

Supporting Elementary Education Yearlong Interns

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Submitted to the UNC Charlotte Scholarship for Teaching and Learning Grants
Program

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Abstract

The *Supporting Elementary Education Yearlong Interns* project will enhance the internship experience for elementary education students at two Professional Development Schools, University Meadows Elementary and David Cox Road Elementary. Yearlong interns at selected schools will participate in ongoing seminars designed to further prepare them for student teaching internship, which will occur one semester later. The seminars will be facilitated by elementary school Project supervisors (Teacher-Leaders), who will be working with the interns during the entire school year. The expected outcome from this project is that student teachers who participate will demonstrate more readiness for the role of teacher and report a greater feeling of preparedness to teach than their peers who do not engage in the project. Outcomes will be determined by multiple data sources, including surveys, classroom observations and interviews.

Project Narrative

The purpose of this project is to design, implement, and examine the impact of a seminar series for yearlong interns in the elementary education program at UNC Charlotte. The seminars will provide interns with support related to issues that have been found to be problematic during student teaching:

This project has the following objectives:

- 1) Design a semester-long seminar series that will address issues faced during student teaching and concerns of the participating students,
- 2) Prepare Project Supervisors to facilitate seminars and support interns in their schools,
- 3) Implement the seminars with continuous refinement based on participants' reactions and needs,
- 4) Examine the impact of the seminar series on students' perceived preparation for student teaching and their performance during student teaching.

Rationale

Since 2003, the Professional Development School (PDS) network at UNC Charlotte has established partnerships between the College of Education and public schools. Professional Development Schools receive both financial and personnel support from the university. The university targets those schools as sites for college courses or locations for student internships and research projects. There are currently four elementary, two middle school, and two high school Professional Development Schools

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in partnership with the College of Education. Each school has a full-time faculty member from the university serving as a University Liaison (UL).

All elementary and middle grades education majors ("Candidates") at UNC Charlotte are required to complete a yearlong internship during their senior year. In the first semester, candidates complete their coursework and are placed by the Office of Field Experiences for clinical activities in an appropriate school setting. An important element of this internship is course-directed educational activities completed under the supervision of their Cooperating Teacher (CT). Candidates' main contacts for support in that semester are their course professors and an appointed representative from the Office of Field Experiences. During the second semester of the yearlong internship, candidates complete a 15-week full-time student teaching experience in the same classroom as the previous semester.

The CT and a Project Supervisor (PS) provide support during this process. They meet regularly with the Candidates throughout the student teaching process. Candidates receive both informal and formal feedback about their student teaching performance. There are four formal observations by the CT and the US. Following each those observations, the Candidates are formally evaluated using the Student Teaching Assessment Rubric (STAR). The STAR is based on the ten national Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards. The student teaching experience and STAR assessments are currently required of all education majors for both their degree and their state certification. This project will provide students with an opportunity to receive additional support in the first semester of their yearlong

internship. That support should help student teachers acquire teaching skills more rapidly and lead them to a higher competency level at the conclusion of student teaching.

Impact

Professional Development Schools must provide evidence that they have a positive impact on student learning outcomes, as well as, their influence on candidates. This project is designed to provide evidence about the influence of a Project Supervisor support program at two Professional Development School sites.

This project will focus on the following research questions:

1. How does participation in a Professional Development Schools' yearlong internship create significant differences in candidates' perceptions of preparedness to student teach?
2. How does participation in a Professional Development School's yearlong internship create significant differences in performance on the Student Teaching Assessment Rubric?

The ultimate goal of the project is to positively impact the learning of public school students through increased learning and performance of public school teachers as well as, university candidates and faculty. It is expected that this study will lead to curriculum improvements that increase the confidence and performance of the pre-service teachers in the PDS classrooms in ways that may be scaled up to reach all undergraduate teacher candidates.

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Literature Review

The role of Professional Development Schools, according to Abma, Fishchetti, and Larson, (1999) is defined as improving the lives, learning, and opportunities of students; enhancing the curriculum, structures, school culture, and community ties for the school and university level staff and faculty; preparing new educators in a professional, collegial environment within the context of experiences that they will likely face in their early years; and researching, assessing, reflecting on, and/or disseminating the results of PDS work. PDS partnerships provide a clear pathway for early educators to grow as professionals and teachers, providing higher quality education at PDS sites (Clark & Huber, 2005).

Role of the Cooperating Teacher and University Liaisons

Teacher education research shows that a balanced, experiential approach to teacher training is quite effective (Clark & Huber, 2005; Rajuan, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2007). A major role of the Cooperating Teacher is to help students confront problems and learn from them, rather than simply ease them into the system. In addition to providing professional support and technical advice, Rajuan, Beijaard, and Verloop (2007) found that Student Teachers (ST) strongly desired a relationship with Cooperating Teachers (CT). The stronger the relationship with the CT, the better the ST was able to absorb technical and practical knowledge. Duffield (2006) concurs that the support of the emotional needs of Student Teachers, as well as Cooperating Teachers, is as important as providing technical training and professional development.

