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Effective teacher education: from student-teacher candidates to novice teachers prepared for urban education

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EFFECTIVE TEACHER EDUCATION: FROM STUDENT-TEACHER CANDIDATES TO NOVICE TEACHERS PREPARED FOR URBAN EDUCATION

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School of Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2011

MAJOR: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Approved by:

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Advisor Date

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DEDICATION

To my daughters,
Sage the Wise One and Victoria the Conqueror

Fiat lux
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The responsibility of developing urban educators who are effective—reflective, innovative and committed to diversity with evidence of student learning—rests not only on individual teacher candidates; it also relies upon the effectiveness of teacher education programs that largely hone their knowledge and skills (Bransford & Darling-Hammond, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Murray, 2009; Ryan and Cooper, 2010; Zeichner, Melnick & Gomez, 1996). Darling-Hammond (1996), for example, acknowledges that teacher education programs must reflect the needs of a “more complex, knowledge-based, and multicultural society” (p. 194) in order to ensure that every student has access to a competent, caring and qualified educator. Furthermore, these programs have a responsibility in validating claims that they are meeting the needs of teacher candidates and the larger society in which they serve. In order to offer the public assurance that these newly certified educators are competent in subject knowledge, possess the quality of caring and acquire the necessary qualifications to work with students, teacher education programs are now, more than ever, seeking an evaluation from a national independent accreditation council which, upon approval, offers that source of validity and reliability (Murray, 2009). However, it is not just an interest of individual colleges; by the end of 2013, all Michigan teacher education programs must be accredited by one of the two national accrediting bodies.

In the College of Education at Wayne State University where this study took place, the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) was chosen in November, 2008. Based on TEAC’s expectations, the teacher education program must provide evidence as to the following:
(1) teacher graduates are “competent, caring and qualified;” and (2) a quality control system is in place and improves the quality of the program. Successful approval by a regionally accredited institution should demonstrate a commitment to the program (O’Brien, 2009; TEAC website). Additionally, teacher education programs must provide to TEAC support for each of their claims from the viewpoint of their mission statement. The evidence of the college’s claims must come from multiple sources (O’Brien, 2009).

The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent a teacher education program prepared teacher candidates to be effective urban educators who are reflective, innovative, and committed to diversity. As the nation grapples with an extreme range of outputs from our public schools, an investigation into such an integral component of developing effective educators is essential, if not mandatory (Spring, 2009). Given the goals and standards for educators today, teacher education programs have to consider their role in this process and determine what is required of them to support teachers who are prepared for multiple experiences and a diverse group of students (Darling-Hammond, 2006). While effective educators challenge themselves to be exemplary in the field, teacher education programs are equally challenged to provide experiences and the necessary pedagogy that will demonstrate and model best practices for these candidates.

This study examined the claims presented by Wayne State University’s College of Education and its role in the preparation of teacher candidates. A qualitative case study was the method utilized to examine the program’s teacher candidates and their perceptions of a university’s claims of preparing them to be reflective, innovative urban practitioners who are committed to diversity. Data sources including candidate interviews, artifacts, field notes and
reviewed documents were analyzed and the findings presented and discussed in detail with supporting evidence. The documents reviewed included WSU’s College of Education Conceptual Framework and the Michigan Department of Education Student Exit Survey. While an effective educator may be characterized by several qualities, this study focused on three that the College of Education has identified from a constructivism theoretical framework; an effective urban educator is one who is reflective, innovative and committed to diversity.

Background of Study: A Vision for the Educator

An effective teacher education program that prepares teachers for today’s schools aims to develop competent educators. An educator does not merely impart knowledge; but provides experiences that may be translated beyond the classroom and shared with students. Concerning teacher preparation, the notable educational philosopher John Dewey states, “The educator, more than the member of any other profession is concerned to have a long look ahead…the educator by the very nature of his work is obliged to see his present work in terms of what is accomplishes, or fails to accomplish, for a future whose objects are linked with those of the present” (Dewey, 1950, p. 91). The essence of Dewey’s perspective is that educators need to be concerned with the transcendence of the now because they understand that their now is laying the foundation for the future ahead. Furthermore, they are individuals who press upon their students to reach for something long-standing, even eternal.

Therefore, defining educator is an important beginning; ancient philosopher Socrates is attributed to the notion that wisdom begins with defining terms (Honderich, 2005). Etymologically, to educate comes from the fourteenth century Latin term educatus, a past participle of educare meaning to rear, and educere which means to lead forth or bring out
It means to stimulate and develop mental or moral growth (American Heritage; Encarta; Merriam Webster). *To teach* is twelfth century Middle English which is defined as to show or instruct; to impart skill or knowledge to (American Heritage; Encarta). Educators, as these definitions suggest will not only impart knowledge or skills in their students; they will lead them in a way that helps students realize and bring forth their individual core beliefs and values. Educators for our future generations “must go beyond dispensing information, giving a test, and giving a grade” (Hammond, 1996, p. 194). Educators should empower and inspire students while recognizing that students are in part self-educators, not just receivers in the process.

The idea of solely imparting knowledge, as Dewey (1897) puts it, fails to recognize that individuals are active in the process of learning. When the student is seen as the active learner which is also suggested by the late philosopher and educator Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Orstein & Hunkins, 2004), the emphasis is lifted off the teacher’s knowledge and placed on their ability to facilitate, and the experience of which he/she provides. Imparting knowledge is only useful if we want a society of robotic-like sensory individuals who only give what we put in them. A belief expressed by the late Dr. John Dewey and Paulo Freire, the ideal of leading students as opposed ‘to filling them as vessels’ rejects indoctrinating approaches such as seeing learners as ‘vessels to be filled’ with a required bag of knowledge (Dewey, 1950; Freire, 1970). Instead the approach is explicit instead of hidden, and aims to create a school that is based on participatory democracy where students make decisions on the daily functions and the rules through inquiry and problem solving (Kohlberg, 1981).
Taken a step further, Freire (1970) proposes to eliminate the line between teacher and student so that “both are simultaneously teacher and student” (p. 59). An educator plays a dual role—not just one who only assumes knowledge-giver—she recognizes that she too has something to learn in the process. A Brazilian educational philosopher, Paulo Freire joins the educational thinkers who reject the ‘filling’ of students with information, and what is decided based on the choices of the teacher and authoritative figures. In what he describes as “banking education” (p. 58) teachers have become the ones who deposit information while the students the depositories. This system, Freire argues, manifests the oppressive state of nature and should be analyzed in order to defeat its long-term effects on future generations. In contrast to banking education where information is narrative, handed down by the authority to the subjects, education should be built upon the idea that knowledge is actually the processes of inquiry. In Freire’s (1970) words, “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world…” (p. 58). With this understanding, the effective educator will encourage students to constantly formulate new questions and think about their experiences in different ways.

According to Kohlberg (1981), students’ developmental growth is facilitated by posing and probing hypothetical dilemmas “in such a way as to arouse disagreement and uncertainty as to what is right” (p. 27). What will ultimately occur is that the students will develop the capacity to think for themselves, as suggested by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1947) in his essay entitled, “The Purpose of Education.” Kings affirms that “Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction” (King, 1947/1992, p. 124). Students will attain this level of critical thinking
only when they learn how to think through problems and learn how to evaluate with their own internalized set of beliefs, values and judgments.

The role of the effective educator then is to prepare students for problems they will encounter by giving “him command of himself” (Dewey, 1897 p. 77). As Dewey further explains, problem skills are essential because there are no certain preset conditions to predict the future. Thus, learners must be equipped with the tools to utilize all of their capabilities for the uncertain future. The responsibility of an educator in this process is to facilitate opportunities for learning so that students see their role in gathering knowledge and meaning with the intent that these circumstances will facilitate and develop their critical thinking skills (Orstein & Hunkins, 2004). Just as Rousseau advocated, the effective educator believes in the importance of experience in helping individuals reason and critically think to reach their own conclusions instead of being told what the answers or results will be (Orstein and Hunkins, 2004).

Throughout this study, understanding the nature of the educator is important even as some authors use educator and teacher interchangeably. This study explicitly distinguishes the characteristics of what is required in the classroom for today’s students and future generations to learn as compared with textbook definitions of these two terms. The expectation is that whoever is working with students, they are serving as a true educator—as clarified in this study—whether in name they are called a teacher or by any other name. An effective educator will facilitate knowledge, increase student learning, inspire and motivate and will be committed to the idea of life-long learning as much as they are serving in the role of educator.

A Search for Answers in Educating the Educator
This study began with a sincere interest in identifying the qualities necessary to be the most effective urban educator. As ‘an educator of the educator,’ I felt it important to explore and identify those qualities most useful that we should know as we service our aspiring educators. Growing up, I heard that teaching was a gift, just as it was for the ‘natural-born leader.’ The question was ever-present: Is teaching an art or a science—instinctive or “a collection of technical skills” (Reagan, Case and Brubacher, 2000 p.18)? Many teachers tell me that they wanted to be a teacher because teaching was their innate gift; that is, they believed it was a desire with which they were born. I shared the same belief. However, I reasoned, that there would be no need for teacher preparation if the innate capacity alone is sufficient to be a teacher. A doctor is often believed to be naturally empathetic and compassionate. However, these essential attributes are in addition to cultivated specialized knowledge, skills and qualities. Similarly, teaching must rely not only on natural characteristics but specific knowledge and qualities. So what are these skills and qualities, and what specific knowledge should every program that prepares educators emphasize to develop effective educators?

One essential quality of an educator is the ability to make informed decisions with reason and careful attention (Reagan, Case & Brubacher, 2000). A part of reaching this end is asking the right questions along the way and considering that there are a numbers of outcomes that can be generated for every problem. The ability to consider a multitude of outcomes prior to acting is a skill that must be developed and cultivated (Kohlberg, 1981). Therefore, part of the task of any teacher education program is to challenge teacher candidates to critically think and expose them to experiences that heighten their reasoning skills in the face of dilemmas.
Ducharme (2010) suggests that teacher education programs can accomplish the task aforementioned if educators are taught to have “a fondness for questions over answers” (p. 8). Paulo Freire, as well as advocates of inquiry-based curriculum, would agree that teaching learners to be better probers helps them to be critical thinkers (Freire, 1970; Short, Schroeder, Laird, Kauffman, Ferguson, & Crawford, 1996). The philosophy behind inquiry-based curriculum presupposes that humans will encounter problems large and small (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). Therefore, learners should be involved with investigative activities that challenge their processes and develop their ability to ask questions to reach their conclusions (Poon, Tan & Tan, 2009). These investigations should be set up as opportunities to inquire and not problems to be avoided (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). In fact, learners in a study conducted at Temasek Primary in Singapore stated that they preferred hands-on investigative projects that required them to make informed decisions by ciphering through many details, and generating a number of solutions (Poon, Tan & Tan, 2009). Teacher candidates as learners then must be provided opportunities to create questions along the way, not just be the ones who solve the problems.

Another part of the task in becoming an effective educator is the ability to take into account the interests, values and perceptions of the students as opposed to simply giving information believed to be what they need to know. In an effort to provide a student-centered environment, understanding their needs and position is as equally important in determining what should be taught (Loyens, Rikers, and Schmidt, 2008). A powerful example of this is the day my students taught me more about using technology in the classroom than I ever could have shared with them. In the course, *Becoming a Professional Educator*, as I began to prepare the
presentation, it occurred to me that students today are far heavily influenced with technology. They have I-pods and I-phones, cell phones, emails, web pages—there are so many technological devices available to students. I scrapped the presentation and determined that this would be a class where students shared their technological skills and demonstrate how they would use it in the classroom. By the end of the class, they were to present a short lesson using technology.

One student connected with a family member in another country over the Internet; another made a movie with rolling credits; yet another created a web page for our class where we actually went to the site and posted comments for the duration of the semester. What I initially had in mind for my presentation was demonstrating how to put together a Power Point presentation. These students showed me how elementary my technology presentation would have been and we all learned a new way to incorporate exciting methods into our classrooms. I was definitely their student for the day. What I learned is that no matter what role we serve in, we will always wear the cap of learner at some point.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine how a teacher education program prepared teacher candidates to be reflective, innovative urban practitioners who are committed to diversity. The data sources consisted of observations, surveys, interviews, and archival documents; they were analyzed and a thick, descriptive final report is presented in Chapter 4.

The College of Education is also going through the accreditation process. This study may serve as a response from the students on their preparation in meeting the claims of the college. By the end of 2013, Michigan teacher education programs must be accredited by one of
the two national accrediting bodies. Wayne State University’s College of Education chose Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) in November, 2008. Many programs offer ambitious claims about their educational quality when communicating with the public. Therefore, the purpose of an accrediting body is to promote coherence in the program and offer the public assurance that the program is meeting their claims (O’Brien, 2009). In order to demonstrate public assurance of program quality assurance based on TEAC’s expectations, the teacher education program must provide evidence in the following three areas: (1) teacher graduates are “competent, caring and qualified;” (2) a quality control system is in place and improves the quality of the program; and (3) successful approval by a regionally accredited institution which demonstrates a commitment to the program (O’Brien, 2009, p. 62).

Additionally, teacher education programs must provide to TEAC support for each of their claims from the viewpoint of their mission statement. The evidence of these claims must come from multiple sources (O’Brien, 2009).

Wayne State University’s College of Education is guided by a mission to prepare “professionals who have the commitment and competence needed to help people acquire the knowledge, skills and understandings to enable them to participate in and contribute to a complex, changing society” (Wayne State University COE Website). Through teaching, service and research, the College strives to carry out this mission. The College is focused on preparing teacher candidates to serve in urban settings which represent the broad diversity of the population. Additionally, these candidates are exposed to multiple field experiences which are designed to enhance their knowledge of themselves as educators and the students they
encounter. They are responsible for conducting research in various teacher education courses in order to strengthen their pedagogical and subject area knowledge.

Through this case study, I want to find out how teacher candidates perceive these overarching themes as presented by the College of Education. While this study may not inform us of every component within the mission statement, the responses to the specific research questions should reveal the student’s perspective on how they are prepared to be reflective and innovative urban educators who are committed to diversity. It is possible that these responses may inform this College of Education and others, on how teacher candidates respond to these claims and even how to address their needs and expectations in becoming an effective urban educator.

Focus Questions

Experiences like the one where students taught me new technological skills led me in the direction of looking at teacher education programs through the perspective of teacher candidates. Often, the participant’s voice is missing in the examination process of a program and it can be a valuable resource of information (Wortthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 2004). Additionally, my work in higher education led me to explore the role of teacher education in preparing teacher candidates and capture the essence of the effective educator by working with students at Wayne State University. These are the questions that initially guided this study:

1. How did participants develop their understanding of becoming an effective urban educator who is reflective, innovative, and committed to diversity based on prior experiences?
2. To what extent does the student teacher course improve the participants’ understanding of the reflective, innovative urban practitioner who is committed to diversity?

3. How do participants characterize an effective urban educator based on experiences in the course and what artifacts demonstrate this characterization?

4. How can participants tell if someone is a reflective educator, an innovative educator, and an educator who is committed to diversity?

5. Do participants believe these qualities can be measured and if so, how?

Summary and Forecast

In chapter one, a vision of an effective educator was presented in order to set the tone for considering the role of teacher education. In chapter 2, a review of the literature that served as the theoretical framework is presented. The theoretical framework that guided the study is constructivism with an examination of its three core tenets. In chapter 3, the methodology is presented. A qualitative case study was conducted to examine the initial certification program’s students and their perception of the success with the university’s claims of preparing its students to be reflective, innovative urban practitioners who are committed to diversity. In chapter 4, the findings reveal results from an analysis of observations, interviews, candidate artifacts and reviewed documents. In a thick rich description the findings uncover the implications that are summarized in chapter 5. Finally chapter 5 concludes the study with a discussion about the revised focus questions, a statement on the candidates’ preparedness from the program, and three main implications of which the topics include learning to teach, teacher education programs, and urban education.
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine how a teacher education program prepared teacher candidates to be effective urban educators who are reflective, innovative, and committed to diversity. In chapter two, a review of the literature of the constructivism theory is presented as the theoretical framework. Constructivism is a theory that focuses on how students learn and in this study the implications for teacher education programs will be discussed. A review of the components of effective teacher education programs is addressed. Finally, I present a conceptual framework for what “urban” means and its significance on teacher education programs which identify themselves as such.

How Individuals Learn: Constructivism as a Learning Theory

An effective teacher education program knows how to reach teacher candidates because the core curriculum is founded upon principles and effective guiding practices grounded in research (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Liberman, Scharoun, Rotarius, Fottler, Dziuban, & Moskal, 2005; Martin, 1995; Orstein & Hunkins, 2004). It is also built on the knowledge of how students learn and the effective ways in which information is transmitted and later retained by the learner. The general consensus of related research states that knowledge of how an individual learns is the precursor for developing effective teaching practices and curriculum (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Liberman et al., 2005; Martin, 1995; Mayberry, 1980; Orstein & Hunkins, 2004).

The theory that has gained recognition in the last two decades in identifying the important features of how students learn is constructivism (Orstein & Hunkins, 2004; Taylor,
Fraser & Fisher, 1997). It is a theory of knowing and learning; therefore it is built upon concepts from philosophy and psychology (Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, Gardner, & Slack, 1995; Ozkal, Tekkaya, Cakiroglu & Sungur, 2008). As it involves the nature of knowing and how we acquire knowledge, it is rooted in epistemology. Constructivism as a theory of learning places its foundations in a psychological framework, specifically its ties to cognitive development.

Constructivism holds that knowledge is constructed, where the learner comes with previous experiences and builds upon that to form new knowledge (Orstein & Hunkins, 2004). This view is in contrast to other traditional theories which support the notion that knowledge is a fixed body of work independent of the learner. Instead, when introduced to new material, learners in the process of constructing knowledge, will consider what they know on that subject and find the ‘file’ within the recesses of their mind that is associated with it, eventually storing it as seen fit. New information, then, is relative to prior knowledge and the learner will constantly file, and ‘create new folders within folders,’ to accommodate new material. The construction of knowledge is further developed through reflection where “the learner engages himself or herself in internalizing and reshaping or transforming information via active consideration” (Orstein and Hunkins, 2004, p. 117).

There are two central tenets of this theory: that knowledge is constructed both individually and socially (Loyens, Rikers and Schmidt, 2008; McIntyre and Byrd, 1998; Orstein & Hunkins, 2004; Ozkal, Tekkay, Cakiroglu & Sungur, 2009). Even prior to 21st century developments in constructivism, the dual nature of individual and social dynamics playing a role
in development was expressed. It was Emile Durkheim (1912/1976) who described the two parts of human nature:

...Man is double. There are two beings in him: an individual being which has its foundation in the organism and the circle of whose activities is therefore strictly limited, and a social being which represents the highest reality in the intellectual and moral order that we can know by observation—I mean society. (p. 16)

Interestingly enough, knowledge construction takes on this same dynamic—that of the shared accounts of the individual and the social environment. This is an important connection; although constructivism has taken the forefront in educational issues relating how students learn, the central tenets of this theory are founded in earlier sociological and cognitive theories.

**The First Tenet of Constructivism: The Active Learner**

Constructivism as a theory of learning “assigns a central role to the learner—that effective learning implies learners being socially apt, self-regulated knowledge constructors” (Loyens, Rikers, & Schmidt, 2008, p. 447). Jean Piaget was one of the earlier psychologists who focused on the individual aspect of the learning process. As one of the central tenets, constructivism emphasizes the individual as the active agent (Aldridge, Fraser, Taylor & Chen, 2000; Harrington and Enoch, 2009; Loyens, Rikers, and Schmidt, 2008; Orstein & Hunkins, 2004). “Active agents” refers to learners who will bring their own prior experiences to the table and arrange new knowledge around it. They are not only receivers in the learning process; they are actively working with prior beliefs, resources and their views of the world.

Prior experiences are so important because they influence how the learner will interact with the world and new ideas (Lambert et al., 1995). As learners interact with others and filter
their own experiences through other perspectives, they are actively constructing new knowledge in the process (Lambert et al., 1995). According to some cognitive psychology theories, the construction of knowledge is an individual process where new knowledge is interpreted and built upon prior knowledge (Loyens, Remy, Rikers & Schmidt, 2008; Orstein & Hunkins, 2004). In essence, one’s past experiences set the foundation for what will occur as new information is received.

Jean Piaget’s theory of cognitive development is one explanation of how individuals connect new information with their prior knowledge. In his study and observation of his children, Piaget identified four stages from birth through adolescence in the cognitive developmental process and found that children build new knowledge upon their prior knowledge (Piaget, 1953). In these stages, ‘nature and nurture’ combine to produce cognitive development. Nature refers to the maturation of the body and brain, and the ability to learn, act and perceive. Nurture is the ability to adapt—specifically, as children respond to the demands of the environment in ways that meet their own goals, they learn to integrate particular observations into a body of coherent knowledge. Piaget theorized that children construct their own knowledge about the world in response to their experiences (Piaget, 1953). Specifically, children at different stages, or ages, think in different ways.

In Piaget’s theory, these are the four stages: sensorimotor (Birth-2 yrs.)—understand the world through senses and actions; preoperational (2-7 yrs.)—understand the world through language and mental images; concrete operational (7-12 yrs.)—understanding of the world through logical and thinking categories; and formal operational (12 yrs. and up)—understanding of the world through hypothetical thinking and scientific reasoning. As they grow and develop
they are capable of thinking in broader and more abstract terms; this is a process that is sequential and successive (Crain, 1985; Orstein & Hunkins, 2004; Piaget, 1953).

In addition to his discovery of developmental stages, Piaget offered an explanation of the cognitive process in which there are three steps: assimilation, accommodation and equilibration (Orstein and Hunkins, 2004). The process begins with a building of new experiences upon prior ones based on the individual’s interaction with the environment—the part of the process Piaget identified as assimilation. As the child organizes the information and develops a new structure to attain the new experiences, the old structures are modified or accommodated given this new information. Finally equilibration occurs at the point in which the prior knowledge and new knowledge have balanced to formulate the proper new structures (Orstein and Hunkins, 2004).

Similarly, psychologist Jerome Bruner (1915- ) noted that new learning is preceded by prior knowledge, although he came up with different terms to describe the act of learning (Orstein and Hunkins, 2004). Acquisition is when the learner gains new knowledge. As the learner begins to utilize the information in new ways and relate it to other experiences, the process is now considered transformation. Through evaluation, the learner will determine whether the information has been processed so as to be flexible for use with other experiences.

**The Second Tenet of Constructivism: Social Interaction**

The notion that the learner is responsible and active is but one of two core tenets of the constructivist theory (McIntyre and Byrd, 1998; Orstein & Hunkins, 2004; Loyens, Rikers and Schmidt, 2008; Ozkal, Tekkay, Cakiroglu & Sungur, 2009). The second tenet of this theory is that learning involves social interactions (Loyens, Rikers and Schmidt, 2008). The social aspect of this theory examines the organizational and cultural dynamics of learning from interaction
with the social environment, often in contrast to the individual or individualist theorists as presented in Piaget's work. The term ‘social’ implies that the larger society has some role in knowledge construction. Social construction then will explain and analyze the effects of social interaction, social action and social processes. When the actions of an individual or a group, intentional or unintentional, affect the behavior of others, social influence may take place (Feldman, 1985).

Lev Vygotsky (1978) was an early German cognitive psychologist who emphasized the role of social interaction in knowledge construction and its effect on an individual's development (Orstein & Hunkins, 2004). The implication from his focus on social construction is that learning is not only an individual process; it is in part a social process. Vygotsky referred to these dimensions in knowledge construction as two psychological planes—first the social plane (inter) then the individual (intra) (Vygotsky, 1978). With his focus on the significance of culture, he believed that the social environment influences the content of an individual's thoughts. This establishes the context of an individual’s thought processes where the two planes connect. As the learning is mediated through the movement of the individuals’ abilities and their social interaction with a more capable other, the learner is in a “zone of proximal development” or ZDP (p. 86). In his words, "this difference between the child’s actual level of development and the level of performance that he achieves in collaboration with the adult, defines the zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 209). As the learner interacts with this capable other, he will consider his experiences, clarify ideas, develop new meanings and finally construct new knowledge. As referenced earlier, Piaget believed that children are capable of performing based on their place in cognitive development as according to a preset stage.
Vygotsky, in contrast, believed that children were not fixed to these stages because of the potential in their social interactions and engaging with other “more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86); this interaction could help them to reach higher cognitive abilities beyond their developmental stage.

A prime example of acquiring new knowledge is found in the structure of a teacher’s lesson plan. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher accesses prior knowledge on the subject. This part of the lesson helps the students connect with a memory or past experience in the topic area. Then the teacher will introduce a new concept from the given topic. At this point, the students may not have any knowledge of the new term being presented. However, because the teacher has already established a context for the material, it positions the students to connect this new material so that knowledge construction takes place. The teacher then explains the material and provides an example or some procedure that will demonstrate the way the new material is used. The students are asked to follow up with guided practice, and often this is where the mediation takes place. The students are now at the point where the mediation occurs or in the ZDP—the actual developmental level and their potential development. As they work through the guided practice with the teacher (or more capable other as Vygotsky calls him), they may learn the new skill or identify with the new material and internalize it thus constructing knowledge. The independent practice portion of the lesson plan will continue to implant the material and reinforce the knowledge construction.

Although Vygotsky’s theory focuses on the learner, one cannot ignore the implications for the important role of this “more capable other” who could be the teacher. The person that helps the learner formulate new knowledge has the role of knowledge facilitator where he is
present to help the learner make connections to existing knowledge and work through new concepts to achieve knowledge construction. While Vygotsky identifies the active process that occurs within the learner, he also highlights the significance of interacting with others who know more and are able to reach learners wherever they can make a connection.

*Identifying Ideal Social Interactions: Implications for a Commitment to Diversity*

As previously mentioned, social interaction in general is a strong focal point of constructivism; however, the quality of these experiences have a far greater importance that the experience itself. John Dewey (1950) said it best when he explained his rationale for a theory of experience:

> It is not enough to insist upon the necessity of experience, nor even of activity in experience. Everything depends upon the quality of the experience which is had...Just as no man lives or dies to himself, so no experience lives and dies to itself. Wholly independent of desire or intent, every experience lives on in further experiences. Hence the central problem of an education based upon experience is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences (p. 16-17).

The kind of experience as it involves the consideration of social interactions begs the question: *What kind of social experiences are qualified as most ideal in the context of twenty-first century learners?* Dewey (1950) argued that an important responsibility of educators is to “recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth” and they “should know how to utilize the surroundings, physical and social...” (p. 35).
According to Darling-Hammond & Garcia-Lopez (2002), the social experiences which facilitate an awareness and sensitivity to the multitude of differences in our society are the ones that will encourage positive growth. The ability to draw upon each learner’s unique experiences (including but not limited to cultural background, abilities, age, class, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and personal life story) in a way that helps learners connect their unique background with others that may or may not be different than their own is a step towards an ideal social interaction; yet this is one of the great challenges in education today. A situation where all students are exposed to all different types of diversity is idealistic in and of itself.

