonishing and unforeseen success stories for teachers and students alike. Teachers gained resolve in their roles and responsibilities in serving all students; they were reminded of the urgency in serving high-need students and remained reflective in their teaching practices.

Introduction

In the author's experience, teachers who enroll in her graduate level learning and development course readily expect to study learning theory, human development, content, and pedagogy. They are somewhat taken aback, however, when the course contextualizes the aforementioned principles through the purview of connecting, respecting, and reflecting. Since her teachers are practicing teachers, they expect to read texts and corollary materials, make presentations, and take tests. They anticipate reflecting on their thinking and practices by engaging in journaling, portfolio development (Wlodarsky, 2010), reflective journals, and inquiry groups (Rodgers, 2002).

They are surprised when they are requested to practice the course precepts as part of their course evaluations. While they believe that the course content will positively impact the lives of children over time, the teachers seem somewhat startled that the instructor requires immediate evidence of their utilization of course tenets. Even so, the teachers are assigned a semester-long project requiring them to directly implement the principles of the course content with their K-12 students. Each teacher self-assesses to determine which student has the greatest need. The primary criteria include a teacher-student relationship that is fractured, barely exists, or is not at all; a student that the teacher frequently misunderstands; a student with poor social skills; or a student with low academic achievement.

Teachers are required to work with the target student throughout the course of the semester by implementing three strategies each week that are part of the course content during that week. The objective is for practicing teachers to give attention to the student that needs the most attention and in the area that the student needs it the most; during the regular class time. Also each week, teachers must reflect upon the implementation of the strategies they used with their K-12 students. To be certain, a state with a large population of high-needs students calls for practicing teachers who connect, respect, and reflect.

High-needs students are typically identified as children who experience physical or intellectual impairments; reside in families that have a low high-income; speak a language other than English; have difficult social and economic conditions; live in substandard housing with families and/or in neighborhoods that exhibit instability; and usually are located in urban or rural settings (Ohio Board Certified Teachers, 2006). Many children have, heretofore, experienced routine underachievement and academic failure. Personal failure alone would be tragic enough. However, some children also stand in the crosswinds of failure of their siblings, parents, and even grandparents and great grandparents. Their family dynamics may be fragile, bearing little

resemblance to ideals. These children spend each day in school with little or no boast in academic legacy. A common thread is woven with empty love tanks (Rath & Clifton, 2004), fears, and insecurities. These features are magnified within sub populations as they have vulnerabilities that present a larger educational task than usual. For them, school seems like a hopeless pursuit so educators must learn how to more consistently counteract this hopelessness (Author, 2010).

Connect

Having teachers connect, respect, and reflect on serving the needs of students becomes increasingly important when the state in which this learning and development course is taught reports greater than 50% of its children as economically disadvantaged. Poverty affects a majority of this state's school-aged children cutting across race, culture, languages, geography, and abilities. As poverty transcends several demographics, it qualifies for focused attention. According to Rath and Clifton (2004), emotional connection can be attained by demonstrating acceptance, approval, appreciation, esteem and personal regard, encouragement, optimism, confidence, hugs, smiles, pats on the back, compassion, mercy and grace. Kunjufu (2002) asserts that when serving parents and children, especially those who are at a disadvantage, one must first establish the significance of who they are before they will become interested in the product one is offering, even to their peril. Whether the product is a rule, a regulation, or educational content, if a student believes "my story is a mystery," the teacher is unlikely to see optimal performance from that child. Therefore, teachers must learn to connect with and embrace of their students and their families so that some children are not placed at arms length, at a distance from the benefits of schooling.

Respect

The desirable quality of respect is promoted whenever there is a need for positive change (Orem, Binkert, & Chancy, 2007). Positive change is required in the achievement of many high-needs students; so the teacher, who is the one facilitating the change should, as much as possible, keep all interactions positive with appreciation at the core of them. The focus must be placed on possibilities and human potential rather than problems. Valuing differences is also important in that people are more confident and comfortable with their futures when they carry parts of the past with them. Educators, then, must allow children to carry the best of their past to the future.

Barbour, Barbour, and Scully (2008) also spoke to the notion of showing respect for children, their families, and communities. They purported that educators must be knowledgeable and respectful of family dynamics in order to forge effective relationships. Henderson and Mapp (2002) implied that familial connections have a protective effect on children. Families are tantamount to blankets that are wrapped around children. By connecting and respecting children, teachers can help keep children protected. Educators should not underestimate the confluence of home-school synchronicity.

