



# **The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin**

## **International Journal for Professional Educators**

2017 • Volume 83-3

**Systems to Address Quality Teaching**

## The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin

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The *Bulletin*, an official publication of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, promotes professional and personal growth of members through publication of their writings. Three online issues per year, subtitled *International Journal for Professional Educators*, focus on research-based and documented works—applied and data-based research, position papers, program descriptions, reviews of literature, and other articles on announced themes or other topics of interest to educators. Two print issues, subtitled *Collegial Exchange*, focus on articles based on practice and experience related to education, the Society, women, and children, as well as personal reflections and creative works. All five issues include book and technology reviews, letters to the editor, poetry, and graphic arts.

Submissions to the *Bulletin*, a refereed publication, are reviewed by the Editorial Board and the Society editorial staff. Selection is based on relevance of the topics addressed, accuracy and validity, contribution to the professional literature, originality, quality of writing, and adherence to Submission Guidelines (see page 63). Editorial Board members evaluate each submission's focus, organization, development, readability, and relevance to the general audience of *Bulletin* readers. Due to the diversity of the *Bulletin* audience, material that expresses a gender, religious, political, or patriotic bias is not suitable for publication.

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## International Journal for Professional Educators

2017 • Volume 83-3

Published by the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International

*The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International  
promotes professional and personal growth of women  
educators and excellence in education.*

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## Call for Submissions

Members are encouraged to submit manuscripts for consideration by the *Bulletin* Editorial Board. The Delta Kappa Gamma *Bulletin: Journal* accepts research-based articles including Action/Classroom Research, Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Reviews of Literature, Program Descriptions, Position Papers, and Book/Technology Reviews. The Delta Kappa Gamma *Bulletin: Collegial Exchange* accepts articles of a more practical, personal nature, including Classroom and DKG Practices/Programs, Viewpoints on Current Issues, Personal Reflections or Anecdotes, Inspirational Pieces, Biographies and Interviews, Book and Technology Reviews, and Creative Writing.

Submissions should be focused, well organized, effectively developed, concise, and appropriate for *Bulletin* readers. The style should be direct, clear, readable, and free from gender, political, patriotic, or religious bias. For more detailed information, please refer to the Submission Guidelines on page 63 and the Submission Grids on page 64.

Listed below are the deadlines and, where appropriate, themes. Although there is a suggested theme for each issue of the *Bulletin: Journal*, manuscripts on all topics are welcome. The *Bulletin: Collegial Exchange* is not theme-based.

### **Journal: Culturally Proficient Leaders (83-5; Online)**

(Postmark deadline is March 1, 2017)

Training • Cultural Change • Meeting Diverse Student Needs & Role Inclusion • Collaborative Leadership • Building School Community

### **Journal: Generational Issues for Educators (84-1; Online)**

(Postmark deadline is May 15, 2017)

Transitions • Technology • Communication • Beliefs • Engagement • Collaboration

### **Collegial Exchange (84-2; Print)**

(Postmark deadline is August 1, 2017)

No designated theme

### **Journal: Accountability (84-3; Online)**

(Postmark deadline is October 1, 2017)

Professionalism • Tenure • National-State-Local Policies • Student Learning • School Improvement

### **Collegial Exchange (84-4; Print)**

(Postmark deadline is December 15, 2017)

No designated theme

Submit all materials to:

***Bulletin* Editorial Staff**

**bulletin@dkg.org**

## From the Editor

In collaborating with members of the local business community during my career as a school superintendent, I became involved with ASQ, the American Society for Quality. Per the organization's Web site, "ASQ has the reputation and reach to bring together the diverse quality champions who are transforming our world"—and what better definition of a chief school administrator than as a *champion of quality* in a school district? I was particularly attracted to the underlying concept of *kaizen*, the Japanese business philosophy of continuous improvement for both an organization and an individual. In the school system, this translated to refusing to rest on the laurels of strong test scores or good college placements and a rejection of the idea that "good enough" was good enough! For the educators within the system—including me—the philosophy translated to an emphasis on lifelong learning if we were to serve students effectively.

The authors in this issue echo such an emphasis on lifelong learning as they pursue the theme and explore three main *systems to address quality teaching*: professional standards, preservice training, and professional development. DKG member Kuenzel, a peer reviewer for The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, shares insights regarding the process for obtaining National Board Certification—a key indicator of quality teaching in the United States. Kern, Lowder, and Crutchfield share the personal side of certification, explaining how meeting the standards made "all the difference" in their careers.

Two teacher-preparation professors shift the focus to the role of preservice education in supporting quality teaching. Pettit shares action research regarding preparing teaching candidates for co-teaching and working with other professionals in inclusive learning environments. Considering inclusion from the perspective of working effectively with English language learners, Williams details a collaboration between a rural university and a dual-language academy that optimizes learning for both students and teacher candidates.

Beyond initial pedagogical training, however, as lifelong learners, teachers must maintain quality in teaching through ongoing professional development. Matherson and Windle set the stage through examination of literature that defines what teachers want from their professional development. Roden and Szabo discuss the impact of a workshop conducted for preschool teachers to create a positive change in their beliefs and attitudes toward the importance of play and its place in the preschool curriculum. Presenting research regarding teachers' implementation of training regarding use of formative assessment in the classroom, Cotton concludes that educators may not always be aware of the extent to which they incorporate new strategies.

Of course, articles in the *Bulletin* in and of themselves work to support quality teaching! Parsons explores use of a culturally responsive model that can help teachers respond more appropriately to their students to deliver strong behavioral and academic support. Malone considers the challenges that socioeconomic status can pose to parental involvement.

Art critic, author, and philosopher John Ruskin once observed, "Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of intelligent effort." May the articles in this issue spur the ongoing efforts of DKG members, as key women educators devoted to excellence in education, to examine and participate in systems to address quality teaching.

Judith R. Merz, EdD  
Editor

# Addressing Quality Teaching: An Interview with Susan Kuenzel Regarding the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

By Judith R. Merz

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*This interview continues a series initiated by members of the Bulletin's editorial board. The goal of the series is to feature interviews conducted with Delta Kappa Gamma members or other educational leaders on a topic related to the theme of the issue. Here, editor Merz interviews DKG member Susan Kuenzel to gain insights regarding The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as a system to address quality teaching.*

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The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) was established in the United States in 1987 to define and recognize quality teaching in order to promote quality learning. The concept of the Board emerged from a task force of policymakers, educators, teachers' associations, and business leaders responding to concerns raised in 1983's *A Nation at Risk*, which noted "a rising tide of mediocrity" in education—a perceived threat to America's future. The mission of the NBPTS is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by

- ♦ Maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do;
- ♦ Providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards;
- ♦ Advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers. (NBPTS, para 1)

Importantly, the standards are created by teachers, and certification against those standards is voluntary. The process of certification is rigorous, based on multiple measures, and performance-based. Review is completed by peers, and more than 112,000 teachers throughout all of the United States have achieved National Board Certification. **Susan Kuenzel** is one such reviewer and shares her insights regarding the process of certification and its challenges and rewards.

**Please describe your role in the National Board Certification process.**

When I went through the process in 2003-2004, little free candidate support existed in our area. As part of the congratulations sent to participants upon achievement, National



Board encourages candidates to be leaders, so I sought out opportunities to learn more about how to support candidates—to provide the support that I had had a hard time finding. I volunteered to do candidate support for our county in North Carolina and worked with other National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) there to start regular support sessions.

The summer after I certified, I applied for and was accepted to be a scorer for an assessment center item in my area of certification, library media. I had learned so much but needed more. I attended Candidate Support Provider (CSP) training conducted by our state's department of public instruction, networked with other CSPs, and represented our county at state-department-sponsored meetings of system-level National Board coordinators. CSPs are trained individuals, usually NBCTs themselves, who ethically facilitate the process for candidates by giving them support intellectually, logistically, emotionally, and technically. We guide them by asking questions to get them to think more deeply but always defer to their choices. The next summer, I went to Pittsburgh to score Entry 4, then called *Documented Accomplishments*, which focused on what the teacher did outside normal teaching duties that impacted student learning, and the following summer to Phoenix to score a video entry—all to learn more about the process to know how to provide better support to candidates. The next summer, I became a trainer of scorers for a video entry and have done that since. During that time, I continued to attend the state-department-sponsored meetings and networked with other CSPs to learn more and better ways to support candidates.

North Carolina has been a leader in National Board support since the inception of NBCTs. Our Department of Public Instruction (DPI) hired an NBCT full-time to lead the state support, and the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) made candidate support a priority. The year that North Carolina announced as the last in which it would fully fund teachers to go through the process, about 6,000 teachers in the state applied for certification. DPI established a team of CSPs to work with those in school systems that did not have candidate support, calling it the Candidate Support Initiative (CSI). That was in the fall after I'd just retired, so I volunteered to help. The next year, when North Carolina had so many "advanced" candidates (those who do not achieve in the first year of the process and elect to continue within the 3-year window for achievement), the same group changed focus from initial certification and continued as the Advanced

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**Dr. Judith R. Merz** retired as a school superintendent after a 35-year career in New Jersey. A member of Alpha Chapter in New Jersey State Organization, she held many leadership positions, including president of the chapter and of the state organization. A doctoral advisor for Nova Southeastern University, Merz has been on the DKG editorial board since 1996 and began her tenure as editor in 2010. [jrmerz@aol.com](mailto:jrmerz@aol.com)



Candidate Support Initiative. My experience scoring and the insight it had given me regarding what works and generally what evidence is usually missing for candidates who

don't achieve certification allowed me to help the DPI leader write and edit the manual that was distributed statewide to CSPs. Pieces of it have been used nationwide.

I've been recognized by my local education agency with a plaque recognizing my service to candidates and the National Board program in our county. This past spring I was honored with the highest award for National Board work in North Carolina through the NBCT Caucus of NCAE. I was presented a leaded crystal star with the inscription "In Recognition of Outstanding Contributions to the NCAE National Board Certification Support Program in North Carolina." The award is named for Karen Garr, a former president of NCAE, who was instrumental in helping create National Board support programs across North Carolina, worked for NBPTS, and was the first recipient of the recognition later named in her honor. This is only the 5th year the award has been given.

In the transition to the new National Board process, I have continued training, leading the field testing of Component 3 in my certificate area and, this past summer, the scoring of the first entries for the new process. I am responsible for choosing and annotating the entries that will be used as benchmarks and training cases for future scoring.

### **What changes have you seen in the certification process?**

The process began in 1994 and was revised in 2001. Changes in the process at this time reflect changes in teaching and seek to offer more flexibility and affordability. Although National Board allowed 3 years to complete the process at one cost (the six assessment center items and four portfolio entries), most teachers completed them all in 1 year and then "re-took" the ones in which they did not obtain a passing score (scored on scale of 1-4, with 3 and 4 passing) in the 2nd and 3rd years. The new process rolls those pieces into "components," prices them separately at a reduced total cost, and allows teachers to complete each component in any order they choose.

- ♦ Component 1, the regrouped assessment-center items, assesses knowledge of content through computer-based answers to selected-response items (multiple choice) and constructed-response exercises (scenario-based short answers). No selected-response items were included in previous versions of process.

- ♦ Component 2 is basically the old Entry 1, differentiation in instruction, showing student-work samples and illustrating how the teacher analyzes students' strengths and needs and uses that information to design and implement instruction.

- ♦ Component 3 combines the two video entries of the previous system and allows teachers to showcase their teaching practice and learning environment. It provides as authentic a view of the teacher's classroom and pedagogy as assessors are able to see, making selection of the video segments and analysis of the videos critical.

*Teachers seek National Board certification for a variety of reasons—to “prove” themselves, for the professional development, for portable certification, for the pay incentive many states offer—so the benefits vary as much as the motivations of each individual.*



\* Component 4 is the newest-looking piece. Final directions were just released in November 2016, so candidates are reading, studying, and learning what is needed to complete it! The title of the component is *Effective and Reflective Practitioner*. The introduction to the component says,

This component requires teacher candidates to gather information from a variety of sources about a group of students; use assessments to effectively plan for and positively impact their students' learning; and provide evidence of their collaboration with families, the community, and colleagues and of their contributions to learning communities to advance students' learning and growth. ([www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org))

Additional sources regarding the changes in the overall certification process are available on the National Board Web site [as listed at the end of this article].

### **What is the most difficult part of becoming an NBCT?**

Scoring has given me deep insight into how to support candidates. I have learned that most of the entries that do not earn a passing score fail to include sufficient analysis. Candidates are repeatedly told to "Answer the questions," and although that's done, there are definitely degrees of answering a question. The most difficult part for candidates, especially advanced (i.e., 2nd- or 3rd-year) candidates, is adding the depth to help the assessor understand, for example, why the teacher did what he or she did, why something was important to that student, why that activity worked, or how that decision affected the outcome.

I say especially for advanced candidates because they probably didn't give enough analysis the first time and don't understand the second time what the problem was, so they try a different approach instead of adding more depth. It isn't that they aren't good teachers. Sometimes they do something so instinctively they don't think to write the why. Scorers cannot assume anything—or they could assume much that doesn't happen—so they can only score the entry based on what they are given. That lack of analysis leaves holes in the entry that keeps it from being clear ... and "clear" is the distinguishing word for a Level 3 score.

### **What do you perceive as the most beneficial component of being involved with National Board certification?**

Teachers seek National Board certification for a variety of reasons—to "prove" themselves, for the professional development, for portable certification, for the pay incentive many states offer—so the benefits vary as much as the motivations of each individual. Even candidates who don't achieve, however, usually say they have strengthened their teaching practice by comparing their teaching to the standards. Showing evidence of the standards through the written commentary and videos takes knowing what those standards are, studying them, deciding how one meets the standards, and considering how one can show that he or she does meet the standards. Most candidates say it is one of the most intensive professional development activities they have ever done and that they are better teachers for having gone through the process.

The leadership opportunities that being an NBCT offers are among the most beneficial results I've realized. The National Board encourages NBCTs to step up as leaders in their schools, counties, states, and nationally. Having accomplished certification through such a rigorous process reaffirms skills and abilities in a teacher. Although we all lead in our classrooms, achieving this level through the peer-review process adds confidence to step beyond our doors, to volunteer for more leadership roles, to help others, to share ideas, and

to help advance careers. NBPTS and many states offer conferences devoted to leadership for NBCTs. I've gained lifelong friends by stepping beyond my classroom through National Board programs.

This is one way that I see a close parallel between National Board certification and Delta Kappa Gamma—leadership is a strong theme for both. I've nominated and brought many members into DKG because I've seen their leadership skills through National Board work. For example, several teachers on our state NBCT Leadership Team were not members of DKG, but their leadership skills were evident as we planned sessions and worked with candidates...so I nominated them for membership in their local areas. One

scorer who worked with me in the summer, whom I nominated for membership in DKG, was named one of 12 "Rising Stars" recognized at our state convention this year as exemplifying the leadership of our Founders. In our state, several chapter presidents and former presidents are NBCTs. They step up and take leadership roles. Many move beyond the classroom into administrative roles.