Research conducted by the Multicultural Education Consensus Panel in 2000 led to the groups’ principles for dealing with diversity and social issues in a multicultural society. Led by multicultural education expert Dr. James A. Banks, the panel identified two principles related to helping students achieve both an awareness of and sensitivity towards issues of diversity that will impact their social interactions. The first is a curricular effort where students learn that knowledge is constructed socially. As the study mentions, students often experience the curriculum and historical accounts of the past from the viewpoint of the victor (Banks, Cookson, Hawley, Irvine, Nieto, Schofield, & Stephan, 2001). Stories such as Columbus’ discovery of America, may diminish the significance of minorities and negatively portray their role in history. This can have far reaching effects on the students and their experiences with other cultures, particularly those represented in these historical accounts. The goal for curriculum must be to present these accounts from varying cultural viewpoints in a way that fosters sensitivity towards everyone’s viewpoint. This exposure to multiple viewpoints could facilitate a sincere interest to
learn from people different that the individual students (Short, Schroeder, Laird, Kauffman, Ferguson, & Crawford, 1996).

The second principle the panel addressed as it relates to social construction of knowledge is providing students the opportunity to interact in a structured environment with other students from different groups such as racial, ethnic, language and abilities. The goal would be to reduce prejudices, counteract stereotypes and minimize the fear and anxiety that often comes along with the unknown. The study found that as students began to interact with members outside of their normal group in this structured environment, they felt more comfortable with people different than they and it helped to reduce their personal stereotypes of each other (Banks et al., 2001).

Helping students to commit to diversity through their social interactions is to explicitly engage them in situations that address diversity (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002). Although it is easy to identify with people that represent the same beliefs and share the same background, it has to be a norm to position students for a society that continues to expand in differences—where the minority is becoming the majority. Students have to be exposed to the different ways that people use and vary language through dialect; they have to experience the uniqueness of various cultures by recognition of holidays, values and beliefs; and they have to share each other’s’ lens of how life ‘really’ is and what each one considers is most important. Of most significance, students need to have opportunities where they share common knowledge about themselves with different people. This will ensure that knowledge which is ultimately constructed within each individual is absorbed in a way that represents the actual accounts of those individuals, reducing stereotypes and prejudices in the long run. Finally, constructivism
suggests that since learning is active on the part of the learner who builds upon his prior experiences with current social interactions, an environment which exposes the learner to the diversity of ideas, beliefs, and cultural differences is essential. In addition to these implications from constructivism, the WSU College of Education has a statement on Commitment to Diversity which is presented in Appendix C.

**The Role of Reflection in the Construction of Knowledge**

Along with social interactions, constructivism supposes that reflection is an important aspect in knowledge construction (Orstein & Hunkins, 2004). Dewey (1933) is often accredited for his focus on the important role of reflection when he argued that it is through active thinking that the learner constructs and reconstructs knowledge through experience. Where the key word is thinking, Danielson (2008) suggests that the reflective thinker is able to use thinking in order to pose new questions, analyze, and solve problems a result of this cognitive process. Danielson (2008) and Dewey (1933) agree that reflection “is based on thoughtful consideration and results in judgment or grounded assertion leading to new understanding and knowledge” (Danielson, 2008, p. 130). Thoughtful consideration or reflection, then, is the first step in knowledge construction.

In order to discover more concrete practices in the reflective thinking process, Danielson (1992) conducted a case study of five student teachers to examine their reflective practices. From an analysis of observations and these students’ responses to questionnaires, interviews, journals, the researcher termed four modes of thinking: technological, situational, deliberate, and dialectical. Danielson (2008) discussed each of these modes of thinking. **Technological** thinking refers to using knowledge from a respected source in order to complete routines that
require efficiency and effectiveness. Examples of this include directing the students during a fire drill and taking attendance; or relying on external sources such as textbooks and administration (Danielson, 2008). Situational thinking describes knowledge that is only used from the situation at hand. People in this mode will make use of their current surroundings and identifiable behaviors from others to assess what is needed in the present moment. The higher level of reflection is deliberate thinking; the individual “goes beyond what he or she already knows and seeks additional information” (p. 134). At this level, the individual will pause and consider other options outside of the situation and normal routines of the day. The reflection is active and is marked by attaining knowledge that stems from many sources (Danielson, 2008). The final and highest level mode of thinking is dialectical thinking where the individual’s practice is transformed and knowledge reconstruction is taking place. At this level, the individual can apply this knowledge and make changes as deemed necessary (Danielson, 2008).

Based on the analysis, the study reported that one mode of thinking is not necessarily better than another, and that all are appropriate in different scenarios. The goal is to help student teachers reach the capacity for the highest level and to know when to consider each mode of reflective thinking. Additionally, student teachers need more exposure to explicit forms of instructions that will lead them to the higher levels of reflective thinking practices which are associated with the dialectical thinking. Finally, the study found that mentors and cooperating teachers could do a better job in facilitating opportunities of reflective practice through professional dialogue and better communication of expectations with the teacher education program.
Given Danielson’s (2008) findings, the process of reflective thinking can lead individuals to knowledge construction even to the point of considering new methods and outcomes. Reflective thinking is a component in the constructivist framework that can be enriched; it is a skill that can be enhanced and taught to learners, considerably the teacher learners. Identifying the strengths of reflective thinking can help to remind individuals that the process where questions are asked, analyzed and revisited are just as important as the solving the problem.

To support reflective skills which can lead to reflective practice, it is essential that teacher education programs focus on developing concrete practices. Teacher education programs that involve initial certification teachers in becoming reflective practitioners support the framework provided by constructivist viewpoints (McIntyre & Byrd, 1997). Reflective practice is the ability to engage in active, persistent, and careful consideration (Dewey, 1950). Some of these practices will include monitoring and visualizing effects of actions; resolving conflicts through informed decision making; synthesizing information into new strategies; and finally examining and altering lessons where fit in order to improve student achievement (Parkay & Stanford, 2010).

Teacher education programs must also strive to help teachers learners to conceptualize the reflective educator. Best stated by Reagan, Case and Brubacher (2000), the reflective educator is an informed decision maker guided by reason and multiple perspectives who reaches beyond the scope of his own biases. He is able to communicate, in writing and/or with others about his practice and raise concerns that may require adjustments. Additionally, he is able to demonstrate a sense of ethical and social sensitivity as he relies upon the judgment and knowledge within structures of the profession’s ethical code of conduct. Consequently,
educators who are reflective in their practice improve and enrich their classroom and “become better, more proficient, and more thoughtful professionals in their own right” (p. 26). In essence, reflection is an essential part of the teacher learning process because it helps to broaden prior knowledge and it facilitates new ways of doing the same things, a fundamental building block in the concept of innovation (Ozkal et al., 2009). WSU College of Education faculty have also conceptualized a reflective educator which is presented in Appendix A.

Reflection that Leads to Innovation

As student teachers enhance their reflective skills, the goal is that they will consider alternate ways of doing things and develop their ability to be innovative. According to Lu & Ortlieb (2009) critical reflection is one of the requirements for innovation particularly as it relates to successful teaching. Innovative by definition means forward-moving, and advanced; it is synonymous with creative, inventive, and fresh. Innovation as it relates to teaching is “experimentation with and the transformation of pedagogical practices, curricular approaches, student assessments and professional collaboration” (Ellison, 2009, p. 31).

As society continues to evolve into a shared space consisting of a myriad of individuals with different backgrounds and lifestyles, innovation is an essential element in learning to teach (Lu & Ortlieb, 2009). It has the potential of engaging new learners who may not have understood the material in earlier methods. It can reinforce the material and help in the learner’s knowledge construction process. An innovative individual also demonstrates the ability to synthesize knowledge which is considered a higher order of cognition helpful in adapting to new situations (Bloom, 1956). This is important in the knowledge construction process because the individual has the ability to bridge connections across a scheme of experiences. The goal
for student teachers as it relates to innovation is that they will develop this ability to use different methods to better reach and inform their students when they become educators. WSU College of Education faculty have also conceptualized an Innovative Educator which is presented in Appendix B.

**Constructivism Implications**

The question is how does a teacher education program which initially focuses its efforts on developing constructivist learners in theory make the shift towards the development of constructivist educators in practice; or reflective student teachers into reflective educators? This is often the problem with going from theory into practice and hence one of the criticisms of constructivism.

Although there has been wide acceptance of constructivism and its strong support for conceptualizing how students learn, there have been criticisms. Oftentimes, situations that actually arise in practice are not predicted by a theory’s implications (Orstein & Hunkins, 2004). In addition, while there is a considerable body of research on constructivism, (i.e., how students learn) there is a lack in support for transferring this theory into instruction for developing practitioners. Orstein and Hunkins (2004) points out that while there is information of how students learn, it does not necessarily indicate how student teachers are taught.

What is significant is that the foundational tenets of constructivism that explain the learning process are also applicable to learning about teaching. Initial certification teachers have experienced the teacher-student experience as a student in what Darling-Hammond (2000) suggested is an apprenticeship through observations and they will build upon these experiences to formulate their beliefs and values about becoming a practitioner. In effective
teacher education programs, they are exposed to multiple field experiences to expand their relationships with students, thus creating more social interactions that will prepare them as educators. Finally, these programs will also ensure that the learning environment offer opportunities to gain new skills to complete familiar tasks. In this light, constructivism and its approaches to learning in general, can be applied to teacher learning as well.

One implication of constructivism for teacher education is that programs cannot be designed in a way that forces students to memorize an entire body of new knowledge without connecting to their personal lives. Best stated by Orstein and Hunkins, (2004, p. 123), “most of the traditional learning was described as a process of transmitting verbal and concrete information to the learner; it was authority centered, subject centered, [and] highly organized.” In contrast, there must be room for what Taba (1962) referred to as “discovery learning,” which rely upon critical thinking and reflective skills such as “abstracting, deducing, comparing, contrasting, inferring, and contemplating” (p. 156). Bruner also advocated for discovery learning and determined it to be the unformed knowledge where students have the opportunity to put the pieces together for its final construction (Orstein and Hunkins, 2004). Discovery learning, then suggests that one important part in the cognitive process is reflective thinking. Developing reflective learners who construct knowledge by relying heavily on critical thinking skills is an essential element in teacher education. It formulates the foundation for these learners who are then expected to become reflective practitioners.

Another key to developing constructivist student teachers may be the development of a constructivist learning environment which incorporates an awareness of teacher candidates as student and as perspective educators (Chicoine, 2004). The environment plays an essential
role in the constructivist model under the premise that there are pedagogical implications of the constructivism theory. As discussed by Chicoine (2004), since this theory is based on the learner being active in the process, the environment has to provide “challenging issues, problems, and projects that require active engagement such as researching, experimenting, and reporting” (p. 249). “Effective education has to allow for practical activity” (Orstein & Hunkins, 2004, p. 113). This environment is grounded in the tenets of the constructivist framework as previously mentioned, where the most important consideration is given to the development of an innovative and experiential-based learning environment (Harrington & Enochs, 2009).

What has been discussed so far is the constructivist theory; the process of knowledge construction as it relates to the role of the learner and his/her social interactions. Furthermore, the implications for student-teacher learners were presented. Now, the focus is turned to the most important features of an effective teacher education program which play a key role in the development of teacher candidates and ultimately educators in the classroom.

**The Effective Teacher Education Program**

According to a review of the literature, there is a relationship between the quality of teacher candidates and the quality of the teacher education program they attend. An adequate teacher education program is an important determinant in actualizing effective educators (NCTAF, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Malm, 2009; Baek & Ham, 2009). According to Darling-Hammond (2000, p. 167), “reviews of research over the past 30 years have concluded that…fully prepared and certified teachers are generally better rated and more successful with students than teachers without this preparation.” Furthermore, The National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future found that one of the factors that deny
students access to “competent, caring and qualified teachers” is the “major flaws in teacher preparation” (NCTAF, 1996 p. 10). Based on Darling-Hammond’s (2006) survey of over nine hundred new teachers about their preparation, three problems were identified in teacher education programs as they work to help teacher candidates learn about teaching. They are helping pre-service teachers learn to translate theory into practice; distinguishing teaching qualities from their experiences as a student; and coping with the complex and constantly changing nature of teaching.

A major criticism of traditional teacher education programs is they often fail to provide teacher candidates with the necessary opportunities for translating theory into practice (Zeichner, Melnick, & Gomez, 1996; Bransford & Darling-Hammond, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Baek & Ham, 2009). Theory serves as the framework for the most valid knowledge that can be generalized and applied to multiple experiences. Practice refers to the activities, procedures, and skills that are applicable to real-world situations (Orstein & Hunkins, 2004). This notion of turning theory into reality is the “how to” of teaching or what is often referred to as the art of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 305). Although it is often agreed upon that developing practices based on theory is the great challenge (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Orstein & Hunkins, 2004), there are some practices that have been connected to the research.

According to Orstein & Hunkins (2004) there are several steps that should guide educators when moving from theory to practice. The first step identified is making sure that the basis of any theory and/or practice be grounded in knowledge from professional scholarly literature. Another step is avoiding new trends that have yet to be tested for validity, accuracy and values. This will often confuse teacher candidates and may discourage them if the practice
fails. The next consideration is the idea that any theory should be supported by its relevance to real-world situations in the classroom. Theories guided by realistic conditions and empirical evidence over the test of time will ensure that teacher candidates walk away from their courses equipped with the tools for becoming an effective practitioner.

An important practice that helps prospective teachers connect theory to practice is when faculty model research driven techniques in their own classroom (Parkay & Stanford, 2008). Faculty, especially in teacher education programs, should point out particular pedagogical points of interest and how they are presenting information. For example, a common part of a skilled teacher’s lesson plan is to begin the topic with accessing the student’s prior knowledge (Parkay & Stanford, 2010). The course instructor in teacher education programs should make a point to explicitly let teacher candidates know that what he is doing right now is accessing prior knowledge. Teacher candidates will then be able to see how just as they are expected to practice certain techniques, their course instructors follows the same strategies as well. In other words, the faculty demonstrate and model effective teaching practices that teacher candidates that teacher candidates will be expected to perform as well.

With this in mind, one of the main goals of a teacher education program should be to help prospective teachers connect the theories of learning and teaching in teacher education courses with application-based experiences that will, in turn, prepare them to be successful future teachers (Liberman et al., 2005; Bransford & Darling-Hammond, 2005; Martin, 1995; Orstein & Hunkins, 2004). A survey conducted by Darling-Hammond, Chung, and Frelow (2002) suggests that teacher candidates who began teaching without prior practical training were the least prepared out of the three thousand teachers surveyed. Furthermore, research
conducted by Baek and Ham (2009) found that the teaching practicum component of a teacher education program significantly improved the educational value for twenty-nine pre-service teachers. These results suggest that students gain the necessary practical teaching competence and readiness for teaching obtained in the practicum where they are translating theory into practice.

In addition to helping teacher candidates connect theory to practice, teacher education programs must be designed in a way that its prospective teachers learn how to evaluate their practices through reflection, often reshaping their teaching “in ways quite different from their own experience as students;” (Darling-Hammond, 2006 p. 305). Some teacher candidates discover the challenge of developing their own philosophy of education because they have, by virtue of being a student, ideals of what a teacher is and should do but have yet to evaluate the effectiveness of these practices. Often these candidates will have to review and clarify their own values and beliefs as they begin to think and act like a teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Teacher education programs must be able to provide opportunities for these candidates to consider their experiences as a student in direct comparison to their beliefs and values as a budding educator.

Finally, a struggle for teacher education programs has been to help its teacher candidates through the complexities that are embedded in teaching in today’s society (Darling-Hammond, 2006). From a cultural perspective, working with a population that is becoming more and more diverse present new teacher candidates with a challenge to address a variety of needs (Rao, 2005; Perry, Moore, Edwards, Acosta, & Frey, 2009). Delpit (1988) challenges those in education to remember they are working with “other people’s children” as is the title of
her book, and must consider each of these learner’s needs, specifically from a cultural and social perspective. In addition to cultural differences, today’s teachers have to address individual learner needs, learning styles, multiple intelligences, strengths, and other areas of learning that address a learner’s range of abilities (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Parkay & Stanford, 2010).

How are teacher candidates prepared to deal with these complexities which not only overlap but occur simultaneously? Truly the responsibility inherent in developing effective educators is one that requires a great deal of evidence and knowing what is essential in such a program. A review of the literature found that an effective teacher education program will have the following components in meeting these goals (Darling-Hammond, 2006; National Academy of Education (NAE), 2005; King, Hollins, and Hayman, 1997; Goodman, 1990):

- Extensive field experiences, with thirty weeks minimum of supervised opportunities in working with diverse students.
- Effective teacher education programs provide structured opportunities to practice particular strategies and use specific tools in the classroom setting.
- A clear mission in which the program design is integrated and coherent and a common vision is carried throughout the program in all courses that relate the content and its application through field experiences.
- Clear strategies that help students constantly evaluate their practice and beliefs and how to relate them to people from diverse backgrounds.
- Help students to connect theory with practice or “content within contexts in which it can be applied” (NAE, p. 41).
“Learning in and from practice” (NAE, p. 46). Through student teaching, performance assessments and portfolios, analyses of teaching and learning, case methods, and practitioner inquiry are intended to support teacher’s ability to learn in and from practice.

The Urban in Education: Conceptualizing Urban

The National Academy of Education has called on teacher education programs to assess how they are producing graduates who are eligible to teach. This assessment is occurring at the college where this study is taking place. Because this university’s mission is to prepare teacher candidates for the urban setting, the concept of urban must be addressed. Urban is a term that refers to high density populations. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, urban is defined as “all territory, population, and housing units in urbanized areas and urban clusters” in which an urbanized area is “a densely settled area that has a census population of at least 50,000” (US Census Website). A teacher education program that focuses on preparing ‘urban’ educators has a specific responsibility given the complexities of the urban setting and it demonstrates the program’s acknowledgment of a unique dynamic that it often ignored. Weiner’s (2002) extensive research on urban places conceptualizes urban “by thinking of urban-ness on a continuum, ranging from largest cities (New York and Los Angeles) on one pole to the least urban communities (small, wealthy suburbs populated almost entirely with European Americans) on the other” (p. 18). In his study, he found that political, economic, and social forces are more intrusive the larger the city and subsequently the school system is.

Mayberry, Crossley and Sweet (1980) considered ‘urban’ through historical lenses, reflecting on the migration of culturally diverse groups who sought a better way of life when they
moved to the inner city. Considerably, the culture which emerged from such diversity is one that required an acceptance of “unofficial laws” and a respect for the variance in age, ethnicity, practices, and beliefs (p. 9). The nature of the urban environment is therefore, one in which the complexities due to the myriad of cultural beliefs and practices bring about a range of additional strategies for survival.

In characterizing the urban context, Solomon and Sekayi (2007) used inner city and urban interchangeably noting that all urban areas are not necessarily considered inner city.

Urban is characterized by socioeconomic disenfranchisement and marginalization: (a) those with high-density populations living below the poverty line; and (b) those with an entrenched “underclass” and unstable, transient communities of immigrants and refugees with limited or no economic and educational resources, living in government-assisted housing, with limited social and health services (p. 10).

Urban areas are large cities with large populations and varied sections of economic stability and instability; however, the problem is often that people in the disenfranchised sections of these cities have diminished access to enriched opportunities such as educational achievement (Mayberry, 1980; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Solomon and Sekayi, 2007). In essence then, urban often denotes the specific complexities of the inner city. The problems of poverty or low-income, overcrowding, discrimination racially and ethnically, and unemployment cast a dark reality for many in these conditions; and this is what is often referred to when the inner city or urban is stated.

Clearly, there are many inconsistencies with the term ‘urban.’ As mentioned, some scholars use it to reference a specific location and its demographics. Then, there are those who
use the term as a “catchall category and euphemism for denoting conditions perceived as undesirable” (Sikula, 1996, p. 747). Whichever conceptualization is acceptable, it is clear that there is a distinct way of life in these settings. Furthermore, workings in the schools of urban areas require a set of skills that prepare new teachers on how to cope with diverse experiences and understand the magnitude of issues they may face in order to endure for the long term (Sikula, 1996).

**Urban Education and Urban Teacher Education Programs**

The dynamics of urban areas will inevitably impact the quality of education for its students for “schools are inextricably linked to the communities they serve through social, political, economic, and cultural interests” (Kretovics & Nussel, 1994, p. ix). Generally, urban school districts have to accommodate and therefore adapt to students from a diverse population, far more than other school districts; (Weiner, 2002). One of these groups is the immigrants, who have left their countries searching for better conditions. Historically they have migrated to the inner city in large numbers, and the schools are responsible for educating children whose first language is not English.

While all school districts experience problems such as violence, drugs, pregnancies and drop-outs, the numbers are often increased in the urban schools districts (Kretovis and Nussel, 1994). In addition to these problems, many urban school lack the resources—including, but not limited to technology, highly qualified teachers, and books—and funding to keep their students at the same level as their suburban counterparts (Weiner, 2006). Class sizes are often larger in urban settings and due to the increased amount of individual needs, teachers are not able to reach their ideal objectives and goals; in the end, students suffer academically. Conversely,
“teachers in many inner city schools may not expect high levels of achievement from their students because of preconceived notions of student ability” (Kretovis and Nussel, 1994, p. 125).

Unfortunately, many new teachers feel ill-prepared for such conditions in urban districts and in the long run, teacher recruitment is affected (Thompson, 2007). In central cities and poor rural areas these sub-par working conditions make teacher recruitment more difficult, and many schools hire individuals who are underprepared for the classroom. The goal of an urban teacher education program is to equip teachers with the confidence and additional strategies that address these unique concerns of urban districts. What are these additional components that make an urban teacher education program effective in developing urban educators? The program must provide its students with multiple experiences in urban settings even to the point of immersion in the urban community (Delpit, 1988). These exposures will enhance pre-service teacher’s awareness of diversity and social capital, especially as it relates to urban life.

Teacher preparation programs for urban settings must also be immersed in urban culture and stay abreast of urban demands. This is done through a creation of what Pennsylvania State Professor William Hank referred to as an “urban partnership” (Yeo and Kanpol, 2002, p. 213). Developing this synergistic relationship with selected urban schools and pre-student and student teachers is the idea. The urban schools are serviced with the additional support from pre-service teachers while these students gain exposure to the urban setting. In the end, the needs of the community, both university and urban school district alike are served and exchange resources that benefit those involved.

The Connection: Effective Educators and Teacher Education Programs
In essence, the effectiveness of the teacher education program significantly impacts the effectiveness of its future teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education requested a review in which fifty-seven studies, published in peer-reviewed journals were analyzed. According to this review, there is a relationship between teacher education and teacher effectiveness “in controlled studies across units of analysis and measures of preparation” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 21). Furthermore, effective teachers have a significant impact in student achievement; some researchers even argue that the teacher is often one of the most important factors in the academic growth of students (Orstein and Hunkins, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Sekayi and Solomon, 2007).

The significance of having effective teachers dramatically increases when considering challenging conditions facing urban communities and its schools. Darling-Hammond (2006, p. 5) identified the reason why this is so:

The need for such [effective] teachers is especially great where schools are the critical lifeline for student success. It may not take much training to teach children who are already skillful learners; who are supported by highly educated parents who build home libraries, take them to museums, pay for summer enrichment programs, and hire tutors when their own knowledge runs out; who have the advantages of steady income, health care, food, and home stability; and whose language and culture are compatible with those of the adults in the school. However, these home and community supports are the exception rather than the rule in urban (and some suburban and rural) public schools.
An effective teacher education program, then, must be one that develops future educators who have a strong sense of subject area knowledge, and equally important, a foundation that is built upon knowledge about teaching and learning. This suggests that the educators who teach in the teacher education program should be grounded in these fundamental principles as well, whereby the curriculum of each course cultivates this development. If there is any college program whose main interests should be effective teaching—from faculty to future educators to the final consumer, the students—it is the college of education, for they are the teacher’s teacher.

Summary

In chapter two, a connection was made between the need for an effective teacher education program in developing effective educators. In order to be effective, the program should have a clear mission and strategies, have a cohesive program that ties all of its courses together under the same mission; offer extensive field experiences; and finally help students to connect theory with practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006; King, Hollins, and Hayman, 1997; National Academy of Education (NAE), 2005). It was also noted that in order for educators to be effective in urban settings, they should be trained for the challenges and experiences specific to the area. A collaborative effort should be fostered with the teacher education program and the larger community to bring about the experiences necessary for the new teacher to feel supported and for the urban students to succeed in their environment (Yeo and Kanpol, 2002).

In chapter 3, the methodology will be presented. A qualitative case study will be conducted to evaluate the initial certification program’s teacher candidates and their perception of the
success with the university’s claims of preparing them to be reflective, innovative practitioners who are committed to diversity.
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

A qualitative case study investigation was conducted to examine how students in an initial certification course of a teacher education program are prepared to be reflective, innovative practitioners who are committed to diversity. Given the nature of the case study to explore a problem with the intent for in-depth information and derive meaning from its participants (Merriam, 1988), I believe that this type of methodology was the most appropriate because through rich, thick description, experiences and perspectives of the research events can be examined through a case study methodology. A case study that captures the experiences and perspectives of teacher candidates in an initial certification teacher education course will optimistically enhance the depth of knowledge of urban teacher preparation in initial certification courses. One of the criticisms of case studies is the inability to abstract generalizations for the population (Burton & Bartlett, 2005; Merriam, 1988). However, Burton & Bartlett suggest that the case study approach offers a rich and in-depth description that is beneficial to an organization, as in the case of the College where this study is being conducted. While the case may be specific to the nature of this program, it may offer “sufficient similarities to make the findings from one study useful when seeking to understand others” (p. 86). The following techniques I used for conducting this case study and collecting the data are supported by Merriam (1988), Yin (1994), Gillham (2000) and Stake (2005): (1) identify the problem and determine the research questions; (2) select the case; (3) prepare and collect data; (4) analyze and evaluate data and (5) prepare the final report.

Restatement of the Purpose and Focus Questions
The purpose of this study was to examine how initial certification teacher education teacher candidates are prepared to be reflective, innovative practitioners who are committed to diversity based on their perceptions. The following questions guided this study:

1. How did participants develop their understanding of becoming an effective urban educator who is reflective, innovative, and committed to diversity based on prior experiences?
2. To what extent does the student teacher course improve the participants’ understanding of the reflective, innovative urban practitioner who is committed to diversity?
3. How do participants characterize an effective urban educator based on experiences in the course and what artifacts demonstrate this characterization?
4. How can participants tell if someone is a reflective educator, an innovative educator, and an educator who is committed to diversity?
5. Do participants believe these qualities can be measured and if so, how?

Research Design

Considering that this study is used to examine perceptions of teacher candidates and their preparedness in the initial certification education courses, a qualitative case study method was employed for its ability to capture “studies of events within their real-life contexts” (Yin, p. 66). A case study methodology was ideal for several reasons. First and in line with the aim of qualitative case studies, several methods of data collection helped to triangulate the findings. Participant interviews was just one of these methods and their responses were important because they may be able to “eliminate erroneous conclusions so that one is left with the best possible, the most compelling, interpretation” (Bromley, 1986, p. 38) of what actually prepares
teacher candidates in order to meet the College of Education’s claims. Case studies also rely upon direct and systematic observations in the data collection process (Yin, 1994). The observations informed the emerging themes and categories that were used to develop the final report.

This study collected data from five self-selected students who were in the student-teaching phase of the program and expected to graduate in December, 2010 or May, 2011. Several sources of data were collected and analyzed from these student-teachers to examine their perceptions of the claims from the College of Education. The first source was field notes in Learning Community group meetings that took place once each month from September to December. Participants in these meetings included a University supervisor and teacher candidates. The second set of data was field notes from eleven (11) observations taken at the teacher candidates’ individual placements for student teaching. The third data set was open-ended interviews of the teacher candidates that were collected and analyzed towards the end of their student teaching experience. The fourth data set was portfolios that include evidence of completion of the College of Education’s competencies and claims (see Appendix D). The fifth data set was reviewed documents that included the following: WSU’s College of Education Conceptual Framework; the COE Student Teacher Handbook; Supervisor Midterm Evaluation for Student-Teachers; and Supervisor Final Evaluation for Student-Teachers.