Reflect

This idea of reflection is supported by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2008). Rarely, however, are teachers taught the purposes, processes, and philosophies of reflecting in multiple contexts of education that are essential for analyzing and understanding their own growth and development (Gallavan & Webster-Smith, 2010). NCATE, for example, expects teachers to participate in clinical practice on which they reflect while it also compels faculties of education to oversee and assess teachers' development of such qualities as reflective and critical thinking, problem solving, and professional dispositions. That aside, teacher education programs should not request teachers to reflect simply because it is mandated

by NCATE (Amobi, 2006). Teachers must be guided down the journey of reflectivity (Spalding & Wilson, 2002) in order to most accurately reflect on both their strengths and their areas for improvement (Gallavan & Webster-Smith, 2010). Even when teachers believe they have a good sense of self or feel they are aware of each of their student's capabilities and motivations, they need to maintain introspective practice.

Rock (2006) purports every professional should obtain the skill of reflection and practice it considering that they do not necessarily learn from their experiences, they learn from reflecting on their experiences. Upon reflection comes insight, followed by the motivational energy needed to take action. Since teaching and learning are lived experiences that intersect with one's immediate surroundings (Morgan, 2003), teachers with troubled students should be persuaded to invest the time. Just as teaching is hard work, reflecting upon teaching is just as hard (Amobi, 2006).

This paper reports the findings of a case study of teachers as they practice connecting, respecting, and reflecting. Although the teachers initially believed the assignment to be overwhelming, considering their everyday professional and graduate school responsibilities, by mid semester, teachers appreciated opportunities to enhance their professional tool boxes by applying strategies as they learned them. What is more, they were delighted with the immediacy of the project. The *change a life today* approach afforded astonishing and unforeseen success stories for teachers and their students alike. The project allowed teachers to connect with students but also reconnect with the reasons they became educators.

Literature Review

The purpose of this project was to have teachers revisit their commitment to the success of all learners, remind them of the need to remain reflective in their teaching practices plus help them gauge their barometers for the urgency of high-need students. While teachers were also assigned traditional activities such as papers, group presentations, and various group activities and assessments, the instructor was most interested in teachers' abilities to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the principles of the course. Related literature on teacher development advances the application of theories to classroom decision making, the use of individualized assessments for classroom decision making, the conduct of action research in the classroom, and the accommodation for diversity in the classroom (Bondy, Ross, Adams, Nowak, Brownell, Hoppey, Kuhel, McCallum, & Stafford, 2007; Danielson, 2007; Jackson & Ormrod, 1998; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; McDevitt & Ormrod, 2004; Ormrod, 2006; Ormrod, 2004; Rathus, 2006).

The conceptual framework of the project is rooted in the *No Excuses* model and the *Turnaround* model. Both methods of school operations are based on the belief that all students can achieve, regardless of social or economic background, and other fragile living conditions. The *No Excuses* model (Carter, 2000; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2004; Tobias, 1990) is implemented by goal-oriented leaders and teachers, who, through collaboration, use a standards-aligned curriculum and a positive school culture to lead students to achievement in a rigorous academic program. Regardless of students' circumstances, they are accepted as they are and are given care and intervention to cultivate productive personal habits of mind that assist them in the confidence and character to succeed in life. Every child is held to high expectations that expand their personal, academic, and professional opportunities.

The *Turnaround* model (King & Lopez, 2008; Successful School Turnaround, n.d.) organizes the school's operations around tenets that counteract the effects of poverty and other negative, external forces in the lives of students. Such tenets include leadership that is proactive,

creative, and responsive in addressing problems; positive and supportive adult-student, school-family, and school-community relationship; a professional teaching staff that takes responsibility for student achievement and effectively supports the whole child; and a safe and orderly environment. School personnel, fundamentally, create the requisite conditions for readiness in the school.