*... Certification  
by The National Board  
for Professional Teaching  
Standards is an ever-evolving  
process for providing  
professional and personal  
growth to educators—  
a match to the mission  
of DKG.*

**Does it make a difference to have an NBCT in a classroom? What kind of follow-up is done to see the difference?**

On a personal level, the NBCT brings to his or her classroom the sense of pride and accomplishment that comes with certification. As suggested above, the leadership factor also

makes the most difference personally. Although many teachers complete the certification for the salary incentives, they learn that much more than money is involved once they achieve.

In terms of the impact of an NBCT on educational outcomes in the classroom, according to the National Research Council, "The evidence is clear the National Board Certification distinguishes more effective teachers from less effective teachers with respect to student achievement" (<http://www.nbpts.org>). The National Board Web site lists a wide variety of studies measuring the impact of NBCTs. These studies have suggested that student-learning increases are comparable to that achieved by 1 or 2 months of additional instruction, with an even greater impact measured for minority and low-income students. NBCTs also achieve strong results on key measures of teacher effectiveness, such as classroom observations and value-added scores.

### **Is National Board certification for life?**

Initial certification is for 10 years. In the 8th or 9th year of certification, NBCTs can go through the process of renewal to show that they are maintaining the same level of teaching and standards that they evidenced when they achieved. Renewal involves three components and a reflection based on *Professional Growth Experiences* that the teacher has done since his or her initial certification. Teachers must show how they have learned or incorporated technology, leadership, diversity, and specific content knowledge, among other rubric-measured aspects. Teachers submit a video in their original certification area and either student-work samples or a second video, which can be with students or adults.

As part of the ongoing evaluation of the National Board certifications, renewal will change in 2021 to a maintenance of certification (MOC) and will be required every 5 years.

### Summary

As Susan Kuenzel's comments suggest, certification by The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is an ever-evolving process for providing professional and personal growth to educators—a match to the mission of DKG. In the United States, NBCTs clearly illustrate the effectiveness of a carefully structured system to address quality teaching.

### References

National Board for Teaching Standards. (2014). Retrieved from [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org)

### Links to Specific Topics

Information for candidates:

- ♦ [http://www.nbpts.org/sites/default/files/documents/CandidateCenter/Ethics%20Policy\\_03.06.13\\_Links%20Need%20to%20be%20updated.pdf](http://www.nbpts.org/sites/default/files/documents/CandidateCenter/Ethics%20Policy_03.06.13_Links%20Need%20to%20be%20updated.pdf)

Information about changes to the certification process:

- ♦ <http://www.nbpts.org/sites/default/files/documents/CertificationRevisionsPage/CertificationChanges1pager.pdf>
- ♦ [http://www.nbpts.org/sites/default/files/certification\\_revision\\_updated\\_august\\_2014.pdf](http://www.nbpts.org/sites/default/files/certification_revision_updated_august_2014.pdf)
- ♦ <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/09/10/04nationalboard.h33.html>  
(a 2013 article but still a good overview)

Information about NBCTs and leadership:

- ♦ <http://www.nbpts.org/spreading-nbct-expertise>

Information about research on the effectiveness of NBCTs:

- ♦ <http://www.nbpts.org/advancing-education-research>

# The Road to National Boards... Has Made All the Difference!

By Angela H. Kern, Laura S. Lowder, and Ann B. Crutchfield

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*The authors, professors at the same university, have a combined educational experience of 75 years. In this article, they share how National Board Certification has influenced the road they have travelled—and has made all the difference in their ongoing growth as educators.*

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The journey to Pfeiffer University is one of intention. One does not just happen to find the village of Misenheimer in the rural piedmont of North Carolina. However, three college professors' journeys to the village afforded them the opportunity to combine strengths of National Board Certification to enhance their elementary education department. This is a story of National Board successes and why one should pursue and earn such recognition. Often the road less travelled is the one that leads to personal and professional fulfillment.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is a voluntary certification system that involves portraying the highest ideals of standards that teachers should demonstrate. The five key propositions of National Boards include (a) commitment to student learning, (b) knowledge of those one is teaching, (c) managing and monitoring of student learning, (d) systematic reflection on one's practices, and (e) becoming a member of the community of learners. The certification involves the completion of portfolios, including video submissions, and successful completion of an assessment center exam. Once certified, teachers submit a profile of professional growth every 10 years to demonstrate a continual commitment to the rigorous standards set forth for certification.

## Angela's Story

My National Board story is one of continual growth. I began the journey in 1999 during my 4th year of teaching Grade 3 in rural North Carolina. My thought process at the time was one of a young and energetic 27-year-old. I distinctly remember spending the summer prior to certification mapping out my portfolio entry ideas and contemplating the ideals of National Boards. After a year of teaching, writing, and reflecting, I airmailed "the box" that included all of my written portfolios in order to meet the required deadline. I then scheduled my session at the computer center for the exact last day of the summer in which the testing section was offered. Why? I was also getting married; yes, I planned a wedding and wrote my boards in the same year. Not advisable. I recall sitting on the beach in Hawaii during my honeymoon, thinking about the "test" I had to go back home and take...lesson learned about time management!

I passed. I learned a lot from the process and continued to use the ideals of the standards in my classroom. As with any Nationally Board Certified Teacher, I then needed another learning opportunity. I decided to pursue my doctorate in curriculum and instruction. Although I thought I had learned my lesson about overextending myself, I obviously had not. My board renewals were due the exact same semester that I defended my dissertation! I guess some people just work best under stress!

I passed the renewal process and again moved on to another challenge. I became a college of education professor. After 15 years in the school system, I left to teach others how to do it best! The National Board process thus has influenced my methodology throughout my entire professional career by focusing my attention on the highest rigorous standards of teaching and learning as set forth by the NBPTS system to address quality teaching.

### Laura's Story

About a decade ago, as a 4th-year classroom teacher, I began the NBPTS certification process. I then taught Grade 3 to a budding group of inquisitive children in a rural community school in North Carolina. My journey was both rigorous and time-consuming but ultimately proved invaluable to my development as an effective elementary school teacher and to the higher education classes that I now lead.

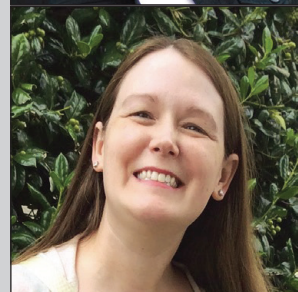
As a less experienced educator, the reflection cycle required throughout the National Board application process led me to develop lesson-planning and preparation habits that I have continued to utilize throughout my career. Rather than ending one lesson and moving directly to the next in an attempt to “teach the curriculum,” I realized more than ever the importance of stopping to reflect on the effectiveness of my previous planning and implementation efforts. Over time, these strategies proved to increase students’ engagement, understanding, and ultimately, academic performance.

Overall, my work through the certification process led me to hold myself and my students to a higher standard. Well beyond the standards of the curriculum, I expect my teaching and the learning related to my university classroom to go above and beyond assigning, completing, and grading assignments. Students must understand the purpose of each aspect of their work toward becoming licensed classroom teachers.

**Dr. Angela Haywood Kern**, a member of Alpha Upsilon Chapter in North Carolina State Organization, completed her undergraduate degree at North Carolina State University, masters at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro, and doctorate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is currently an associate professor of education at Pfeiffer University. Her research interests include underserved gifted education students, social studies issues and methods, and mathematics and science with literature integration. [angie.kern@pfeiffer.edu](mailto:angie.kern@pfeiffer.edu)



**Dr. Laura Sawyer Lowder** completed her undergraduate degree at Pfeiffer University and completed her doctorate at the University of Florida. She is currently an assistant professor of education at Pfeiffer University. Her research interests include instructional design focused on constructivist teaching through the Technological, Pedagogical, Content Knowledge Framework (TPACK), as well as mathematics and social learning. [laura.lowder@pfeiffer.edu](mailto:laura.lowder@pfeiffer.edu)



**Dr. Ann Benson Crutchfield**, a member of Psi Chapter in North Carolina State Organization, completed her undergraduate degree at Pfeiffer College, Misenheimer, North Carolina, and master's degree at North Carolina State University, Raleigh before completing her doctorate at Columbia University in New York. She is currently the Director of Undergraduate Teacher Education at Pfeiffer University. [ann.crutchfield@pfeiffer.edu](mailto:ann.crutchfield@pfeiffer.edu)





### **Ann's Story**

In 1999, I had been principal of a very successful elementary school with 1000 students and more than 100 staff members for 5 years. The faculty members were dynamic and innovative—more than capable. Yet, even with my consistent nudging and encouragement, they were apprehensive about undertaking the process to earn National Board Certification. I kept thinking that perhaps I was expecting too much. Because no National Board Certification for administrators was available, I could not say, “I did it, and you can do this.” So I requested a sabbatical from my position as principal and returned to the classroom with three goals: (a) to be the best teacher I could for my students, (b) to be a better principal in the future, and (c) to earn my National Board Certification. It had been 13 years since I had been a classroom teacher.

The first month I did not know what hit me. I had never been so tired in my life. How could I do this and complete the requirements for National Board Certification? Fortunately, another teacher at my school was attempting certification as well, and we began working together. I believe that alliance was the most influential component of completing the process successfully. The value of working collaboratively on items, reading and editing for each other, taking time to talk through the competencies, and selecting appropriate evidence with a committed, capable peer was incalculable. Looking back on the experience, I know why I continue to surround myself with peers I respect and admire in the workplace. The overall process gave me the tools to think deeply and acquire a more meaningful understanding of the “how and why” of engaged teaching and learning—an understanding I continue to examine with my university students on a regular basis.

### **Our Story**

Three professors and three different journeys combined to make an impact in the lives of future teachers. We comprise the elementary education department at our university. Upon reflection regarding our common goals, we realized that the National Board process is embedded in our methodology and teaching to preservice teachers. We have made a commitment to be a part of a learning community in which the elementary team meets weekly to ensure that learning experiences for preservice teachers are maximized. We connect content in methodology classes to experiences in the classroom setting by having the preservice teachers in schools, reflecting upon their observations and practices for hours above and beyond their student teaching semester. Methodology classes are connected in a manner for transferability between subjects in order to maximize student learning. Preservice teachers have access to us for guidance beyond office hours for social and emotional support.

The National Board process in which we partook years ago in hopes of validating our reputations as effective classroom teachers has carried over much more than we ever could have imagined into the teaching and learning that happens in our current higher-education classrooms. Our undergraduate and graduate degrees helped us solidify our knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy. Our National Board certification helped us to make the connection between curriculum, pedagogy, community, and lifelong learning, and now we share that knowledge with others. The ideals set forth by completing the National Board process led us to a common ground of high ideals and rigorous reflection for ourselves and our students—a worthwhile investment in a system to support quality teaching.

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# Preparing Teaching Candidates for Co-Teaching

By Sue L. Pettit

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*In this action research study, the author used weekly course discussions and early co-teaching practice in a Diverse Learners Course to prepare early teaching candidates for co-teaching and working with other teachers in inclusive learning environments. Candidates discussed their experiences weekly and then responded with written postteaching video observations. The written observations demonstrated that early teaching candidates valued their co-teaching experiences and, after only two formal co-teaching lessons, (a) their co-teaching teams worked together to meet common learning goals for students, (b) their co-teaching teams worked together to meet common teaching goals, (c) they experienced equality in teaching roles, and (d) they had increased opportunities for differentiation. The author recommends early co-teaching practice to prepare teacher candidates more completely for inclusive and collaborative teaching environments.*

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## Co-teaching—An Integral Part of Early Teacher Preparation

Most educators agree that teaching is a dynamic profession and requires valuable clinical experience; the more time that preservice teachers spend with quality mentors in the classroom, the better prepared and confident they will be as 1st-year teachers (Gut, Beam, Henning, Cochran, & Knight, 2014). In addition, the lack of intense early training may mean that new teachers do not know how to develop collaborative relationships with other specialists, a critical skill for inclusive teaching (Beninghof, 2012; Friend, 2015; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2013; Tomlinson, 2010; Valle & Connor, 2011). In a recent study involving teachers' perceptions regarding mentoring and field experience, researchers found that mentor teachers recommended longer, more collaborative, and co-generative early-field experiences to prepare new and inclusive teachers properly (Ambrosetti, Knight, & Dekkers, 2014; Gut et al., 2014). In co-generative teaching relationships, instructional partners continually reflect and adjust their co-teaching for the purpose of increased student learning (Lindeman, 2014; Roth & Tobin, 2001). Quality co-partnering and professional learning are reached through purposeful co-planning and relationship building. It stands to reason that co-teaching practice should begin much earlier than during the capstone of student teaching.

## Field Work and Collaborative Experience

During student teaching, candidates are in the classroom for extended times and are likely to develop co-generative relationships with their supervising teachers. In contrast, early-field experiences tend to be short-term, and candidates may do no more than observe or support their cooperating teacher's instruction (Gut et al., 2015; Scherer, 2012). A closer look at early field experiences reveals that many early candidates learn about teaching by practicing alone with small groups of students (Ambrosetti et al., 2014; Roth

& Tobin, 2001). In these instances, postpractice feedback leaves candidates wondering about their own progress and abilities as they struggle to make connections between the theory they are learning in their courses and the supervising teacher's suggestions. They often lose confidence in their own efforts and are rewarded for mirroring the cooperating teacher's more isolated teaching style and procedures (Kusuma-Powell & Powell, 2015; Roth & Tobin, 2000; Valle & Connor, 2011). Supervising teachers using the traditional lead-teacher, isolated model report not having time to develop a mentoring relationship with their candidates and are less able to answer teaching questions in a meaningful and practical form. Such supervision associated with early experiences can be general, "unguided, fragmented, and lack coherence" (Gut et al., p. 243).

Traditional early experiences are not the best fit for preparing co-teachers for inclusive classrooms; in fact, there are no winners there. The expert teacher loses because she misses the opportunity for maximizing her ability as a co-teacher and as a mentor. The novice loses because she has missed the opportunity to work and reflect synchronously with her mentor (Roth & Tobin, 2001). During the traditional field experience, the students in the classrooms lose most, because they are not the primary focus of the practice-teaching event (Beninghof, 2015; Heck & Bacharach, 2015; Parker, McHatton, Alvarez, & Rosa, 2010). In co-generative co-teaching, the expert and novice both learn as they focus on differentiating for student needs and greater learning performance (Scherer, 2012).