A cross case analysis is the method used to develop emerging categories and determine the overall themes of the study. Using a modified version of Stake’s (2006) cross-case analysis procedure, each of the participants’ responses is compared and contrasted with each other in relation to the findings and themes.
The Context of the Study

Local Area

The study takes places in Detroit, the largest populous city in Michigan and one of the United States’ largest metropolitan areas. As reported by the 2008 Estimate Population from the U.S. Census, Detroit is considered the 11th largest populated state in the country. As with other large urban centers, the metropolitan area is home to many ethnicities and cultural settings. While over 80% of the city is African-American, the diversity is present as it is dispersed throughout the area. In one instance, the neighboring center, Hamtramck, has over twenty different ancestry groups present according to the 2000 US Census. These unique differences, such as religious, culture and ethnicities are represented in the campus life at Wayne State University.

Looking at the US Census 2008 population estimates, there are places in Detroit that reflect the declining population that has been going on since the 1950s. In many parts of the city, mass areas are covered with boarded houses and buildings, and abandoned neighborhoods with scattered images of a once prominent dwelling. Through a case study on Detroit, Sugrue (2005) explained that the “transformation of American cities” is the result of three factors. As Sugrue (2005) writes, like many other urban cities, Detroit’s population has been cut in half due to “industrial decline, racial conflict and disinvestment” (p. xvi). Some areas, however are witnessing efforts to improve these conditions such as those surrounding Wayne State University (Sugrue, 2005). Through the arts, tourism, and entertainment arenas, Detroit has spent “millions of dollars in subsidies and tax abatements for entertainment venues, conference centers, and hotels” (p. xxiii).
In midtown Detroit where Wayne State University is located, for example, the area is surrounded by museums and historical sites such as the Detroit Science Center, Detroit Institute of Arts and the Charles H. Wright African American Museum. The Detroit Tigers Stadium and Ford field, home of the baseball and football team respectively, are also nearby where crowds gather and traffic comes to a near halt before and after game time. Recently renovated upscale restaurants and luxury apartments are also found in this area. Just from the aforementioned, it is reasonable to note that the neighborhood around Wayne State University is full of energy with businesses and activities thriving.

One reason why the area around Wayne State University is maintained could be the efforts of the University Cultural Center Association (UCCA). With over twenty eight projects and initiatives, this consortium of local stakeholders (including leaders from WSU) seek to improve and maintain the area through the following main avenues: 1. Beautification and Maintenance; 2) Development; 3) Marketing; 4) Planning and Economic Development and 5) Special Events. Such projects have included the creation of thirty perennial flowerbeds along the major road medians; Detroit spring clean up project; the opening of the Ferry Inn, an $8 million 42-room boutique hotel; the Midtown Lofts just to name a few (UCCA website). Most of these projects create and enhance the area surrounding the campus.

The University

Covering 203 acres, Wayne State University (WSU) has over 33,000 undergraduate and graduate students (WSU website). WSU offers six extension centers in three of the surrounding counties where students complete courses. In fact, a few complete degree programs are offered
from these extension centers as well. Wayne State University also has an expanding presence of online courses in many of its colleges. Wayne State University may not be different from the other state universities with these offerings but what makes it considerably unique is that it is Michigan’s only urban research university. This is reflected in the University’s vision for its student: “World-Class Education in the Real World” (WSU website).

The College of Education

Wayne State University’s College of Education was founded in 1881 and has one of the largest teacher certification programs in Michigan; it now has over 4,400 students enrolled in its thirty-seven programs. A little more than half of the students are enrolled in the undergraduate and the remaining in graduate programs. The College of Education is guided by the following mission statement: “The College of Education prepares professionals who have the skills and understandings to enable them to participate in and contribute to a complex, changing society” (COE Website).

The Course

According to the College of Education Student Teacher Handbook, TED 5780: Student-Teaching is the final course in the teacher education program for teacher candidates. Candidates will be placed in a class at a school based on the specific academic certification of which they are seeking. They are expected to gradually accept full responsibility of the class which includes the lesson planning, implementation, and student evaluation. This course is designed to be in the final pre-service experience that will prepare teacher candidates to be successful teachers.
Teachers candidates enrolled in the Student Teaching course have to meet several requirements in addition to teaching a class in a school. First, teacher candidates must keep a professional reflective journal that documents their daily activities and personal growth. Second, they must continue to work on their final portfolio which is presented at the end of Student-Teaching experience. The portfolio consists of artifacts that demonstrate the teacher candidate’s growth and development as an educator. Included is evidence that the candidate has met the claims of the College of Education. Artifacts include a Teaching and Learning Statement; a unit of instruction; a case study; and several outstanding artifacts chosen by the candidate. Third, teacher candidates are assigned to a Community of Learners group which meets monthly as a means of support among their colleagues. In these cohorts, teacher candidates meet with a group leader along with several other teacher candidates. The purpose is to give student-teachers the opportunity for interaction with colleagues where they are able to share, discuss, and solve problems. Fourth, all student teachers must attend several seminars throughout the semester which include topics such as Diversity, Professionalism, and Digital Storytelling.

Participants

The sample for this study was five teacher candidates who were enrolled in TED 5780: Student-Teaching in the Fall 2010 and in the elementary education planned program. The age range was 26 years old to 49 years old. Four of the five participants attended a local community college prior to entering the Education program at Wayne State University. The first guideline in selecting teacher candidates for this study was that they were placed in an urban setting and attended the same Community of Learners meeting. The Community of Learners met once a
month and was supervised by a faculty member at Wayne State University. The second guideline was that these teacher candidates were selected based on their commitment to further research. The third consideration was that all of the teacher candidates teach in the same school district.

Participants were notified that there are no identifiers in this study. They were also notified of the time commitment for this study: participants were observed in their field placements for a minimum of two 1-hour observations. Towards the end of the semester, each participant was given a 1-hour interview and spent a minimum of thirty minutes discussing their portfolios. The total individual time commitment for this study including hours observed in their field placement was approximately 3 ½ hours. Not included are the hours observed in the four Community of Learners cohort meetings which were required for the course.

Table 1
Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code (Pseudo-name)</th>
<th>Age during Study</th>
<th>No. of Yrs at College</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Grade Taught during Student-Teaching</th>
<th>Completed all Course work? Yes or No</th>
<th>Completed Certification app? Yes or No</th>
<th>Next Steps within one year? (Teach, Job Search, Masters, More School, or Break)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Sam</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Masters in BBE/Substitute teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Thompson</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20 (on and off)</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Hired as Math Teacher at student teaching asstn/Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Kimberly</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Teach; more school; job search</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Holly</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>No; one semester left to complete the final student teaching for special education teachers</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Emerson</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Job search; substitute teach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ms. Sam

Prior to her attendance at Wayne State University, Ms. Sam gained an associate degree at a local community college. For three years, Ms. Sam volunteered at a school in her neighborhood and knew she wanted to do more in the schools once her children were older. She started the Teacher Education program at Wayne State in 2007 with a major in science and interests in Bi-Lingual and Elementary Education. She speaks and writes Arabic fluently.

Ms. Thompson

Ms. Thompson attended the university on and off since 1991 with a beginning interest in the sciences. She was a para-professional for six years and took on numerous volunteering positions working with children. Her interest in teaching developed out of seeing a lot of students who “fall by the wayside,” and it motivated her to be a part of the solution in “producing productive members of society” (Ms. Thompson Interview, December 2, 2010).

Ms. Kimberly

Ms. Kimberly began with interests in public relations at an out-of-state university and then at a local community college. She stayed a year at each and with a growing interest in becoming a teacher she applied to WSU Elementary Education program with a major in Language Arts. Inspired by overcoming her own struggles in school with “different tricks that worked” for her, she wanted to help students succeed and reach beyond their academic challenges (Ms. Kimberly Interview, December 2, 2010).

Ms. Holly

A formal postal worker, Ms. Holly began at a local community college and has always had the desire to become a teacher. Her major is Special Education and she has experience
working with students of varying abilities including blindness, autistic challenges, and ADHD. She also worked with children at her church for several years prior to her attendance at the College (Ms. Holly Interview, February 3, 2011). As is the case for Special Education majors, Ms. Holly would complete another student-teaching requirement, this time working in a Special Education classroom in the proceeding semester.

**Ms. Emerson**

Fluent in Arabic, Ms. Emerson began her studies in WSU Elementary Education program with major in Language Arts, after attending a local community college. She was devoted to helping the children in her family—immediate and extended—with homework and academic support; these experiences led to her desire to teach. Ms. Emerson stated that teaching is one of the most rewarding jobs and wanted to be the one to help children given that she’s patient and caring (Ms. Emerson Interview, November 22, 2010). Eventually, she wants to return to acquire an endorsement in Bi-lingual Education.

**Procedures**

The research phase of this study began when the proposal was approved by Wayne State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Next, the researcher attended the Community of Learners meeting in order to obtain voluntary consent for participation in this study. At the meeting, two points of interests were discussed. The first interest was to request participants for study on a voluntary basis. Secondly, a schedule was created for observation dates to collect field notes from the participants’ field placement site; discuss their artifacts; and conduct the individual open-ended interviews. After the five teacher candidates were identified, they were given a pseudo name in order to protect their identity.
Once the selection process was complete, permission was acquired from the Superintendent in the district where the student teachers were placed via phone and a written follow-up. In this correspondence, the purpose of my research was outlined, and the nature of my observation was detailed which was to observe the candidate for one hour while they are teaching in the class. It was also noted that there are no identifiers in this study. The first observation was in September and October; the final observation in late November.

**Data Collection**

This study relied upon qualitative data in the form of field notes from group observations and teacher candidates during their student teaching; interviews; teacher candidate artifacts from their portfolio; and document reviews. According to Yin (1994) and Merriam (1998), the multiple sources of data are the strength of the case study approach because it permits for triangulation. Triangulation lends itself to obtaining multiple sources of evidence thereby strengthening the construct validity and reliability of the case study. In this study, I collected data on the teacher candidates’ experiences and perspectives on being prepared to be effective urban educators who are reflective, innovative and committed to diversity.

**Field Notes**

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003) field notes are important because “it can provide any study with a personal log that helps the researcher to keep track of the development of the project” (p. 111) and helps to begin the analysis phase. During each interview, document review and the survey, I wrote a detailed descriptive report on what occurred. I also collected field notes from eleven (11) class observations using Spradley’s (1980) methods of participant observation. Although I did not participate in the activities to “any great extent,” (p. 59) I was
engaged in passive to moderate participation by speaking with the teacher candidate during or after their class. According to Spradley (p. 54), there are two purposes for a participant observer: engage in the activities and observe the people, the place and the activities that happen in the social situation. These observations occurred over three months, the Fall 2010 semester. One observation of each of the five participants took place in September through October; and a final observation of each participant took place in late November.

The reports collected after each interview, document review, and classroom observations were labeled and stored on the computer along with a hard copy for the final report with the date and type of data collected. Using the method proposed by Bogdan and Biklen (2003), I was working to provide a rich and “well-endowed” description. Each field note report described the following five components: 1) the setting in which the data was taken; 2) information about the participant’s appearance and mannerisms 3) specific quotes from the participants and reconstruction of the data; 4) sequence of events; and 5) researcher behavior and reflective analysis. When all of the data were collected, I often wrote a field notes summary in an effort to recall anything that may have been pertinent to the study. These observations became the important groundwork for the questions that were discussed in the interviews with the students. They also formed the building blocks of an audit trail which is important in creating trustworthiness.

**Open-Ended Interviews**

An interview is a conversation in which the purpose is to understand the interviewee’s meanings on a specific topic or issue (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), interviews should be audio-recorded and then transcribed in order to capture the exact
words of each participant. The interview was open-ended as suggested by Spradley (1980), which allowed the participant to elaborate at will on the questions asked. I engaged the participant to obtain more information as needed and was prepared with general probing questions developed prior to the interview.

Five self-selected teacher candidates enrolled in TED 5780: Student-Teachers were asked to respond to questions in an open-ended interview. In order to discuss growth and/or development from the course, interview participants answered questions towards the end of the course. With this, participants were able to respond on the effects the course had on perceptions of the claims. The questions focused on the goal of the research and that is to provide insight in the participant’s perspective on the claim that the College of Education prepares educators to be reflective, innovative, and committed to diversity (See Appendix E for the interview protocol).

Reviewed Documents

Several documents helped to inform this study including but not limited to gathered material from the TEAC advisory committee; the College’s conceptual framework and information on their website; and The College of Education Student-Teacher Handbook. Particular emphasis and analysis was given to the ten required assignments used in early teacher education courses and that were observed for accreditation through TEAC. The use of documents in a case study is important because it corroborates and augments the evidence from other data sources (Yin, 1994).

Student Artifacts
The five teacher candidates who were followed throughout the semester were asked to share their portfolio along with any other artifacts that may be linked to the claims such as their lesson plans and reflective journal. I also asked the candidates who were interviewed to discuss these artifacts in order to provide a richer description as it related to their perspective of the claims. Artifacts included required assignments in the course such as lesson plans, unit plans, journal entries; as well as other artifacts that the teacher candidates shared as a result of their student teaching experience.

**Data Analysis**

In qualitative research, data analysis begins in the data collection process considering that this design is largely an inductive process (Merriam, 1988). Once I began to collect information, I was looking for major themes that emerged. I did, however, follow Bogdan & Biklen’s (2003) suggestion of conducting a formal analysis after all the data were collected; this is recommended for beginning researchers to ensure that each part of the process is given its appropriate allocation of time and attention. As expressed by Spradley (1980), analysis is ultimately “a search for patterns,” (p. 85) and this is the first stage in the analysis process. I organized, coded, and synthesized the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) as I searched for patterns. Using Merriam’s (1988) intensive analysis process, I then identified major themes across data based on the research questions that guided the study. Next, I considered the data collected from class observations and from the interview from each interviewee; each of these participants are considered as a mini-case. Their responses were analyzed in relation to the themes that emerged during the intensive analysis phase (Stake, 2006). A cross-case analysis of the mini-cases was conducted to compare and contrast the data to find out what was
common and unique across the cases. Finally, the assertions made from the data were presented in the Findings report based on evidence from the analysis.

*Initial Analysis*

After the data collection process, the information was coded to identify emerging themes as supported by the major themes in the related focus questions. At this stage, I was looking for similarities among the responses in the broadest categories which correlated with the guiding questions and gave insight as the teacher candidate’s conception of reflection, innovation and a commitment to diversity. As themes emerged and categories could be subdivided, these themes were further broken down into subcategories. Using a modified version of Spradley’s (1980) domain analysis to organize the data into categories and themes, I searched for semantic relationships of the responses. This involved looking for terms that emerged as parts of one domain. By categorizing similar phrases, identifying the relationship of terms to its form and connecting it with examples from the data, I was able to discover the emerging subcategories across the responses. Table 2 is the initial analysis worksheet where I considered the major themes, categories and subcategories. After careful review of the data, I continued to evaluate the themes which are shown in Table 3.
# Table 2

*Initial Analysis Worksheet #1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes that emerged</th>
<th>Date: Jan. 2011</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating Teacher Experience</td>
<td><em>It also appears that the input specifically the student teaching experience is variable. Some students are in a “team-teaching” while others “sink-or-swim;” still others are in “teaching development” where responsibilities are released in stages.</em> (Entry 5 RJ)</td>
<td>Team teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparedness from WSU</td>
<td>Cooperating teacher method</td>
<td>Sink or swim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specific courses</td>
<td>Teaching development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reflective educator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>innovative educator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>committed to diversity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>areas of strengths</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>areas of weakness</td>
<td>Exhibited confidence about…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Development MTTC</td>
<td>Exhibited anxiety about…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final Classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behavior management technology</td>
<td>Kinds of @ WSU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Elmo machine (Electricity Light Machine Organization)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smart Board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PowerPoint</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kinds of @ S-T location</td>
<td>Examples of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promethean board</td>
<td>innovative educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smart Board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PowerPoint</td>
<td>reflective educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>radio use in the classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>projector</td>
<td>committed to diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conception of WSU Claims</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Intensive Analysis

I employed Merriam’s (1998) intensive analysis process. This involved a deeper look at the categories and themes from the previous process in order to refine and reduce each taxonomic class to interpret meaning from the data (Merriam, 1998). These themes were then analyzed to determine the connections of the subcategories in order to forward the assertion development stage. They were labeled as Theme 1, Theme 2, etc. and indicated primary information about the goal of the study. The study did provide an assertion of the participants’ preparedness towards becoming an effective urban educator as supported by the data.

As I continued the analysis process, I modified what would be considered themes or categories. I also assessed which of the initial guiding questions were relevant to the study and which ones need to reformulated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Based on the data collected, I determined that the following questions were relevant:

1. What do teacher candidates learn about being an effective educator while student-teaching?

2. To what extent does the teacher education program improve the participants’ understanding of the reflective, innovative urban practitioner who is committed to diversity?

3. In what areas do teacher candidates perceive changes or improvements are needed in the future based on their experiences in student teaching?

During this phase of analysis, I coded, sorted, and analyzed the data using the NVIVO software. I entered all data sources in the program and then was able to sort related data based on similar connections and patterns. As I considered the focus questions, the theme analysis
phase helped me to further sort the data and make determinations of the subcategories. By the end of this phase, I had general themes as well as subcategories. Each theme and its subcategories addressed one of the research questions. The three themes are the following:

1. Becoming a Reflective Educator through Experience
2. Pedagogical Knowledge Gained during Student-Teaching
3. Preparedness from Teacher Education Program

The first theme emerged given that I was able to observe the candidates during their student-teaching semester. I was able to collect specific data from observations, interviews and artifacts about their reflective experiences during this course. The second theme addressed the candidates’ pedagogical knowledge gained. The third theme emerged as candidates expressed their sense of preparedness in the form of their readiness for a future classroom and future recommendations to the Teacher Education program. They discussed the knowledge gained and experience with technology both prior to and during Student Teaching. An unexpected category came out of my observations which led me to further investigate the participants’ student-teaching experience with the cooperating teacher. Their perspective is reflected in Theme three, Preparedness from Teacher Education Program, which addressed question three (See above).

After this phase, I began to reflect on the findings and considered the themes that had emerged in order to write the final report. Using a modified version of Stake’s (2006) worksheet for presenting the case study themes, the themes and subcategories for this study are provided in Table 3.
Table 3  
Themes that Emerged from Intensive Analysis Phase Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1: Becoming a Reflective Educator through experience</th>
<th>Question 1: What do teacher candidates learn about being an effective educator while student-teaching?</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A. Reflective Experiences during Student-teaching</td>
<td>Artifacts, Interviews, Observations</td>
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**Mini-Case Analysis**

Each teacher candidate was labeled as mini-case 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and the data collected were analyzed in depth according to the newly emerged themes developed in the intensive analysis phase. Each of the mini-cases provided a deeper understanding of the complex entity being studied which was the overall perceptions of the participants as they related to the teacher education program. At this stage, the individual participants were closely observed to explore their unique input as related to the purpose of the study and to each generated theme (Stake, 2006). All of the data were analyzed based on these initial findings to further develop the assertions with evidence.

**Cross-Case Analysis**

Using a modified version of Stake’s (2006) cross-case analysis procedure, the mini-cases were compared and contrasted in relation to the findings and themes. In this stage, it was important to acknowledge similarities and differences of each mini-case to the others. Tying in information from other data sources was also important at this stage as it demonstrated triangulation and support of the findings.

**Trustworthiness**

Given the notion of trustworthiness as presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985), I had to ask, “Will this project be trustworthy?” Case study is a form of naturalistic inquiry which is based on the axioms of the naturalism paradigm. The realities are value-bound, multiple, constructive and holistic. Its axioms are compared to the conventional paradigm presented by the positivism where realities are scientific, hypothesis-based, single and tangible. “Different research perspectives make different kinds of knowledge claims, and the criteria as to what counts as
significant knowledge vary one to another” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.294). For the purposes of this study, every attempt was made to present the data and findings in an unbiased manner. Some of the considerations of trustworthiness are outlined in this section followed by the ways in which I worked to meet the criteria.

In the conventional paradigm, the criteria by which the researcher evaluates are through internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity. The criteria appropriate for the naturalist paradigm are the following: true value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality, respectively. True value answers how to establish confidence in truth of findings. Applicability looks at how the findings apply in other contexts; consistency finds whether it can be repeated with same subjects in same context; and neutrality is determined by subjects and not biased by inquirer. The chapter on trustworthiness goes on to prove these measures are just as strong as those presented by the conventional paradigm. It states that, for example, these naturalistic designs would probably score as well as quasi-experimental designs (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The four criteria of trustworthiness in the naturalistic inquiry according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. There are several techniques that serve to strengthen credibility: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation analysis (comparing multiple sources to confirm information), negative case analysis (revising and rereading claims to rule out competing explanations), referential adequacy (put data aside and review after findings) and member checks (data are tested with members of group where data were originally collected). Transferability provides the thick description that establishes time and context of naturalistic research. Dependability and conformability is established through the methods of triangulation, overlapping, and audit trail.
The goal here is to use various sources to further establish trustworthiness. Essentially, the findings must be grounded in the data as evidenced by the reporting of the auditor. Finally it is important for the researcher to keep a record of field notes, keeping track of all field work with dates and times attached to it. It should also include changes to or decisions about method and how research impacts the researcher.

Given the notion of trustworthiness as presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985), I had to ask, “Will this project be trustworthy?” Given that there was prolonged and persistent observations; there was a detailed triangulation analysis, I met the criteria for trustworthiness. I was fully and intensely aware of the setting, people and culture of the environment. I worked to make the study credible through meaningful observations by being a participant observer; through member checks with participants during the initial data analysis stages while participants were student teaching as well as after the data collection stages; and through a triangulation of data sources. Transferability was accounted for by providing thick descriptions as presented from the field notes and findings. I placed emphasis on hidden or otherwise, ‘undercurrents’ of the scene as well. By recording the source of notes throughout the analysis stage, I served to keep an audit trail, focusing on the issue of dependability. This is the commitment that is given towards a case study that demonstrates trustworthiness.

Summary

Several sources of data were collected and analyzed from teacher candidates and their perceptions of the claims from the College of Education. Data were collected from five self-selected students who were in the student-teaching phase of the program and expected to graduate at the 2010-11 school year. Several sources of data were collected and analyzed
from these student-teachers to examine their perceptions of the claims from the College of Education. The first source was field notes from four observations, one in each month from September to December, of teacher candidates in their monthly Learning Community group meetings. The next set of data was field notes from eleven (11) observations taken at the teacher candidates’ individual placements for student teaching. Data were collected and analyzed from the five teacher candidates’ responses to an open-ended interview towards the end of their student teaching experience, along with artifacts they shared with me from the placement. In addition, documents were reviewed. They included the following: WSU’s College of Education Conceptual Framework; the Michigan Department of Education Student Exit Survey; COE Student Teacher Handbook; Supervisor Midterm Evaluation for Student-Teachers; and Supervisor Final Evaluation for Student-Teachers.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine how a teacher education program prepared teacher candidates to be effective urban educators who are reflective, innovative, and committed to diversity based on their perceptions and insight. Five self-selected candidates participated in this qualitative case study during the semester-long course for the Teacher Education program: TED 5780: Student-Teaching. The data were collected from observations in their student-teaching placement and their monthly Community of Learners meetings; along with interviews, artifacts and reviewed documents. The NVIVO software was used to sort, organize, code and analyze the data.

In this chapter, the findings are presented and analyzed. Because observations were made during the participants’ student-teaching experience, they may be referred to as student-teachers, participants and teacher candidates. Using Merriam’s (1988) intensive analysis process, major themes were identified across data based on the revised research questions. This chapter is separated into three major themes which are subdivided into a total of six subcategories (See Chapter 3, Table 3, p.65). The first theme, Becoming a reflective educator through experience, is the telling of candidates’ experiences in the classroom. Through reflection, they became aware of changes needed and discovered new ways to help students learn that improved their teaching throughout the semester. The second theme, Pedagogical knowledge gained, discusses the candidates’ development of instructional methods in adapting to the needs of culturally diverse students and differentiating instruction for varying abilities. It also discusses the candidates’ exposure to technological experiences.
The third theme, *Preparedness from the teacher education program*, has two subcategories. The first subcategory of this theme is *Connecting theory to practice: On constructivism*. It discusses the candidates’ ability to connect educational theories with their classroom experience as evidenced by a link between their teaching and learning statements, my observations, and their own perceptions. Using Stake’s (2006) analysis process, the data were compared and contrasted to identify cases where candidates’ beliefs about teaching and learning directly translate into their teacher behavior. The second subcategory addresses the candidates’ awareness for urban issues and the knowledge required to teach in this environment.

**Theme 1: Becoming a Reflective Educator through Experience**

Reflective practice is a two-phase process; phase one takes into account the cognitive aspect in reflection and phase two encompasses a subsequent action. The cognitive aspect of reflective practice is the awareness of a need to implement or modify a course of action. It stems from a probe of current conditions and then the realization that something different would be better in the experience being considered. The subsequent action is one that takes into account best practices for the projected outcome. The goal of reflective practice for educators is to carefully and continually consider what would be in the best interests of the students at all times.

Theme one gives insight into reflective experiences and new ways of teaching after reflection as shared by the five candidates. As the supporting evidence shows, teacher candidates were consistent with reflective practices both in and outside of the classroom, which impacted their instructional abilities. In the final interviews conducted at the end of the semester
I found that candidates kept a reflective journal during their student teaching experience and they shared times where through reflection, they realized they could make significant improvements to their instruction. I reviewed their journals to compare the classroom observations in order to discover if they probed and then changed or improved their instruction as a result of this practice. From my observations of their student-teaching, their journals and artifacts, and through their responses in our interviews, it was evident that some candidates made changes throughout their student-teaching experiences as a result of reflection. In some cases it compelled them to redo a course assignment or teach in an entirely different way. In other cases, reflection gave the candidates insight as to how they would do their lessons once they were leading their own classes in the future. These experiences will be presented in the following two subcategories: Reflective Experiences during Student-teaching and Playing with Numbers: Discovering New Ways to Teach after Reflection.

In the first subcategory, Reflective Experiences During Student-teaching, an analysis of the candidates' challenges in the classroom is presented in the context of reflection and innovation. Mrs. Emerson, Ms. Thompson, Ms. Kimberly and I had an informal meeting mid-semester where they shared their ideas on improvements that they could make moving forward. Some of these exchanges are presented and analyzed in the section A Reflective Redo: Overcoming Challenges in the Classroom through Reflection. Then a detailed account of reflection is provided in Ms. Holly's Tech Train Wreck where Ms. Holly considered appropriate use of technology with kindergarteners. “Train wreck” is a term Ms. Holly used to describe her experience using the document camera with her kindergartners (Ms. Holly interview, December 24, 2010). It offers a rich and thick description of an experience which brought about
monumental insight for Ms. Holly that she stated will have an impact on her future teaching career.