The theoretical framework for this project also rests in the fact that since the days of Dewey (1933), teachers have been encouraged to be self reflective. He purported that reflective teachers do not accept current principles and repeated practices without questioning the status quo. They seek to improve efficiency and effectiveness for the individual, the group, and society. Emphasizing practitioner-based intuition, Schön (1987), supported by Dewey, advanced the conversation on reflectivity. His work suggested that reflection can lead to positive changes in practice for teachers. Dewey (1933) and Schön (1987) argued that educators should become the owner and subject of the reflective process. Schön (1987) promoted not only recalling experiences but reconstructing them, generating alternatives, and considering ethical implications. Zeichner (1990) expanded reflectivity in education to include the social context with the focus on democratic principles, educational equity, and social justice. Rodgers (2002) added that reflection requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of self and of others.

Considering successful models used with high-needs students across the nation, the instructor wanted to initiate a performance-based way that all teachers could become actively engaged in the work of one of the greatest banes of American schools. This work would also secure their confidence as teacher-leaders and as informed decision-makers as they would, on one hand, help chronically underperforming students and, on the other hand, help themselves become more competent teachers. The project offered a safe haven for teachers to reflect and receive guidance and feedback from an instructor who has worked and continues to work extensively with high-needs students.

Methodology

The main inclusion criterion for participation in this case study was that the teachers be enrolled in the graduate level learning and development course. Twenty-one of the 24 enrolled students participated. Three students did not participate as they were not practicing teachers that semester. Those students were assigned specific course principles to further research and present in essay form. In this study, all individuals enrolled in the course are labeled teachers to differentiate them from P-12 grade students.

Of those teachers participating, 1 is African American and 20 are Caucasians. Only three participating teachers are male. Teachers' experience ranged from 3- to 17-years as educators. The program of instruction is located in the central region of a southern state. Students drove from mostly rural and suburban areas from the north, south, east and west to matriculate in the web-enhanced course.

Teachers were assigned a semester project requiring them to directly implement the principles of the course content. The foundational principles of the course were taken from the course text entitled *Educational Psychology: Developing Learners* by Jeanne Ormrod (2006). The text was supplemented with a plethora of resources introduced by the instructor. Course topics included Group Differences and Inclusiveness, Individual Differences, Personal & Social Development, Learning & Cognitive Processes, Knowledge Construction, Cognitive & Linguistic Development, Higher Level Thinking Processes, Behaviorist Views of Learning,

Motivation and Affect, Cognitive Factors in Motivation, Instructional Strategies, Creating a Productive Learning Environment, Classroom Assessment Strategies, and Working with Parents.

Teachers were also taught the necessary tools and refined techniques of reflection to ensure that their self-examination was principled, productive, and positive (Gallavan & Webster-Smith, 2010). The topics were presented through readings, lectures, discussion, and group activity. Following the unveiling of each of the course topics, teachers were given individual and/or group reflective activities. Additionally, the instructor initiated a private journal between herself and each of the teachers. At the end of each face-to-face class meeting, teachers recorded their thoughts on the material presented, their “aha” moments, or any concerns regarding the operations of the class. At the beginning of the subsequent face-to-face class meeting, the instructor returned each teacher’s journal with comments relating to the teachers’ previous reflection. This cycle continued for the duration of the course.

Teachers were requested to implement the course principles with a student with whom they had little emotional connection, little understood, a student with poor social skills, or a student who experienced low academic achievement. Teachers would work with their target student throughout the course of the semester. When considering the target student, teachers were encouraged to select the student with the greatest need for improvement, preferably a high-needs student. The target student would be given a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality in reporting.

Procedures and First Reporting Period

Teachers began the project by providing the instructor with data points about themselves such as years of teaching experience in general, teaching at the current grade level, in the discipline, in the community, and/or at their respective school. They were also requested to list at least five of their personal positive qualities. Moreover, they were instructed to give reasons for selecting the target student and state an accomplishment they hoped to attain by giving focused attention to the student’s specific challenges. In addition, they were requested to list at least five positive qualities about the student and provide the student’s demographics such as gender, age, grade, subject, culture, assumed socio-economic status (SES), participation in the regular, special education or 504 program and the school’s setting (urban, suburban or rural.) In order to reconstruct historical interaction with their students, teachers were requested to record the amount of personal contact they typically made with the chosen student during the current academic year only (i.e., the approximate number of times they personally communicated with the student per day and the types of interactions they made with the student). The class discussed the student’s typical behavior, any particular positive or negative interactions between them and the student, plus any forms of communication typically made with the student’s parents, positive or negative.