Relationships with Cooperating Teachers appeared to be the most influential factor

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in the Student Teacher's formation of a positive or negative perception about the clinical experience (Duffield, 2006). CTs should be encouraged to provide student teachers with learning opportunities for challenge and time for exploration of personal teaching identities in a safe environment. Collaboration between CTs and STs is essential in coping with practical classroom challenges for which there are no ready-made solutions (Rajuan, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2007). A safe environment for collaboration, discussion and support in which CTs and STs can discuss both strengths and weaknesses of the practicum can increase preparedness, teaching quality and retention rates of beginning teachers (Rajuan, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2007). The PDS model provides the time and space for relationships to develop and also includes another more educative support in the University Liaison.

According to the PDS Network at Ball State University, the role of University Liaison (UL) is to provide high quality teacher preparation, enhance student learning, provide professional development and conduct research (Clark & Huber, 2005). PDS partnerships provide a mutually beneficial, formalized relationship for schools and universities. School personnel develop a more professional vision of themselves, and the university has can remain grounded in real world activities and concerns of the classroom and take those lessons back to the university (Clark & Huber, 2005).

Field Experiences and Support

Clinical experiences can help shape a new teacher's future life as a professional and can encourage or discourage the creation and maintenance of long-term retention. Singh's (2006) research asked teacher candidates about the most valuable aspects of their

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training. Approximately 93% believed that clinical experience played a significant role in their teacher preparation. Approximately 90% agreed or strongly agreed that clinical experience had sharpened their observational skills and helped them gain confidence in their ability to impact pupil achievement. Approximately 68% agreed or strongly agreed that they perceived themselves as members of a professional team and enjoyed the same status as their collaborating teacher. Finally, a significant number of the teacher candidates commented that they would like to spend more time in their field placement and that they would like to do more teaching.

Graham's (2006) field experience research found that two important aspects in the intellectual tasks of teaching are "focused dialogue about practice; and shared responsibility for learning (p.1124). Focused seminars, which include Student Teachers, Cooperating Teachers and University Liaisons, provide an excellent opportunity to address pedagogy and to build a sense of responsibility for success. Collaborative seminars held on-site during the internship year, support a more ecological approach to teacher education proposed by Wideen, Meyer-Smith, and Moon (1998)

Team Approaches to Supervision

Jointly led seminars during the intern year can promote dialogue about specific classroom practices. In addition, these supportive conversations provide time to explore rationale regarding classroom and curriculum decisions (Graham, 2006). Seminars may also connect theoretical material (learned in course work) to classroom experiences (done in the field). "The seminars offered interns opportunities to refine their personal visions

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of teaching and professional identity; hearing more experienced colleagues discuss their practice and beliefs about teaching and learning” (Graham, 2006, p.1125).

Models of Shared Supervision

University Liaisons and Cooperating Teachers can provide a team approach to supporting student teachers and increasing preparedness to teach. Melser (2004) found that a shared supervision model increased empowerment of teachers involved and a shared responsibility for the training and success of the student teachers. Bates, Ramirez and Drits (2009) found that providing STs with access to more knowledgeable others, such as University Liaisons, could structure a strong support system that encourages professionalism and results in more effective teacher education practices (Melser, 2004).

The triad approach to field experience has had success in teacher preparation and is similar to the collaborative seminar approach. The triad includes two student teachers and one cooperating teacher (Goonough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman, & Stevens, 2009). In this model, the student teachers have an opportunity to offer peer feedback and support. The triad creates “communities of practice” with shared concerns and goals- that negotiate meaning of the community (Goonough, et al., 2009). Like the triad approach, the seminar approach provides time and structure for STs who are placed in the same school site to reflect on their experiences, share challenges and successes and receive additional support (Melser, 2004).

Methods

This project will begin during the 2010-2011 academic year at UNC Charlotte. Project Supervisors from the two participating PDS elementary schools will provide monthly seminars for the yearlong interns assigned to those PDS sites during the first internship semester, August to November, 2011. These monthly seminars will be 90

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minutes long and will address common student teacher issues and other Candidates' concerns. All seminars will be held at the two PDS schools.

During summer, 2010 university-based project personnel and school-based project supervisors will collaboratively develop seminar modules. The modules will include professional readings, video vignettes of classroom practice and other materials. At the September seminar, participants will complete a survey regarding their perceptions of their preparedness for student teaching. Based on data analysis, future seminar meetings will be refined to address concerns and questions that the candidates have. Further, the activities will be designed to be open-ended, allowing seminar facilitators and candidates to guide discussions and activities in ways that meet candidates' individual needs.

Topics, which will be included include: differentiating instruction, classroom management, alternative types of assessment, and preparing for full-time teaching. During 2008-2009, a seminar of K-12 candidates was held and data was collected on participants' perceptions. On a 10-item instrument, participants reported statistically significant differences on every item when compared to a matched sample control group of candidates that did not participate in the seminars (Polly, Frazier, & Hopper, 2008). The largest gains were identified on questions related to differentiating instruction, managing the classroom, and conducting alternative assessments. Based on findings from that project, it is expected that these topics, will once again, be central to candidates' questions and concerns.