### **The Co-teaching Relationship—More Than a Strategy**

Co-teaching models have become standard for bolstering the effectiveness of inclusive teaching environments and promoting equal access to learning for both the professionals and their students (Beninghof, 2012, 2015; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2013; Murdock, Finnegan, & Theve, 2015). The co-teaching model has typically been described in metaphor form—for example, as a marriage or dance between the general and special education teacher or other classroom helpers (Friend, 1993, 2015; Parker et al., 2010). Metaphors for co-teaching reflect the importance of an interactive relationship focused on student learning. It has been widely documented that relationship problems related to co-teaching assignments can be the undoing of the co-teaching partnership and create a degenerative and split environment for students (Kusuma-Powell & Powell, 2015). To support teacher candidates effectively and prepare 1st-year teachers properly, leaders of teacher training programs can work to provide earlier co-teaching placements where co-generated goals and stronger teaching relationships are valued and practiced (Beninghof, 2012; Friend, 2015; Sileo, 2011; Tomlinson, 2010, 2015). In an ideal early-field experience, both the supervising teacher and teacher candidate are teaching, reflecting, and responding to students and to each other. Co-generative teaching relationships are at the heart of successful teaching partnerships and should be an integral part of early and inclusive teacher training (Ambrosetti, et al., 2015; Kusuma-Powell & Powell, 2015; Parker et al., 2010; Roth & Tobin, 2000).



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## Research Setting

The Teacher Education Program (TEP) at Colorado State University-Pueblo serves approximately 350 undergraduate and graduate teaching candidates per year. Candidates apply to the program as juniors to complete approximately 50 credits of education coursework. Most courses meet weekly and work in tandem with a 30-to-40-hour field experience placement in area schools.

All teacher candidates are expected to plan and teach according to three TEP standards that relate to co-teaching: (a) candidate employs a wide range of teaching techniques to match the intellectual, emotional, physical, and social level of each student and chooses teaching strategies and materials to achieve different curricular purposes; (b) candidate creates lessons and activities that differentiate instruction, operating at multiple levels to meet individual student needs; and (c) candidate establishes a learning environment that promotes educational equity and implements strategies to address inequities, so that all students are treated in an equitable and fair manner (Colorado State University-Pueblo, 2016). All course assignments in this study were devised to meet these three state and institutional requirements. None of these teacher-program standards specifically mention the pedagogy of co-teaching, an omission that became more important to me as I progressed through this study.

For many years, the TEP faculty have promoted co-teaching as a strong model for mentoring and supporting teacher-preparation candidates and their students. During student teaching, supervising teachers are invited to the university to meet with their student teachers for a 3-to-4-hour co-teaching workshop led by the teacher education professors. During this workshop, the student teachers and their cooperating teachers plan together in preparation for a semester of co-teaching and collaborative experience. Although brief, the workshop gives candidates and supervising teachers time to plan general co-teaching goals with the teacher education faculty as consultants.

During the student-teaching semester, university faculty visit the candidates in their placements on a weekly basis. Co-teaching is observed and evaluated, with feedback given. The university faculty also have the opportunity to co-teach with their candidates when it is appropriate for the individual's learning. During this semester, many of the student-teaching teams blossom into collaborative and cohesive co-teaching teams. On occasion, however, some student-teaching teams do not gel, and these candidates have a more isolated and traditional training experience. As a result, co-teaching is not practiced and candidates do not have opportunities to practice inclusionary pedagogy.

In contrast, during early teaching courses in the program, the co-teaching model is taught in lecture form because faculty seldom have time to get out to the schools for observations of teaching. Faculty and candidates are reliant on the expertise of the school personnel. Co-teaching is encouraged but not required, and no training sessions exist for cooperating teachers. Many times, students go through all their early courses not having had a meaningful co-teaching experience. This leaves co-teaching practice and preparation to occur during student teaching. Teacher candidates can clearly benefit from more co-teaching practice.

Concerns about increasing co-teaching experiences during early teacher education preparation made the 15-week, TEP Diverse Learners Course a good match for this study. The focus for both the course and the TEP is to learn how to meet the instructional, social, and emotional needs of all students through differentiated and specially designed instruction—specifically, using the co-teaching model.

## Methodology

This action research study was qualitative, relying on focus group discussions and personal reflections. I asked the following two-part research question: How can I adjust the expectations in my Diverse Learners Course to increase the probability that candidates will (a) consistently engage in early co-teaching practice, and (b) collaborate with their cooperating teacher to increase student learning?

Thirteen candidates spent 3 hours a week in their field-experience classrooms in schools that were in various stages of implementing co-teaching and university partnerships. Seven of the candidates were placed in a new partner school, and six were placed at other partner schools that were at different stages of using co-teaching models. Two of the candidates were licensed general education teachers working to complete an add-on special education licensure. The teaching candidates were placed in field experiences in the following grade-level assignments: two participants in kindergarten, one participant in a Grade 1 and Grade 2 combination, two participants in Grade 3, one participant in Grade 4, one participant in Grade 6, two participants in K-6 pullout programs requiring elementary licenses, and four participants in secondary math and science classrooms. After each field experience, the candidates were asked to apply what they had learned in their practice as they read and studied for their next class discussion.

## Research Interventions

In order to find out if changed course expectations would increase the probability that early teaching candidates would consistently engage in co-teaching practice and collaboration for increased student learning, I added two interventions to the traditional course. First, on a weekly basis, candidates were asked to discuss their roles as co-teachers. Second, they were required to write a reflection on two formally taught and taped co-teaching lessons.

**Weekly discussions.** For 15 weeks, my candidates and I began course meetings with discussions regarding their most recent co-teaching experiences. The Socratic discussions were framed by using open-ended questions related to their growing co-teaching abilities. For example, one week I asked students, "How would you describe the difference between leading and co-leading during a co-teaching lesson?" An effort was made to protect participants' confidentiality by asking candidates to discuss their experiences with a professional lens and to refrain from using names of teachers, schools, or students. These discussion guidelines were created and monitored by the students themselves. The discussions were honest and heavily focused on what was learned from weekly co-teaching experiences.

**Postteaching video reflections.** To evaluate whether candidates were having co-generative co-teaching experiences during their field work, I used the data from individual reflections that candidates wrote after observing two videotaped co-teaching experiences. This assignment was an individual task; however, before candidates completed the final reflection, they met with various classmates to self- and peer-evaluate their videos. The reflective prompt was "Discuss the effectiveness of your planning and co-teaching experience." I received responses from all 13 candidates.

## Data Analysis

In the spirit of qualitative action research design (Mertler, 2012; Mills, 2007), I coded candidate responses from weekly discussion and postteaching videos and looked for themes



and key phrases related to mentoring, co-generative teaching, and co-teaching adjustments. After a careful analysis of the coding, I was able to identify four themes: (a) co-teaching to meet common learning goals, (b) co-teaching to meet common teaching goals, (c) equality in teaching roles, and (d) increased opportunities for differentiation. I coded responses for Theme 1—*co-teaching to meet common learning goals*—if the student referred to teaming for the sake of improving student learning. I coded responses for Theme 2 if the candidate mentioned that the co-teachers worked towards common teaching goals.

**Theme 1: Co-teachers worked together to meet common learning goals.** Early teaching practice can be a challenge for candidates who are inexperienced, short on knowledge, low in confidence, and offered only a few hours a week in the classroom setting. However, when using the co-teaching model during early practice placements, the cooperative teacher takes the lead as mentor and main teacher—directing and adjusting pedagogy as needed for greater student performance. The candidate, in the co-teaching model, becomes the follower and support teacher—taking cues from the mentor and adding into the lesson and helping students when it is appropriate. The responses showed that, during this study, the team met common learning goals for the students and the teacher candidates learned how to work in a collaborative relationship. One candidate wrote, “The coop teacher and I would piggyback on each other’s ideas in order to help the students as much as possible.” Another candidate stated, “Instructions were clarified for different students by both teachers.” Candidates in this study were able to step into a real-time teaching event and confidently interact with the cooperative teacher and the students. This response demonstrated that the candidates were consistently engaged in co-teaching to increase the quality of student learning.

In addition, candidates noted that the back-and-forth communication between team members was clarifying for students and provided needed scaffolding for student learning. One stated, “I was able to let the coop add information when she felt that the students needed clarification. I was also able to play off the points or words that the coop and students were saying.” Co-teaching resulted in clearer teaching descriptions and directions. Another commented, “I think it [co-teaching] benefits the teachers because, if they have one way of doing an activity, the other teacher might have another way to explain it.” Candidates in this study celebrated their ability to interact with the cooperative teachers and better meet students’ learning goals.

**Theme 2: Co-teachers worked together to meet common teaching goals.** According to the literature, often early candidates are placed with small groups of students away from the main teaching event. As well, cooperative teachers are concerned about giving early candidates solo teaching time for fear that the candidate will not meet Core Standards or have the experience to manage the behaviors of a whole class. During this study and according to positive candidate responses, the cooperative teachers accepted and coached the candidates as they taught their lessons. One candidate stated, “My co-teacher and I

“ The focus . . .  
is to learn  
how to meet  
the instructional,  
social, and emotional  
needs of all students  
through differentiated  
and specially designed  
instruction—specifically,  
using the co-teaching  
model. ”

had a quick ‘where are we?’ meeting that allowed us to determine who would need more assistance at that point in the lesson.” Regarding teaching surprises and instructional modifications, one candidate stated, “Touching base throughout the lesson helps to maintain focus on the whole class and aid any struggling students we did not have a plan for previously in the lesson.”

Good teaching is sophisticated and hard to learn after the fact. Providing scaffolding for early candidates as they are practice teaching, builds confidence and helps them to be better prepared to work in collaborative and inclusive settings. The following candidate expressed the confidence that she found in her co-teaching relationship: “With another teacher by your side, there is always someone to back you up. If you falter or forget something, they can usually help pick up where you left off.” Candidates in this study received synchronous support and on-the-spot feedback and had the privilege to work toward common teaching goals with their cooperating teachers.

**Theme 3: Equality in teaching roles.** In past semesters, many early candidates had expressed a concern that they were little more than an extra body in their early field-experience placements and an underutilized volunteer in the classroom. During this co-teaching study, candidates expressed that they felt appreciated and viewed as equals. One candidate said, “I now have the ability to teach with another teacher and hold equal roles in the classroom.” Another expressed, “We really exhibit a sharing of the classroom!” In this study, many of the candidates reported that they were an important part of the teaching team, as suggested in this response: “The lesson had great flow from when I was talking to when she was talking...because both of us were interacting with the students.” During the collaborations, both teachers were equally engaged and contributing to the needs of students.

**Theme 4: Increased opportunities for differentiation.** Knowing how to plan for and implement differentiation is critical in teaching, especially in inclusive environments. However, knowing how and when to differentiate can be a complex skill during early, solo teaching. During this co-teaching study, candidates were supported during instruction, which freed them to differentiate. In their supportive roles, they found opportunities to bolster their own effectiveness. While the cooperative teacher was leading, one candidate noted, “I gave students who [had] finished another problem to allow them to continue to get practice at making arrays without disrupting the class.” Another candidate shared, “I differentiated by allowing a certain student to use a marker to underline his adjectives to encourage him to stay on task. He got to pick a different color of marker so by the end of the lesson his paper was colorful and unique.” Co-teaching gave one candidate an opportunity to notice the needs of more advanced learners: “I differentiated by giving the student who typically completed the work very fast some more advanced problems when the student got done. I was also able to use my strengths of pulling a variety of students into the topic instead of just a few students.” In addition to planned differentiations, candidates were afforded additional opportunities to differentiate instruction and, with co-teaching support, the confidence to practice such differentiations on the spot.

### **Summary of Candidates’ Observations**

As noted in the reflections for Theme 1, candidates found that co-teaching is a co-generative relationship and, when teams work in tandem, they can clarify instruction and meet common learning goals for students. Early candidates also noted, as found in Theme 2, that co-teaching is a great opportunity for support and feedback regarding their teaching. In turn, the candidates were able to support the cooperating teacher’s teaching



goals. As noted in Theme 3, candidates perceived that they were no longer on the edge of the teaching experience but an equal and engaged member of the teaching team. Finally, the candidates found that their co-teaching support gave them additional opportunities to provide meaningful differentiation for students—something that might have been too challenging for early candidates if they were practice teaching on the edge of a supervisor's classroom. Using weekly class discussion related to candidates' co-teaching in the field and having candidates observe and provide a written response to two co-teaching videos did increase the amount and quality of their early co-teaching experiences in the Diverse Learners Course. Candidates, for the most part, reported positive perceptions related to their early co-teaching practice, and all but two students met my expectations for more and meaningful co-teaching in the course.

### Challenges

As noted, two students reported not having meaningful co-teaching relationships. One of these two students was a certified general education teacher working on her K-12 special education license and working in a class for students with severe developmental disabilities. The partner school in which she taught had a challenging time with staff shortages. She planned her two co-teaching lessons with another special education teacher, but, for both teaching events, the specialist was pulled for inclusive support in another classroom. This candidate stated the following after the second lesson:

I was frustrated because my cooperating teacher and I had worked hard on this lesson and I was really looking forward to teaching with her. This did help me see the strength of the lesson plan. The sub was able to jump in and follow the lesson easily, which made the lesson (stations with manipulative learning aids) go smoothly overall.

The second participant was a music candidate. The university faculty struggled finding music faculty who were versed in or had experience with co-teaching methods. This student noted,

My strengths in co-teaching were very few because my teacher didn't quite understand what she needed to do, and I feel that was my fault because I didn't explain it very well. When she (the teaching supervisor) knew what she needed to do, the whole lesson seemed to run smoother.

Both cases highlighted that these two candidates were likely to be less prepared for inclusive teaching. As the course teacher, I could see my own missed opportunities for faculty intervention. In hindsight, I could have arranged to co-teach with both candidates—an option of which I will be more aware in the future. Both candidates would have profited from site visits and stronger intervention, including supervisory training.

In the past, co-teaching was included in the Diverse Learners Course and in other early teacher-education courses as content to be learned rather than practiced. Co-teaching in early field experiences had not been required but rather encouraged as something that students *should* try. This generally resulted in very few early co-teaching experiences before the capstone student teaching experience. As a result, the interventions in this study were a departure from current TEP standards, which do not mention co-teaching as a specific program requirement. I believe that this omission places our candidates at risk in their first year of teaching as schools become more compliant to federal requirements for inclusive teaching.

Finally, co-teaching is often conceptually taught by describing different models of how the generalist and specialist will be working together and the teaching roles that they will

adopt: duet, lead and support, speak and add, station, and so on (Beninhof, 2012; Friend; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008). I consciously decided to teach these models in the standard way through lecture, practice, and discussion. I asked students to select models and discuss them with their co-teachers, but I deemphasized specifically identifying the models during class discussion and for the video observation responses. I was concerned that candidates would become more concerned about describing their roles as co-teachers and less concerned about their own co-generative teaching and student-learning goals. This decision did leave me curious about candidates' perceptions about using the various roles characterized in the literature.