Finally in *Playing with Numbers: Discovering New Ways to Teach after Reflection*, Mrs. Emerson and Ms. Kimberly’s exploration of different ways to teach mathematical concepts proved to be successful the second time around and these experiences are outlined. Mrs. Emerson and her first graders were working with the number line, while Ms. Kimberly found a way to help her kindergarten students learn about estimation. Supported by their reflections and their portfolio, candidates discovered the importance and the connection between reflecting upon their teaching and then finding ways to enrich their classroom experiences to affect student achievement.

**Reflective Experiences during Student Teaching**

The teacher candidates’ reflective practices were examined and analyzed during their student-teaching semester. Making pedagogical, curricular, and behavioral modification decisions or changes to improve instruction for student achievement were documented. Observed accounts were noted where candidates adopted an alternate course of action than previously considered given the belief that it would be in the best interests of the students. The findings revealed that participants were reflective in their practice throughout the student-teacher semester and were able to share their reflections of the overall teacher education experience during the final weeks of the semester.

**A Reflective Redo: Overcoming Classroom Challenges through Reflection**

Student-teaching is learning on the job and in many cases, it helps to have reflective practices in order to evaluate what is working in the learning process and what is not. Through
these practices, student-teachers can observe if they need to make changes that would improve their instructional abilities so they may better reach students for academic achievement. These practices can include research on education topics, constant evaluation of current news, and the maintenance of a journal to record statements such as feedback from students, administrators or personal thoughts about the effectiveness of instructional delivery techniques.

It is not necessarily a terrible situation if student-teachers realize they do not have all the answers upon entering the classroom; it is more important that they are willing to exhaust every effort in improving—even to the point of re-teaching the material in the hopes that the second time around, the students’ best interest will be served. Ms. Holly, as stated in our interview, (December 24, 2010,) believed that reflection means to

to constantly looking inward to make sure that I am attaining goals and remembering that I need to reflect on how I'm teaching and my teaching style—remembering that it’s not necessarily about me and when i look back over a day I would like to be reflective enough to weight it out as far as did I hit the goals; have i taught every student, what didn't go right, what can i improve upon next time.

In accordance with Ms. Holly’s statement about reflection, reflection should be continual in order to achieve student learning. This is the case whether the reflection is formally kept in a journal or a teacher's instruction is revisited in thought.

The first evidence of teacher candidates’ reflective practices is supported by three of the five candidates’ responses to the informal interview questions I asked after one of their Community of Learner’s meeting. Each identified one or more decisions they made to modify
their teaching as a result of examining their classroom experiences during student teaching. Specifically I asked candidates the following two questions during this interview (Researcher journal, Entry 7, October 28, 2010):

1. What have you decided to change?
2. How are things (classroom management plan, teaching style, ways you deal with the content) different from when you started?

I found that teacher candidates did probe into their practices in the classroom and subsequently made adjustments. Changes cited were modifying the classroom management plan to establish more teacher control of negative behaviors; helping ELL learners understand directions better; and rotating schedule of content in the elementary level classroom. Ms. Thompson’s and Mrs. Emerson’s responses are presented below while Ms. Kimberly’s input is developed in a future theme.

Ms. Thompson, a fifth grade teacher at a large charter school, discovered that her students would constantly talk when they were supposed to be quietly working on an assignment. She believed they were not focused on their work and noticed they would begin talking again shortly after she asked them to stop. At the beginning of the student-teaching term, Ms. Thompson observed that when in charge of the classroom, her cooperating teacher rarely had to request silence and students worked silently. Once Ms. Thompson began teaching, she detected more chatter and a stream of disruptions. When she compared the classroom learning environment to her cooperating teacher’s she felt uncomfortable with the noise level and decided to get some feedback. During the first informal evaluation from her cooperating teacher, Ms. Thompson stated that the cooperating teacher called her classroom
management style “soft,” meaning that she did not reinforce the expected behavior from the students (Ms. Thompson informal interview, Reflection journal, Entry 7, October 28, 2010). According to the candidate, it also meant that the students did not think she was “tough enough” and ultimately, the students did not respect her (Interview, December 2, 2010).

Ms. Thompson believed that she needed to establish and then reinforce the rules. She would do this by directing instructions for behavior modification to the specific individuals who were not abiding by classroom rules. I also noticed during my observations that Ms. Thompson used the “Star-bucks” points as leverage for good behavior (Ms. Thompson Student-Teaching Observations, November 10, 2010). Star-bucks, as part of a school-wide positive reinforcement plan, are given out to students who are found adhering to school policies or classroom rules. Periodically, students would be able to turn in their Star-bucks for prizes such as small toys; the opportunity to play in the gym; watch a movie or play games on the computer on the given Friday. Initially, Ms. Thompson stated that she did not take away Star-bucks points because she knew how much it meant to the students. She found that when threatened to take them away, students would tell the others to be quiet and students would stop talking (Ms. Thompson Interview).

Ms. Thompson’s student-teaching experience was an opportunity to learn about the relationship of rewards and performance. She seemed to be grappling with the notion of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards for the students in her classroom management. The students only responded to negative reinforcement with the Starbucks as the stimuli. Ms. Kimberly had not helped the students to understand that they can produce quality work if they focus on their assignment and the result is that they will feel proud about receiving the desired grade. Instead,
she was in a system that perpetuated the extrinsic values of quiet work which can fail at teaching students the principle of working attentively.

Another discovery for Ms. Thompson was her developing understanding of the various roles of teachers. The reason that behavior management was an area of frustration for Ms. Thompson was because she had yet to identify with teacher-as-disciplinarian. To add to this, she was influenced by her cooperating teacher who “ran a tight ship” (Researcher Journal Entry 7, October 28, 2010). Ms. Thompson did not see herself to be this way; neither did she want to accept the role of strict disciplinarian. She seemed to only identify with her very gentle, kind-hearted personality and in realizing her purpose as an educator, struggled to find the appropriate way to be both kind and enact her role as classroom manager.

What Ms. Thompson had to realize was that she needed to ‘find her way’ as all teachers must do in order to cultivate the appropriate learning environment. Through observations of her cooperating teacher’s behavior management style, she considered classroom management strategies and tried several behavior modification actions such as taking away Star-buck points, constantly silencing them and requiring that misbehaved students sit next to her desk. As she was regularly challenged in this area, her coping mechanism for behavior management issues seemed to be trial-and-error (Ms. Thompson Student-Teaching Observations, October 27; November 10; November 27, 2010). Eventually, Ms. Thompson adopted other solutions that she believed would be better for the learning environment. As she would discover throughout the semester, being a reflective educator is a continuous and systematic process of building upon prior knowledge where the goal is to arrive at effective teaching.
From these experiences, Ms. Thompson learned in three areas during her student-teaching. First, she developed an understanding of extrinsic versus intrinsic rewards and how students may respond to these rewards long term. Secondly, the candidate discovered the multiples roles a teacher is required to fulfill in order to be an effective teacher. Ms. Thompson eventually came to realize her overuse of her trial-and-error methods at an attempt to manage or modify student behavior (Ms. Thompson Interview). In future teaching experiences, she will have to access best practices in order to improve her classroom management plan. Through reflective practices, she may be able to channel her management challenges into a better plan and continue personal development as an effective educator.

While Ms. Thompson changed her management style in order to improve the learning environment in the classroom, Mrs. Emerson considered that a change in the daily routine would balance interest and enrich learning of all subjects. Following the schedule developed by the cooperating teacher, students in her class would begin everyday with Literacy, language arts, and social studies; after lunch they had math and science (Mrs. Emerson student-teaching observations, October 13 and November 10, 2010). A first grade student-teacher at a public school, Mrs. Emerson discovered that students were “more alert in the morning” (Mrs. Emerson informal interview, Reflection journal, Entry 7, October 28, 2010). They also seemed sluggish after lunch and she thought that things were becoming “so predictable” (Mrs. Emerson informal interview, October 28, 2010). Some students would come in from lunch and put their heads down, not pay attention when she was instructing at the board, or took longer on class work.

The student-teaching term brought about experiences that would challenge Mrs. Emerson’s thinking of when subjects should be presented throughout the day over the course of
a week. Mrs. Emerson evaluated the class scheduling and determined that changing it around is beneficial for students. She learned that it would be necessary for the future classroom. Although she did not feel at liberty to do so in the cooperating teacher’s classroom, she noticed the obvious differences in student interest from the morning to the afternoon. Mrs. Emerson considered that the students would gain academically if they were able to have math and science in the morning instead of literacy and language arts all of the time. Ms. Holly, a participant who taught kindergarten, made a similar observation during her first student-teaching assignment. She will be discussed in a later section but her comments on routines are appropriate here. Regarding her first experience with a cooperating teacher’s daily routine, Ms. Holly stated that [the class] “was so structured that it was boring. There was never any straying from how things happen from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and there was no fun in that. I didn’t think it was fun and I can’t imagine the kids thinking it was fun” (Ms. Holly interview, December 24, 2010).

Through direct experience, Mrs. Emerson made considerations of student interest and performance that she previously had not noticed. Through active learning in the classroom, Mrs. Emerson was able to observe the differences of student behavior from the morning to the afternoon. She determined that something different should be done in order to engage students in learning all of the subjects and she reflected upon possible solutions for this problem. Through her constant evaluation of what was occurring in the classroom and how it impacted student learning, Mrs. Emerson may be able to arrive at optimal class scheduling as outlined in her classroom management plan for both her long-term teaching practices and her students’ achievement.
In the first few weeks of student-teaching, the candidates saw a need to evaluate their performance and they did make changes to improve the environment for their students. Ms. Thompson’s classroom management adjustments and the insight to rotate classes by Mrs. Emerson stemmed from reflection, that is, careful consideration for optimal experiences. For Ms. Thompson, it was a necessity to reconsider her initial approach in behavior management. Ms. Thompson did not see her students reaching their full potential if she did not address the students’ constant talking and distracting behaviors because it had a direct and negative impact on the learning environment. As such, Mrs. Emerson and Ms. Thompson made student-teaching experiences insightful and through reflection were able to make improvements in their role as educator.

A Detailed Account of Reflection: Ms. Holly’s Tech Train Wreck

Ms. Holly, an advocate of “thinking outside of the box” firmly believed in the idea that an effective educator should be “open to new methods and embrace the new things that come along and not simply be one of those teachers that sit the kids in rows and give them worksheets” (Ms. Holly interview, December 24, 2010). “I want to know where they’re at and work with them on their level. And perhaps bring teaching to a higher level and it will be more meaningful to them.” With this philosophy, as stated in her teaching and learning statement assignment (Artifact: Ms. Holly Teaching and Learning Statement, p. 1), Ms. Holly definitely looked for ways to bring new experiences to her students. This is exactly why the idea of reading a book using the ELMO machine sounded like a wonderful idea for her kindergarten students. A document camera, such as The ELMO machine, is a projector which captures documents and magnifies it for audience viewing.
Traditionally, presenting a new book to a group of students was done by flashing the pages while reading the text. With the document camera, Ms. Holly’s plan was to project the pages onto the overhead screen in order to magnify the pictures and text so that the students would have a better view. With no prior exposure to the document camera, the students were more enthralled by the bright light projected onto the screen. They screamed and wanted to stand in front of the light. Here is a portion of the account in her own words (Ms. Holly Interview, December 24, 2010):

A mistake that I realized about half way through the lesson was that they didn't have exposure with an ELMO machine. So they were playing with it because it would project an image onto a screen. And they were playing in front of the projection light. It was making shadows and the students were making finger puppets and standing up and it caused chaos. And I could not control them no matter what I tried. Finally I had to shut the whole thing down and move them to another location on the carpet and change up the entire lesson. Because it was a train wreck; it was absolutely a disaster. During reflection, I realized I had to expose them to it. I was reading a book over the ELMO machine and they were not used to that.

At some point, Ms. Holly stepped back from the lesson and her eagerness to appeal to the student’s interests. Even though she had all of the right intentions in using new media equipment in the classroom, she learned through experience and additional reflection that instructional delivery must take into account the audience to which the material is being presented. With no evidence of prior experience with the document camera, the
kindergarteners were easily amused with the bright lights on the wall. This was, in fact, a time where through play and fun, the students could become acquainted with the light from the document camera. They could have time allocated for making finger puppets, dancing in the lights, and other ways of exploring the new technology while learning about its significance to other academic tasks.

This was a lesson in itself, as Ms. Holly would suggest, where time should be set apart just for fun with the document camera with the students. In the middle of the situation, she realized that because of her inability to calm the students, she had to move on to something else. However, it was through reflection afterwards that she realized why it did not work. Ms. Holly learned that reflection, then, brings about a heightened awareness in order to effectively evaluate experiences. Hopefully, it leads to the exploration of alternative outcomes in order to arrive at the best outcomes. What Ms. Holly gleaned from her student teaching experience is the importance of relying on reflection to arrive at better choices. The term also improved her ability to recognize appropriate implementation strategies necessary for technology integration by considering the students' age level and previous experiences with the equipment.

**Playing with Numbers: Discovering New Ways to Teach After Reflection**

The goal is for teacher candidates to arrive at the most fitting way of instruction, behavior management, and curricular decision-making. Taking that alternative course of action is the next aspect of being a reflective educator. As the candidates were able to evaluate their classroom experiences and determine the need for changes, they discovered new ways to teach. This is the subject of the second subcategory of **Becoming a Reflective Educator during Student-Teaching.**
Experience in the classroom can help the teacher candidate process, evaluate and hopefully determine what is required for students to learn based on active learning. Reflection is only one step of several in effective teaching and creating the ideal classroom learning environment. As one who seeks to be most effective, the candidate learns to go beyond consideration of what may work, to channeling that reflection into a creative product. Aiming to improve, enhance or stimulate student learning should be the reason a candidate makes changes in their practice. When the candidate explores alternative ways to deal with classroom challenges, whether in instructional methods or behavior management, the goal is for the teacher to arrive at the best outcomes for that learning environment and for the particular needs of the student.

In this subcategory, Mrs. Emerson’s and Ms. Kimberly’s discovery of how to “communicate in numbers” is discussed; that is, how they helped their students learn a new concept in math. With each story, reflection played a key role in the candidates’ final lesson after a failed instructional attempt. One candidate, Mrs. Emerson, provided evidence where reflection helped her to realize that her first grade students were not learning some of the concepts the first time she taught it. She considered, discovered and implemented new ways to help students learn these concepts and in one of these situations, I had the opportunity to observe her re-teach the assignment and see the results based on student feedback at the end. Another candidate, Ms. Kimberly found a new way to teach the concept of estimation after careful reflection. She explained how she considered that her kindergarten students were not getting the concept of estimating and with a few tricks and a lot of “treats,” she turned their learning curve around. I observed her “Guess-timation” activity and saw how the students
reacted to her final lesson on estimation. In this process, these candidates found new ways to present broad concepts for their elementary students.

Ms. Emerson’s Number Line Game

First grade teacher candidate, Mrs. Emerson, faced challenges in teaching a new math concept to her students. On the days that I observed her, she articulated her words and spoke in a loud voice, and in many instances gave directives to individuals when she had expectations (Mrs. Emerson student-teaching observations, October 13; November 10, 2010). As such, she communicated quite well with the students and stepped in the role of teacher it seemed with ease. Except with this math concept, she explained that the students did not understand counting and moving spaces using a number chart from 1 to 100 (Mrs. Emerson Interview, November 2, 2010). The lesson outcome was for them to be able to place their finger on a given number and relocate it according to the requested number of moves to see where they landed. For example, Mrs. Emerson would have them place their finger on 10 and tell them to move 5 spaces on the chart. The students would be expected to say that they landed on 15. As she would vent to her cooperating teacher, students did not meet the expected outcomes. “They’re just not getting it. They are not getting it at all!” Mrs. Emerson “became very frustrated” (Mrs. Emerson Interview, November 22, 2010). She not only wanted to fix the situation, but Mrs. Emerson also wanted to understand why they could not perform the tasks from the assignment moving forward.

After she thought it over that night, Mrs. Emerson figured out why the students may be having a difficult time with this lesson; it may have been a result of her teaching method (Mrs. Emerson interview, November 22, 2010). Mrs. Emerson determined that she had two outcomes
in this lesson: identifying numbers 1-100 and using the 1-100 chart by moving to various spaces upon request. The latter involved the concept of simple adding and subtracting by moving to different spaces on the chart. Her intended lesson was for students to move spaces to arrive at a specified number and use this lesson as a building block for future addition and subtraction (Mrs. Emerson interview, November 22, 1010). In order for the students to understand the expected outcome, she discovered a need to eliminate the requirement of knowing numbers 1-100. Mrs. Emerson then implemented a new way to teach the assignment; she used a number line from 1 to 10 instead and had students move spaces along the line. The candidate saw that they did much better. Mrs. Emerson considered taking it a step further in order to make it more concrete, engaging and more active. So she created a floor model number line with big numbers boxed in large squares. Mrs. Emerson discovered that the students not only learned the intended objective, they enjoyed jumping and moving around while learning about addition and subtraction on a number line.

Through reflection and experience, Mrs. Emerson realized that simplifying the material and identifying the multiple concepts in the outcomes was key to re-teaching the lesson the next time around. She was able to understand why the students did not comprehend the lesson only after the school day and later on that night (Mrs. Emerson Interview, November 22, 2010). Reflection after a lesson allows the instructor such as Mrs. Emerson, to retrace her steps, cue in feedback from the students, and finally deduce what is working and what is not. It seems that in this process, Mrs. Emerson was able to recognize the complexity of the lesson of which she was initially unaware.
Once she identified introducing multiple concepts as the problem, she saw how to reach the students to include their point of view. The solution to re-teaching this lesson was two-fold: simplifying the objective to cover one concept and to make the lesson playful. Mrs. Emerson mentioned that during her reflection, she realized that first graders want to play; they like to jump around and laugh (Mrs. Emerson Interview, November 22, 2010). It is the teachers who want students to learn. As Mrs. Emerson gleaned in this experience, meeting students where they are and tailoring a lesson appropriate to their age level really can make a difference in learning. Oftentimes, teachers load multiple outcomes in assignments because it seems that they have forgotten what it is like to be a six year old in grade school. In the process of retracing steps to determine the missing link to learning, teachers can stand in the shoes of their learners and possibly come up with an improved methodology to reach them.

**Ms. Kimberly “Guess-timation” Trick—or Treats**

On November 10, 2011, I had the opportunity to see students excited about the assignment in Ms. Kimberly’s kindergarten class (Ms. Kimberly student-teaching observation). This particular afternoon, students had two overlapping tasks. While they completed work displayed from the overhead projector, students had to come up to Ms. Kimberly’s desk and estimate the number of lollipops in her jar. She called it her “Guess-timation” Contest, a blend of the two words *guess* and *estimation*. It was later revealed that there were fifty two lollipops in the jar (Ms. Kimberly Interview, December 2, 2011) and the person with the closest estimate would win them all. Students struggled with the term *estimation*; for a kindergarten class, Ms. Kimberly wanted to help students understand the meaning of the term first and then move towards strategies for estimating. The objective was to introduce estimation rather than teach
how to appropriately calculate an answer. As the responses revealed, students wildly guessed at the number of lollipops but they also understood the goal of the lesson.

The first person to guess was the cooperating teacher who said it was probably six and quickly corrected herself. She took another guess: 1000, this time and quickly corrected herself again. The cooperating teacher said she gave up and wanted the students’ help. This initiated the call as students came up one by one and then two by twos. These five year olds had a broad range for how many lollipops they believed to be in the jar. Ms. Kimberly called over one student and asked him to guess. He stood there. She said “how many?” but with no response from the little boy. Then Ms. Kimberly named off some numbers and he picked twenty. One student guessed eight; another guessed thirty; another fifty. One girl held up five fingers and Ms. Kimberly asked curiously, “Five?” Then the girl held up four fingers and Ms. Kimberly asked with even more inflection in her voice, “Fourrrr?” One student said 110, and Ms. Kimberly asked, “One hundred and ten? Okay.” One student said 1002 and the next one, a million and two.

I would later hear that this lesson resulted from Ms. Kimberly’s disappointment in trying to teach estimation the day before (Ms. Kimberly Interview, December 2, 1010). It was a lesson from Ms. Kimberly’s curriculum guide and she used the worksheet in the book to teach the concept. Coming from a traditional perspective, it was typical of a worksheet—a page with numbers and a few pictures. It seemed though that “the students just weren’t into it” (Ms. Kimberly Interview, December 2, 2010). On her way home that evening, Ms. Kimberly decided on a way to make the lesson more engaging. Ms. Kimberly wanted to ensure their learning by adding a little motivation; so she stopped by the store to pick up some lollipops. Her inspiration was articulated clearly during our interview:
When they think about estimation, I want them to remember that jar. I want to give them meaning to what I am teaching them. And I think you have to do something fun and hands-on for it to stick in their mind; that estimating is just guessing and I want them to remember someone winning fifty two suckers. They will remember that.

As with Mrs. Emerson’s rationale for re-teaching using a creative methodology, Ms. Kimberly reasoned that children have specific motivators and she needed to tap into the minds of the kindergarteners. Sometimes teachers lose this child-like awareness as they aim to teach content from a particular subject area such as math. Ms. Kimberly revisited the notion of what it is like to be a child and what worked in motivating her. It was not the worksheets that the traditional classroom utilized for many lessons. Simply put, many children want treats and would like to participate in an activity that involves a chance at winning some candy. Her second time at teaching estimation helped the students connect guessing the number of lollipops in the jar with the estimation term introduced the day before. As she suggested in a previous quote, Ms. Kimberly wanted to give her students a memory for the new concept to ensure that the ability to estimate was locked in place. She was able to build knowledge through experience, an important step in active learning and a foundational concept in the constructivist framework. Had Ms. Kimberly not taken any time to reconsider the lesson, she may have never stopped at the store or given the lesson another chance the next day. Ms. Kimberly may have even missed an opportunity for learning to take place.

Mrs. Emerson and Ms. Kimberly both benefited from reflective practices—that is, careful thought and changing plans—so that student learning was maximized. They also engaged their
students with play by remembering what it is like to be a young learner who appreciates fun and physical movement. Through this process, Mrs. Emerson and Ms. Kimberly activated their innovation and the results were rewarding for both the students and these participants. These experiences brought the candidates one step closer to pedagogical proficiency and effective teaching practices. The next section further discusses pedagogical knowledge gained for the candidates in this study.

**Theme 2: Pedagogical Knowledge Gained during Student-Teaching**

Pedagogical knowledge is competency of teaching methods and instruction. It is working with the content in a way that students learn the material. A person can be very knowledgeable about a subject matter, whether it is math, biology, chemistry, etc. Not every person can teach their knowledge in a way that others learn the same content he or she knows. The ability to help someone learn could be mere coincidence or the result of effective communication strategies between the teacher and the learner. The ability to teach a classroom filled with individuals, each of whom has a unique history and personality, requires additional skills. Particularly, reaching every individual in the classroom depends upon several skills but two of great importance as discovered in this study is: 1.) Knowledge of how students learn and 2.) Knowledge of the students in that class. Pedagogical knowledge, in part, is this skillset that accounts for learning about students, and understanding how students will learn in order to help them achieve the content in the classroom. This section begins with a general depiction of candidates’ experiences with learning about their students. It is followed by two subsections which are **Adapting to the needs of Culturally Diverse Students: A Mini-Case study of Ms. Kimberly’s Experience with Arab students** and **Differentiated Instruction for Varying Abilities.**
In this theme, the focus is on the extent to which teacher candidates learned about their students and how their students learned. As I would discover, in a matter of three months, candidates learned something about each student. They learned their students’ names, abilities, interests and some participants met with the students’ parents for performance reviews. Candidates learned about specific challenges some students were dealing with both academically and personally. Mrs. Emerson learned, for example, that one of her students, Frank, was having a hard time dealing with his parents’ divorce. The little boy “cried on a daily basis” until it became her routine to pull him aside, offer tissue, show him that she cared, and gently guide him into the daily activities (Mrs. Emerson Interview, November 22, 2010). In another school building, fifth grade teacher Ms. Sam found that several of the students struggled to speak English because their parents did not use the language in the home (Ms. Sam Interview, December 2, 2010). In many cases, she had to translate Arabic into English and as an Arabic speaker herself, encouraged the students to use English in the home by teaching it to their parents. Yet, in another situation, Ms. Thompson discovered that one of her students was “deficient on every level” (Ms. Thompson, December 2, 2010) and this is discussed in the section Differentiated instruction for varying abilities.

The most demonstrative case for learning about students is when a teacher is not only able to listen and respond to the needs of the students, but that teacher is able to impact student learning with this knowledge. Learning about students is evident when the teacher is able to show how she has adapted her teaching instruction as a result of knowledge about her students and their needs. One participant, Ms. Kimberly, stated that working with culturally diverse students taught her how to recognize and embrace differences in people and it
impacted her outlook on learning about students in every classroom (Ms. Kimberly Interview, December 2, 2010). She learned to deal with sensitive matters as it relates to cultural viewpoints and her experiences are described in the first section entitled, *Adapting to the needs of Culturally Diverse Students: A Mini-Case study of Ms. Kimberly’s Experience with Arab students.*

In the second subsection of this theme, *Differentiated Instruction for Varying Abilities*, I examine how teacher candidates utilized differentiated instruction to meet the needs of each learner in the classroom. All candidates accessed a range of instructional methods with the goal of reaching every learner in the classroom. An analysis of these techniques is presented as well. This section is followed by a presentation of the candidates’ experience with technology integration both during courses in the education program and their student-teaching term. With technology ever evolving, they perceived that working with various media equipment is beneficial for reaching all learning styles and helps to keep the students engaged. The section is ended with a detailed account of how fifth grade teacher, Ms. Thompson, successfully made accommodations for a student who was cognitively impaired. This analysis demonstrates that the teacher candidates had the opportunity to develop their pedagogy during student-teaching and in many cases, they were able to adapt to the needs of their students, whether it be through cultural diversity or varying abilities.

*Adapting to the needs of Culturally Diverse Students: A mini-case study of Ms. Kimberly’s experience with Arab students*

Building on Parkay and Stanford’s (2010) definition, cultural diversity is the recognition of certain norms and the unique way of living of individuals who ascribe to a group of people. In
many urban districts, such as the one where teacher candidates worked in this study, the people have distinguishing cultural viewpoints and it is up to those who service the community to learn about the social language and customs. The task was no different for the candidates who did their student teaching in this urban district. They had to learn the ways of the community.

It was most evident by Ms. Kimberly’s account just how important it is to not only be aware of cultural diversity; one has to accommodate the needs of every individual and she felt it was important to adapt to their environment in order to achieve understanding, respect, and improve her instruction to the students. Ms. Kimberly, a kindergarten teacher in a metropolitan Detroit area, found her student teaching experience to be both challenging and rewarding given the cultural barrier she initially had with the students and larger community. She believed that the student teaching experience was significant in helping her to learn how to improve the classroom environment and help her students to learn. This cultural exchange she was experiencing was a recurring theme as we met and discussed her time while student teaching.

The first account was recorded when Ms. Kimberly was asked about how things had changed from when she began student-teaching until the midpoint of the semester. She explained that in her kindergarten classroom, some of the students spoke Arabic and very little English, which I noted during observations (Ms. Kimberly student-teaching observations, October 13 and November 10, 2010). For Ms. Kimberly’s cooperating teacher, communication was manageable because she communicated fluently in Arabic and English. Now Ms. Kimberly, with no prior Arabic fluency, was faced with the challenge of reaching students who had English as a Second Language. She realized at some point that she was not even trying to
communicate with them much less teach them; often the cooperating teacher would step in to help the English Language Learners (or commonly addressed as ELLs) when these students came up to Ms. Kimberly (Ms. Kimberly student-teaching observation, October 13, 2010; Capstone Conversation, December 14, 2010). It seemed as if she thought it was not her responsibility given her inability to speak Arabic. Ms. Kimberly’s cooperating teacher seemed to agree through her actions as she would step in to help with the ELLs.