Even though teachers of elementary school students were with their students all day while secondary school teachers were with their students only one period per day but usually several times per week, each teacher was requested to implement three strategies per week from course content presented that week. The topic notwithstanding, one strategy each week would seek to improve the teacher’s emotional relationship with his or her student. Another strategy would aspire to improve the classroom environment for the student. And another strategy would aim to improve the academic achievement of the student.

Teachers also discussed any differences in their relationship with the student, any variances in the student’s behavior and/or the classroom environment in which the student interacted, or in academic achievement. Additionally, teachers were requested to provide the

report card average for each documentation cycle. Teachers reported categorical and descriptive reflections once per month for the duration of the course, on the assignment page of the Blackboard online learning system. As a final reflection, teachers posted, on the Blackboard discussion page, the historical profile of their student and the strategy that harvested the most remarkable, positive outcomes with their chosen student. To accommodate teachers' personal styles, the instructor gave them the liberty to document in essay- or bullet-style reporting.

Case Study Teacher Descriptions

Although 21 teachers participated in the case study, only 5 teachers are highlighted in this paper. For impact, relatively new teachers were selected and at least one teacher was chosen from elementary, one from middle, and one from high school to demonstrate a variety of ways in which teachers executed the project, considering student challenges. None of the teachers in the class taught at urban schools that particular semester.

Case I: A 7-year African American male, physical education teacher working in a suburban elementary school.

Case II: A 4-year Caucasian female, kindergarten teacher working in a suburban school.

Case III: A 3-year Caucasian female, kindergarten teacher working in a rural school.

Case IV: A 4-year Caucasian female, middle school math teacher working in a rural school.

Case V: A 4-year Caucasian female, high school social studies teacher working in a rural setting.

Case Study Student Descriptions

Male and female as well as African American and Caucasian students participated in the teachers' studies. Although one of the students was not considered a traditional high-needs student, all teachers selected students who were experiencing difficulty in school for various reasons.

Case I: A 5-year old African American male student.

Case II: A 5-year old Caucasian male student.

Case III: A 6-year old Caucasian female student.

Case IV: An 11-year old Caucasian female student.

Case V: A 15-year old Caucasian male student.

Results

Initially, teachers expressed feelings of being overwhelmed by the notion of adding one more requirement to their everyday teaching responsibilities. The instructor commiserated with the teachers but assured them that the project would be attainable and worthwhile. She encouraged their cooperation by reiterating that the semester-long project was aligned with the course text and other literature (Bondy, Ross, Adams, Nowak, Brownell, Hoppey, Kuhel, McCallum, & Stafford, 2007; Danielson, 2007; Jackson & Ormrod, 1998; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; McDevitt & Ormrod, 2004; Ormrod, 2004; Ormrod, 2006a, 2006b; Rathus, 2006) on teacher development. After some cajoling, teachers acknowledged that they were committed to teacher-leadership and wanted to leave the course with a plethora of research-based strategies to use with their students.

Reasons for Selecting Target Students

Along with historical perceptions, teachers were requested to provide reasons detailing why they selected their target students. The historical information that teachers reported about their students was telling.

Case I: African American male teacher about his African American male kindergarten student in a suburban school. *I want to help him elevate his behavior. He has emotional issues but is nice*

and is a good athlete; he has a hard time sharing, is rough with other students; he shuts down when he doesn't get his way.

Case II: The selection of this student is not a typical high-needs student. This teacher recently finished earning a Gifted and Talented certification and decided to take on a bright 'student's unseemly behavior as a mission. Most of her students are reading on Text Level 3. This student is reading on Text Level 32.

Caucasian female kindergarten teacher on her 5-year old Caucasian male student in a suburban school. *Although he tries hard to make friends, he doesn't have many friends due to his social behavior and lack of respect for authority. He talks over me when I am teaching. Mother says he disrespects her too. He thrives on verbal praise, leadership, and loves to be in control. He's not a big hugger but he is spoiled!*

Case III: Caucasian female kindergarten teacher about her 6-year old Caucasian female student in a rural school. *I want her behavior to change. The student is very bright but has been very difficult for me all year. She makes my skin crawl. The principal wanted to paddle her after spending 5 minutes with her. Another car-duty teacher wants to beat her. She is disrespectful to adults; she laughs at people as they are getting on to her; at nap time she often makes noises and tears up anything she can get her hands on rather than rest. The mother says the child doesn't act this way at home.* When the instructor questioned the teacher about her dispositions, she mentioned that corporal punishment is allowed at her school. All the same, the instructor requested the teacher to do her best to maintain a positive outlook on the student. Further, in the end-of-class, private journal back to the teacher, the instructor routinely discussed the teacher's dispositions toward her student.