### Implications

For my next action research study in the Diverse Learners Course, I will use the findings from this study—specifically, candidates' responses to videos—during weekly

*... Weekly class discussions and course expectations for co-teaching in early field experience resulted in enriched experience for these teacher candidates, their cooperating teachers, and the classroom students.*

course discussions. For example, I will post candidates' comments from this study and ask my new candidates whether they identify with what the study group stated. I would like to verify or negate themes that I found in this study and perhaps identify additional co-generative, co-teaching themes. Second, and because it is challenging for our faculty to visit all early field placements, I will have course students create short training videos regarding their co-teaching practice. These videos can be shared by the candidates with their supervisors and, perhaps, at professional development meetings. As well, the videos can serve as reflective tools for both the candidates and their supervisors. Last, I will work with TEP faculty to revise the TEP Teaching Standards so that expectations for co-teaching

are directly stated.

### Conclusion

Quality co-teaching relationships are a key factor for increasing student performance, especially for students with special needs. Common sense dictates that formative co-teaching practice is critical throughout teacher training, and the lack of early co-teaching experiences in the TEP has been a concern. In this study, I used my Teaching Diverse Learners course as a platform for my co-teaching intervention. I used weekly class discussions regarding candidate co-teaching experiences in the field and an individual reflection and written response to two postteaching videos. My results from using these two interventions were encouraging: Most students noted that during their 15 weeks of field work they came to value their co-teaching relationship, especially in regards to common teaching and learning goals, teaching equality, and the ability to offer differentiations to students.

The data from this action research suggest that weekly class discussions and course expectations for co-teaching in early field experience resulted in enriched experience for these teacher candidates, their cooperating teachers, and the classroom students. The participants in this study, for the most part, had increased and positive co-teaching experiences. These meaningful experiences helped candidates to develop an early praxis

about co-teaching and a strong foundation for building quality co-teaching skills, co-generative relationships, and collaboration for successful inclusive practice during their student teaching, 1st-year teaching experiences, and beyond.

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# Using EL Infusion to Expose Teacher Candidates to a Dual-Language Setting: Another Success Story

By Deborah J. Williams

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*The author describes a field experience that results from collaboration among educators at a rural university in Texas and a dual-language academy. The endeavor was a result of university personnel's decision to infuse English Learner strategies into the curriculum for generalist, elementary, preservice teachers. This decision to expose teacher candidates to a dual-language setting optimized learning for both elementary students and teacher candidates.*

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## Introduction

Teacher preparation programs must include the demands of preparing teachers to meet the needs of diverse students and communities. Nutta, Mokhtari, and Strebel (2012) described several English Learner (EL) infusion models that have been successfully implemented in North America and also defined EL infusion as “the addition of EL content into a general teacher preparation program in an interconnected, cohesive, and interdisciplinary manner” (p. 20). For instance, due to budget constraints in the Ontario

schools, services for ELs were eliminated. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) established a program to infuse EL concerns and strategies into teacher preparation and professional development programs in Ontario. This program is noted for supporting mainstream teachers who have ELs in their classrooms.

The field experience described here occurred at a rural university in Texas as a result of university personnel's decision to infuse EL strategies into the curriculum for generalist, elementary, preservice teachers. Five years ago, educators at this university started to embed EL content into three reading courses by adopting two textbooks that students use in each of the courses. This decision enhanced program cohesiveness. A collaboration was established with educators at the only dual-language academy in the district. Placing teacher candidates at Piney Woods Academy enabled leaders of the current teacher preparation program to move EL infusion from the knowledge and comprehension taxonomy levels to critical thinking levels.



During a classroom visit, the principal listens to a kindergarten student explain an independent writing assignment.



A goal of the initial field experience was to place teacher candidates on PK-5 public school campuses to help them apply their skills for mainstream instruction and also to continue to embrace the EL infusion approach. These goals were accomplished through 2-hour placements in the field, 4 days a week, Monday through Thursday.

Piney Woods Academy of Dual-Language serves students in prekindergarten through Grade 5. At Piney Woods, students receive science and social studies instruction in Spanish and math in English. The teachers address reading and language arts in the students' dominant language. Student achievement at Piney Woods Academy is among the highest in the district for Grade 3 youngsters, who have been exposed to two languages since prekindergarten. Data from the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) revealed that 89% of Piney Woods students who took the assessment in English met requirements during the May 2015 administration, and 90% of the students who took the Spanish version met requirements.



A teacher candidate engages a kindergarten class in a writing lesson.

### Gomez and Gomez Enrichment Program

Piney Woods Academy personnel implement the Gomez and Gomez Enrichment Program, in which students from both language groups learn English and Spanish. This is one type of English-language-development class that serves second-language learners. Horwitz (2013) defined dual language programs as follows:

Dual language programs are designed to teach a new language simultaneously to two groups of language learners. In the United States, these programs are typically composed of Spanish- and English-speaking students with approximately half of the instructional time in each language. (p. 6)

Since 1995, Dr. Leo Gomez has researched how language and academic issues affect dual language learners. Components of the Gomez and Gomez Enrichment Program include exposure to grade-level materials, heterogeneous instructional grouping, separation of languages for content-area instruction, technology support, vocabulary enrichment, conceptual confinement, and academic rigor.

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### How Did Kindergarten, First, and Second Grade Students Benefit?

Each teacher candidate tailored small-group instruction for three students, Monday through Thursday, for 20-30 minutes each day. Teacher candidates administered an Interest Inventory (Cooter, Flynt, & Cooter, 2013) and exposed K-2 students to literature based on their interests. This strategy seemed to motivate the children and enhanced their attitudes about reading. Teacher candidates also learned that a best practice is to administer informal preassessments at the beginning of the school year and monitor

students' progress throughout the year. Further, teacher candidates learned to administer the same assessments at the end of a 6-week intervention to evaluate students' growth. Based on postassessment results, the students who participated in small-group instruction with teacher candidates increased their ability to elaborate on story elements when retelling narrative text. For nonfiction texts, students increased their ability to elaborate on key facts, details, and main ideas.

Several EL students increased their ability to rhyme and blend. English phonics skills increased in areas such as letter recognition, long and short vowel sounds, patterns, consonant blends, digraphs, and



A teacher candidate engages a small group of three Grade 1 students in a phonics lesson after reading a short story.

diphthongs. The EL students showed growth in recognizing and reading words with unique vowel patterns such as Vowel-Consonant (an), Consonant-Vowel-Consonant (cat), Consonant-Vowel-Consonant-silent e (like) patterns. Postassessment data also revealed that sight word recognition increased for several of the students.

### How Did Teacher Candidates Benefit?

The focus of the field experience was for teacher candidates to begin to link theory and practice while engaged in an authentic PK-5 setting. Teacher candidates practiced professionalism by reporting to the dual-language campus Monday through Thursday from 8:15-10:15 am. They learned how to teach whole- and small-group lessons that emphasized reading and language arts. Teacher candidates were exposed to the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) in an authentic environment. The ELPS, along with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), were the driving force for development of learner-centered lessons.

### Conclusions

Given the variety and mobility among ELs, most teachers, at some point, are likely to encounter learners whose language and culture are unfamiliar (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013). As a result of working in this program, I have strong evidence that monolingual teacher candidates can learn how to address the needs of ELs in a dual language setting. Overall, teacher candidates learned how to construct lesson plans that included the ELPS to support ELs. Teacher candidates also witnessed how faculty and staff supported biliteracy



and biculturalism in a school environment. Teacher candidates learned that grouping dynamics of the school involved language partners; that is, English-dominant students were assigned Spanish-dominant partners so that each student might gain experience with receiving and expressing through language. Teacher candidates learned in college reading courses that there are basically four types of educational programs that promote the acquisition of English simultaneously with acquisition or maintenance of other languages (Diaz-Rico, 2013). Through this 12-week field placement, teacher candidates also engaged with a two-way immersion setting that represents one of the four types of programs for ELs.

Although this collaboration proved successful, further inquiry is needed regarding several individual factors that impacted this goal. Training and support for teacher educators should be considered. Infusing EL strategies increases the work load of teacher educators; and teacher educators and candidates need training on language assessments.

As migrant enrollments in U.S. schools steadily escalate each year, leaders of teacher education programs must recognize that preparing teachers to meet the needs of ELs begins with infusing strategies into content and placing preservice teachers in English-language settings for field experiences. Teacher educators must accordingly develop a plan for expanding the number of generalist teacher candidates who are exposed to EL settings during field experiences.



A teacher candidate presents an integrated social studies workshop lesson on Thanksgiving celebrations.

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# What Do Teachers Want from Their Professional Development? Four Emerging Themes

By Lisa Matherson and Tracy M. Windle

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*Great strides have been made in enhancing the professional development opportunities for teachers, but despite these strides, a discrepancy still exists between what is offered to teachers and what they really want from their professional development. The authors examined the literature to help answer the question: What do teachers want from their professional development? In answering the question, they offer four suggestions gleaned from an examination of the literature.*

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## Introduction

Anyone who has ever attended a professional development meeting, session, or seminar has probably walked out thinking, “I survived another meeting that could have been relayed in an e-mail.” The “sit and get” professional development of the past must become a thing of just that...the past. In a 2009 study, Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos found that 90% of U.S. teachers participated in these types of sessions, which had little to no impact on teacher pedagogical practice or student learning.

Although some school or district mandates can only be met through “sit and get” professional development, the expectation of teachers today is to instruct students via methods that will have them engaging in higher order thinking skills and applying those skills across the curriculum. If these are the expectations set forth for the teachers, then should it not be expected that teachers be provided engaging professional development in which they apply the same skills? This disposition, supported by Guskey and Huberman (1995) 20 years ago, is still important enough to recognize. Education is dynamic, and, because researchers are consistently discovering new knowledge about teaching and learning processes, practitioners “must keep abreast of this emerging knowledge base and be prepared to use it to continually refine their skills” (Guskey & Huberman, 1995, p. 1).

In this article, we asked ourselves the question: What do teachers want from their professional development? To answer this question, we examined the literature that focused on teacher development, teacher learning, professional development, and professional development reform. From these examinations, we offer four suggestions.

## Thoughts on Professional Development

The most useful professional development focuses on active teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Desimone &

Stuckey, 2014; Mizell, 2010). When sessions are designed with these elements in mind, teachers will develop the pedagogical skills necessary to impact student learning, which is a central concept in any definition of professional development (Blank, de las Alas, & Smith, 2007; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Evans, 2014; Wenglinsky, 2000). Furthermore, research also shows that professional development is a social interaction and not merely an isolated experience (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Evans, 2014).

According to Evans (2014), professional development is not always a formal experience. In other words, professional development occurs “implicitly in often unanticipated situations and in unrecognized ways” (p. 181). Furthermore, these situations occur through social interactions that, in turn, develop into learning communities. Likewise, Cunningham, Etter, Platas, Wheeler, and Campbell (2015) argued, “Teacher knowledge and development may also be successfully constructed through relationship-based approaches” (p. 62). Increasing research exists regarding the effectiveness of the relationship-based approaches, such as mentoring, peer coaching, consultation, and technological approaches (e.g., Twitter or Facebook; Callahan, 2016; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Neuman & Cunningham, 2009). Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) stated that the most useful professional development emphasizes active participation and a hands-on experience rather than abstract discussions. When teachers are engaged in these types of professional development, their motivation increases and they sense they have more control and responsibility for their professional development rather than perceiving it as mandated (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010). Therefore, successful professional development for teachers involves components of social interaction, not just the “sit and get.”

Keeping the social-interaction concept of professional development in mind, Evans (2014) examined the types of models used in professional development and the idea that these models were either conceptual or processual in focus. From her findings, she posed the question, “How do people develop personally—either processual or conceptual?” (p. 183). Furthermore, she stated that, for professional development to be successful, two critical factors should be considered: (a) what motivates teachers to engage in professional development, and (b) the process by which the change in teachers’ cognitive discourses occurs (p. 184). The literature indicates the support for collaboration among teachers in their professional development needs and for professional learning communities (Darling-

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Hammond & Richardson, 2009; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Steeg & Lambson, 2015).

In their seminal work, Louis and Marks (1998) found that when school personnel develop respect for professional learning communities, the following occur: (a) higher expectations are set for students by the teachers; (b) students can count on their teachers and peers for help in achieving their learning goals; (c) the quality of the classroom pedagogy is considerably higher; and (d) achievement levels of the students are significantly higher. DuFour (2016) has compiled an extensive bibliography of research that provides evidence of these factors being significant ([www.allthingsplc.info](http://www.allthingsplc.info)).

### Professional Development Desires

From the examination of the literature, we gleaned several themes that address the desires of teachers in relation to what they wish from their required professional development:

**1. Teachers want professional development learning opportunities that are interactive, engaging, and relevant for their students.** Teachers want professional development to be interactive and engaging; they want it to be relevant so they do not feel they have wasted their time. Teachers want professional development sessions that will have them actively engaged in the practice of skills, strategies, and techniques. The desire for these opportunities to be modeled is a prime focus, along with hands-on practice of the skills, strategies, and techniques before teachers implement them in their classrooms.

*“ Professional development should be just as dynamic as the education its participants are expected to provide.”*

Relevancy for students is another desire for teachers. Professional development should be constructed in a way that will prepare teachers for what their students need most. To prepare students for success, teachers must teach them to learn and, in order to do so, teachers must become active learners themselves.

**2. Teachers want professional development learning opportunities that show them a more practical way to deliver content.** Professional development is more successful when it is explicitly tied to classroom lessons (Desimone

& Garet, 2015). Classroom lessons must be student-focused and driven by meaningful pedagogy interwoven with content. A national study regarding professional development showed that the percentage of teachers participating in sessions related to the content they taught increased from 59% in 2000 to 87% in 2008 (Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010). Teachers want professional development that they can use immediately to help them prepare and deliver what their students need the most, i.e., skills, techniques, and strategies that allow them to address individual needs and help them tailor differentiated learning for their students.

Changing the classroom into an environment in which deep learning and learners' needs are valued is not easy, and teachers need assistance and support as they rethink their classroom practices. Not only should teachers be innovative and creative in their approaches to integrating the skills and techniques they are learning into their classrooms, but the professional development they receive should also include the underlying theory. Without understanding both aspects—theory and application—ensuring the success of skills and techniques within the classroom is difficult.