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As indicated earlier, the seminar topics and modules will be developed during the summer. However, the data and a continuous feedback process will help to modify and refine modules and seminar materials to better address the needs of participating candidates. The data used to refine modules are described in the next section.

Evaluation

The project will utilize multiple data sources during the evaluation and refinement process. Those include: pre/post survey of candidates' preparedness for student teaching, the STAR observation rubric, seminar feedback forms, field notes from seminar observations, and focus groups.

In order to evaluate the impact of the seminars, a matched sample (age, gender, race, approximate GPA) of yearlong interns from non-PDSs will also complete the survey. The seminar participants and the matched sample will be compared in terms of data on the survey, and the STAR observation rubric. In order to compare groups, gain scores will be calculated between pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys. A t-test will be run in order to examine whether there were statistically significant differences between seminar participants and the matched control group. T-tests will also be run on the various components of the STAR rubric to examine whether statistically significant differences exist between groups.

Knowledge Dissemination

Data and findings from the project will be presented at conferences, such as the National PDS Conference, the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, and UNC Charlotte conferences. Findings will also be disseminated in data-

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based, peer-reviewed journals, such as the *PDS Journal*, the *Journal of Teacher Education* and *Teaching and Teacher Education*.

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Human Subjects

IRB Approval was originally received for the pilot project in June 2008. A pilot study was conducted from August 2008 - May 2009 as planned. Four seminars were provided for participants in the fall semester. Pre and post-surveys were completed, and STAR data was collected at the end of student teaching for the participants and candidates in the matched sample. An extension for the project was received in August 2009. The IRB protocol number is 07-06-11.

Extramural Funding

No external funding is being sought at this time. Future funding may stem from NSF grants and US Department of Education grants that focus on enhancing teacher education programs.

Timeline

Summer 2010	Curriculum development, Master Teacher workshops, Project Supervisor training module development
Fall 2010	Internship semester - four support seminars at two school sites led by Project Supervisors, pre-survey administered at two sites and control sites, continued Project Supervisor training, and post-survey at all sites
Spring 2011	Student Teaching semester-- Student Teacher Orientation attended by Project Supervisors, STAR, focus groups, Student Teacher observations, data collection and analysis, and dissemination of findings

References

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- Bates, A., Ramirez, L, & Drita, D., (2009). Connecting university supervision and critical reflection: mentoring and modeling. *The Teacher Educator*, 44, 90-112.
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- Rajuan, M., Beijgaard, D., & Verloop, N. (2007). The role of the cooperating teacher: bridging the gap between the expectations of cooperating teachers and student teachers. *Mentoring & Tutoring*, 15(3), 223-242.
- Singh, D.K. (2006). What do teacher candidates have to say about their clinical experiences? Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), Atlanta, GA.

Budget Request for SOTL Grant

Year 2010-2011

Joint Proposal? Yes X No

Title of Project Supporting Elementary Education Yearlong Interns

Duration of Project 1 year

Primary Investigator(s) Dr. Marvin Chapman, Dr. Drew Polly, Dr. Joyce Frazier, Mrs. Cindy Hopper

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UNC Charlotte SOTL Grants Previously Received (please names of project, PIs, and dates) Polly: Supporting Case-based Mathematics Instruction, 2006-2007

Allocate operating budget to Department of Reading and Elementary Education

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		Year One	Year Two
Account #	Award	January to June	July to June
Faculty Stipend	Transferred directly from Academic Affairs to Grantee on May 15		1,500.00
911250	Graduate Student Salaries		
911300	Special Pay (Faculty on UNCC payroll other than Grantee)		3,000.00
915000	Student Temporary Wages		
915900	Non-student Temporary Wages		
920000	Honorarium (Individual(s) not with UNCC)		1,500.00
921150	Participant Stipends		4,000.00
925000	Travel - Domestic		
926000	Travel - Foreign		
928000	Communication and/or Printing		
930000	Supplies		
942000	Computing Equipment		
944000	Educational Equipment	400.00	400.00
951000	Other Current Services		
	Subtotal	\$400	\$10,400.00
GRAND TOTAL		\$ 10,800.00	

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Attachments:

1. Attach/provide a narrative that explains how the funds requested will be used.
2. Has funding for the project been requested from other sources? Yes No.

Budget Narrative

The *Supporting Elementary Education Yearlong Interns* project will be implemented at participating Professional Development Schools for 2010-2011. This research will result in improved planning and support for yearlong interns to prepare them for student teaching. The above budget lists the necessary training and resources for the program.

Personnel

Dr. Chapman will be compensated \$1,500 to oversee the project and co-develop the seminar modules during Summer, 2010. Two faculty members in the Office of Field Experiences, Dr. Joyce Frazier and Mrs. Cindy Hopper, will be compensated \$1,500 each (\$3,000 total) to facilitate training sessions for Project Supervisors and co-develop seminar modules. Stipends in the amount of (\$200 each, \$4000 total) will be provided to the Project Supervisors for participating in the Project Supervisor training and module training.

Equipment

Training modules including books and support materials (\$400) will be accessible to the Project Supervisors and student teachers at each school site.