Case IV: Caucasian female math teacher on her 11-year old Caucasian female student in a rural school. *I want her to know that she can do better regardless of her circumstances. She is a low performer having failed the first semester and hardly ever has her homework, math book, or supplies. Her SES is described as poverty. She has good social skills, is honest and cares about others. Her home life is unstable.*

Case V: Caucasian female social studies teacher said of her 15-year old Caucasian male student in a rural setting. *He has a low SES and low self-esteem, avoids conversations with the teacher, is somewhat immature (acts like a prankster, makes noises, throws paper) and struggles academically. He hates his long bus rides to and from his rural community. I have difficulty communicating with parents outside of brief parent-teacher conferences; they do not return phone calls. My goal is to get him to perform academically.*

According to Herner-Patnode, Lee, and Cristol (2010), the success of teachers flows parallel to their dispositions toward teaching and learning. Having teachers reflect on the reasons for selecting their students drew out their *humanistic aspects of teaching* (Herner-Patnode, Lee, & Cristol, 2010, p 115) and reconnected them to some of the very reasons they became educators.

Second Reporting Period

During the second documentation period, the course highlighted topics such as inclusiveness, getting to know students' strengths and interests, childhood development, cultivating home-school synchronicity, and appreciation for the contributions of each student and the student's family to the fabric of the classroom, school, and American society. Teachers reported using various strategies with positive results.

Case I: *I have frequent communication with his father. I relate to the student and family on a personal level as we all are African Americans. There are some differences in his behavior in my class but he has a tough time relating in other classes what we have established in PE class.*

Case II: *I am getting to know him personally, finding common ground, challenging him and helping him to develop peer relationships. He is starting to enjoy school more. I allow him to work with the Gifted/Talented teacher one afternoon per week. He is working on a power point presentation once I learned he liked non-fiction, science. We checked out solar system books from the library for him to read. He names the students who are his friends.*

Case III: *I use unifying language such as “our” classroom and “our tables” for ownership and community rather than “my” classroom and tables. Also, for the first time all year, she is concerned with the behavior of others. She now points out the misbehavior of others, trying to help me out.*

Case IV: *I have tried to get to know her, told her I wanted her to keep the lines of communication open with me and I am trying to motivate her to learn. When I discussed that she didn’t have her supplies, she said she couldn’t afford them. So, I privately gave her a notebook. She has had her homework twice this week and three other assignments by the end of the day, which is a big improvement. I gave her new mechanical pencils and post-it notes as a surprise. Later I was able to brag on her and award a home work pass for being one of the students who completed an assignment. She wrote me a note telling me what’s going on in her life. She had been wearing revealing clothes but did not wear any revealing clothing after our conversation.*

Case V: *I have worked to foster a welcoming environment for him and encourage student achievement. I have been using Ruby Payne’s Hidden Rules and Erickson’s Stages of Psychosocial Development of Adolescence to understand him. I have contributed to his self concept and emotional well being by asking about his hobby, which is bull-riding. Now that I speak openly about it, he has invited the entire class to his next competition. He now readily works with his peers.*

Offering this specific course content, giving teachers the opportunity to put theory into action, as well as taking reflective moments allowed teachers to experience reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983). Their learning was extended beyond theory; teachers themselves became researchers, and were able to reap benefits from their reflection within the zone of time that their actions could make a positive difference on their practice.

Third Reporting Period

During this reporting period, the course unveiled social development and motivation as well as cognitive, affective, and moral development so that, by mid semester, teachers were beginning to appreciate opportunities to practice classroom theories, models, and concepts on their authentic challenges with real children.