**3. Teachers want professional development learning opportunities that are teacher-driven.** Teachers want a voice in the professional development offered and should be allowed to participate democratically in the planning and delivery of professional development sessions. District leaders need to empower teachers more fully by listening to the needs and desires of their professionals. Teachers need to speak up and not be shy in voicing opinions. Both teachers and district leaders need to put more thought into professional learning needs. Learning needs are different for every teacher, and professional development should meet the needs of all teachers. In trying to meet the needs of the teachers, system leaders should tap into the talents of their teachers. Every teacher, whether new or veteran, has something he or she can offer, and these talents should be utilized.

The talents offered by teachers will enable them to create communities of practice or professional learning groups where they can develop the trust needed to collaborate and speak honestly about issues and develop professional development that will allow them to improve their practices and change classroom environments. Teachers who participate in such groups grow in practice by collaborating with other teachers from their school or with teachers from across multiple schools; they are able to discuss issues, share practices, and develop solutions. Communities of practice or professional learning communities can focus on any aspect of education, but to ensure their success, teachers need to engage purposefully in a continuous cycle of inquiry or learning that promotes the nature of collaboration and further ensures the success of the students (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005).

**4. Teachers want professional development learning opportunities that are sustained over time.** Teachers want professional development that will make them better over time, not a quick fix that will only address the issues or the current reform for a short while. In a world that changes rapidly, educators need professional development that will lay a foundation upon which they can grow. Professional growth should be a steady progression over the course of a semester, a year, or more if it is to have lasting impacts in the classroom and on student achievement. When teachers learn new practices, implementation happens in the classroom, changes occur, and success of both the teachers and students becomes evident. The effectiveness of sustained professional development depends on how carefully educators conceive, plan, and implement it. Teachers have a vested interest in wanting to be the best at what they do, and becoming better is a process—a process that takes time.

Realistically, to improve practice and student learning, teachers need close to 50 hours of professional development (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2009). To improve student performance, professional development should be sustained over time, and professional development sessions delivered in the “sit and get” format are rarely sustained as most are focused on a single issue. Effective professional development is “intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice; is focused on the teaching and learning of specific academic content; is connected to other school initiatives; and builds strong collaboration among teachers” (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2009, p. 5). Tapping into the talents of teachers and developing communities of practice or professional learning communities can allow teachers to develop teacher-driven professional development that scaffolds connectively from one session to another, thereby providing the sustainability of the professional development teachers desire.

## Conclusion

Professional development is multidimensional. To gain the most from professional development, as well as to impact the learning of students and pedagogical and personal

practices, teachers must continue to change their attitudes, intellectual capacity, and mindsets (Evans, 2014). Because professional development is multidimensional, it can no longer be restricted to the “sit and get” model of the past but must transform to a succession of opportunities offering a myriad of possibilities aligned with the desires of teachers. Professional development should be just as dynamic as the education its participants are expected to provide.

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# Play Workshop: Changing Preschool Teachers' Ideas about Play in the Curriculum

By Tracey Roden and Susan Szabo

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*Play has lost its central focus in early childhood curriculum for a variety of reasons, and many teachers, parents, and policy makers believe play is a waste of time. Thus, play has slowly decreased in the preschool classroom. However, research has shown that play is important to children's development. The authors discuss a Play Workshop conducted for 18 preschool teachers who learned about the need and purpose of play through experiencing both individual and group play activities. Even though this workshop only lasted 3½ hours, survey results revealed a positive change in these preschool teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward the importance of play and its place in the preschool curriculum.*

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Play is child's work and supports physical development, social and emotional development, cognitive development, creativity, imagination, and language and literacy development (Brown & Vaughn, 2009; Caplan & Caplan, 1973; Epstein, 2009; Holdaway, 1970; Ramsey, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978; White, 2012; Wohlwend, 2009). "Play may seem simple, yet it is profound to a child's development. Play makes learning something that happens naturally and joyfully, when a child laughs and wonders, explores and imagines" (White, 2012, p. 3). Early childhood classrooms are perfect environments for children to engage in play behavior and develop language, social, and cognitive skills through interactions with peers and facilitation by adults. Early childhood programs should provide a fundamental foundation for children's learning and development and are essential to the future achievement of each child. Instilling this foundation of learning and achievement early in a child's educational experiences ensures that he or she is more likely to continue to achieve educational success (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is the leading organization promoting best practices in early childhood. Their extensive body of literature regarding research on play suggests strongly that it helps young children develop in the physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language, and literacy domains. However, the age of accountability has led to high-stakes testing, pushed-down curriculum, and widespread criticism from teachers, parents, and policy makers who believe that play is a waste of time—a frivolous activity with no correlation to academic achievement (Ramsey, 2014; Wohlwend, 2009). These beliefs, as well as policies driven by them, have led to replacement of play with tests to measure academic standards. Thus, even though considerable research shows play is important to the development of the whole child, children are spending less to virtually no time at play (Elkind, 2008; White, 2012).

### Theoretical Framework

This study is posited within the play theory, the sociocultural theory, and the cognitive theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky believed that cognitive development occurs within social interactions, and, for children, this happens through play. Many researchers have posited that play is critical to a child's normal development and is how children learn about the world around them, how they learn to think, and how they acquire language (Bruce, 2011; Ginsburg, 2007; Packer, Isenberg, & Guisenberry, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). Play can be unstructured or structured and planned. Play can be done by oneself or with others. Nevertheless, play helps children to build the appropriate skills to be ready for school (Ashiabi, 2007; Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk, & Singer, 2009).

### Purpose of Study

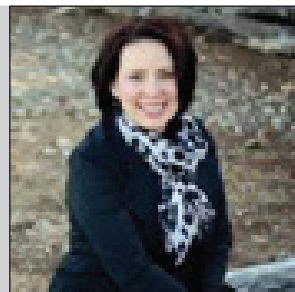
The authors agree with the research and believe play is important even though it is under siege (Elkind, 2008; Ramsey, 2014; Wohlwend, 2009). However, in order for play to be added effectively to the curriculum, teachers need to believe in the power of play and its impact on the whole child (Nell, Drew, & Bush, 2013).

Accordingly, the first author, a doctoral student and early childhood consultant, was asked to develop and present a Play Workshop for 18 preschool teachers serving in a private, urban preschool. This professional development session lasted 3½ hours, and the preschool teachers learned about the need and purpose of play by engaging in both individual free-time active play as well as cooperative play. The Play Workshop had four purposes for teacher participants:

- 1) to involve them in self-active play to experience its physical, cognitive, social, and emotional benefits;
- 2) to gain insight into what children experience during play;
- 3) to translate what they learned from experiences into more effective practices; and
- 4) to become empowered to narrow the gap between what is known about the importance of play and what is practiced.

The authors were curious to see if engaging in these two types of play would change the opinions of these preschool teachers about play so that they would purposefully include more play activities in their preschool classrooms.

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**Dr. Susan Szabo** has been an educator for more than 40 years. She has taught Grades 2-5, been a reading specialist in the public schools, and now teaches reading and social studies at Texas A&M Curriculum-Commerce. Her research interests are varied, but she is passionate in helping teachers understand how to develop the whole child. Szabo is a member of Lambda Chapter in Texas State Organization. [Susan.Szabo@tamuc.edu](mailto:Susan.Szabo@tamuc.edu)



## Methods

The study utilized a pre-postintervention quantitative design. The participants were 18 female preschool teachers ranging in age from 19 to 56 years. Five teachers had more than 10 years of experience teaching preschool-age children. Seven teachers had 5 to 9 years of experience. Four teachers had between 1 to 4 years of experience, and two teachers had less than a year of experience teaching preschool children. Results are not generalizable because the study involved a small sample group from the same school in northeast Texas.

### Pre- and Postintervention Survey

In order to determine if the Play Workshop changed the preschool teachers' opinions about play, a pre-postintervention survey, developed by the first author using play research, was given to the 18 teachers who attended the workshop. The survey included 12 questions, and the participants responded using a Likert-scale with a response range of 1-5 (*strongly disagree to strongly agree*).

### Workshop Design

The Play Workshop lasted 3½ hours. During the first 45 minutes, the preschool teachers were asked to play as individuals with materials that were found on the tables: beads, buttons, clay, construction paper, clothespins, cork, paint, pipe cleaners, plastic lids, Popsicle sticks, ribbon, string, textured shapes, thread spools, and yarn. At the end of the silent, solo-play period, the preschool teachers were asked to reflect on what they did, what they learned, and what they felt. Their creations were then shared with the whole class.

Next, the teachers were asked to participate in cooperative play with a partner or small group using any and all of the materials found on the tables. This partner-play group also lasted 45 minutes. During this time, the participants had to agree on which materials were used and what was created. At the end of the cooperative play, the preschool teachers were again asked to reflect on what they did, what they learned, and what they felt. Their final pair-creations were then shared with the whole group.

## Results

Even though this workshop only lasted 3½ hours, the survey results (see Table 1) revealed a positive change in these preschool teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward including play into the curriculum.

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Table 1

*Survey Results*

Question		Number and Percent of Likert Ratings				
		1	2	3	4	5
Play promotes inspiration and develops personal strengths for both children and adults.	Pre	1 (6%)	0	5 (28%)	1 (6%)	11 (60%)
	Post	0	0	3 (17%)	0	15 (83%)
Hands-on play, with open-ended materials, connects an individual with earlier times of their lives.	Pre	0	1 (6%)	6 (33%)	3 (17%)	8 (44%)
	Post	0	0	3 (17%)	1 (6%)	14 (77%)
3. Feelings of relaxation, inner peace, and remarkable emotion are typical responses to hands-on play for children and adults.	Pre	0	2 (11%)	5 (28%)	5 (28%)	33% (6)
	Post	0	0	4 (22%)	1 (6%)	13 (72%)
4. Feelings experienced in the play space often move into the players' daily lives.	Pre	0	0	8 (44%)	4 (22%)	6 (34%)
	Post	0	0	1 (6%)	6 (34%)	11 (60%)
5. Play allows participants to better understand themselves and their world.	Pre	1 (6%)	0	6 (33%)	3 (17%)	8 (44%)
	Post	0	0	4 (22%)	3 (17%)	11 (60%)
6. Play relaxes and focuses the mind for both children and adults.	Pre	0	2 (11%)	3 (17%)	6 (33%)	7 (39%)
	Post	0	1 (6%)	0	2 (11%)	15 (83%)
7. Adults need play to understand its value and role in the learning process.	Pre	0	0	6 (33%)	2 (11%)	10 (56%)
	Post	0	0	2 (11%)	4 (22%)	12 (67%)
8. Participating in hands-on play gives adults insight on how children learn.	Pre	0	0	5 (28%)	3 (17%)	10 (55%)
	Post	0	0	2 (11%)	2 (11%)	14 (78%)
9. Using open-ended materials taps into the basic human need to express thoughts and feeling through play.	Pre	0	0	6 (33%)	4 (22%)	8 (45%)
	Post	0	1 (6%)	3 (17%)	1 (6%)	13 (71%)
10. Teachers learn from engaging in play, just as young children do.	Pre	0	0	6 (33%)	2 (11%)	10 (56%)
	Post	0	0	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	16 (88%)

11. Play reduces stress in both children and adults.	Pre	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	3 (16%)	3 (16%)	9 (50%)
	Post	0	0	0	3 (17%)	15 (83%)
12. Play belongs at the core of the early childhood classroom.	Pre	2 (12%)	1 (6%)	2 (11%)	3 (16%)	10 (55%)
	Post	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	0	2 (11%)	14 (77%)

Note: 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree

## Discussion

Even though the sample size was small ( $n=18$ ) and all the teachers worked in the same preschool building, the results were encouraging. The workshop involved two different types of play. The first was solo play, in which the participants had to “work” on their own, and the second was partner play, in which the participants had to work with a peer or small group. The participants found value in both types of play. One participant stated, “This was so fun! [sic] I liked creating on my own, but I also liked working with a peer.” Another participant stated, “Play time is FUN!! This activity brought me closer to my peers, and I got to learn more about them while playing.” Another participant stated, “I now realize that young children learn both ways, through quiet or solo play and through group play.”

Before the workshop, only 10 teachers believed that they could learn in the same manner as young children by engaging in play (Statement 10). However, after the workshop, 16 preschool teachers believed that play could also be beneficial for adults for a number of reasons. This concept is one of the foundational assumptions that supported growth found within several other statements, as many of the participants experienced not only relaxation through reduction of stress and discovery of inner peace (Statements 3 and 11) but also creativity and focus (Statement 6). One participant commented, “The whole process of independent play was very calming. I drew a picture; it was very nice to think about drawing and not worry about anything.” Another participant stated, “Play is very therapeutic. It is very relaxing and lets creative juices thrive.”

Before the workshop, only 10 preschool teachers believed that hands-on play gives adults insights into how children learn (Statement 8). However, after the workshop, 14 preschool teachers believed they had gained some insights into how children feel. One participant stated, “This gave me perspective on how the kids feel when it’s time to end an activity when they are not quite ready.” Another participant stated, “I did not want to stop, as my creation was not done yet.”

Before the workshop, 10 preschool teachers believed that play belonged at the core of early childhood classrooms (Statement 12). However, after the workshop, 14 believed play was important and should be part of early childhood curriculum. One participant stated, “It would be so great to allow kids to participate in open-ended play together!” Another participant stated, “This was awesome! I wish parents could do this workshop to understand that play is important in their child’s healthy development.” Another participant stated, “I am going to have to put more free time into the schedule so students can explore and create and work/play together.”

## Conclusion

The results of the workshop were encouraging because, in a short 3½ hours, most of these preschool teachers changed their minds and attitudes about the importance of play in



the curriculum. The age of accountability and high-stakes testing has had a harmful impact on the inclusion of play (Ramsey, 2014; Wohlwend, 2009), and perhaps lack of play has negatively affected both students' healthy development and their academic achievement.

In this busy, crazy world, adults need to slow down and play. Educators and other adults need to model for children that play is an important part of one's life (Elkind, 2008), as it keeps an individual balanced and healthy. When adults value play, then the magic of play will be exposed, thereby upgrading the value of play so that it can be reinstated into the school curriculum (Nell, Drew, & Bush, 2013). As a result, perhaps children will be more emotionally mature and motivated to tackle the hard work of learning. Perhaps when children learn how to master the intricacies of play, their lives will be more enriched and they will have learned to behave more responsibly. They will have learned to value sincerely the differences found within people so they can meet the challenges and frustrations of life with optimism and creativity.

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# Teachers' Use of Formative Assessment

By Donna Cotton

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*The author presents research regarding formative assessment and teachers' use of formative assessment in the classroom. The study was conducted in a school district in northwestern North Carolina. The teachers in this study had training in the use of formative assessment but perhaps were not implementing the strategy to its fullest potential within their everyday instruction. The researcher used surveys to compare teachers' ratings of their use of formative assessment to students' ratings of their teachers' use of formative assessment. The data revealed that students rated teachers more highly than teachers rated themselves in the use of formative assessment.*

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A teacher is one who helps others learn new things, but how does a teacher know when a student has learned and is ready to move on to the next new thing? How does a teacher know a student is ready to advance to another level? What instructional methods are available to help a teacher know if the learning objectives for the lesson or unit have been met? How does a teacher best check for understanding? The answer is formative assessment. "Formative assessment, if used effectively, can provide teachers and their students with the information they need to move learning forward" (Heritage, 2007, p. 1).