However, Ms. Kimberly’s presence in the classroom required her to consider a solution because the ELLs saw her as the teacher, not the teacher that did not speak Arab. They came up to her with questions in Arabic, pointed to the assignments when they did not understand and they expected her assistance (Ms. Kimberly student-teaching observations, October 13 and November 10, 2010). After careful thought and actually working with the ELLs, Ms. Kimberly realized the importance of accepting her position as teacher and took steps to owning that role. The students relied upon her guidance and she no longer wanted that language barrier to divide her from anyone in the classroom.

Ms. Kimberly made gradual changes as she discovered what worked best to help the Arabic students understand her English instructions. The first adjustment was more body language such as hand gestures and eye contact, instead of relying solely on verbal communication (Capstone Conversation, December 14, 2010). Ms. Kimberly found that pointing more would at least help the ELLs learn visually and in simple terms. Another technique she discovered was stressing the pronunciation of the words and moving them closer to the front (Mrs. Kimberly informal interview, Reflection journal, Entry 7, October 28, 2010). Ms. Kimberly
also began to learn some Arabic in order to communicate in their language which was something she had not considered at the beginning of the semester.

Ms. Kimberly learned how to communicate with ELLs on the job. They required that she adopt alternative methods of communication in order to improve her ability to connect with them. Students, especially young learners, are clear to establish the role of teachers-as-helper as they call upon them for assistance. Ms. Kimberly would not have been forced to learn Arabic or communicate through other means with Arabic students if she were not in the student-teaching experience. Furthermore, she would not have realized various communication strategies to reach ELLs had it not been for her reflectiveness. She was challenged with no solutions for a recurring experience in student-teaching. The students continued to seek her assistance when it came to understanding the work in the classroom and they saw Ms. Kimberly no differently than the cooperating teacher.

Learning to be an effective educator for Ms. Kimberly was strengthened in her student-teaching experience. First, the demands in the classroom helped Ms. Kimberly to accept her role as the teacher who is able to meet the needs of all learners. Second, it reinforced the need for Ms. Kimberly to explore and implement alternative methods for reaching all students including the ELL learners. Finally, she learned specific knowledge through experience of how ELL students learn in an English-speaking classroom. The pedagogical knowledge the candidate gained was using alternative methods such as gesturing, enunciating and moving students around in order to reach her students. Overall, the student-teaching experience for Ms. Kimberly brought her one step closer in her development as the effective urban educator who is able to meet the needs of diverse learners.
In our final interview, Ms. Kimberly returned to her ideas about cultural diversity. When I asked her about the idea of being committed to diversity, I observed that Ms. Kimberly was very passionate about this topic. She became clearer about her conceptions while student teaching because she realized that being committed to diversity means:

- Reaching everybody. Some people think it's dealing with race, sex, creed but that's not what diversity is to me...if we're still on that, we have light years to come. I'm passed that, I think diversity is being aware of those issues, taking them into consideration. Like when you walk into a school with 95% Arabic students, you need to have some sensitivity to that and learn about that. But it's just reaching everybody, no matter what you have to do (Ms. Kimberly Interview, December 2, 2010).

She further went to discuss some of the experiences in the classroom that would help her to be sensitive and adapt to her environment in the largely Arabic school district:

- I learned from my CT [cooperating teacher] that Arabics, they don't view time like us. They are very slow and they're not on a schedule so I had to take that into consideration so that it's going to take them 10 minutes to put on their coat even though I want them to put on their coat right now to go outside. Then another time, I put a picture up of a pig on the screen for them to spell it and they yelled, "Gross." Well, a lot of the students don't eat pig and it's a forbidden meat so I had to become sensitive to that. And I tell them, "Well I do eat that, and I like that and it's okay and that's turns into a diversity lesson all in itself.
Ms. Kimberly’s experience with cultural diversity is an important one because it reveals that understanding people different than one’s self is a process when the goal is respect for each person’s beliefs, values and knowledge about the world. In this study, I found that there are five stages in the cultural diversity development process which evolve from awareness, empathy, sensitivity, adaptation and accommodation. First, a person has to become aware of the cultural differences in the group of which she is working. As with Ms. Kimberly, she became aware of the language barrier the first time a student came up to her and spoke Arabic. She had no mechanism for handling this situation; in earlier interactions, the cooperating teacher would step in to assist.

Eventually, the candidate empathized with their need for help which is the second step in the process of understanding culturally different individuals. Empathy is the ability to understand at an emotional level of what another person may be feeling. The ability to identify with the needs and beliefs of others is an important part of understanding cultural differences because it is the only way to connect with their perception of life. Understanding others’ perception helps everyone—the one who needs to understand and the one who wants to be understood. In the case with Ms. Kimberly, she had the opportunity to see things differently and learn a new language. It also helped her students because they had another teacher who would service them in the best way.

Ms. Kimberly’s empathy may have fostered by her own life story. She “struggled in school because of a learning disability” and in many instances felt she had very few teachers who supported and believed in her success (Ms. Kimberly interview, December 2, 2010). This personal struggle is what compelled her to become a teacher so that she would be the one who
came to the aid of those students struggling in school. Ms. Kimberly was able to bridge her past experiences as a struggling student to the students she wanted to help in the student teaching experience. Therefore, connecting to the past was a catalyst for Ms. Kimberly’s development in student-teaching as she honed the feelings of being left behind to help pull her students forward.

The third process in working with culturally diverse groups is developing sensitivity to the other group’s viewpoints and needs. Sensitivity is the level of responsiveness a person commits to a given situation. It is different from empathy in that it takes into an account how another person may wanted to be treated. It goes from understanding how that person may feel to how that person would like for someone to respond to him in the given situation. When the students who spoke Arabic continued to rely upon Ms. Kimberly for help, Ms. Kimberly recognized that she had to find a way to better communicate with them. She no longer looked to the cooperating teacher to take over the situation and she was now ready and willing to find other ways to communicate with them. Her sensitivity brought her to the next stage of accommodation. At this stage in culturally diversity, people make interpersonal changes to improve the conditions. Ms. Kimberly came to the realization that she had to change her role with the students who spoke Arabic. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, *accommodate* means to serve or assist. The interpersonal changes affect the intrapersonal changes which is ultimately changing the environment so that those with cultural differences not only understand each other but also communicate better as a result of it. This is the final stage of developing cultural diversity: to *adapt* which means to adjust or modify. Below is a diagram I created which visually shows the development of cultural diversity.
Figure 1. The Development of Cultural Diversity from Awareness to Adaptation

The last two stages often occur together but it is important to recognize that the individual changes through experiences with the outside world. This is separate from what the individual changes. In Ms. Kimberly’s case, she identified with the struggle of the ELLs through empathy and claimed the role of helper. At that point, she recognized how to help them which was to use more physical gestures such as pointing and move them closer to the front of the class. Ms. Kimberly also listened and was sensitive to their views such as the situation when some students expressed their disgust of a pig because many of them did not eat it. Ms. Kimberly went a step further to share her views about eating pork, stating that she does eat it and she likes it. She did this in order to extend their perspective beyond their interests to include others around them. Finally, the candidate changed her way of thinking about time given that
the students seemed to move slower with tasks she initially considered quick and simple. Ms. Kimberly’s accommodations for these situations were to allocate more time to tasks such as putting on coats to go outside and not rush the students in these moments. She learned that an effective educator will be able to view life from the students’ perspective and make the necessary adaptations for their benefit.

From a cognitive development perspective, Piaget’s (1953) work describes the concept of adaptation and accommodation to explain how awareness is internalized. Although used slightly different, the notion that there is an internal (cognitive) and external (physical action) step in the development process, could be applied to this analysis. Additionally, as mentioned in Chapter one in the section Urban Education and Urban Teacher Education Programs, Weiner (2002) addressed the idea that teachers in urban areas have to accommodate and therefore adapt to students from diverse populations. Effective educators will find ways to adapt to the cultural diversity in their classrooms.

**Differentiated Instruction for Varying Learning Abilities**

In addition to cultural differences, today’s teachers have to address individual learner needs, and the range of abilities in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Parkay & Stanford, 2010). Differentiated instruction in the classroom is one method for responding to these differences; it is developing instruction to serve the various learning styles and abilities. Generally, there is more than one way to deliver a lesson in order to meet the specified outcomes. Delivery of the knowledge has to be designed in a way that it reaches all learners regardless of their differences. Two main considerations are addressed in the differentiated instruction method: different learning styles and varying ability levels. According to Stanford and
Parkay (2010), there are three learning styles: kinesthetic, audio, and visual. Kinesthetic learners acquire knowledge through activities where they are physically doing something with the new information. Audio learners acquire knowledge best by hearing the material. Visual learners have to see some type of physical image in order to learn the material. By incorporating material that addresses each of these learning styles, the teacher has a better chance of reaching all students.

Differentiated instruction also takes into account the range of student abilities. In each content area, students vary with the level of learning and the pace at which they learn. Some move quickly through material while others move at a slower pace; some acquire the knowledge easily while others struggle. For each student at every level, it is the role of an effective teacher to make accommodations for these differences in the classroom. In this subsection, a broad view of various delivery methods will be presented and analyzed, followed by a description of teacher candidates’ experiences with integrated technology. A section on technology is presented in order to examine the extent to which technology is relevant in the teacher field. Finally, a detailed account of Ms. Thompson’s strategies and proven success in working with students of varying learning abilities is discussed.

**Various instructional techniques used by candidates: Playing for learning’s sake**

Effective teaching relies upon the ability to connect with students so that learning takes place. Therefore, teachers need to have knowledge of how students learn and what is required to reach all students regardless of their learning style and abilities. Teachers often gain mastery of utilizing various techniques and implementing multiple instructional strategies as they develop their skills, often through experience. There are several strategies to acquire a skill set which
incorporates multiple instructional methodologies. Student-teachers are often guided by best practices, groomed by a teacher-mentor who is an effective educator and learn on-the-job. These strategies will cultivate the novice teacher's ability to target the most appropriate delivery methods of instruction.

Three of the five candidates in this study, Mrs. Emerson, Ms. Holly and Ms. Kimberly, were early elementary student-teachers. Observations, interviews and artifacts revealed the importance of play in their classrooms to help students learn. In many cases, these candidates incorporated a range of instructional techniques to keep their student's attention. The students were often so engaged with singing, music, pictures and even candy, they seemed to ignore that they were learning how to count by tens; or that they were graphing colors (Ms. Kimberly Interview, December 2, 2010). Student-teachers also used playful terms in order to simplify the instructions. In this section, two stories which encouraged learning through play will be presented and analyzed: music, dance and sounds.

Ms. Kimberly and Ms. Holly included music, dance and sounds such as clapping in their instructional delivery to engage their kindergarteners (Ms. Holly and Ms. Kimberly student-teaching observations). Ms. Kimberly used music each time I observed her classroom and Ms. Holly consistently used clapping and snapping her fingers to retain student attention and deliver instructions. Supported by her belief that the best way to learn is through active learning, Ms. Kimberly stated her class "is no paper-pencil kind of class because it doesn't work for us here" (Ms. Kimberly Interview, December 2, 2010).

In one of the observations, Ms. Kimberly asked the students if they wanted to count by 2s; and they screamed, “Yes!” (Ms. Kimberly student-teaching observation, November 10,
2010). It was as if they anticipated what was to occur next. It would seem that this was a regular event given their level of excitement. Instead of having the students recite the numbers, Ms. Kimberly led the students in the song, *Can Cockatoos Count by Twos*, a song by Hap Palmer:

*Can Cockatoos Count by Twos:*

Can a tree chase a flea?

Can a pig dance a jig?

Can a car travel far?

Can cockatoos count by twos?

two, four, six, eight, ten, twelve,

fourteen, sixteen, eighteen, twenty

Can a cat catch a rat?

Can a mouse lift a house?

Can a child run wild?

Can little red hens count by ten's?

ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty,

seventy, eighty, ninety, one hundred

Can a fish wash a dish?

Can a wall crack and fall?

Can a snail read the mail?

Can a rocket ship hop and skip?
ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five,
four, three, two, one, zero

The students danced around in front of the room and with loud voices sang the song that had them count by 2s to the number 20; 10s to the number 100; and count backwards from 10 to 0 where they ended with “Blastoff!” The class sang this song each time I was there, and the mention of singing it was always met with enthusiasm by the students. What may have been irrelevant to the students but more important for Ms. Kimberly was their knowledge of numbers, counting by 2s, 10s, and counting backwards. As Ms. Kimberly’s classroom experiences demonstrate, incorporating educational songs and music in the daily classroom experiences, students are able to memorize and recall knowledge.

Just as Ms. Kimberly relied upon music and dance to help students learn, I noticed how Ms. Holly resorted to sound effects and play in order reinforce learning. One particular observation revealed that Ms. Holly was able to recover her lesson through sound effects because the students were obviously ready for the morning to end. When Ms. Holly asked the class, “What time is it now?” the overwhelming response was “LUNCH!” It was actually time to complete workbook activities but the students believed otherwise (Ms. Holly student-teaching observations, October 27, 2010). Even as she attempted to redirect their focus by having them skip to get their workbooks on the window shelf, Ms. Holly’s efforts were met with bitter sighs and one boy who revolted with, “No, I don’t want to get my workbook” (Ms. Holly student-teaching observations, October 27, 2010). She told him that was not a nice thing to say, and began to count backwards from five to one. She then wanted the group to raise their notebooks in the air at which point the room became quiet. Ms. Holly asked them to open the books and
when they got to the requested page, put their pencil on the star. Then she gave instructions: For every time they heard a word that began with /s/, she wanted them to clap. Her first /s/ word received a weak chorus of clapping, with approximately half of the twenty-seven students to respond. As Ms. Holly continued to read the passage and said words that began with /s/, the entire class had joined in by the second paragraph. They seemed focused at this point and repeated the steps for other letters. Ms. Holly had used the sounds of clapping to unify the group in class work and learn about words that begin with /s/.

As these beginning teachers discovered, students may not identify with the importance of learning but oftentimes will yield to play. Ms. Kimberly used music and dance for learning just as often as Ms. Holly used sounds to develop association with phonemic awareness in her kindergarten classroom. It is also the case that each candidate relied upon these methods to keep their students engaged in the learning process. Specifically, music and sounds presents auditory learners with content specific to their needs and the dance caters to the kinesthetic learner.

Ms. Kimberly and Mrs. Holly learned the importance of play during their student-teaching experience. They discovered three strengths of play in the classroom. First, play as a method of engaging students in learning promotes the teacher’s ability to connect with students on their cognitive level. Secondly, playing in the learning environment offers multiple avenues for interacting with the content which address each of the learning styles. Finally, students often are more receptive to the material when play is introduced because it may release the stress of having to perform at a certain level or according to the teacher’s expectations.

*Technology Integration: “ELMOS and Computers and Smart Boards …Oh My!”*
As technology is increasingly infused in our daily lives, so it is the case for education as well. Technology supports various instructional methods when educators, for example, show films, presentations or images to learners who rely upon their audio and visual needs. Technology integration constitutes the incorporation of multi-media in a lesson in order to support learners who are visual, audio and even kinesthetic. In observations, I observed candidates use the following technological equipment in the classroom: overhead projector; radio; computers; a promethean board, a microphone, a hearing aid, a television, a DVD player, and the ELMO projector, a document camera used with a projector. In each class, these media resources were regularly accessed as a common feature. In Ms. Sam’s classroom, for example, daily announcements were given by office staff each morning through a television which was hoisted in the corner of the classroom. During one observation with Ms. Sam, a picture slideshow of students dressed in Halloween costumes were showcased after the announcements (Student-teaching observation, November 3, 2010).

Ms. Holly’s experience with the ELMO projector was discussed in an earlier section as an example of how technology in and of itself is not the solution. It also demonstrated the notion that there are appropriate ways to integrate new media into the classroom. There has to be a consideration of the audience’s experience and their age level in order to determine the steps for integration. In this section, Ms. Sam, Thompson and Mrs. Emerson’s experience with technology will be presented and analyzed. Their experiences with the promethean board and the computer will be highlighted as these stories have the ability to capture the early 21st century classroom and its reliance on technology integration to accommodate various learning styles.
During observations, Ms. Emerson and Ms. Sam used promethean boards, an interactive learning device which operates on a white board, daily in the classroom. Replacing the traditional green or black board, the white board was used to 1) access photos and activities on the internet; 2) provide examples of correct work; 3) have students come to the front and perform problems in front of the class: 4) post instructions for class work.

In Ms. Sam’s fifth grade class, technology was an integral part of the experience. Ms. Sam gave instructions and taught the daily lesson at the front using the Promethean board while wearing a microphone box. This box, worn around her neck was connected to a remote ear piece of a student who was hearing impaired (Ms. Sam student-teaching observations, November 3 and November 22, 2010). Each time students spoke aloud to address the entire class, Ms. Sam would give them a hand-held microphone to speak so that the student who was hearing impaired could participate. While Ms. Sam learned how to operate the hearing aid device during student-teaching, she had experience working with the Promethean board in a previous teacher education course (Ms. Sam Interview, December 2, 2011).

At one observation, Ms. Sam used the board to post the “Daily Language Review” (Student-Teaching Observation, November 3, 2010). As the candidate asked students to fix the incorrect grammar in sentences, she would call upon students who had their hands raised. Ms. Sam also posted these directions on the promethean board which served as a visual announcement of her expectations upon arrival:

“Good morning! Unpack your backpack, sharpen your pencils, and make your lunch choice. Put your multiplication worksheet, “Compound Words,” “Adjective
Excellence” worksheets and signed Social Studies test on your desk. Complete daily Language and then do the “Phoney Baloney” page.

As students were coming in, Ms. Sam greeted them at the door and asked them to take out their homework. She directed their attention to the board and students read the white board silently and began to follow the directions. Two students walked to the pencil sharpener while others shuffled papers or pulled out items from their back pack (Ms. Sam observations, November 3, 2010).

The transition from the traditional black board to the Promethean white board is significant for two reasons. The first reason is that it makes the instructional delivery more efficient for teachers. Whereas the black board involved writing instructions and lessons which often had to be erased, the white board is utilized with a computer so that documents can be created, edited and stored for future use. In this way, teachers can re-use content such as directions without having to create the same statements on a daily basis. The second reason Promethean boards are useful is that it allows students to interact with other data sources beyond words; they can click on, access and work with visual images. It supports differentiated instruction because it is resourceful for addressing all learning styles in the classroom. For example, as Ms. Sam presented a science lesson on snakes, she was able to display various snake pictures onto the promethean board (Ms. Sam student-teaching observation, November 3, 2010). These images enriched the content in the lesson as all students can see the relation of the statement to the image displayed. Ms. Sam was able to successfully use the white board in her student-teaching classroom because of her earlier experiences in two teaching method courses (Ms. Sam interview, December 2, 2010). Therefore, experiences in the classroom
reinforced knowledge Ms. Sam developed in the teacher education program and may use in her future teaching career.

Just as smart boards are prevalent, so is computer usage in today’s classrooms. Computers facilitate the needs of students who benefit from using multiple learning styles to acquire knowledge. Ms. Thompson’s class is an example of the impact computers have made in the 21st century classroom experience. Although rarely the norm, each student in Ms. Thompson’s fifth grade classroom had a computer at his/her seat and worked from them daily. Once intimidated by computers, Ms. Thompson “was fine once [she] got in the classroom” (Ms. Thompson interview, December 2, 2010). The candidate observed how her cooperating teacher used the computer to communicate with students and parents about daily classroom activities and homework assignments. Inspired to continue these efforts, Ms. Thompson designed a web page to replace her cooperating teacher’s and took an active approach to incorporate computer usage in the classroom. During the three observations, Ms. Thompson made use of the computer; her instructions were to access her teacher web page, and find the links to activities and further directions (Student-teaching Observation, October 27 and November 10 and 17, 2010).

One project Ms. Thompson’s students completed with computers was a Microsoft Office Power Point presentation of Tlingit Indians (Student-Teaching observation, November 17, 2010). Ms. Thompson found out these fifth graders were taught how to use Power Point in another class and she wanted a way to incorporate it into her lessons. Over the course of three weeks, students worked in pairs to search for information on the internet. Then they worked on the design and layout as they prepared the slides together (Ms. Thompson interview, December
I observed their final presentations, noting that some of the students wore business casual clothes, seemingly proud to perform their work in front of the class (Ms. Thompson student-teaching observations, November 17, 2010). As one student spoke to the class about the presentation, the other clicked through the slides. Each student’s computer was connected to the teacher’s and as the student clicked through the slides at the teacher’s desk, students were able to follow along by looking on their individual monitors. Some of the presenters walked around the room, looking at the students’ monitors as they read bullet points or spoke about the pictures on the slides. Others stood at the computer of one student who was closest to the front and read bulleted information from there.

Ms. Thompson’s lessons plans which incorporated computer usage through the design and execution of Power Point presentations and web page link raises the level of technological sophistication uncommon in a typical urban fifth grade classroom just five years prior. Through these experiences she was able to further develop both her skills and the students’ to communicate with technological terminology. A once intimidated computer user, Ms. Thompson’s ability to incorporate Power Point into her lesson demonstrates the pedagogical growth that the student teaching experience supports. Instead of reading about the Tlingit Indians in their social studies books, Ms. Thompson effectively infused multiple methods through computer usage to help students learn the subject. In this assignment, students used the computer to 1) find actual images of Alaska and the Tlingit group; 2) research cultural aspects of the tribe; and 3) create a presentation which contained all of their findings. Helping students to synthesize knowledge, which is a higher form of cognition, is an instructional skill of an effective educator. Ms. Thompson was able to demonstrate this skill and her competency of
teaching methods and instruction through the Tlingit Indians Power point presentation assignment. The performance assessment also revealed Ms. Thompson’s instructional abilities because it showcased student learning and knowledge acquisition.

The use of a computer was also a constant staple in Ms. Emerson’s first grade class and served as an instructional tool to differentiate instruction. Ms. Emerson’s classroom had three computers in the back. During the class period, a name would pop up on the screen and that student would go to the computer to complete activities such as word-picture matching and addition problems. No matter what was going on, students were allowed to go to the back to work on the computer when their name appeared on the screen (Ms. Emerson Student-Teaching Observation, October 13, 2010).

Technology then is a vehicle which transports students into multiple aspects of the subject. Teachers use it to diversify their instructional methods as it enriches their lessons with pictures, audio and real-life encounters. As this analysis indicates, several teacher candidates relied upon various media to support their instructional delivery and methods. Candidates explored technology by incorporating multi-media in their lesson plans. The technology most observed was the promethean board, the computer and the projector. As a result of the student teaching term, candidates developed their pedagogical knowledge as they enhanced their methods with technology in order to impact student learning. Ms. Thompson’s delivery of Tlingit Indians included a computer exploration of the culture by accessing pictures, facts, and other aspects of their way of life. The students were engaged in the content as they learned through computer use. This technology supported Ms. Thompson’s instructional approach of using differentiated instruction to reach all learners. The promethean board is also another medium
for creative instructional delivery and Mrs. Emerson and Ms. Sam were able to develop their pedagogical awareness as they infused the board in their lesson plans to display content relevant to their subject.

A Detailed Account of Accommodating Students: Ms. Thompson’s Peas in a Pod

As mentioned previously, pedagogical knowledge is knowledge of the students and knowledge of how to meet the needs of each learner. As teachers discover the needs of their learners, they may discover the different cultural backgrounds and the varying learning abilities. The first subsection of Pedagogical Knowledge Gained during Student-Teaching addressed how the candidates adapted to the varying cultural aspects of diversity. This subsection will discuss how one participant, Ms. Thompson learned to make accommodations for Cecil, a student who was cognitively impaired.

As part of the student-teaching requirements, each candidate was required to complete a case study on one student. It is designed to give student-teachers the opportunity to narrow the scope for improving the classroom experience in order to impact learning. Student-teachers are asked to complete this study guided by the adapted Stephen and Story’s (2000) Observational worksheet below:
For her case study, Ms. Thompson chose a student who was not performing academically well. She described Cecil as a fifth grader who “was testing at a first grade level;” and in her observations of his assignments, Ms. Thompson determined that “he was deficient on every level” (Interview, December 2, 2010). Furthermore, Ms. Thompson observed that “he wouldn’t do anything” and “he didn’t understand what was going on.” An investigation into Cecil’s home environment revealed that he received very little, if any, academic support from family. Ms. Thompson’s hypothesis about Cecil’s needs led to her curricular actions for improving his assignments. She decided to pair him daily with Jacob, who struggled academically as well, but was someone who had “slightly higher cognitive skills.” Ms. Thompson’s thinking was that Jacob would be able to offer advice and instruction to Cecil.

Table 4

*Stephen and Story’s Case Study Observational Worksheet*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation Statements of fact</th>
<th>Interpretations</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Curricular Decisions</th>
<th>Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write what you actually see</td>
<td>Think broadly about what might be going on. Statements about what you think might have influenced the learners’ actions.</td>
<td>Frames as a statement: If this______, then this______.</td>
<td>Figure out what you can do to test your hypotheses or research question.</td>
<td>Reflect on results of your decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make no judgments, interpretations</td>
<td>Avoid statements that may be perceived as given (e.g., “lacks motivation”)</td>
<td></td>
<td>What specific assessments, strategies, materials, and resources will you use with the student (Lesson Plans)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does___? If____? Will____?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
without the frustration he often exhibited when she or other teachers explained the work to him.

Through an analysis of Ms. Thompson’s interview responses, her statements were collected and identified through the Observational worksheet required for case studies in the student-teaching course where all statements in her own words are in quotation marks:

Table 5

Case Study Worksheet according to Ms. Thompson’s Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Interpretations</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Curricular Decisions</th>
<th>Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Description of Cecil:**  
• “He wouldn't do anything”  
• “He was testing at a first grade level”  
• “He wasn’t understanding what was going on.”  
• “Student was deficient on every level” | • “He was not getting any help from home.”  
• Broadly, Cecil was “not focused” as was the case for many of her students.  
• Even broader, she observed the school serves urban African Americans who lack support from home environment. | Frames as a statement: If this______, then this______.  
• If she had a student work with him who had similar academic struggles, then it would be less frustrating to him.  
• “Working with him is frustrating and I felt that someone on his level would be less frustrating to him.” | • Paired student with Jacob, a student with deficiencies but “with slightly higher cognitive skills” | • “They hit it off like two peas in a pod”  
• “[Jacob] read to [Cecil], they were helpful to each other and that built their confidence.”  
• Both started to participate in class more and their learning improved. |

The reaction to Ms. Thompson’s curriculum improvement plan for her case study student was met with disapproval from others in education, who told her, “that’s like the blind leading the blind” (Interview, December 2, 2010). However, the results for Cecil were positive. He performed better on his assignments which produced higher grades. Cecil concentrated more
on the work he did and really wanted to do better; he also seemed to understand the directions. The candidate stated that it not only helped Cecil, it improved Jacob’s performance on class assignments. Ms. Thompson also found that performing better may have built their confidence because they participated more often.