Case I: *I use a positive tone, creativity and critical thinking with him. This allows him to come up with different games to present to other students and keeps him out of trouble.*

Case II: *I am fostering a warm and supportive environment and holding him accountable. His behavior is the same. He still cries sometimes because friends have left him and wears his heart on his sleeve. I’m really working on improving his manners. We’re gradually getting there. He hasn’t talked back to me in a while, which is nice.*

Case III: *The student is absent a lot less. She now wants to sit next to me at lunch. She makes me notes that say “Mrs. X I Love You!” She has stayed on green light for as much as 4 days! I have really formed a connection with her that most other teachers are not seeing. However, some of her teachers have commented on positive change in her behavior. Even though she still has her bad days, we have already come so far in our relationship and her behavior.*

Case IV: *I am teaching her learning strategies. She has been able to tell what area and perimeter are in class this week. She actually sang the lyrics of the rap song to tell me about each of them. She also gave me a present on Valentine's Day. The card with a letter inside said that I was the most influential person in her life! She said most students wrote them to their parents but she just had to write to me. Wow!*

Case V: *I have worked with him on a variety of study strategies such as flash cards and debates. He loves to argue. I now use this perceived character flaw to boost his self esteem. I realized how I present a question or task to him has everything to do with his level of participation.*

This set of actions and reflections afforded students the joys of reflection-on-action (Schön, 1987). When implementing the routine standards of this assignment, teachers were confronted with unexpected results from their students. Their encounters action generated inquiry into personal theories that undergird their actions. These intersections with reflection-on-action are important in that they have the power to change future actions.

Fourth Reporting Period

This period included the study of behaviorist views of learning, instructional strategies, creative productive learning environment, and classroom assessment strategies. As the documentation period continued, students eagerly documented their tales and shared them before, during, and after class with everyone.

Case I: *I evaluate his performance in a non-controlling way. With this, he now works well with others and executes the different activities. I overheard him say "Coach said to take three turns and give it to the next person in line." He was reinforcing the expected and modeled behavior.*

Case II: *I am providing opportunities for him to interact with classmates. He is much happier and enjoys coming to school. I have been evaluating the effectiveness of my attitude and actions. I have two months left with him and I am determined to keep it up!*

Case III: *I am now looking into her Micro-system or family according to Bronfenbrenner and the characteristics of effective modeling. I am also beginning to see the importance of meeting the students' deepest need of love and belonging. She now has a baby sister and I am finding ways that her sister can look up to her. She has become a different child in my eyes. She has gone from the child that makes my skin crawl to the child that melts my heart. You never would have convinced me that we would really bond like this prior to this class. I am so glad that I have learned how to take time and actually meet the needs of the child to help them to behave the way I need them to in the classroom.*

Case IV: *I am now providing scaffolding as she can easily get confused with concepts. She shared with me a poem about her dad being in jail. She stopped by and we talked about it more. I am impressed with her maturity in expressing her feelings. She is a true leader with her friends. Besides, she has turned in eight out of nine assignments. She received a home work pass.*

Case V: *I have been implementing the behaviorist approach by manipulating the environment to modify his behavior, implementing cues and positive reinforcement. I am also using self-efficacy strategies and helping him create a self-determined plan. I have shared with him my notes from class on the different personality types and characteristics. He agreed that he is a rebel. He is aware of new study habits and methods of accountability. By creating lessons that connect to him personally, he is more motivated to complete assignments. He relates his and his father's hardships to book characters. Because these assignments reflect his interests and experiences, he is more enthused and is offering detailed responses.*

As the semester's end drew near, teachers began to show signs of enhanced self-efficacy. They moved beyond the standard of accountability and responsibility to dispositions of commitment, virtue, and integrity. Teachers recorded using course strategies with other students in need as well as with their entire classes. Additionally, teachers demonstrated educational efficacy. They were doing what is right because it is right; they were doing what is good, and doing it well. What is more, reflective practice afforded them yet new opportunities to evaluate their skills and celebrate their accomplishments (Wagner, 2006).

Fifth Reporting Period

In the final reflections posted on the Blackboard discussion page, students shared with one another their experiences from the project. They provided one another with the historical profiles of their students and the strategies that harvested the most remarkable, positive outcomes with their chosen students. Students encouraged and congratulated one another. A sampling of remarks about the work of the five teachers is noted.