The practice of formative assessment has been around for several years, and research supports its impact, but whether teachers actually use the practice is questionable. Some research has indicated that they do not. The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project is a research group funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to "determine better ways to identify and develop effective teaching" (Kane & Staiger, 2012, p. 1). The MET Project report, *Gathering Feedback for Teaching* (Kane & Staiger, 2012), was the second of two initial reports from the MET Project. This report analyzed classroom practices using varied observation instruments, including Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observation (PLATO), Framework for Teaching (FFT), Mathematical Quality of Instruction (MQI), and UTeach Teacher Observation Protocol (UTOP). Observations were conducted in 1,333 classrooms. More than 7,491 lessons were videotaped, resulting in more than 22,000 observation scores. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district, the largest school district in North Carolina, was part of this study (Kane & Staiger, 2012).

Although many good teaching strategies were observed, the observers did uncover areas of weakness in teaching practices related to formative assessment. These findings, chronicled by Kane and Staiger (2012), included weak practice in the use of student feedback (CLASS); weak practice in classroom discussion (PLATO); weak practice in questioning and discussion techniques, as well as in using assessments in instruction (FFT); weak practice in student participation of understanding meaning and reasoning

(MQI); and very low use of formative assessment in classrooms participating in the study (UTOP).

In my practice as a school administrator, I often observed that teachers might have a level of understanding about formative assessment as a result of professional development and other opportunities, but they did not implement formative assessment appropriately within the context of their everyday teaching. Considering this observation and the research that supported the use of formative assessment, I designed a study to examine teachers' use of formative assessment. Specifically, my research investigated teachers' perceptions of their use of formative assessment and students' perceptions of their teachers' use of formative assessment.

### Literature Review

Simply stated, formative assessment is assessing a student's progress regularly as learning and teaching are happening. Formative assessment allows the teacher to adapt lesson plans to match the necessary path to learning—immediately. Formative assessment allows educators the opportunity to gauge student learning as it is happening and respond at once to the students' needs.

The widespread use of the term "assessment" in every area of education results in varied definitions of that term. Although an often-debated topic in education at the local, state, and federal level, assessment can be confusing as it can mean many things to many people. For example, aptitude tests predict a student's future performance; criterion-referenced tests assess a student's knowledge of a particular subject; norm-referenced tests compare student achievement with national results; formative assessments allow a teacher to evaluate students' progress during teaching and to adjust teaching according to students' needs; performance-based tests assess a student's execution of a given task; and standardized achievement tests, administered the same way to all students, assess understanding in a particular area (McGraw Hill, 2001). In addition, these categories of assessments can be combined. For example, standardized tests can be norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, or both. They can utilize many different types of questions such as multiple choice, matching, essays, short answer, true or false, presentations, role plays, projects, portfolios, and simulations. The questions can be scored as correct or incorrect (quantitative) as well as by using observations, rubrics, and peer assessments (qualitative).

Ultimately, a variety of assessments should be used to analyze students' needs and mastery of academic goals (Wortham, 2008). By using many different types of assessments, teachers can evaluate more than just factual recall. They can more effectively assess twenty-first century skills such as critical thinking and problem solving as well as evaluate creativity and innovation. Assessment also allows teachers to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of their students more effectively (Lombardi, 2008). Without assessment, how can teachers know if their students have learned or if their teaching methods are working? Without the results of assessment, how can students know if they are meeting the expectations of their

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teachers?

Dating as far back as the 1930s, evaluating student performance has been a fiercely debated topic in education. Crooks (1933) recognized the variety of discourse in education relating to assessment and the resulting grade a student receives: "There is revealed much divergence of opinion on the reliability of marks, their purposes, the methods of their presentation, and even their necessity" (p. 259). In later decades, focus on student learning and achievement increased, and considerable research on student evaluation and assessment has been undertaken. In some districts, teachers' performance is evaluated based on students' performance on assessments that are summative in nature.

Scriven is given credit for first developing the idea of formative assessment or formative evaluation (Greenstein, 2010). In 1967, Scriven described evaluations that could be used to change a program that was in progress as *formative evaluations* (Greenstein, 2010). This was in contrast to a summative evaluation, which would give a final determination of the success or failure of a program (Popham, 2006).

Black and Wiliam (1998a), in their research on formative assessment, stated that it "does not have a tightly defined and widely accepted meaning" (p. 1). However, a definition of formative assessment can be derived from the variety of descriptions available. According to Black and Wiliam, formative assessment consists of "all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged" (p. 1).

Formative assessment has also been defined as "a systematic process to continuously gather evidence about learning" (Heritage, 2007, p. 2). Unlike summative assessment, which provides evaluative feedback, formative assessment allows a teacher to monitor continuously, in part through descriptive feedback, a student's progress and level of understanding. Assessing students in this manner allows a teacher to restructure teaching immediately when it is evident that students are not meeting learning goals (Heritage, 2007).

**Current importance of formative assessment.** In 2008, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction developed *A Framework of Change* to improve accountability, student achievement, and student preparation for the twenty-first century. Formative assessment is the foundation of the assessment component of this framework (NCDPI/Academic Services, 2008). Through this initiative, state leaders developed a self-directed, online tutorial of formative assessment, consisting of various modules related to the concept, as well as a real-time, online chat to encourage collaboration about the topic. This state-wide professional development opportunity for all public school teachers is called North Carolina's Formative Assessment Learning Community Online Network (NCFALCON) and exists to enhance and support their use of formative assessment within the classroom.

NCFALCON is based on the research of Dr. Sarah McManus and others for the Council of Chief State School Officers Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers collaborative of the State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (FAST SCASS CCSSO). This research was presented in her work, *Attributes of Effective Formative Assessment*, and outlined key attributes of formative assessment (McManus, 2008).

To facilitate development of NCFALCON, two instruments were used to collect data. These two instruments were a teacher survey (NCFALCON Formative Assessment Module Presurvey 2010-2011, Part II – Philosophy and Practice) and a student survey (NCFALCON Student Experiences Survey), both designed to assess the use of formative assessment. My study to examine teachers' use of formative assessment used these NCFALCON surveys.



### Participants

Grade 4 and 5 teachers who had completed professional development via NCFALCON and their students were included in the study and completed NCFALCON developmental surveys. In total, 57 Grade 4 and 5 teachers participated in this research, representing 80% of the total population of Grade 4 and 5 teachers in the school district. In line with these teachers, a total of 1,177 students returned surveys, representing 80% of the total Grade 4 and Grade 5 population of 1,468 students.

### Instruments

The teachers completed the NCFALCON presurvey of Teacher Philosophy and Practice, used with permission from NCFALCON developer McManus. The survey consists of 10 statements to assess teachers' use of formative assessment (Appendix A). The content validity of the survey was established by an expert panel convened by the CCSSO's Formative Assessment (FA) Advisory Group in 2006. The FA Advisory Group's vision was implemented by FAST SCASS and is described in the *Attributes of Effective Formative Assessment* (McManus, 2008). The survey items reflect the attributes identified by the panel (McManus, 2008). The teachers' survey measured the level of each teacher's belief in his or her use of formative assessment.

To provide further understanding of teachers' use of formative assessment, the students of the participating teachers completed a survey to ascertain their perceptions of their particular teacher's use of formative assessment in the classroom. The student experiences survey from NCFALCON (Appendix B) was administered to all 1,468 Grade 4 and 5 students in the district. No student demographic information was collected. The student survey was anonymous, only coded to match the teacher's name. The student survey consisted of 20 statements. These statements were part of a pilot survey to measure students' observations of teachers' use of formative assessment and were used with permission from the developer, Dr. Nina Arshavsky (2011). The content validity of the survey was also established by an expert panel in the field of formative assessment, convened by the CCSSO's FA Advisory Group in 2006 (McManus, 2008). The student survey questions gauged classroom teachers' practices in formative assessment as perceived by the students.

Both the educators' and the students' surveys were completed online and focused on two fundamental components of formative assessment: (1) learning targets and criteria for success, and (2) analyzing evidence and descriptive feedback. Wiliam (2011) commented on identifying learning targets and specifying the criteria for success: "It seems obvious that students might find it helpful to know what they are going to be learning" (p. 51). Marzano (2010) researched the impact of establishing learning goals on student achievement and explained that students must understand learning goals as well as how they should progress in their learning to meet those goals (Hattie, 2009). Moss and Brookhart (2009) stated, "A vision of the endpoint makes the journey possible" (p. 26) and suggested setting the learning targets is the first step in formative assessment.

The second key component of formative assessment suggests that teachers must analyze data collected in order to determine the next steps in the learning progression for each student; descriptive feedback will give the learner "specific information . . . that help(s) the learner understand what he or she needs to do in order to improve" (Simcoe County District School Board, 2011, p. 5). Marzano (2010) agreed that feedback can enlighten everyone involved in the assessment of what gaps in learning are occurring and where to



go next. Black and Wiliam (1998b), in their seminal work, *Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards through Classroom Assessment*, explained that students' learning improves when they are given feedback concerning their "strengths and weaknesses" (p. 10).

A four-point response scale was used to measure responses to the statements in the surveys (Vockell, 1983). Response points for both the teachers' and students' surveys were 4 = *All of the time*, 3 = *Most of the time*, 2 = *Some of the time*, and 1 = *Rarely or Never*. A higher score on either the teachers' survey or the students' survey indicated more consistent use of formative assessment by the classroom teacher.

### Analysis

Once the survey data were collected through an online Google form, I constructed a data spreadsheet that included (a) each individual teacher's name; (b) the mean of all responses on the teacher survey for each teacher, separated into two teacher-survey component subscores measuring the two fundamental components of formative assessment for each teacher; (c) mean of responses for all student-survey items for all students per teacher; (d) and two student-survey classroom composite component subscores for all students per teacher. The component subscores averaged the scores of the (1) Learning Targets and Criteria for Success and (2) Analyzing Evidence and Descriptive Feedback components for both the teacher and the student composite results.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of the data. As the data were analyzed, the teacher- and student-survey results were correlated to determine the strength of the relationship between the students' and teachers' perceptions of the use of formative assessment in the classroom. Paired t-tests were used to determine the difference between the means of the teacher-survey scores and the student-survey scores, comparing the variability of their scores to determine if the means were statistically different (Trochin, 2006).

### Results and Discussion

The researcher hypothesized that teacher-survey ratings regarding use of formative assessment would differ from the student-survey ratings and that they would indicate teachers' perceptions of formative assessment use were stronger than the students' perceptions of formative assessment use. This was not supported in the data analysis. A comparison of the mean teacher-survey ratings (Appendix C) to the mean student-survey ratings overall (Appendix D) and in Subscale 1 and Subscale 2 (Appendix E) indicated students' ratings were higher in all three areas.

The teacher overall mean was 2.44. The student overall mean was 3.15. A paired t test comparing student and teacher overall ratings was statistically significant,  $t(56) = -14.65$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ . The effect size was 1.94, indicating a large effect (Cohen, 1988).

Analysis of the surveys in the component subscales, Learning Targets and Criteria for Success (Subscale 1) and Analyzing Evidence and Descriptive Feedback (Subscale 2)

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indicated the teachers' mean for Subscale 1 was 2.82 and the student mean for Subscale 1 was 3.33. The results of a paired *t* test comparing students' and teachers' ratings for Subscale 1 was statistically significant,  $t(54) = -4.97, p < 0.0001$ . The effect size was .67 indicating a moderate effect (Cohen, 1988). The teachers' mean and students' mean for Subscale 2, Analyzing Evidence and Descriptive Feedback, was 2.31 for teachers and 3.07 for students. The results of a paired *t* test comparing students' and teachers' ratings for Subscale 2 was statistically significant,  $t(55) = -15.04, p < 0.0001$ . The effect size was 2.0 indicating a large effect (Cohen, 1988).

The statistical significance of the *t*-tests and the large and moderate effect sizes for all three comparisons indicated that the differences in the teachers' mean ratings and students' mean ratings did not occur by chance. This suggested that teachers did have a level of understanding of formative assessment but were not deliberately using formative assessment and, therefore, not using the available data to enhance student learning. An alternate explanation was that young children like their teachers and rated them more highly because of these positive feelings.

### **Limitations**

One limitation to the study was the sampling, as only one school district was used; results should not be generalized to all school districts. Possible bias on the part of the students was another limitation. The only ethical issues anticipated were that teachers may have been hesitant to identify themselves on the survey, being concerned about confidentiality. The highest level of confidentiality was maintained, and no teacher, student, or school names were made public.

### **Reflections**

Whether teachers believe they are using formative assessment appropriately or not, Bloom's concept of mastery learning from the 1960s is the foundation of the practice. Bloom "proposed a mastery learning approach to instruction wherein students do not move to new topics until prior topics have been mastered" (Zimmerman & Dibeneditto, 2008, p. 208). Furthermore, numerous research studies exist concerning the impact of mastery learning on student achievement. As early as 1986, the research of Guskey and Gates supported the theory that there is an increase in student achievement for those students of teachers who implement mastery learning within their classrooms. Their meta-analysis of 27 studies of group-based mastery learning using effect size as the measurement showed positive effects in 25 of the 27 studies as a result of mastery learning (Guskey & Gates; Hattie, 2009).

Mastery learning emphasizes the importance of feedback and the resulting modifications to teaching methods (Guskey, 2010), and research based on feedback given to students, as part of mastery learning, is the cornerstone of research on formative assessment. Although formative assessment has several features, if able to focus on one, teachers should choose feedback as the focus area; as Hattie (2009) noted, feedback is an essential element to formative assessment. Students who receive descriptive feedback reflecting the desired outcomes and criteria for success of the lesson will be better prepared to answer the question, "How am I doing?" Students will also better understand as the teacher directs them to "Where do I need to go next?" (Frey & Fisher, 2011).

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Appendix A  
Teacher Practice Survey

TEACHER PRACTICE SURVEY

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate how often you do the following:

All of the time=4   Most of the time=3   Some of the time=2   Rarely/Never=1

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I use checklists when gathering information about student learning.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I use rubrics for assessing my students.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I write learning targets on the board and go over them with my students.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I provide students specific information (without using grades or rubrics) about where they are in meeting the learning targets.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I plan or modify classroom instruction based on the information I receive from classroom assessment.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I give students opportunities to self-assess and set goals for future learning.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I give students opportunities to reflect on and share their learning progress with others.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I give students opportunities to formatively assess their peers.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I give students opportunities to summatively assess their peers.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ I give students opportunities to provide input on assessment design.