Ms. Thompson’s case study experience reveals two important factors. The first one is the significance of the case study in student-teaching. In fulfillment of the teacher education program, student-teachers are required to identify students in their classroom who would benefit from additional teacher support. Through the process outlined in the teacher education program’s adopted observational worksheet, candidates learn to sharpen the ability of distinguishing students’ individual needs and making accommodations for them. This conditions novice teachers to examine the variance in student abilities and may prevent a student from falling behind.

The most important aspect of the case study experience is Ms. Thompson’s ability to reach Cecil who was a child in need. Through the case study assignment, Ms. Thompson was given the process for assisting an individual who required accommodations not directly addressed in the lesson plan. By following the steps outlined in Steven and Story (2000) observational worksheet, she learned to cite facts about Cecil, make interpretations about his challenges, and determine a curricular action that would advance him. Ms. Thompson was effective in determining curricular decisions to improve student learning.

Students in the classrooms today are diverse learners. Teachers have to recognize the differences whether it is cultural or level of abilities in order to make accommodations and adapt the lesson to their needs. The goal is to bring all students under one umbrella equipped and
open for learning and academic success. For Ms. Kimberly, she learned about her students in the context of their Arabic values and beliefs. Ms. Kimberly also extended her connection to reach her students beyond the language barrier even to the point of learning some of their language as she worked to teach them English. Equally dynamic was Ms. Thompson’s ability to create a plan that improved one student’s capacity for academic achievement. By pairing Cecil with Jacob who would ultimately engage Cecil in the lesson, Cecil’s confidence was strengthened and his grades reflected growth and academic achievement. Because both students related to academic challenges, they felt a sense of belonging and were able to put their pressures aside to improve their academic scores.

As educators consider ways to address the needs of diverse learners, technology integration has taken the forefront of differentiating instruction. With computers for each of her students, Ms. Thompson’s experiences revealed that the more students are able to use technology to complete assignments, the more they will rely upon and use terminology related to it such as the Power Point presentations her students completed. Through the use of computers at continuous intermittent intervals, Mrs. Emerson’s students found moments of relief from the daily routine as they visited the back room for computer time. There, they practiced assignments which reinforced the lessons in math, science and reading in a fun way. For them, computers served their visual, auditory and kinesthetic needs; it was also the student’s way to learn through games and enrichment activities. The student-teaching term gave candidates experience in developing pedagogical knowledge by varying their instructional delivery with the support of current technology.

**Theme 3: Preparedness from Teacher Education Program**
Upon exit of an effective teacher education program, teacher candidates are required to hold the status of highly qualified teachers who are competent and caring. Teacher education programs must prepare candidates so that they demonstrate an ability to transmit theoretical knowledge about teaching with that of their actual practices in the classroom. In these two sections, *Connecting Theory to Practice: On Constructivism* and *Teaching in the Urban Environment*, candidates reveal the extent to which the teacher education program prepared them for connecting theory and practice. In the first section, I address the candidates’ ability to connect constructivism with the classroom experience as evidenced by a link between their teaching and learning statements, my observations, and their own perceptions when discussed during interviews. In section two, candidates share their experiences and perceptions of preparedness in teaching in an urban environment. As the analysis reveals, each candidate learned the underpinnings of theory into practice through their student-teaching experience and some candidates believed there are special considerations when working in an urban environment.

**Connecting Theory to Practice: On Constructivism**

As a teacher, identifying a theoretical foundation is important because it can translate into beliefs about students and how they learn; what is important knowledge to cover during the term; and the role of the teacher. These beliefs are channeled in the teacher’s behavior and ultimately affect the students as they react to the teacher’s collective message. Theories about teaching are evidenced by teacher practices in the classroom. Therefore, one goal for teacher education programs is to help teacher candidates understand how to apply educational theories through the use of best practices. Constructivism, the conceptual framework for the college
where this study took place, is a theory which is grounded in active learning and connecting new content with prior knowledge. In this section there are two subcategories. The first subcategory examines the extent to which candidates considered constructivism as their adopted theory and incorporated it in their classroom practice.

A major tenet of constructivism is incorporating active learning where students are learning the content through experiences and active involvement. Lessons are presented in a way that is best described by Ms. Kimberly: “This is no paper/pencil kind of class because it doesn’t work for us there. I know it’s doesn’t work for a lot of kids, well it doesn’t work for me. I’m a hands-on learner so I tend to be a hands-on teacher” (Ms. Kimberly, Interview, December 2, 2010). The active learning classroom is marked by physical movement, multiple “opportunities for students to take risks,” and incorporates “hands on activities” that “allow children’s natural curiosity to guide his or her learning which promotes self-discovery” (Ms. Thompson Final Teaching and Learning Statement, December 1, 2010). Visible are “dry erase boards, markers, and many interesting books…students are talking with their partners about what they are learning, and [they are given time] to share with the class” (Mrs. Emerson Final Teaching and Learning Statement, December 14, 2010). The main component of this theory is the reliance on hands-on learning to help students learn. All candidates agreed that hands-on learning is one of the most important practices they needed to utilize in the classroom because it the most effective method for student learning (Ms. Holly Interview; Mrs. Emerson Teaching and Learning Statement; Mrs. Emerson Interview; Ms. Thompson Teaching and Learning Statement; Ms. Thompson Interview; Ms. Kimberly Teaching and Learning Statement; Ms. Kimberly Interview; Capstone Conversation).
Based on my observations, all of the candidates showcased their value of constructivist approaches in their classroom pedagogical methods—a belief that learning through experience is instrumental in helping students understand the content. The kindergarten classes of Ms. Kimberly and Ms. Holly were characterized by active participation and experiential learning. Students in Ms. Kimberly’s class, for example, learned to “tally and graph gummy bears colors…bubble maps… and [build] a robot for the 3-D shapes” (Ms. Kimberly Interview). Ms. Holly’s students developed phonemic awareness of different letters by hearing the sound and jumping on the floor with the corresponding letter (Ms. Holly Student-Teaching Observation, November 22, 2010). In Ms. Sam’s class, students learned about snakes by feeling actual skin shed from a real snake (Ms. Sam Student-Teaching Observation, November 22, 2010). Ms. Thompson’s students created eco-systems with living things to increase their understanding (Interview, December 2; Capstone conversation, December 14, 2010)

The following example captures how a candidate, Mrs. Emerson, helped her students learn through active participation. The objective was for her first grade students to distinguish between living and non-living things. In the Capstone Conversation, the exit review for the teacher candidates, Mrs. Emerson described how it was through reflection that she connected the constructivist approach to helping students understand this lesson (December 14, 2010). At first, she used the assignments in their workbooks to teach the concept, filled with words and black-and-white pictures. In an effort to help students identify with their experiences in the environment, Mrs. Emerson had the class put on their coats to complete their assignment outdoors; their task was to find three living things and three non-living things (Mrs. Emerson Interview, November 22, 2010). The students were enthused to report their findings, not to
mention the ideal of going outside sparked their abilities to absorb the information she wanted them to learn. By engaging her students in active learning, Mrs. Emerson successfully made the transition from a theoretical constructivist foundation to its application in the classroom. As she identified with the tenets of the constructivist framework, her findings through practice revealed that students do acquire knowledge by experience. As the theory posits, “the learner engages himself or herself in internalizing and reshaping or transforming information via active consideration” (Orstein and Hunkins, 2004, p. 117).

The compilation of candidates’ statements about constructivism as expressed in interviews and artifacts, compared with observations of candidates incorporating hands-on experiences learning demonstrates a connection of the theory with their practices. Specifically, each candidate stated that hands-on learning was an important component in their teaching philosophy as evidenced in their teaching and learning statement or as stated in the interview. They, in turn, carried this belief into the classroom and this theory was demonstrated by the kinds of activities and experiences in their daily lessons. The results of incorporating these constructivist-based practices, they discovered, were that students found the experiences engaging and beneficial to learning the material.

Teaching in the Urban Environment

The urban environment is a largely populated area where the cultural, ethnical and economic state of affairs creates a complex and dynamic situation for the individuals in these communities. Often, an overwhelming number of people in urban environments such as those represented in this study are those who have fewer resources. Because of an array of complex conditions, the children who attend urban schools are a part of a culture that has a subset of
challenges in addition to the normal ones of children from other communities (Mayberry, Crossley, and Sweet, 1980). These are issues which may be seen everywhere but may make the educational experience complicated because of the multitude of challenges a teacher addresses in an urban classroom. Thus, the rise of training educators to address these issues is relevant as urban schools struggle to retain them. Ms. Kimberly, Ms. Thompson and Mrs. Emerson are candidates who recognized what it required of them to be an effective educator in the urban environment. In this section, their insight will be presented and analyzed.

Ms. Kimberly, Ms. Thompson and Mrs. Emerson all discussed the struggles of some of their students and their experience with moving them forward so that they were teachable. A teachable student is one whose environmental, mental and emotional conditions are conducive to learning. In order to reach the students for learning, they have to be mentally and emotionally ready in an environment where they feel safe and engaged. In a classroom where students are motivated to achieve in spite of their daily circumstances, teachers still have to consider that all of the students come from various backgrounds and bring an array of experiences into the classrooms. The teacher also has to address the different learning styles in the classroom (Parkay and Stanford, 2010). Any community may have students who suffer from safety concerns, feelings of hopelessness, lack of support and no sense of purpose. The urban element adds a larger number of students who are challenged in these areas. An educator with these conditions has to be prepared specifically for a large number of problems.

Ms. Kimberly’s definition of the ideal candidate for this environment is: “an urban educator is one that has many different teaching styles to fit all the different learning styles and abilities that will make up the classroom” (Ms. Kimberly Final Teaching and Learning Statement,
December 14, 2010). In her experience, Ms. Kimberly recognized how students came from various backgrounds such as those Arabic students who spoke very little English and whose parents spoke none. Prior to developing sensitivity to the needs of Arabic speaking students, she “ignored them” as they struggled to communicate in their Arabic language which suggests that Ms. Kimberly felt no responsibility to educating them (Ms. Kimberly Interview, December 2, 2010; Capstone conversation, December 14, 2010). As evidenced by her interview responses (see Theme 2 for a detailed account of Ms. Kimberly’s experiences with the Arabic students), adapting to the needs of her English Language Learners (ELL) learners was required for her to positively change the environment for them in her classroom. As she stated in her interview, “when you walk into a school with 95% Arabic students, you need to have some sensitivity to that and learn about that.” Her sensitivity was heightened to a level that would change her teacher behaviors. This was expressed through her willingness to discover ways of communicating with the ELL learners. Ms. Kimberly learned to point more often, use eye contact, rearrange the seating area, and speak a little Arabic to meet the needs of these students. In a statement, Ms. Kimberly wrote about the importance of helping all students succeed even if they have differences:

I want all my students to succeed and love education as much I do. I have provided a warm and safe place for all my students to learn in. I have made it my mission to make sure that all my students learn no matter what their racial or cultural background is. To be committed to diversity an educator must have awareness and appreciation for all students. I feel those two aspects of myself were already in place before I started on my teaching journey. I do not see
difference in a negative way inside my classroom or among my students. I embrace the difference, and try to learn as much as I can from situations I’m not familiar with (Ms. Kimberly Teaching and Learning Statement December 14, 2010).

As suggested earlier, ELL learners can be found in any community; they often are found in larger numbers in urban settings such as where Ms. Kimberly worked. In fact, Mrs. Emerson and Ms. Sam all worked in urban schools where there was a large presence of ELL learners. Unlike Ms. Kimberly’s experiences, Mrs. Emerson and Ms. Sam were both Arabic and were able to easily accommodate the ELL students in their classroom. For someone like Ms. Kimberly it required she further extend her knowledge base in order to meet the needs of these students. Her vision of reaching all students as expressed in her teaching and learning statement was demonstrated by her classroom behaviors throughout her student-teaching.

For Ms. Thompson’s learning, the student-teaching term helped her to reflect in broader terms about each student’s circumstances and what is required in order to meet their needs. Ms. Thompson discovered the importance of collaboration in the classroom. For the students, Ms. Thompson’s preparedness to integrate technology and use differentiated instruction helped them to achieve the stated objectives and complete a project that may propel them in future career ventures. With Ms. Thompson, her experiences in the classroom revealed that students lacked support from their home environment (Ms. Thompson Interview, December 2, 2010; Capstone Conversation, December 14, 2010). Cecil, her case study student who” would not do anything in class”, was also “not focused” like many “of the other students in the class” (Interview, 2010). In a broader context, Ms. Thompson associated this lack of focus to
the notion of the urban conditions for impoverished African American or minority families where she found that she “had to work hard” to keep parents involved at least at the beginning of student-teaching semester (Informal Interview, October 28, 2010). Although the candidate offered no reasons for her inferences, the students’ lack of focus meant that Ms. Thompson may have felt compelled to constantly ask them to stop talking and return to their work. Seeing no intrinsic value in staying focused to complete their assignments, one could argue that she wanted to them to know she was aware of their behaviors with the hope that they would recognize someone was paying attention to them. In a broader sense, this may attribute to their sense of belonging in a caring environment where their quality of life was valued.

One solution Ms. Thompson discovered for getting students to focus was having them work collaboratively. As compared to her years as a young girl where classrooms were arranged so that students “sat in rows in schools” and worked independently and silently, Ms. Thompson found that “it’s rewarding to see them getting things done together.” As evidenced in the assignment where students created a Power Point presentation about Tlingit Indians, I observed students working in pairs and they seemed to approach this presentation with seriousness and confidence. In my researcher journal, I wrote the following about a girl named Michelle: “one girl was walking around the room looking at some of the students’ computers as they followed along silently. She looked like a power executive running a very important meeting. Her projection was loud and she appeared very confident” (November 18, 2010). Michelle’s confidence was exhibited by sharp hand gestures and an ability to move through the information seemingly with no strain or masked effort.
This fifth grader’s concentration in the Power Point presentation suggests she was engaged and it required her ability to demonstrate applicable long-term skills. Michelle wanted to perform well; she seemed focused on her work and had a partner who could support these efforts. Again, Michelle could have been anywhere in the world or had favorable conditions outside of the classroom conducive to learning in the classroom. However, the point remains that Ms. Thompson had more students who struggled to stay focus and were limited by their lack of support outside of the classroom. In order to move them beyond their circumstances of little support, having them pair up and work collaboratively seemed to provide a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging led to a feeling of importance and ultimately may have been a motivating factor to do well on this Power Point assignment in Ms. Thompson’s class.

Teaching in urban environments requires patience and an ability to work through the layer of intricacies that all classroom settings must accommodate. Teachers have to consider the cultural aspects of the students; they must consider the learning styles; and they must consider the varying cognitive abilities in order to meet the needs of all students. In urban environments, considering these dynamics is essential to a learning environment conducive for learning.

The teacher education program helped Mrs. Emerson improve her understanding of key motivating factors that impact the climate of her classroom. For instance, over time she came to realize that her urban students benefited from emotional support, self-esteem building exercises, and extracurricular activities which invested in their values of engaging in kid-friendly fun. In her Teaching and Learning Statement (December 14, 2010), an assignment that identifies the candidates’ educational philosophy, she wrote:
I believe motivation is a huge key in teaching students. I try to get students excited about learning by being enthusiastic about the lesson myself. If students are not motivated, they will most likely not learn. If students are excited about learning they will be eager to learn and will show growth. For September we had movie day, October we went on a field trip to Jeepers, and for November we are inviting the parents in for a pancake centers party. These activities are planned in advance so students have something to look forward to. These events motivate the students to stay on task and be productive and respectful students. I remind them that these reward days are for all of our hard work. I challenge all my students, in a non-stressful environment. Even students who struggle should be challenged. I offer struggling students additional help, but I also motivate them to challenge themselves. I reward students for trying by praising them and bringing attention to them from their classmates.

When I asked her about teaching in urban schools in the interview, she pointed out motivation as an important element to be considered that is specific to the urban culture (Mrs. Emerson interview, November 22, 2010). Here she stated that a teacher has to look at where your students come from...all students are not the same and some in these [urban] areas have to be motivated more than others. So, we adjust the classroom. I have a student who cries every day because his parents are divorced. So I have to individualize the lesson for him...I have to let him know that I care about his situation. And I sat with him every morning and I told him that his parents still love him to get him to see that it’s not his fault.
Mrs. Emerson realized that as she helped this student, Frank, through feelings of disappointment and a need for belonging, it would be the only way he would start his work. In a broader context, she recognized the often underlying current in urban education and academic achievement which is meeting the motivational needs of students. As students are faced with a plethora of issues from hunger pains to emotional hurt; from feelings of being undervalued to a sense of hopelessness; it is difficult for them to visualize beyond their circumstances and see the importance of performing at full potential on school work. Maslow’s (1954) Hierarchy of Needs supports this notion that if individuals are to self-actualize, they have to be fulfilled in many other areas including their physiological needs; needs of safety and belonging, and a need to feel worthy.

![Figure 2 – Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs](image-url)
The implications from Maslow’s theory are unmet needs in the areas previously mentioned means that people will not be motivated to, for example, achieve academically. Once Frank received attention from Mrs. Emerson, he was emotionally healthy and motivated enough to focus on class assignments.

This leads into one revelation about Frank. Frank’s issue of belonging and family problems were only addressed because he cried every day. How many other students in the class had problems but were not resolved because they do not make a fuss as Frank had done? There is an old saying which applies here: the closed mouth does not get fed. In a world where survival is given to the fittest, Frank seemed to receive the motivation he needed to help him think beyond his family crisis. However, in a caring environment such as the classroom it is up to the teacher to ensure that all children have support that will help them to learn.

Teaching in an urban environment often means that teachers have to be prepared to meet the challenges of their students. There may be more emotional, physiological, self-belonging needs in the urban classroom. Working in urban communities requires an understanding of these dynamics in addition to all other skills required of educators to meet the needs of diverse learners. Ms. Kimberly linked the ability to connect with her Arabic students in the broader context of working with diverse populations which are dominant in urban centers. Ms. Thompson found that exposing students to activities which expand their experiences and provide them with an escape of their immediate circumstances change the scope of hope for urban students. Finally Mrs. Emerson found that motivation is a factor in a community dominated by hopelessness and the survival mentality. This statement suggests that educators
have to discover ways to accommodate students who struggle to focus, feel unsafe, and have no sense of belonging or self-worth.

**Summary of Findings**

**Theme 1: Becoming a Reflective Educator through Experience**

By reflecting upon their experiences in the classroom during student-teaching, the candidates were able to challenge their beliefs, values and knowledge about teaching in order to improve their instruction and ultimately, impact student learning. The path to becoming an educator who is reflective for these candidates was the realization that their experiences in the classroom helped them to evaluate their performance through the lens of their students.

Reflection encourages insight, alternative ways of thinking, and creative solutions for optimal learning. As it did for Mrs. Emerson and Ms. Kimberly in their math lessons, reflecting helps in examining classroom practices. When the teacher candidates presented classic concepts of estimation and addition using the number line, in new ways not previously considered without reflection, it can be identified as innovative strategies in the classroom. As Ms. Holly suggested, innovation may not be the concept of bringing original instructional methods into the classroom; it simply is the acting of bringing something different or something new that is creative and raises the possibilities for students to understand the lesson. As she said in our interview (December 24, 2010):

I'm not very clever on my own but I am pretty good at finding different things on the internet. and put my little twist on it... I want to be open to new methods and embrace the new things that come along and not simply be one of those teachers that simply sit the kids in rows and give them worksheets. I want to
know where they're at and work with them on their level. And perhaps bring
teaching to a higher level and it will be more meaningful to them.

It is important for teacher candidates to be reflective educators who systematically and
continually probe into their decisions. It helps them to review, evaluate and discover the most
important methodology for the interest of the student achievement.

**Theme 2: Pedagogical Knowledge Gained during Student-Teaching**

The participants demonstrated development of pedagogical knowledge during their
student-teaching semester. They learned about their students, discovered how their students
learned and utilized various methods of instruction to impact student learning. Ms. Kimberly
gained knowledge of accommodating the needs of her Arabic students as they struggled to
understand in an English classroom. She learned that physical communication with them, such
as pointing and enunciating words, was just as important if these ELL learners were to have any
success in the classroom. She also learned some of the Arabic language as she adapted to
their cultural values. Ms. Thompson changed the learning environment for Cecil who struggled
to achieve at the fifth grade level. Through her accommodations, Cecil was paired with Jacob
and as a result of their collaboration on classroom assignments, they performed better and their
confidence increased. Ms. Thompson demonstrated the importance of developing individual
plans in order to meet the varying abilities found in the classrooms. All five candidates relied
upon technology as a way to enhance their lessons for student learning. Through differentiated
instruction and the use of media equipment such as computers, promethean boards and project
cameras, these candidates addressed the needs of visual, kinesthetic and audio learners in
their classrooms.
**Theme 3: Preparedness from Teacher Education Program**

This study revealed that given the knowledge candidates acquired in the teacher education program, they were prepared, and as Ms. Thompson stated, “definitely ready” to be an effective urban educator in their future classroom (Ms. Thompson Interview, December 2, 2010). An effective teacher education program is evaluated based on its ability to equip candidates with the necessary skills and experiences for their students. One such measure of preparedness is the extent to which pre-service teachers are able to connect theories about teaching and learning with the classroom practices. The candidates who participated in this study claimed that their educational philosophy was best represented by the constructivist model which focuses on accessing students’ prior knowledge and active learning. The study revealed that the candidates incorporated active learning experiences in the classroom which were reflective of their overall teaching and learning philosophy. I observed that all candidates relied upon application-based assignments, collaborative team work, physical play, and differentiated instruction to promote student learning.

It was also evident that some candidates captured the distinguishing factors that may be attributed to urban education. Ms. Kimberly, Mrs. Emerson and Ms. Thompson had developed beliefs about the qualities inherent in the urban experience as revealed in their teaching and learning statements and through interviews. They believed that an individual screening of student concerns support is sometimes needed for urban students. As detailed in Theme one and mentioned in this section, Ms. Kimberly found that some urban students lack academic support at home because their parents do not speak English and are unable to assist with academic challenges. Mrs. Emerson saw firsthand the effects of family concerns as a result of
her student teaching. Her experiences with Frank, the student who cried every day, improved her understanding of meeting specific needs of students. Mrs. Emerson ultimately learned that some may need emotional support before they can focus on academic assignments. In all, they learned that some students struggle to focus academically due to emotional, physiological, cultural, cognitive ability and/or self-worth deficiencies. As educators, these candidates must create the most effective learning environment which accounts for assessing each student individually to determine the appropriate plan that would promote learning.

**Limitations and Weaknesses**

One factor that may have affected the knowledge gain and the ability to articulate the claims of this college is the participants’ number of years in the program. The range was two years, Mrs. Emerson, to twenty years, Ms. Thompson. It seemed that the participant who was here for two years found it difficult to characterize an educator who is reflective, innovative, and committed to diversity as compared to the one who had been at the college over a twenty year span. Each time I asked the question to Mrs. Emerson, she looked at me and paused. I would ask her to give me an example for the claims and she did so, seeming to be more comfortable with providing situations where the term was applied than being able to articulate the concept. The more time spent in the College of Education, the more in depth the responses were to the questions in the interview.

Additionally, Ms. Sam was the candidate who submitted the least amount of artifacts and responses to interview questions. It should be noted that her limited input throughout this study is reflected by this fact. All other candidates submitted the required assignments for the student-teaching term: a teaching and learning statement, lesson plans, case study, and
journals. Ms. Sam initially gave me these items but at our last meeting, she asked that I return them given her newfound discomfort. Therefore, little weight has been given to her as a mini-case and is only applied where applicable.

Overall, the analysis supports that these candidates are well prepared to teach in urban settings. They demonstrated a willingness to learn about their practice in connection with educational theories. The candidates also learned about their students in order affect learning. Chapter five elaborates the discussion of the findings followed by implications. The recommendations for future research are presented as well.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine how a teacher education program prepared teacher candidates to be effective urban educators who are reflective, innovative, and committed to diversity based on their perceptions and insight. Five self-selected candidates participated in this qualitative case study during the semester-long course for the Teacher Education program: TED 5780: Student-Teaching. The data were collected from observations in their student-teaching placement and their monthly Community of Learners meetings; along with interviews, artifacts and reviewed documents. The NVIVO software was used to sort, organize, code and analyze the data. In chapter four, the data revealed three overarching themes that answer the following questions:

1. What do teacher candidates learn about being an effective educator while student-teaching?
2. To what extent does the teacher education program improve the participants' understanding of the reflective, innovative urban practitioner who is committed to diversity?
3. In what areas do teacher candidates perceive changes or improvements are needed in the future based on their experiences in student teaching?

From these questions, three main themes emerged: Becoming a Reflective Educator through Experience; Pedagogical Knowledge Gained during Student-Teaching; and Preparedness from Teacher Education Program. In a total of six subcategories, the findings were presented and analyzed (see Chapter 4). In this chapter, a discussion is
presented according to the guiding questions of this study. Then, the implications are discussed.

A Discussion of Results Regarding the Research Questions

Question 1: What did candidates learn about being an effective teacher while student teaching?

During the student-teaching term, teacher candidates learned to reflect and use their classroom experiences to help develop teaching strategies, pedagogical knowledge; and they learned about their students. In maximizing student achievement they learned about the importance of reflection. Reflection was the single most important factor in the evaluation process for understanding why students may have not learned from instruction. The end of the reflection process yielded information for the next steps. Student-teachers focused on those moments where they needed improvement to affect student learning because they earnestly wanted to be effective. Reflection brought them closer to their anticipated end and each candidate recognized this benefit through the classroom experiences during student teaching.

The candidates also developed key practices to enhance their instructional delivery. Constructivism as a theoretical platform for all of these candidates served them well as they both learned to teach, and helped their students learn. The candidates learned the relevance of theoretical knowledge and its connection to real-life encounters with learners. The prior knowledge gained in teacher education courses became substantive in the classroom as candidates were able to connect doctrine to practical experiences. This student teaching term gave them the practical hands-on experience which became the culminating personal and public assessment of their potential success in the teaching field.
Question 2: To what extent does the teacher education program improve the participants’ understanding of the reflective, innovative urban practitioner who is committed to diversity?

The teacher education program improved the candidates’ ability to articulate and demonstrate proficiency in pedagogical knowledge. All candidates acknowledged that it was only during the student-teaching experience that they were able to enact theoretical knowledge learned in coursework and see its application in actual student exchanges. The participants demonstrated development of pedagogical knowledge as they learned about their students, discovered how their students learned and utilized various methods of instruction to impact student learning. They also proved technology integration competency in order to support differentiated methods. Technology integration is becoming the 21st century meter for innovation in the classroom. Using various media such as the computer, promethean board and the document camera kept the students engaged as they absorbed the content to maximize learning.

All candidates agreed that working with individual students helped them to understand the scope of responsibilities inherent in effective teaching. Specifically, Ms. Kimberly, Mrs. Emerson and Ms. Thompson developed their understanding of the urban environment as one in which requires sensitivity and adaptation to the needs of individual learners and the specific conditions of their environment. Each candidate accommodated the demands, both unspoken and explicit, of individual students who faced academic challenges due to their new experiences with the English language, family environment, varying abilities, and/or emotional needs. Addressing individual needs is a requirement of all teachers for all students. These candidates
realized that in many cases the urban environment has a larger population of students who face obstacles such as the ones mentioned above.