Case I: *I think using role-playing in class is great! Sometimes students don't really understand why their behavior might not be acceptable until they see just how it looks. I'm going to add this to my arsenal of tools so that my 5th graders can see their behavior and learn from it. Good job!*

Case II: *I am very impressed with how you are dealing with such a gifted student in your classroom. I have had smart students that needed extended activities or higher level thinking assignments but never anyone that could create a power point and present it to our class. I find that absolutely amazing! I think that he is very fortunate to have you as his teacher especially since you are interested and trained in dealing with gifted students.*

Case III: *Your work with your student is a perfect example of what a positive relationship with a student can do to encourage appropriate behavior therefore resulting in increased learning. Excellent work!*

Case IV: *Wow! I am very impressed how such little gestures can make such a huge difference in a student's performance and attitude. I agree that the success of these strategies with one child really helps to motivate us to use them on other students as well. Congratulations on your achievement with your "project student" so far. She really sounded like she needed someone to simply be a steady, positive role model in her life.*

Case V: *I really connected to your chosen student because I have students just like that in my class. They try to cover up their inadequacy in the classroom with humor or other distractions. They might be very polite or friendly but the bottom line is that they aren't performing like they should. I really like your strategy of allowing the students to think about their answers before class even begins. Perhaps I can try this strategy on my chosen student. One of his primary problems is that he is scared to answer questions out loud in class or volunteer in small groups. If he knows what's coming up in class he can write down his ideas and thoughts before class, let me read over it quickly before class begins, and then have his comments written down and ready to go. I'll give this strategy a shot in the next couple of weeks.*

Another general comment included *I have been encouraged by everyone's stories! There are a few that have reinforced my beliefs about reaching our students. I do have to say great job to everyone!!*

Discussions

This project was not reported to boast or to put forward that relevant and authentic assignments are always successful. As in reality, teachers experienced disappointments and impediments along the way. One student reported *While I'm focusing on my project student, another student has become more of a problem.* Another student reported *Every time I think we*

have really made progress something will happen with the student that makes it feel like we have gained absolutely no ground. She's on an emotional roller coaster this week. Yet another student wrote He seems to be giving up as we embark upon Spring Break. The process required patience as every strategy did not work for every student. With each documentation cycle, the instructor was sure to offer feedback concerning the appropriateness, execution, and outcomes of the strategies the teachers used. She also championed their efforts, encouraged their hearts, and empathized with their frustrations. Even so, the project was a lesson in endurance and hope.

You may note that even though the strategies were grounded in theories, concepts, and strategies, on the whole, the strategies were not complex. They included initiatives such as connecting emotionally with the students, getting to know them, creating a welcoming environment, teaching learning and study strategies, scaffolding, basic behavioral approaches and so forth. In fact, much of their success and revelations were as much related to giving students the, sometimes, desperate attention they needed to move beyond their current life's circumstances. This project was in keeping with Viadero's (2008) admonishment that when teachers hold high expectations of students, teachers must also generate high motivation and offer high help.

Conclusions

The project was implemented in order to ensure that classroom teachers enrolled in a graduate level learning and development course would immediately begin to test and apply the theories, models, and concepts that were presented in class. Too often this is not the case. Although teachers may comprehend the material, and with good intentions plan to apply it at some juncture in the future, they do not follow up with newfound strategies. Avoiding use of new strategies without supervision and support may lessen the likelihood that they will incorporate the strategy as their own. In this course, teachers were compelled to complete the project as it represented 50% of their grade and persisted for the length of the course.

The most important goals of this project were attained. Teachers revisited their commitment and responsibility to serving all students. They gained a sense of urgency for serving high-need students. They also continued reflective teaching practices. This course is typically offered once per academic year. With the project's success, the instructor adopts and adapts this assignment for each group of students that matriculates. She continually revises and strengthens it with feedback and recommendations from her teachers.

Karl A. Menninger, M.D., and noted psychiatrist of the 20th century once said, *What's done to children they will do to society* (BrainyQuote.com, n.d.). Fortunately, this group of teachers gained a better understanding of this principle and the urgency of it. This project challenged teachers to remain hopeful and to continue to believe in students regardless of the surmounting, external forces working against them.

By teachers' own admission, were it not for the semester-project, they would not have paused to learn more about their troubled students, their personal and academic issues, nor their motivations. This project empowered them to keep working with students even when strategies did not work, knowing that fresh strategies would be introduced or reinforced the following week. One teacher confessed that, *without the project, my target student was likely to fall between the cracks.* Another teacher reported, *If not now, when? There is no time like the present. We must go into the classroom each day with the resolve to change a life today!*

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