## Appendix B

### Student Experiences Survey

#### ***STUDENT EXPERIENCES SURVEY***

***TEACHER NAME:***

	Statement	Rarely or Never (1)	Some of the time (2)	Most of the time (3)	All of the time (4)
1	In this class, I know what I am supposed to do.				
2	In this class, I know what I am supposed to learn or know.				
3	In this class, the teacher explains what we are going to learn each day.				
4	In this class, the teacher explains what it will take for me to do well and get a good grade.				
5	In this class, I know how the assignments will be graded.				
6	For assignments in this class (graded or ungraded), I know in advance what good-quality work and bad-quality work look like.				
7	In this class, the teacher asks students to talk or write about what we learned.				
8	In this class, the teacher asks students to talk or write about what we did not understand				
9	The teacher asks students to explain how they got the answer.				
10	The teacher checks to make sure that students understand.				
11	In this class, the teacher seems to know when students are confused and tries to find out why.				
12	The teacher makes clear to me what I need to work on more to improve my understanding.				
13	The teacher makes clear to me what things I have learned well.				
14	The teacher's feedback on my work helps me understand how to make it better.				
15	The teacher gives feedback and comments on some assignments, but grades other assignments with letter grade or a number of points.				
16	I have a chance to change my work using the teacher's feedback and then resubmit it.				
17	The teacher encourages students to think about or reflect on their own work.				



18	The teacher encourages students to evaluate their own work.				
19	In this class, students check each other's work (such as an assignment, test, or quiz) and provide feedback to each other.				
20	In this class, students work in pairs or groups and talk about each other's work as a way to help or improve learning.				

### Appendix C

#### Average Responses to Teacher Survey Items: Overall

Teacher Survey	Sample Size	Average Rating
I use checklists when gathering information about student learning.	60	2.5
I use rubrics for assessing my students.	60	2.3
I write learning targets on the board and go over them with my students.	60	2.9
I provide students specific information (without using grades or rubrics) about where they are in meeting the learning targets.	58	2.7
I plan or modify classroom instruction based on the information I receive from classroom assessment.	60	3.7
I give students opportunities to self-assess and set goals for future learning.	60	2.6
I give students opportunities to reflect on and share their learning progress with others.	59	2.6
I give students opportunities to formatively assess their peers.	59	1.9
I give students opportunities to summatively assess their peers.	59	1.5
I give students opportunities to provide input on assessment design.	59	1.6

Appendix D  
Average Responses to Student Survey Items: Overall

Student Survey	Sample Size	Average Rating
In this class, I know what I am supposed to do.	1177	3.3
In this class, I know what I am supposed to learn or know.	1175	3.4
In this class, the teacher explains what we are going to learn each day.	1171	3.6
In this class, the teacher explains what it will take for me to do well and get a good grade.	1169	3.4
In this class, I know how the assignments will be graded.	1174	2.9
For assignments in this class (graded or ungraded), I know in advance what good-quality work and bad-quality work look like.	1169	3.3
In this class, the teacher asks students to talk or write about what we learned.	1163	2.7
In this class, the teacher asks students to talk or write about what we did not understand	1166	2.7
The teacher asks students to explain how they got the answer.	1172	3.5
The teacher checks to make sure that students understand.	1169	3.6
In this class, the teacher seems to know when students are confused and tries to find out why.	1170	3.2
The teacher makes clear to me what I need to work on more to improve my understanding.	1172	3.4
The teacher makes clear to me what things I have learned well.	1171	3.2
The teacher's feedback on my work helps me understand how to make it better.	1171	3.3
The teacher gives feedback and comments on some assignments, but grades other assignments with letter grade or a number of points.	1176	3.2
I have a chance to change my work using the teacher's feedback and then resubmit it.	1171	2.8
The teacher encourages students to think about or reflect on their own work.	1167	3.3
The teacher encourages students to evaluate their own work.	1165	3.3
In this class, students check each other's work (such as an assignment, test, or quiz) and provide feedback to each other.	1167	2.1
In this class, students work in pairs or groups and talk about each other's work as a way to help or improve learning.	1175	2.8

Appendix E  
Teacher Survey Item Means: Subscales 1 and 2

Teacher Survey	Sample Size	Average Rating
Subscale 1: Learning Targets and Criteria for Success		
3. I write learning targets on the board and go over them with my students.	60	2.9
4. I provide students specific information (without using grades or rubrics) about where they are in meeting the learning targets.	58	2.7
Subscale 2: Analyzing Evidence and Descriptive Feedback		
1. I use checklists when gathering information about student learning.	60	2.5
2. I use rubrics for assessing my students.	60	2.3
5. I plan or modify classroom instruction based on the information I receive from classroom assessment.	60	3.7
6. I give students opportunities to self-assess and set goals for future learning.	60	2.6
7. I give students opportunities to reflect on and share their learning progress with others.	59	2.6
8. I give students opportunities to formatively assess their peers.	59	1.9
9. I give students opportunities to summatively assess their peers.	59	1.5
10. I give students opportunities to provide input on assessment design.	59	1.6

## Student Survey Item Means: Subscales 1 and 2

Student Survey	Sample Size	Average Rating
Subscale 1: Learning Targets and Criteria for Success		
In this class, I know what I am supposed to do.	1,177	3.3
In this class, I know what I am supposed to learn or know.	1,175	3.4
In this class, the teacher explains what we are going to learn each day.	1,171	3.6
In this class, the teacher explains what it will take for me to do well and get a good grade.	1,169	3.4
In this class, I know how the assignments will be graded.	1,174	2.9
For assignments in this class (graded or ungraded), I know in advance what good-quality work and bad-quality work look like.	1,169	3.3
Subscale 2: Analyzing Evidence and Descriptive Feedback		
In this class, the teacher asks students to talk or write about what we learned.	1,163	2.7
In this class, the teacher asks students to talk or write about what we did not understand.	1,166	2.7
The teacher asks students to explain how they got the answer.	1,172	3.5
The teacher checks to make sure that students understand.	1,169	3.6
In this class, the teacher seems to know when students are confused and tries to find out why.	1,170	3.2
The teacher makes clear to me what I need to work on more to improve my understanding.	1,172	3.4
The teacher makes clear to me what things I have learned well.	1,171	3.2
The teacher's feedback on my work helps me understand how to make it better.	1,171	3.3
The teacher gives feedback and comments on some assignments, but grades other assignments with letter grade or a number of points.	1,176	3.2
I have a chance to change my work using the teacher's feedback and then resubmit it.	1,171	2.8
The teacher encourages students to think about or reflect on their own work.	1,167	3.3
The teacher encourages students to evaluate their own work.	1,165	3.3
In this class, students check each other's work (such as an assignment, test, or quiz) and provide feedback to each other.	1,167	2.1
In this class, students work in pairs or groups and talk about each other's work as a way to help or improve learning.	1,175	2.8

# **An Intervention for the Intervention: Integrating Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports with Culturally Responsive Practices**

**By Felisha Parsons**

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*African American males are over-represented in disciplinary sanctions. To combat this issue, school personnel who implement School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports (SWPBS), also known as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), should consider employing a more culturally responsive model. The Culturally Responsive-SWPBS model consists of six salient practices that can help teachers respond more appropriately to their students to best deliver behavior and academic support.*

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## **Introduction**

For those school personnel implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS) but who have disproportionality in their data, it is time to add another layer to address this issue. According to the Elementary and Middle Schools Technical Assistance Center (n.d.), disproportionality “refers to the over- or under-representation of a given population group, often defined by racial or ethnic backgrounds, but also defined by socioeconomic status, national origin, English proficiency, gender, and sexual orientation, in a specific population category.” Specifically, African American males have been disproportionately represented in disciplinary sanctions among ethnic groups (Bradshaw, Mitchell, O’Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Vincent, Randall, Cartledge, Tobin, & Swain-Bradway, 2011). The premise of this article is to challenge SWPBS schools to move toward a more culturally responsive framework (see Figure). SWPBS has the potential to pivot toward a culturally responsive and inclusive approach that would increase positive outcomes for students of color.

School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS), also known as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), is a multi-faceted, evidence-based practice that focuses on classroom management and school-wide systems. According to Sugai and Horner (2009), SWPBS is based on data-driven decision-making that targets measurable outcomes and employs evidence-based practices and supporting practices implemented across tiers. It applies a problem-solving process within a three-tiered system of support



that enhances the capacity of school personnel to address efficiently all students' needs and that supplies a prevention-based continuum of practices for students (Eber, Upreti, & Rose, 2010).

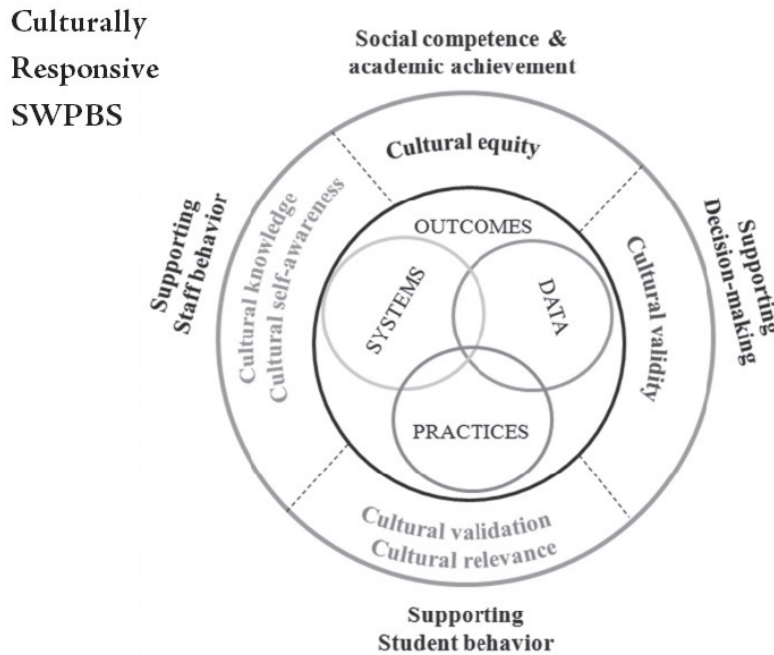


Figure. The integration of SWPBS with Culturally Responsive Practices Model (Vincent et al., 2011; Sugai, O'Keefe & Fallon, 2012).

In 2011, the federal government called for public school leaders to reevaluate their discipline policies and practices to combat disproportionality, which reflects discriminatory practices, and to ensure fairness and equity for all students. To address disproportionality of suspensions and expulsions, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, in collaboration with other federal partners and experts from the field, released the Supportive School Discipline Initiative (SSDI; 2011), promoting awareness and supporting discipline policies and practices that keep students engaged in school while holding them appropriately accountable for their misbehaviors. To improve school climate and discipline, Guiding Principle 3 of the federal government's SSDI was the assurance of fairness, equity, and continuous improvement. The federal government proposed that school discipline policies and practices be monitored and evaluated continuously to eradicate discrimination and disproportionality among students of color (Department of Education, 2014). The appeal of Vincent et al. (2011) to blend PBIS with culturally responsive practices is a great point of action in support of SSDI.

Vincent et al. (2011) suggested that the SWPBS framework expand to include culturally responsive practices that support staff, their decision-making processes, and

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students' social and academic success. Diminishing ineffective, reactionary practices such as referrals and suspensions is the goal. The integration of PBIS with culturally responsive practices has the potential to enhance student-teacher relationships, decrease disproportionality, and increase instructional time.

### **The Need for Culturally Responsive SWPBS**

More than 20,000 schools across grade levels are implementing PBIS ([www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)). However, disproportionality persists. The Children's Defense Fund (Edelman, Beck, & Smith, 1975) first brought the issue of racial disproportionality to national attention, showing that African American students were two to three times overrepresented in school suspensions. Importantly, school suspension has been an indicator of school dropout or failure to graduate on time (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986; Raffaele Mendez, 2003). Suspended students are more likely to become disenfranchised, more likely to commit law-breaking activities, less likely to be invested in school rules and course work, and less motivated to achieve academic success (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Dropout rates are consistently higher for suspended students (Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002).

African American males are socially and academically marginalized in U.S. public schools (Brown, Dancy, & Davis, 2013; Noguera, 2003; Polite & Davis, 1999) and

are persistently burdened with referrals and suspensions. Consistent findings of disproportionality in referrals suggest that racial and ethnic disparities in discipline begin at the classroom level (Skiba, et al., 2002; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). Research has shown racial dynamics between African American students and their teachers contribute to school disengagement and failure (Thomas, Coard, Stevenson, Bentley, & Zamel, 2009). African American students are excluded from school at a higher rate and for less severe behavioral violations (Raffaele Mendez, & Knoff, 2003; Theriot, Craun, & Dupper, 2010) and are referred to the office for more behavioral violations at a higher rate than their Caucasian counterparts (Raffaele et al., 2003; Skiba et al., 2002). Teachers'

“ Six culturally  
responsive practices . . .  
confront disproportionality:  
Cultural knowledge  
Cultural self-awareness  
Validation of others' cultures  
Cultural relevance  
Cultural validity  
Cultural equity ”

subjective judgments of student behavior regarding disruption, defiance, disrespect, insubordination, and noncompliance (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Skiba et al., 2002) impact African Americans disproportionately.

### **Making Steps Toward Culturally Responsive SWPBS Schools**

A school-wide, culturally responsive PBIS approach would increase instructional time and engagement in the classroom where most PBIS implementation occurs (Han & Weiss, 2005) and most referrals originate (Parsons, 2016). Gay defined culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural knowledge, or experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (2010, p. 31). Using culturally responsive teaching theory, Vincent et al. (2011) developed the Culturally Responsive SWPBS framework by

integrating six culturally responsive practices with SWPBS to confront disproportionality and reverse the trends of disciplinary sanctions such as office discipline referrals and suspensions among African American males.

The first practice is to enhance staff members' **cultural knowledge**. It is beneficial for school staff to gain better knowledge and understanding about cultural dimensions that tend to be divisive among people. These dimensions include language, communication styles, socioeconomic status, and level of authority.

The second practice is to enhance staff members' **cultural self-awareness**. This practice is a prerequisite for appreciating and understanding others' cultural backgrounds (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). The process of deconstructing and reconstructing one's thinking through analysis of biases, stereotypes, and the status quo is essential (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002).

The third key practice supports the **validation of others' cultures**. To establish meaningful connections with diverse student populations, researchers have proposed educators acknowledge cultural backgrounds instead of being colorblind (Delpit, 1992; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004).

**Cultural relevance** is the fourth key practice that applies not only to academic content but also to social skills. Relevance allows school staff to create spaces for students to have rich discourse around disciplinary sanctions. This fosters an approach where discipline is handled in a culturally responsive manner.