**Question 3. In what areas do teacher candidates perceive changes or improvements are needed in the future based on their experiences in student teaching?**

Throughout the student-teaching term, candidates saw a need to evaluate their performance and they did make changes that will impact their future in the classroom. The most common change they seek moving forward is to stay abreast of best classroom management practices; this was an area of development for all candidates, particularly Ms. Thompson and Ms. Holly. Other advancements they will seek to enhance their practice include professional development, current literature review, and reflection through experiences with their students (Ms. Thompson, Ms. Sam, Mrs. Emerson, Ms. Holly Interview). By accessing research-based practices, candidates believe that their teaching skills will be sharpened.

Televisions, computers and radios were a common staple in all of the classrooms where I conducted observations. Just twenty years ago, these media resources were limited in many schools. Now teachers rely upon them. This indicates that technology must be a part of teacher education. As the findings capture the growing trend of our generation’s reliance on technology, student-teachers need experiences in their teacher education courses to strengthen their ability for classroom use. The teacher candidates agreed that more experience with various technological media prior to student-teaching would only have enhanced their classroom experience. They recommend that technology integration be emphasized to a greater degree in future teacher education coursework (Mrs. Thompson, Ms. Sam, Ms. Mrs. Emerson Interviews).
A Discussion Regarding the Candidates’ Perception of Preparedness

Each candidate expressed their level of preparedness according to their perceived strengths due to the student-teaching term and the coursework of the teacher education program (Ms. Kimberly, Ms. Thompson, Ms. Sam, Ms. Holly and Mrs. Emerson: Final Interviews). Ms. Kimberly believed that she strengthened her commitment to the active learning philosophy by setting goals and successfully incorporating this constructivist tenet in daily lesson plans. Ms. Thompson felt strongly about her ability to successfully help two students improve learning whose performance was far behind their grade level. Ms. Sam believed she gained awareness for supplementing the content knowledge from the students’ text with other resources such as those she collected from the library and internet. She found that students appreciated her depth of knowledge and modeling further exploration of the content encouraged the students to do the same. Through active experiences in the classroom, both effective and not, Ms. Holly believed that she developed the ability to integrate technology appropriately for her future classroom experiences. Finally, Mrs. Emerson perceived her awareness reached new heights as she worked with the students who read at different competency levels. She found a way to vary her instruction for each group of learners through collaboration, group activities, and pairing them with another student of both a higher and equal reading level. Figure 5.1 shows a diagram of each candidate’s strengths as expressed during the interview.
In addition to the candidates’ perceptions about the level of preparedness, through observations, reviewed artifacts and responses to interviews, their development was captured during the student-teaching term. Some candidates developed their understanding of reflection as a significant requirement for effective teaching during the student-teaching term. Overall each candidate felt they were prepared for their career as a future educator. Through the student-teaching term and coursework in the teacher education program, candidates developed proficiency as indicated by an analysis of their instructional delivery and methods and reflective
practices. Summarized below are the results of each candidate’s specific areas of development during the student-teaching semester in the following order: Ms. Thompson, Ms. Holly, Mrs. Emerson, and Ms. Kimberly and Ms. Sam.

**Ms. Thompson**

Fifth grade teacher, Ms. Thompson, developed in three main areas during the student-teaching semester which were reflection, classroom management, and using the case study to support student learning. At first, Ms. Thompson tried several strategies to manage the class; her trial-and-error attempts included constant demands for silence, threats to take away rewards and watching students who were misbehaving. Ms. Thompson benefited from reflection by really screening results of extrinsic rewards as she sought behavior modification from some talkative students. Through reflection, she improved in her teaching as she developed an awareness of extrinsic versus intrinsic rewards and how students may respond to these rewards long term. It was also as a result of reflective practices that she discovered the multiple roles a teacher is required to fulfill in order to be an effective teacher. Ms. Thompson realized the overuse of her trial-and-error methods at an attempt to manage or modify student behavior. In future teaching experiences, she will have to access best practices in order to improve her classroom management plan. In her future classroom, she will have to set the tone in advance and has promised to consult literature to improve her management style. Through these efforts, she may be able to channel her management challenges into practices conducive to learning and continue personal development as an effective educator.

The student-teaching term also seemed to help her reflect in broader terms about student’s circumstances and what is required in order to meet their needs based on knowledge
of their challenges both in and out of the classroom. Ms. Thompson determined the appropriate curricular decision for two students who struggled academically was collaboratively work which resulted in improved performance by the semester’s end. Finally, for her students, Ms. Thompson’s preparedness to integrate technology and use differentiated instruction helped them to achieve the stated objectives and complete a complex project. Her goal to facilitate learning so that “students evolve as independent thinkers” is solidified by these collaborative efforts where students were able to synthesize the content into a creative product (Ms. Thompson Teaching and Learning Statement).

**Ms. Holly**

Ms. Holly developed a heightened awareness of her pedagogy in order to achieve student learning for her first grade classroom. It was through reflection that she learned how to effectively evaluate experiences to discover why some instructional choices would be better suited for different occasions than others. Ms. Holly gleaned from her student teaching experience the importance of relying on reflection to arrive at better choices. The experiences in a future classroom will mark the success of her reflective practices and it is with hope that Ms. Holly accesses best practices to inform her curricular decisions.

The study also revealed Ms. Holly’s commitment to “think outside the box” in order to bring creativity and innovation into the classroom (Ms. Holly Teaching and Learning Statement). Ms. Holly’s inspiration to be a better teacher was sparked by teachers who lacked creativity (Ms. Holly Interview). By incorporating various teaching methods and integrating new technology, she kept the students engaged and interested in learning. Ms. Holly proved that she is willing
“to reach students where they are” in order for their academic success through play, active learning and a student-centered environment.

Mrs. Emerson

Through reflection and experience, Mrs. Emerson developed sensitivity to the needs of students with varying abilities. She noticed that some students silently struggled with the reading text and their low grades served as evidence (Mrs. Emerson Student-Teaching Observation, October 13, 1020). Along with her cooperating teacher, Mrs. Emerson changed the instructional delivery of reading from teacher-led instruction with the whole group, to cooperative learning. She incorporated small group reading time where students were matched with appropriate content and others at their level. She also paired advanced readers with those who were challenged. These changes improved the overall class reading performance. At the end of the term, she perceived that she was “successful” with structuring lessons to accommodate varying abilities (Mrs. Emerson Interview, November 22, 2010).

Mrs. Emerson also demonstrated pedagogical proficiency in several ways. First, she learned about her students’ personal challenges and even adapted the daily routine to accommodate one of them. Secondly, Mrs. Emerson developed the ability to retrace her steps, cue in feedback from the students, and finally determine why her students failed to learn a lesson. Reflection helped her to discover the problem, simplify the overall lesson objectives and differentiate the instruction to include the learning styles of all students. It seems that in this process, Mrs. Emerson realized the importance of innovation and captured the essence inherent in the art of teaching.

Ms. Kimberly
Learning to be an effective educator for Ms. Kimberly was strengthened in her student-teaching experience. The demands in the classroom helped Ms. Kimberly to accept her role as the teacher who is able to meet the needs of all learners. Being in the classroom reinforced her need to explore and implement alternative methods for reaching all students including the English language learners. She adapted by incorporating physical gestures, moving students closer to the front, and learning Arabic. Through the accommodations she made and the improved results demonstrated by the students, she learned specific knowledge of how to reach ELLs in an English-speaking classroom. Overall, the student-teaching experience for Ms. Kimberly brought her one step closer in her development as the effective urban educator.

Ms. Kimberly also developed clarity about her conceptualization of diversity while student teaching. The candidate realized that being committed to diversity is more about understanding individuals and their particular wants and needs, and not just cultural or racial aspects which make them different. In part, it means being sensitive to individual stories, values and beliefs and infusing the learning environment with some aspect of each perspective—even to the point of reliance upon each student’s input in order to elevate the knowledge base and cultural capital of the classroom. Ms. Kimberly also realized that another part of diversity commitment is changing to account for new information. Remaining the same individual in the face of multiple perspectives is not adapting. An effective educator is able to view life from the students’ perspective and make the necessary adaptations for their benefit.

Ms. Sam

Based solely on observations and limited responses to interview questions, Ms. Sam, a fifth grade student teacher, was most concerned with knowledge of the content and becoming a
subject matter expert (Ms. Sam Interview, December 2, 2010; Student-Teaching Observation, November 22, 2010). In particular, she researched supplemental science and math materials in an effort to advance students in these areas. Ms. Sam set high expectations for both herself and her students. For the students, math homework was assigned three to four times per week.

In order to improve her practice, Ms. Sam researched the daily lesson’s topic prior to the presentation “just about” every day (Ms. Sam Student-Teaching Observation, November 22, 2010). In one observation (November 22, 2010), I asked Ms. Sam about the multitude of facts she had on hand about snakes. It was important to her to be able to provide answers to potential questions and with three pages of supplemental information about snakes, no question went unanswered.

When asked directly if they were prepared to teach in their own classroom without supervision, each candidate affirmed her readiness. They felt that the student teaching term was just the beginning to a long career in the teaching field. The teacher education program, the candidates perceived, successfully prepared them for whatever may come in their future classrooms. The urban environment helped them to understand many of the complexities which may be present amongst the student body. As a result of this term, the candidates feel assured that experiences in the classroom with their students prepared them for many of the possible challenges their future students may be facing.

A Discussion Regarding Reflection

As one who seeks to be most effective in teaching so that students learn, the candidates learned to rely upon reflective practices. As was often the case in the student-teaching experience, aiming to improve, enhance or stimulate student learning is the reason changes are
made in practice. When the candidate explores alternative ways to deal with classroom challenges, whether in instructional methods or managing the classroom, the goal is for the teacher to arrive at the best outcomes for that learning environment and for the particular needs of the student.

Reflection brings about a heightened awareness in order to effectively evaluate experiences. Reflection after a lesson allows the instructor to retrace their steps, cue in the feedback from the students, whether it was in discussion or on written class work, and finally deduce what is working and what is not. In the process of retracing steps in order to determine the missing link to learning, teachers can stand in the shoes of their learners and possibly come up with an improved way to reach them. Educators who are effective at impacting student achievement constantly review their daily lessons and the experiences which took place in the classroom. They understand the importance of not only realizing when the method used was ineffective, they attain wisdom by pinpointing why it did not work.

Reflection is important; however, it is not the solution. It does not equate to the most appropriate choices for each given situation but it definitely starts the process. Reflection should lead to the exploration of alternative outcomes in order to arrive at the best outcomes. I argue that innovation does not occur without some reflection. Reflection precedes innovation. Ultimately the student teaching experience helped the candidates learn to go beyond consideration of what may work, to channeling reflection into the next course of action.

There are all sorts of experiences in which people can choose to be reflective. Not all individuals choose to absorb life through a reflective lens. As educators, reflection is so important because it lends itself to improved instruction. Improved instruction lends itself to
more opportunities for learning. As expressed by Dewey (1950), reflection as educators does actually have a long term impact and is not only beneficial for the teacher, but may prove to be beneficial—if successful changes are made—to help those that being taught to learn. Sometimes in moments of frustration, educators find their way. If they cannot, the students compel them to reconsider other ways as was the case for Ms. Kimberly working with English language learners. Sometimes, the interaction lends itself to helping educators learn about themselves.

Ultimately, reflection is important because the process will enhance awareness of what is or has taken place and brings clarity to make informed decisions for future action. While reflection often leads to improved awareness, is does not end there, for “recognizing the right action to take is mastery” (Fortgang, 2001, p. 58). Educators must choose the best course of actions and beyond reflection is appropriating the right choices needed to achieve the goal of student learning. Effective instruction encompasses knowledge of best practices and an ability to guide students through practices for academic achievement. Reflection is but one step in the final decision making process, but an essential one.

**Implications**

**Introduction: Learning to Teach, Reaching All Learners**

The results from this study generated several implications which are presented in this section. These overarching statements address the need for educators to continually reflect and evaluate their role in students’ lives as they seek to facilitate knowledge for learning. The evaluation required should occur in every entity where the goal is learning—from grade school to higher education, and especially through teacher education programs which prepare
educators to affect student learning. Before the main implications are presented there are a few introductory points of discussion which encompass the role of all educators; they are developments from this study that ground the proceeding sections starting from a broad perspective to very specific concepts. This section begins with the educator’s essential role; then addresses the mission of teacher education in its efforts to develop them; finally, establishes the call for a new urban education agenda.

Chapter one introduced the first notion that effective educators are those that make the right decisions about the way they teach and the knowledge they facilitate so that learning is achieved (Reagan, Case and Brubacher, 2000). This task requires that first, the educator connect with the students’ needs and abilities, create an optimal learning environment and access pedagogy which engages the students. At the end of the day, educators must be committed to the preeminent purpose of helping students learn. The second point builds upon Darling-Hammond (2006) which is the notion that effective educators have to constantly reflect on their teaching, their students, and their environment in order to stay coherent with the changing needs and wants of the target audience. Sometimes instructors have to be ‘retuned’ to the ways of learners and this can happen in the reflection process. Once they step in those learners’ shoes, educators should reexamine the intended outcomes using information generated from reflection to arrive at the most appropriate instructional delivery and methods so that the lesson will be learned.

Thirdly, one of the most important aspects of effective teaching is the ability to reach any learner where they are and elevate each one into full knowledge of the intended outcomes as emphasized by Parkay and Stanford (2010). There are many reasons which prevent students
from learning. Differing beliefs and values from an individual’s cultural background, learning styles, economic status which sometimes affect the psychological and emotional composition of students; these are conditions which factor into the learnability level. If these conditions are negative they can create a wall that inhibits a student’s receptiveness for learning.

However, it is my belief that effective teachers know how to penetrate the barriers which prevent students to learn by tapping into the minds of those they teach. Effective educators are able to identify exactly where to connect new information with the student’s prior knowledge. They are aware of their audience and find a way to relate to where they are in life’s journey. They take a moment to walk in their students’ shoes. They understand what each student needs by evaluating their mental, psychological, emotional and cultural state of affairs. Finally, an effective teacher makes the intended outcomes clear and in measurable terms so that all involve understand the expectations. For students in the knowledge development process, educators are like builders whose purpose is to assess whether the ground is ready for new structures or whether demolition of old structures needs to occur before a new building is constructed.

With these points in mind, three implications are developed. The first one is built upon the belief that educators must fully understand the key principles of constructivist teachings which are presented in the first section, More Emphasis on How Students Learn. Here, the process of how learners build upon prior knowledge and how teachers access this prior knowledge is discussed. The second implication addressed in the section, Implications for Teacher Education: Novice Teachers, not Student Teacher, and Faculty Modeling, makes the case for restructuring teacher education programs to omit the development of student
teachers and in its place adopt one that I propose which is the novice teacher model. This section also claims that faculty will further develop these novice teachers if they model best practices, explain their pedagogical rationale throughout the course and evaluate novice teachers’ practices prior to the final teaching experience with students. The third and final implication is a call for urban education reform which discusses a transition from a tolerance of survival thinking among urban students into an expansion of knowledge regarding their full potential. A model is introduced for the renewed thinking required for students as educators earnestly seek ways to reach them behind divisive barriers to learning, layer by layer. Throughout this discussion, the participants and their experiences are referenced as supporting evidence.

**More Emphasis on How Students Learn**

**Implication 1: Educators must fully understand the key principles of constructivist teaching and learning in order to reach all students for learning.** During the student-teaching observations, it was evident that candidates relied upon multiple delivery methods to reach their students. If the technique was ineffective such as the case when Ms. Holly tried to use the document camera for the first time with the kindergarteners, reflection helped them to consider alternative ways to teach. Reflection and differentiated instruction are but two considerations when the goal is reaching students. Educators also have to know how students learn and retain knowledge which is so important yet often understated. Teachers have to know not only the subject matter; they have to know how to reach the students through an understanding of how knowledge is acquired.
The concluding evidence from this study supports the notion that there are optimal conditions for knowledge reception and there is a process which has to be considered. I call this knowledge acquisition process “tapping into the minds.” It means that effective teachers will find the way to reach each learner in the class through an awareness of the student’s current state of mind. As discussed throughout the findings in Chapter 4, this state of mind accounts for the students’ prior knowledge in relation to the new material, and their posture as it relates to the following: cultural aspects which present varying values and beliefs about what knowledge is important; level of cognitive capabilities to acquire knowledge; learning styles; physiological; a sense of belonging or lack thereof; emotional needs; self-esteem levels; and economic and social factors which cause students to lack motivation for learning.

An educator who ‘taps into the minds’ of her students is concerned with knowledge acquisition—that is, how students receive, store, and retain information. Building upon Bruner’s (1960) ideas of how the mind categorizes information and develops an internal cognitive map, the proceeding section is language I used with the participants. It helped them understand the importance of accessing prior knowledge as students gain from new experiences. Recall in Chapter 1, page 16 where metaphoric language was introduced to describe the knowledge acquisition process:

When introduced to new material, learners in the process of constructing knowledge, will consider what they know on that subject and find the ‘file’ within the recesses of their mind that is associated with it, eventually storing it as seen fit. New information, then, is relative to prior knowledge and the learner will
constantly file, and 'create new folders within folders,' to accommodate new material.

To continue from this point, individuals store information in their memory or as referred to in this example “files.” This study revealed that there are three pertinent considerations in order to effectively access prior knowledge in the knowledge construction process. The three considerations are: 1) accessing the file; 2) evaluating the structure which houses the file; and 3) storing new knowledge in the file. These three steps are required in helping students to learn new content.

The first step effective educators make in reaching students for learning is to “access the file.” This step constitutes connecting with each learner’s previous knowledge. Accessing prior knowledge is a value of the constructivist framework. What is often understated is what prior knowledge educators need to access. Ms. Holly, for example, would have benefited from asking her kindergarten students about their experience with a very new technology she wanted to use. Had she incorporated the term, “camera document” (ELMO machine) in the introduction to the lesson, Ms. Holly would have found that there was no ‘file’ for this and therefore, one needed to be created or connected to another familiar term the students may have about this equipment. Ms. Holly could have started with a question about machines the students may have used or seen. This question would have opened the student's experience base to knowledge specific to one she wanted to incorporate. If students had no response to the question about machinery, another appropriate starting point could have been shadows or what takes place when light is flashed on the wall. In each case, Ms. Holly’s goal would be to identify a starting point—what I am calling the ‘file’ in the student’s mind—which houses previous
knowledge upon which to build new content. The key in this step is identifying this place for every single student.

Mrs. Emerson’s experience with Frank, the student who cried on a daily basis, is an example of how an educator starts with the information of the student, or the state of mind that the students is presently fixated, and builds upon their experience to achieve learning. Each day, Mrs. Emerson began with the state of mind in which Frank dwelt. He was experiencing a frustrating reaction to his parent’s divorce and could not move pass the strong emotions about this in order to engage in academic tasks. By working in Frank’s current file, emotional frustration, Mrs. Emerson was able to help him resolve the feelings associated with its content in order to move towards other academic objectives. Although he needed this routine on a daily basis, Mrs. Emerson met him every day with the same concern because this was the only way it seemed that he would be able to participate in learning. Some teachers would actually focus only on Frank’s need to learn instead, and expect that he quickly return to his work. They undervalue the importance of his emotional state and only push him to achieve because they are held accountable, state standards have to be met, or simply because they know Frank can do the work but he is just not applying himself. This is a case where teachers have to address the individual’s conditions which affect whether learning is achievable at that moment or not which leads to the second step in the knowledge acquisition process.

In the second step, educators evaluate the structure which houses the file. Often referred to as knowledge of how students learn, this involves an examination of the structure in place for how new knowledge would be best stored. The requirement for really absorbing the conditions upon which learning is achieved is to think in terms of each student’s current needs
and wants. Through empathy and evaluating the characteristics of the target audience, educators seek to understand each individual by standing in their shoes. Standing in another’s shoes means they experience life from the perspective of that person.

This was the case for many of the candidates but particularly the kindergarten teachers, Ms. Kimberly and Ms. Holly as they incorporated play, dance and songs in their classroom experience. They found that students were so engaged in the activity, students overlooked that learning numbers or words was the outcome. Therefore, an understanding of what keeps five year olds involved is essential. Keeping students engaged required knowledge of how students connect with the content. The candidates never had to let go of the intended outcomes in accommodating the young learner’s engagement needs. In actuality, they increased the chances that students were successful in meeting the lesson outcomes.

Once the educator determines the connecting point, accesses the most appropriate file, and understands how new information is stored, only then can new information be acquired so that learning is achieved. The first two steps in knowledge acquisition are preparation-oriented; they are the required steps before any new information can be introduced. The last step in this process is delivery-oriented and specifies the way in which knowledge is facilitated to ensure that learning takes place. Teaching to learn requires that both student and educator are in agreement of the expected outcomes. This means that each party knows exactly what to expect by the end of the lesson. To achieve this, teachers have to deliver instruction which is guided by clear and measurable objectives. Essentially, mutual assent is evident when students and teachers know precisely what constitutes the grade students will receive on their assignments. Teaching to learn also requires an opportunity for students to actively engage with the material.
Students should not only acquire knowledge through direct instruction where the teacher drills the information into the file (Darling-Hammond, 1996). The teacher’s work, in addition to direct instruction, is to provide activities, projects collaboration, and other applicable learning tasks that students take responsible action in making the connections themselves. As the candidates continually advocated, active learning is very effective in helpings students file, collect and retain new knowledge.

**Implications for Teacher Education: Novice Teachers, not Student-Teachers & Faculty Modeling**

Implication 2: A restructuring of teacher education programs to formally transition students into the role of novice teachers can develop their understanding as to the responsibilities of an educator, not a student who teaches. Faculty will improve the development process for these novice teachers if they model best practices, explain their pedagogical rationale throughout the course and evaluate novice teachers’ practices prior to the final teaching experience with students. The role of teacher education is important because training to be a teacher often begins in course work. As discussed in the literature review, the two most important goals for the teacher education program are to develop teacher candidates’ understanding of how all learners acquire knowledge and ensure subject matter competency (Darling-Hammond, 2006; National Academy of Education (NAE), 2005; King, Hollins, and Hayman, 1997; Goodman, 1990). The knowledge acquisition process outlined in the previous section, *Learning to Teach, Reaching all Learners* applies for an adult learning to teach or a child who is learning to read because the path of acquiring knowledge is similar. To ensure that knowledge is attained, the instructor, in this case faculty in the teacher
education program, must build upon previous knowledge and provide experiences which facilitate learning. Instructors and faculty have to access the files in the teacher candidates’ mind about education; understand the conditions of each individual to determine whether the information will be properly stored; and finally, facilitate new information.

As Darling-Hammond (2006) explains, the previous knowledge that teacher education faculty generally build upon is experiences the candidates had as students. It is an appropriate past experience because up until the point of teacher training, student experiences are mostly what the candidates know. However, in order to perform effectively as a teacher, a transition from student to teacher has to occur which elevates the candidates’ ability to make informed decisions for someone else as opposed to themselves. Candidates have to use their student experiences only to the extent that it supports new knowledge about helping others learn.

To use the metaphoric language from the previous section, Learning to Teach, Reaching all Learners, teachers-in-training often build knowledge about teaching in their student folder. That is, they store new knowledge about educational experiences often using their perspective as a student. Proposed here is that faculty focus on student experiences in a larger context, maybe classroom experiences, and clearly distinguish the prospective of student and teacher. The goal is for faculty to distinctly develop content in the new folder called my role as teacher. This can be done in a course designed to strengthen teaching skills through experiential learning and performance assessments. The instructor would begin by modeling each module and provide rationale for his/her curricular decisions, pedagogical methods and connection to theories. As the candidates are guided through each module, they demonstrate proficiency in the expected outcomes and must also develop their research-based theoretical
framework. Although many of these tasks are presently addressed in teacher education coursework, it is done through the student’s lens. From a student’s perspective, these are tasks designed to fulfill the requirements for a grade, not as a teacher responsible for the next generation. Also, the opportunity to teach students is mainly addressed in their student teaching experience which arguably is late in the teacher development process. Outside of observations required in initial certification courses, evaluation of these teacher candidates as they work with students should be monitored early in the program and evaluated throughout.

In essence, an effective education program will help teacher candidates to own their role as teacher earlier in the program so that candidates clearly recognize their development though a teacher lens as opposed to their student one. As students, assignments are completed many times to fulfill a requirement or to satisfy a requirement. A satisfactory grade, in a sense, is an extrinsic reward. In concrete terms, instructors should remind candidates that they are officially educators; they are not turning in work to receive a passing grade; and the candidates are developing their contract of assurance to the public that they are ready and prepared to teach by the work they complete in this course and future ones thereafter.

As the teacher candidates in this study suggested, once they identified with their role as teacher, their thinking changed and they yearned to succeed because their students depended upon it (Ms. Thompson Interview, December 2, 2010; Mrs. Emerson Interview, November 22, 2010). They sought proficiency because it mattered not only for them but others who depended on their achievement as a novice teacher. As they faced challenges in the classroom, the candidates felt a sense of urgency to know the best practices because they felt accountable.
This sense of accountability should occur earlier in the program so that candidates develop a sense of ownership while they are also developing the foundational tenets of education.

Ms. Thompson, for example, learned the importance of best practices for behavior modification only after she entered the final student teaching experience. It was primarily through trial-and-error that she finally discovered some methods for maintaining order in the class. The opportunity cost for Ms. Thompson’s student-as-teacher experiences is the productivity that could have been achieved for her students. Had the candidate observed faculty demonstrate behavior modification strategies, consulted best practices, and had an opportunity to be evaluated prior to the student teaching term, her final classroom experience prior to certification may have only been a demonstration of excellence as opposed to one where she was learning to teach (Ms. Thompson interview December 2, 2010).

Therefore, the student-teaching experience should not serve as the formal transition to teaching; teaching opportunities should occur earlier in the program and be formally assigned as such. By the time teacher candidates enter the novice teacher’s term, faculty should be able to identify each candidate’s abilities and measure it according to best practices. This will ensure that children receive novice teachers, not student-as-teachers. Novice teachers are those who think beyond the role of the student—to perform in the leadership role required as educator. Consider again Ms. Thompson who struggled with classroom management, particularly modifying negative behavior in the classroom. Her transition into the role of teacher first occurred in this student-teaching environment. Ideally, Ms. Thompson’s behavior modification plan would have been developed, practiced and evaluated in several courses in the teacher education program. She would have been able to identify research-based ideologies which
supported her plan and would have had input from faculty. Ms. Thompson also would have been able to identify instances where faculty modeled best practices to inform her own decisions.

Candidates and their teaching practices need to be developed and assessed before they enter the classroom with students. Clearly, the student-teaching experience is the point at which candidates’ skills are assessed. However, a level of competency needs to be attained during course work so that students are not submerged in trial-and-error practices. Candidates did agree that more hands-on training in their teacher’s role prior to student teaching would be beneficial for confidence-building and minimal ineffective practices they demonstrated during the term (Mrs. Thompson, Ms. Sam, Mrs. Emerson, Ms. Holly Interviews). Just as medical programs transition students to “novice doctors” upon graduation (having met all requirements and practiced in multiple instances) as they go through residency and not students who treat real people, the same should occur for our teacher programs. These teacher programs should produce a professional first and then require that the professionals serve in a training capacity such as the medical residency model.