Establishing **cultural validity** is the fifth practice. Treating each child the same way, using the same methods, may be unproductive. Knowledge of students' circumstances and backgrounds should not excuse their behavior; however, such knowledge can help one identify the core reasons for misbehavior and then implement a fertile plan of action to resolve the problem with dignity and empathy.

The last practice emphasizes **cultural equity**. Consistent with data collected in Parsons' (2016) study, earlier researchers found that referrals were based on subjective interpretation of behavior, such as defiance and disrespect (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Skiba et al., 2002). Minimizing teachers' subjective judgments may be achieved through constant review of data, PBIS training, and discourse around cultural responsiveness, equity, and fairness.

These six key practices help to facilitate the process of integrating PBIS with culturally responsive practices in schools. Each practice is essential and builds on the others to provide a framework that would enhance school climate and student engagement while reducing discipline problems.

### Conclusion in Support of a Culturally Responsive SWPBS Framework

To employ change that produces a more inclusive, empathic, and culturally sensitive school environment, staff must reflect on three dimensions—institutional, instructional, and personal—that the aforementioned salient practices address. School personnel, ideally, should address disproportionality in discipline through examining policies, practices, and staff's attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives. This framework would begin to reverse the current disciplinary outcomes, such as suspensions, that negatively affect African Americans throughout their schooling. This ideal approach would encourage inclusive school environments where all students can attain high levels of academic achievement, build genuine relationships with teachers, and experience a strong sense of belonging within the school community.

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# Socioeconomic Status: A Potential Challenge for Parental Involvement in Schools

By Debra Malone

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*The evidence is clear: Over the last 40 years, parental involvement in the educational pursuits of their children has profoundly influenced young people's academic success. Unfortunately, some families who want to participate in their child's schooling are challenged by potential barriers to their involvement. In this article, the author argues that socioeconomic status is a challenge for parental involvement in many public schools but that educators can find creative ways to help parents overcome these challenges. The result will be more opportunities for all families to engage in their child's schooling.*

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Scholars continue to be highly interested in parental involvement (PI) as a research topic because a direct correlation exists between such involvement and a child's academic success (Epstein, 2001; Hawkins & Mulkey, 2005; Ryan, Casas, Kelly-Vance, Ryallas & Nero, 2010). Nevertheless, a gap has seemingly occurred between the reality of PI and the practice for public school pupils. The reality is that PI is imperative to students' educational success. The practice is that some parents participate in their child's schooling at a lesser rate than is acceptable to educators (Bower & Griffen, 2011; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Robles, 2011). The assumption is, in fact, that some parents find it difficult to participate in their child's schooling because of their socioeconomic status (SES; Catsambis, 2001; Davis-Kean & Sexton 2009; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). Because PI is paramount to all students and because inadequate PI can negatively influence students' learning outcomes (Epstein, 2010), consideration of the role of SES is imperative.

Indeed, researchers have consistently stated that all types of PI—communicating, volunteering, disciplining, teaching at home, participating in decision making, and collaborating with the community—have an important impact on academic success (Epstein, 2010; Marchant, Paulson, & Rotlisberg; 2001). Strongly considering its importance, legislators have enacted laws and programs to foster PI (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002). The mandates have included Head Start for preschool children (Jacobs, 2007; Tekin, 2011), Even Start (Anderson, 2006; Tekin, 2011), All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Abeson 1978; Tekin, 2011), Goals 2000 (Campbell, 2003; Tekin, 2011), and No Child Left Behind Law (NCLB; Chang, 2012; Randolph & Wilson-Younger, 2012). Prior to these laws, primarily those whose SES allowed them to stay home during the day were able to engage in the school setting by volunteering in the front office and in their child's

classroom. After these laws were enacted, all parents, regardless of SES, were provided more opportunities to participate in their child's schooling (Tekin, 2011).

Clearly, PI has become a nationwide priority in the United States (Hayes, 2012), but limited PI is an ongoing challenge in many schools, especially at the secondary level (Robles, 2011; Wright, 2009). The difficulty of attaining PI is increasing despite evidence that families who engage in their child's schooling make an important contribution to promoting positive academic achievement (Grolnick, Friendly, & Bellas, 2009; Pomerantz & Moorman, 2011). To complicate the issue, PI declines as children leave elementary school (Robles, 2011; Wright, 2009). At the elementary level, PI includes attending school conferences, joining the parent-teacher association, and volunteering at school functions (Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). In contrast, PI at the secondary level is typically comprised of parents volunteering in concession booths and in fundraising endeavors (Carter & Healey, 2012).

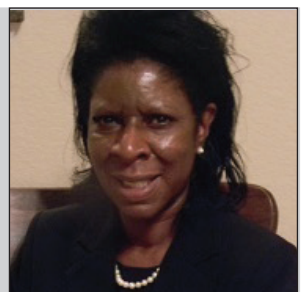
### SES as a Challenge to Parental Involvement

SES is a social position determined by a person's salary, employment position, and educational attainment (Hook, Lawson, & Farah, 2013), and in some cases, SES is a challenge to PI (Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2012). Scholars have conducted prudent analyses of these challenges (Walker et al., 2012). For example, through research, they have revealed a link between SES and student learning outcomes, citing weak PI as a factor (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008; Turney & Kao, 2009; Epstein, 2001; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004; Ryan et al., 2010; Hook et al., 2013; Ingram, Wolfe, and Lieberman, 2009). Oftentimes, parents who display limited PI also have limited access to resources and opportunities, including knowledge, by virtue of their lower SES; this, in turn, can negatively impact children's academic success (Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009).

**Lack of knowledge or education.** Specifically, Turney and Kao (2009) found that parents from higher SES and those who were more educated were more actively engaged in their child's schooling than parents from lower SES. Several researchers found that parents who obtained less formal education and had low SES displayed less visible and active levels of PI in schools but engaged in high levels at home (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008; Ryan et al., 2010; Sy et al., 2007). For example, these parents frequently informed their children they expected them to graduate from high school and often also expressed a desire for them to pursue higher education (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008). The parents' lack of or limited knowledge, however, placed them at an additional disadvantage because of unfamiliarity with the procedures involved in obtaining public resources to provide for their child's academic success (Griffiths-Prince, 2009).

The information from these researchers supported Epstein's (2001) notion that some parents need assistance from educators to be meaningfully engaged to promote their child's academic growth. To support these parents, district administrators and community

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liaisons can implement English as a Second Language classes, parenting classes, basic adult-education classes, or cooking classes as ways to make parents feel welcome on campus and to offer opportunities for additional education. These efforts might make parents feel valued and more comfortable participating in the school setting.

**Work schedules and transportation issue.** Several researchers found that numerous low SES families wanted to participate in their child's schooling but were unable to do so because they lacked essential resources such as time, money, and transportation to support their children academically (Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009; Griffiths-Prince, 2009; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler 2007). These findings are important for educators, because they reiterate that some low SES parents are willing to engage in their student's schooling but face barriers. To alleviate transportation issues, district administrators could provide bus transportation for major events such as back-to-school and open house.

**Preference for home-based involvement.** Another example of SES as a potential challenge to PI was revealed in the research of Ingram et al. (2009), who explored PI among low SES parents. The researchers revealed that some low SES families reacted positively to parenting their children in the privacy of their homes and embraced this opportunity as the most heartfelt area of PI. However, many of these parents believed that it was the principal's role to focus on decision-making, working with the community, and volunteering opportunities—not theirs. Other low SES parents welcomed PI with specific guidance from educators.

Apart from suggesting engagement of parents in school-based opportunities, PI is also defined as an integration of home and school (Epstein, 2001). Epstein suggested educators encourage families not only to engage in their students' academic pursuits at school but also to address their educational needs at home (Epstein, 2001). Much like Epstein, some principals believe that building a community of families, students, and educators provides support for students' learning.

**Visibility of involvement.** Although there are many forms of PI, most people measure the phenomenon by observable practices such as volunteering (Epstein, 2001), and SES has an impact in this area. For instance, using visible criteria, researchers have noted that engagement in their child's academics is considerably greater among high SES families than low SES families (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; De Carvalho, 2001; Lareau, 2000). These findings are noteworthy to educators in recognizing that children from low SES families oftentimes have less-involved parents and do not excel academically compared to their peers from high SES families with highly engaged parents (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008; Turney & Kao, 2009; Sy et al., 2007). These implications are also important because they remind educators to find ways to engage all parents in their child's learning process. One way to increase PI among all parents is for educators to redefine PI so all forms of engagement are acceptable, even the less visible ones. For instance, when parents shop at a local used bookstore for their adolescents, this is a form of PI although it is not visible to educators.

## Conclusion

Nearly all families love their children, aspire for them to succeed academically, and feel certain that PI is vital for a child's academic accomplishment (Epstein, Sanders, Sheldon, Simon, Salinas, & Jansorn, 2009; Robles, 2011). Nevertheless, educators have not closed the gap between the dream and reality of PI (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Researchers have offered various explanations of why this gap exists in many schools (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011), including potential barriers to PI that occur when parents experience difficulty

engaging in established forms of PI (Epstein, 2001). I contend that SES contributes to this difficulty and is therefore a key barrier.

School officials must find ways to overcome this challenge. A review of literature provides adequate evidence to support the viewpoint that SES has the potential to lessen PI in school. Nevertheless, when administrators are willing to address SES challenges to PI, families will engage in school-related activities. Four potential strategies for removing SES challenges include implementing flexible volunteer opportunities, offering childcare, offering training programs for parents, and increasing awareness to meet specific needs for working parents. Flexible volunteer schedules can allow parents to participate in school functions without experiencing a loss in wages. Offering childcare can allow parents who have limited resources an opportunity to engage in school-related activities. Training programs for families can equip them with information that allows them to participate in the educational process. Increasing awareness to meet specific needs for working and single parents ultimately can increase PI and positively impact academic outcomes. Finally, these accommodations may make it feasible for families of all SES levels to support the school and their child.

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# Bulletin Submission Guidelines

Submissions from members will be accepted for review provided that:

- ✦ The submission is not being considered concurrently in whole or substantial part by another publisher.
- ✦ The *Bulletin* has exclusive option of possible publication for a period of 6 months following receipt of the submission.
- ✦ The author assumes responsibility for publication clearance in the event the submission was presented at a professional meeting or is the direct product of a project financed by a funding agency.
- ✦ Authors are responsible for accurately citing all quoted and bibliographic materials and for obtaining permission from the original source for quotations in excess of 150 words or for tables or figures reproduced from published works.
- ✦ Co-authors are permitted. At least one author must be a Delta Kappa Gamma member.

## Manuscript Preparation

- ✦ Although there is a suggested theme for each issue of the *Journal*, manuscripts on all topics are welcome. The *Collegial Exchange* is not theme-based.
- ✦ Manuscripts should be focused, well organized, effectively developed, concise, and appropriate for *Bulletin* readers. The style should be direct, clear, readable, and free from gender, political, patriotic, or religious bias. Topic headings should be inserted where appropriate.
- ✦ Please see Submission Grid on the following page for specific requirements of the types of manuscripts appropriate for publication.
- ✦ Use *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, current edition, for manuscript preparation. Visit the APA Style website at [www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org).
- ✦ Double space the entire manuscript, including quotations, references, and tables. Print should be clear, dark, and legible. Pages must be numbered.
- ✦ References should refer only to materials cited within the text. Nonretrievable material, such as papers, reports of limited circulation, unpublished works, and personal communications, should be restricted to works absolutely essential to the manuscript.
- ✦ Abbreviations should be explained at their first appearance in the text. Educational jargon (e.g., preservice, K–10, etc.) should be defined as it occurs in the text.
- ✦ Place tables and figures on separate pages at the end of the manuscript. Use Arabic numerals and indicate approximate placement in the text.
- ✦ Photos, graphics, charts, etc. that may enhance the presentation of the manuscript may be included. Contact the editorial staff ([bulletin@dkg.org](mailto:bulletin@dkg.org)) for information regarding the use of photos.

## Submission

- ✦ One submission per author per issue.
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- ✦ For poems and graphic arts, submit name, address, and chapter affiliation. A photograph is not required.
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## Bulletin Submission Grid

Publication	Submission Type and Description	Word Length	Requirements
<i>Journal</i>	Action/Classroom Research: Organized, systematic, and reflective analysis of classroom practice with implications for future practice in teaching and learning.	1,500-4,000	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Journal</i>	Qualitative/Quantitative/Mixed Methods Research: Essentially narrative with nonstatistical approaches and a focus on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meanings from their experiences (Qual)/Gathers and analyzes measurable data to support or refute a hypothesis or theory through numbers and statistics (Quan)/Utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data to explore a research question (Mixed).	1,500-4,000	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Journal</i>	Position Paper/Viewpoint: Defines an issue; asserts clear and unequivocal position on that issue, provides data and references that inform that position, and argues directly in its favor.	1,000-1,500	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Journal</i>	Review of Literature: Presents supporting and nonsupporting evidence to clarify a topic and/or problem of interest and value to educators; synthesizes and critiques the literature; draws conclusions; mentions procedures for selecting and reviewing literature; may include narrative review, best evidence synthesis, or meta-analysis.	1,500-3,000	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Journal</i>	Program Description: Provides an overview and details of a single program in an educational setting. Goals, resources, and outcomes are included. No marketing or promotion of a program is allowed.	1,500-2,000	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Journal</i>	Book/Technology Review: Combines summary and personal critique of a book, Web site, or app on an educational topic or with educational relevance.	400-700	Introduction; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Classroom Practice/Program: Describes practice or initiative used in a classroom to advance educational excellence	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	DKG Chapter/State Organization Practice/Program: Describes a practice or initiative used by a chapter or state organization to advance the purposes of DKG	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Viewpoint on Current Issue: Defines and addresses an issue related to education, women, children, or DKG	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Personal Reflection or Anecdote: Shares a personal experience that provides insight to the human condition, particularly related to educators and women	500-700	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Inspirational Piece: Provides transcript of speech delivered at chapter, state, regional, or international events	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Bio and/or Interview: Shares the story or thoughts of a key woman educator or leader in education, women's issues, or children's issues	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Book Review: Combines a summary and personal critique of a textbook, resource, or book (fiction or nonfiction) related to education or to women and children	400-700	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Technology Review: Combines a summary and personal critique of an educational application, program, or piece of hardware that is useful in the classroom or that is useful in the life of an educator	400-700	Bio; photo
<i>Journal or Collegial Exchange</i>	Letter to the Editor: Responds to items previously published in the <i>Bulletin</i>	200-300	Author's name; chapter/state
<i>Journal or Collegial Exchange</i>	Poetry/Creative Work: Original expressions in any creative format	NA	Bio; photo

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