This leads into the final implication for a teacher education program. Modeling learning outcomes impact achievement whether it is for students who want to read or adults who want to teach. Therefore, faculty in teacher education programs help the teacher candidates learn when they demonstrate best practices both explicitly and indirectly. Direct instruction should not be the prevalent method used in teacher training, yet all candidates described courses where the primary instructional method was to lecture for over two hours. Differentiated instruction helps to ensure learning for varying abilities and styles; therefore, faculty must model this in
their course work. When all else fails, learners will often resort to how they have been taught or what has been modeled as was the case for Ms. Thompson when she observed her cooperating teachers’ behavior modification plan (Researcher Journal Entry, October 28, 2010). The teacher education program should be the point at which candidates break away from ineffective practices of their grade schooling to be immersed solely in dynamic pedagogy which facilitates learning to teach. This begins with modeling from faculty.

**Urban Education Reform: Students Achieving, not Just Surviving.**

Implication 3: The urban education agenda is to elevate students from a survival state of mind into knowledge of their full potential. A survival state of mind can affect a student’s motivation to think beyond his current state of affairs. When students are empowered to think beyond survival and their motivating factors are addressed the renewed thinking peels away the divisive barriers to learning, layer by layer.

As defined in Chapter four, the urban environment is a largely populated area where the cultural, ethnical and economic state of affairs creates a complex and dynamic situation for many of the individuals in these communities (Mayberry, Crossley and Sweet, 1980). Here the cultural aspects of a group are distinguished from what is commonly classified as aspects of urban culture. Cultural aspects of a group relate to certain norms such as traditions, values and beliefs of people who identify themselves of the same people. Urban culture refers to norms of a group of people based on their location and the broadly held conditions they encounter as a result of their demographics. I believe that for educators, differentiating the two is important because, although not always exclusively done, addressing the students’ cultural needs requires awareness of the values, traditions, and beliefs while addressing the urban needs
necessitates an awareness of the economic and social conditions many children face in a specific location.

People in urban environments, especially the poor, struggle to realize their potential, often in more numbers than those in other communities such as suburban or wealthy areas. Issues commonly identified in urban culture are the lack of resources to people who desperately need them, cyclical poverty, and an overriding sense of hopelessness. A discussion of struggles common within urban culture should take nothing away from the richness inherent in the diversity of these communities; the people who achieve in spite of these conditions or for which these conditions do not apply; or the higher quality of life which arise from its positive attributes.

In very broad terms the condition of many in urban areas is one where that which abounds is a lack of resources. Those affected negatively by the “urban crisis” as Sugrue (2005) acclaims, have a mental state that focuses on surviving. These conditions affect a person’s thinking about their outlook and inhibits their need to set goals beyond the day-to-day struggle to survive. It was Maslow who theorized that an individual is often unmotivated to think about maximizing his full potential when the concern of the day is what he will eat, or how safe he will be throughout the night (Maslow, 1956). Using analysis from Maslow’s theoretical interpretation, those in the survival state are motivated to satisfy their physiological, safety, and esteem needs.

As discussed in Chapter two, urban conditions do affect student achievement. The reason that urban education is distinguished from all others is that historically, nations have found it challenging to improve academic achievement in the face of the urban crisis (Spring, 2010). Statistics have shown the disparaging numbers of students who are achieving well
below the averages in other neighborhoods with better conditions (Spring, 2010). Children in urban environments are hard to reach because as educators attempt to teach them about math, reading and science, the children are thinking about their rumbling bellies or how their mom was attacked the night before. Mothers are there telling them that they do not have a father and it rings loudly in their ears even as the room goes silent during test time. Many students from urban areas have needs that are not fulfilled. I strongly believe that these students are not deficient themselves; they face a reality that hinders their ability to think beyond survival mode just as others in the urban community. The conditions cripple their ability to maximize their full potential and as a result they adopt the survival mentality of those submerged in the urban crisis. Students are forced to emerge from a negative state in order to reach achievement at their full potential.

Critics such as Senge, McCabe, Lucas, Smith & Dutton (2000) have argued that children are not deficient and do not need to be fixed. Others fault teachers for not setting high enough expectations and accepting less given the effects of low socioeconomic status. It is clear that urban students themselves are not deficient; and yes, high expectations should be expected regardless of the community or location. However, the challenges in the urban community are real and have to be addressed before academic expectations are enforced. What is considered deficient are the inequities found in the educational resources for those in varying economic statuses. How can students be pushed to pass the test when they have very little motivation to excel because they do not see past their circumstances? How can these students focus when there is such a sense of hopelessness that weighs down their belief for a better life when that which dominates their reality is cyclical generational poverty?
I can identify with the desire for a better life as I am a product of the urban environment and a person who grew up in survival mode. I grew up for a short time in government-assisted housing on Detroit’s east side. My parents did the best to support our family; however, their combined income was barely enough to pay the bills. We struggled like most our neighbors to make ends meet and welfare food was commonplace in the home. There were many days that I was overcome with a sense of hopelessness and it was only until adulthood that I realized my low self-esteem. My friend often jokes how I cried one day because I was not pretty enough and nobody wanted to be around me. It was a feeling that I did not fit in the environment because I hated identifying with poverty or anything that resembled it.

I never would have imagined a life outside of my environment had it not been for the high expectations of my parents and the empowerment from experiences in a high school French class. The teacher of this class empowered her students by expanding our choices and dreams for ourselves. In an effort to build a sense of belonging to a community of French learners, she helped us to build self-confidence through our achievements in experiences foreign to our native language and everyday life. Her class was a means of escape from mere surviving as she created a new world. This French teacher exposed us to concrete French cultural experiences such as watching French films; eating escargot and various cheeses; and reading novels. She successfully conveyed to us that life could be better and helped us to visualize this new life with the altered lens she provided in that French classroom. Like others in my class, I felt a sense of connection to something greater than my circumstances and as a result, esteemed for more because I believed in my potential to succeed. It was no coincidence that I chose the college that advertised a study abroad opportunity which was a part of the
general curriculum. As I arrived in France two years later, I recognized the transference of
wealth in knowledge and experiences that this teacher freely gave. In the end, I did perceive
that I had escaped the survival mentality and was compelled to help children understand their
power and what it would take to see the better side of life beyond mere existing.

A connection was made to Maslow’s theory hierarchy of needs in Chapter four in the
Teaching in an Urban Environment analysis. It was used to analyze why a student, Frank,
may have been able to move beyond his daily emotional frustration with his parent’s divorce
once Mrs. Emerson spoke with him (p.120). Maslow’s theory is the centerpiece for a model I
developed to depict the motivational factors as it is translated into survival thinking. Maslow’s
model posits that there are five hierarchal tiers of needs beginning with the most important at
the bottom which are physiological needs; then moves through to needs of safety, a sense of
belonging; self-esteem; and then to the highest point, which is self-actualization (Parkay &
Stanford, 2010). The model I created below depicts the physical, mental, and emotional state of
affairs common in the urban culture for those who operate in survival mode especially due to
impoverished conditions. Maslow’s theory in diagram form depicts a hierarchal of needs in
relation to how motivated an individual would be to reach their needs at each ascending level.
Using the same concept of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs diagram, this image below uses the
hierarchal terms to emphasize each tier as translated from Maslow’s tier description, but what it
depicts is the urban student’s outlook set in deficient thinking as a result of the urban crisis. This
is what each educator has to consider as they create lesson plans for effective urban teaching.
The Motivating Factors in Relation to Survival Mentality

This model uses the same hierarchal structure in Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs to emphasize each tier. This model captures the current physical, mental, and emotional state of affairs for many in survival mode.

As Figure 4 depicts, children with the survival mentality may be affected by many factors. They have physiological concerns such as the lack of food in the home or a decrepitated form of shelter. Some students have safety concerns because of the staggering cases of violence in these communities. Others feel no sense of belonging as they go from school to do their homework alone, knowing that their parents are working two jobs just to make ends meet—or worse, could care less if the assignment is completed. As a result of these factors, a lot of children in survival mode feel worthless, invaluable and therefore, have no
reason to feel important, significant or that their lives really matter. They have no sense of what their full potential could be, and thinking beyond their surviving conditions is an illusion, reserved for fiction characters such as Cinderella.

The urban survival mode has meant a feeling of being on the brink of non-existence and existence. It is not represented by notions of sufficiency and definitely not abundance. Even if it is the case that a child is not faced with these extremes, many children in urban environments often know that a better world exists but it is far from their reality, whether perceived or in actuality. Urban education reform is elevating students beyond the current found in urban areas, which is survival mode, and into one that helps them understand that they are valuable; they belong to a rich world that extends beyond their current way of life, and they should be confident that their future is bright because they will be able to reach their dreams through hope, perseverance, motivation, and high expectations which they set for themselves and that are supported by those in the school system.

Teaching in the urban environment dictates that urban challenges have to be acknowledged, not casted away because the problems are real. Urban education reform is elevating students beyond physiological and safety needs so that they have a better chance to reach full potential. Maslow (1954) had it right when he posited that if one’s basic needs are not met, he is challenged to think in broader terms about how to love, raising his self-esteem, let alone reaching his full potential. Urban students need alternative perspectives. Recall Ms. Kimberly who explained to her students that she ate pork and she enjoyed it. Ms. Kimberly was able to alter their perspective to fit in her own so that they have a broader view of their earthly neighbors.
The role of the urban educator then, is to help students internalize an alternative reality for their future. Educators have to help students realize their full potential by teaching them the importance of foreseeing a successful future and providing as many opportunities as possible to escape the everyday life of survival. It does not have to be a focus of their long-term future. As Mrs. Emerson stressed, having events throughout the year is one spark that propels students beyond their everyday concerns. It builds excitement for something concrete and events that interests them beyond academic achievement or home life. Urban educators need to come equipped with new ways of teaching, thinking ‘on the fly,’ and constantly reevaluating their pedagogy to ensure that they are meeting the needs of their community. Urban educators also have to systematically and continually expose urban students to alternative realities which will expand their range of potential possibilities.

What it requires from urban students is the will to overlook their circumstances, be confident, and focus on academic achievement to move towards self-actualization. To be motivated at a level which springs inner city children through the obstacles common in urban areas such as cyclical poverty and lack of resources, these students will have to be proactive, self-starters, self-driven and supported by a community of learners who has their best interest in mind.

Students in this environment would benefit from an evaluation in order to determine their needs if they are to achieve academic success. What that means is regardless of the social injustices and issues of fairness given these facts, students are expected to meet state, federal and district standards often with fewer resources, in many cases. In order to compete with someone who has better conditions for growth—whose odds are in their favor—the students
from urban neighborhoods have to study just as hard if not more given few resources. Figure 4 below is a model I created for educators in thinking about ways to impact urban students and their needs on a physiological, safety, belonging, esteem and self-actualization (or in short, PS-BES) level. It is derived from Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory and while the hierarchy in this model is congruent to the original theory, the hierarchy of renewed thinking model provides a replacing value for level of need.

**Figure 5 – The Real Urban Education: Survival Thinking Repaired by Renewed Thinking and School Support.** This figure represents the results of school support for students in survival mode whose physiological, safety, belonging, emotional, and/or self-actualization needs addressed. It is up to the educators to help students realize this renewed thinking.
As urban educators seek ways to elevate their students beyond survival mode, a push for changing those with survival thinking is required. In its place, educators have to affirm the student’s potential to move beyond the day’s circumstance and reach for something greater. This can happen as educators access the files of perseverance, hope, and achievement. It can happen as educators evaluate the conditions of each student and determine his or her needs to eliminate those barriers that prevent learning. And it can happen when the educators store positive experiences that depict an improved quality of life beyond that of survival. Each time an educator shows life outside of the urban crisis, knowledge about a better future is transmitted and hopefully stored in the urban child’s mind. This is what is required in urban education—a heightened awareness for a quality of life that is greater than what these students experience on a daily basis. It also requires experiences which prove that students are valuable through an investment of rich and rewarding experiences; of which has historically been reserved for those with higher socioeconomic status.

Finally it does not solely fall on the teacher in the classroom. Each educator, whether it be the administrator, the district superintendent or the paraprofessional and lunch attendant can help to support students through awareness, empathy and adapting to those needs which call for help. From a top-down perspective, administrators have to openly communicate that children in their district are valuable. This is demonstrated through engaging activities beyond academics. As Mrs. Emerson revealed in Chapter 4 about motivating students, children need something to look forward to and her school provided exciting monthly events to affirm that hard work pays off and that the administrators value them.
From a bottom-up perspective, meeting the needs of all students requires an evaluation of their cultural background, abilities, learning style and what I’m referring to as the PSBES needs which are the physiological, safety, belonging, esteem and self-actualization as adopted from terms used in Maslow’s (1954) Hierarchy of Needs theory. All of those who work in the school can remain open to listening when students sound off emotional challenges, or reaffirm how bright each student’s future will be because they are valuable.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

**Restructuring Teacher Education Programs**

This study resulted in a call for restructuring teacher education programs in an effort to formally transition teacher candidates into their role as a novice teacher instead of student teacher. I also asked that faculty in the teacher education department work to model best practices and provide rationale for their chosen pedagogy both explicitly and indirectly. In future research, a case study that examines teacher candidates as they formally transition into their novice teacher status would provide evidence for or against this restructured program. Ideally, students will have met all state and teacher education program requirements, become a professional teacher and then work as a novice teacher in a development capacity modeled after the medical program’s residency. Additionally, an action research study done by faculty could be beneficial in providing insight on the feasibility and effectiveness of modeling best practices in teacher education courses.

**Issues in Urban Education**

In an effort to better evaluate students’ needs, further research is needed to determine whether addressing motivating factors mentioned in this study will improve conditions for
learning. These factors included needs of physiological, safety, belonging, esteems, and self-actualization, in addition to the cultural aspects, learning styles, and varying cognitive abilities. It would be helpful if a study was conducted to develop research-based findings to discover the significance of the factors presented above and how educators can effectively support each student given the outcome of the study.

Technology

Teacher education can conduct annual surveys of schools in the area to find out their technology sources. By organizing the data based on subject areas, teachers would report their technological integration methods and report them to the school supervisor who would then fill out the survey. This would support a stronger relationship and collaboration with school districts in the surrounding area and it would inform TED programs on how to better service pre-service teachers for their potential future classrooms. Depending on the scope of the teacher education program and their ability to reach a wide group of districts it could really impact the courses and the learning curve prior to entering the classroom.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine how a teacher education program prepares its teacher candidates for student learning.

The three main implications from this study are stated below:

1. Educators must fully understand the key principles of constructivist teaching and learning in order to reach all students for learning.
2. The effective teacher education program must ensure that faculty model effective teaching practices and formally transition teacher candidates from student to teacher.

3. Urban education reform is elevating students beyond the current found in urban areas, which is survival mode, and into one that helps them understand that they are valuable; they belong to a rich world that extends beyond their current way of life, and they should be confident that their future is bright because they will be able to reach their dreams. Educators have to affirm the student’s potential to move beyond the day’s circumstance and reach for something greater. This can happen as educators access the files of perseverance, hope, and achievement. It can happen as educators evaluate the conditions of each student and determine his or her needs to eliminate those barriers that prevent learning. And it can happen when the educators store positive experiences that depict an improved quality of life beyond that of survival.

The purpose of education to change and improve the way people think about themselves, their work, and the programs which affect our lives is by far the overarching implication that these three statements share in common. Education is a multifaceted entity which necessitates that educators tirelessly yield to serving a multitude of needs towards a cause beyond the ordinary. Educators do this because their service definitely extends greater than the currency of short term material urgencies. Educators train individuals who will touch the entire planet and see far beyond the brightest star. Education as an entity that improves the quality of life thrives upon the hopes and dreams of those individuals who seek to learn all there
is about this Universe for the sole purpose of making someone else’s life better. What greater gift can a being contribute when he or she seeks purpose in order to help others fulfill theirs. This study is one of many that explored and discovered ways in which education improves the lives of children, adults, and the programs which facilitate knowledge about teaching. The charge is that all leaders but particularly those in the educational arena continue to seek ways to improve the quality of life through education for students and especially for those who teach them.
APPENDIX A

WSU's COE Statement on the Reflective Educator

As of April 19, 2010

The College of Education believes that teaching is a multifaceted task situated in a complex environment. Preparing pre-service teachers to negotiate these complexities requires creative and innovative strategies.

The College of Education faculty inducts pre-service teachers into the profession by helping them learn to think as reflective teachers. Reflection allows educators to look back in order to plan the way forward. It is a process that empowers educators to be professional kid watchers who use their observations of children to guide their curricular decision-making. In this way reflective educators become lifelong researchers of their students’ understandings.

Dewey defined reflection as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1933, p. 118). Schön (1983) made reflection the center point in his articulation of how professionals reflect in and on action. Both Dewey and Schön recognize the importance of critically examining one’s beliefs and feelings as paramount to the development of new understandings and ultimately, changes in practice. As we use the term reflection, we intend an active process of persistent and careful observation and analysis of every aspect of one's practice. Reflection is a strategy that educators can use to make informed decisions about teaching and learning. A primary goal of the College of Education is to prepare educators who systematically, intentionally, and critically examine all aspects of practice.
Observations of students can lead to an examination of the dynamics of learning, and a critical and supportive examination of one’s own practice (Eby, Herrell, & Hicks, 2002; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Reflection also involves examining one’s practice from multiple perspectives, including cognitive, socio-cultural, and psychological frameworks and requires consideration of curriculum, material and assessments. Discussion about classroom practice with faculty and fellow students can lead to new insights about the educational process, as well as develop professional dispositions. Through this process of reflective practice, educators learn to adapt instruction to better meet the needs of learners from diverse backgrounds (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Delpit, 1996; Hale, 2001; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The College of Education faculty also examines their own practice, and explicitly demonstrates and infuses reflective practice into their own teaching. Through discourse, demonstrations, guided practice and carefully crafted curricula, graduates of the College of Education program develop a reflective disposition, coupled with requisite skills and knowledge that will help them become more insightful innovators of their own practice, and more committed to capitalizing on the assets of their diverse populations.

References:

Dewey, 1933
Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993;
Delpit, 1996;
Eby, Herrell, & Hicks, 2002;
Gay & Kirkland, 2003;
Hale, 2001
Howard, 2003
Ladson-Billings, 1994
Schön 1983
Zeichner & Liston, 1996
APPENDIX B

WSU’s COE Statement on the Innovative Educator

as of April 10, 2010

The Effective Urban Educator: *Innovative Practitioner who is Able to Demonstrate the Ability to Problem Solve, Develop Ideas, and use Creative Methods*

The College of Educations’ commitment to innovation is grounded in the belief that an innovative educator is one who understands the nature of schooling for the 21st century and who has a vision for what education means for a democratic society. Innovation implies knowledge of how to initiate, negotiate and implement change for the common good.

Innovative educators believe that learning is a process of making connections. They embrace an asset model of learning that views the knowledge, experience, and culture of PK-12 students and their families as the basis for building curriculum (Compton-Lily, 2008). Innovators capitalize on the diversity in their classrooms by drawing out varied viewpoints on issues, inviting multiple solutions to problems, and seeking different perspectives on events (Darling-Hammond, L. & Bransford, J. 2005). In order to ensure this diversity of response innovators provide multiple avenues for their students to express their ideas (Eisner, 2002). Employing available and emerging technologies is one of these important avenues for this expression of ideas (Kress, 2003; Weigel, M., James, C., & Gardner, H., 2009).

Innovative educators believe that learning is both a personal and social process and that optimal learning occurs in a supportive, collaborative community. They build classroom communities that nurture important attitudes and dispositions about learning: Taking risks, being curious, having confidence to raise questions, persevering, living with the tentative, being
skeptical about assumptions and conclusions, viewing mistakes as opportunities for learning, and respecting the ideas of others.

Innovative educators are professional learners. They learn by reflecting on their work with students to differentiate instruction. They closely observe students as they create theories, solve problems, and make personal connections to issues and events and use those observations to modify and enhance teaching and learning. They participate in learning communities by reading professional literature, attending conferences, and making presentations at various educational meetings. They continue to learn about expanded uses of digital technologies, thereby helping themselves and their students to produce and communicate ideas in new and enlightened ways. The College of Education considers innovation as the core of education by enhancing the lives of learners, their teachers, and their organizations (Govindarajan, & Timble)

References


APPENDIX C
WSU’s COE Statement on the Educator Who is committed to Diversity

As of April 10, 2010

The Effective Urban Educator: Committed to meet the needs of a Diverse Population.

Committed to Diversity

The College of Education’s commitment to diversity is grounded in the diversity of our own student body as well as the diversity of students with whom they will work. Cultural diversity is “a mosaic of individuals and groups with varying backgrounds, experiences, styles, perceptions, values, and beliefs” (Institute for Cultural Partnerships). There are many types of diversity including but not limited to race, culture, religion, age, class, socioeconomic status, abilities and sexual orientation. The unique urban location of Wayne State University in midtown Detroit affords the opportunity to draw upon the social and institutional diversity of the Detroit metropolitan area and to ground curriculum in principles of social justice.

The College of Education prepares effective educators who come from a wide range of social, cultural, and economic backgrounds and affiliations. Our candidates understand that PK-12 students will have different views of the world and ways of knowing and learning. Being committed to diversity is “to teach in ways that help different kinds of learners find productive paths to knowledge as they also learn to live constructively together” (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 5). The College of Education prepares our graduates to demonstrate their commitment to diversity by providing authentic, differentiated, inclusive and culturally sensitive instruction to PK-12 students with a wide range of interests, needs, and academic and cultural experiences (Hale, 1992; Peterson & Hittie, 2003). College of Education faculty and candidates model
dispositions that enhance one’s awareness of and sensitivity to the diverse population of students they will serve.

Faculty and candidates who are committed to diversity acknowledge the critical importance of education in the functioning of a democratic society. They recognize its potential for improving the lives of individuals and communities, and also for transforming societal inequities (Banks, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 200?; Freire, 1998; Gutmann, 1999; Howe, 1997). Faculty embrace their dual responsibility for both serving diverse candidates and raising their awareness about diversity. Faculty believe that diversity and social justice are examined most effectively when these issues are infused throughout the curriculum (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).
APPENDIX D

Wayne State University
College of Education Claims & Supporting Data as of April, 2010

Our Graduates are qualified to Teach in Urban Settings, so we claim our program completers:

1. The Effective Urban Educators are **reflective Practitioners** who can accurately assess themselves and develop plans for improvement
   a. Reflective journal
   b. Portfolio
   c. Lesson plan
   d. Supervisor evaluation
   e. Cooperating teacher evaluations
   f. Exit surveys (2)

2. The Effective Urban Educator is an **Innovative Practitioner** who is able to demonstrate the ability to problem solve, develop ideas, and use creative methods.
   a. Case Study
   b. Lesson Plan
   c. Management Plan
   d. Supervisor Evaluation
   e. Cooperating Teacher Evaluations

3. The Effective Urban Educator **committed to meet the needs of a diverse population**.
   a. Windshield survey
   b. Community Outreach
   c. Service Learning Field Experience (2251)
   d. School District Instructional Plan
   e. Supervisor Evaluation
   f. Cooperating Teacher Evaluation

4. The Effective Urban Educator can meet **Professional Standards** for Michigan teachers (PSMT). Our graduates are able to meet all of the College of Education Standards.
   a. GPA (gen ed & content)
   b. GPA (pedagogy)
   c. MTTC
   d. Lesson plan (content benchmarks)/GLECS
   e. Supervisor Evaluation
   f. Cooperating Teacher Evaluation

In order for our claims to be valid and reliable:

- Each claim should have about 3 or more assessments that fit that claim.
- Make claims Clear. Why did we choose these 3 assessments for this particular claims, what makes these valid.
- Why is the assessment valid? They are valid because they meet the claim
- They are reliable because we look at inter rater reliability with supervisor/cooperating teacher evaluations through the in-service training meetings.
- The faculty who use the rubric created the rubric; and PT faculty will be trained on evaluating students on the rubric.
APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol

Interviewee: Student-Teacher

Introductory Statement

First, I would like to thank you for your time and the opportunity to ask questions about being prepared to be a reflective, innovative educator who is committed to diversity. This interview and your identity will remain confidential. Are there any questions about this? I hope that you can clarify some things and you can give me your perspective of this course and the preparation you have had in the college of education. You are more than welcome to ask questions and if I need to be more specific please do not hesitate to ask.

General Probes

Tell me a little more about…..?
What do you mean?
Can you give me an example of that?
How would you define your perspective of…?
When this happens, what is your response?

General Question #1 – Background Information

I would like to get some general information about you as a student here.
Tell me about some general things that apply to your background as a student here:

- Number of Years at University
- Major Selection and Minor Selection
- Number of classes toward your major and minor
- Grade Level Teaching Interests
Experience working with children or adolescents (such as tutoring, camp counselor, community service, babysitting, parenting, daycare center, teaching, sibling care, religious groups, other)
Experience working with diverse populations including but not limited to cultural, racial, language background, ability, disability, socioeconomic backgrounds

Specific Questions
- When you think back to your experiences as a student, which teacher(s) stands out to you? What were his/her positive and negative qualities?
- What are the most important qualities your professors need to have for you to become an effective educator?
- How did you discover your desire to become a teacher?
- Why are you interested in becoming a teacher?
- What school do you see yourself choosing to do your student-teaching?
- Where do you see yourself teaching upon graduation?—public or private; suburban, rural or urban; in Michigan, in another state or International?
- Tell me why you see yourself teaching in this environment.

General Question #2 – A Reflective Educator

Tell me about your characterization of a reflective educator?

Specific Questions
1. To what extent do you reflect on your teacher education experiences? Assignments?
   a) Do you keep a reflective journal?
   b) Are you required to do so for this course?
      i. If so, how often do you write in your reflective journal?
         What kinds of things do you write about?
c) If given the chance, would you resubmit assignments for a better grade after given feedback from instructor? Have you ever done this? If so, what was the result?

2. What are the qualities of a reflective teacher in your own words?

3. Tell me about a teacher you considered reflective and provide me with an experience that demonstrated this to you?

General Question #3 – The Innovative Educator

Tell me about your characterization of an innovative educator?

Specific Questions

1. I would like to ask you some scenario-based questions. Please know that there is no right or wrong answer. I would like to find out how you think educators should handle these situations.

What should the teacher do when:
   a) 50% of the class is at 70% or lower?
   b) If one or students are falling asleep?
   c) If the technology fails and can’t show the power point presentation that was prepared for the day’ class?

2. Give me one example where you were innovative (in an assignment, activity, project, organization, field experience, etc.)

3. What are the qualities of an innovative teacher in your own words?

4. Tell me about a teacher you considered innovative and provide me with an experience that demonstrated this to you?

General Question #4 – The Urban Educator

Tell me about your characterization of an urban educator?
Specific Questions

1. What experiences do you have in working with urban students?
2. To what extent are urban schools different from other schools such as suburban or rural?
3. What are the qualities of an urban teacher in your own words?
4. What skills or features would a person need in order to work in an urban setting? Is this any different than working in other schools?

General Question #5 – The Educator who is committed to Diversity

Tell me about your characterization of an educator who is committed to diversity?

Specific Questions

1. To what extent is being committed to diversity important for your teacher education preparation?
   Please explain your position on these statements:
   a. It is more important to teach American values than the students’ individual cultural beliefs.
   b. If a natural born female asked me to identify them by male from now on, I would.
   c. It is harder to teach poor children because they require more from the teacher.

2. What are the qualities of an educator who is committed to diversity in your own words?
3. Tell me about a teacher you considered to be committed to diversity and provide me with an experience that demonstrated this to you?
General Question #6 – Perceptions of Reflective, Innovative Urban Educator who is committed to Diversity

1. How do you characterize a reflective, innovative practitioner who is committed to diversity?
   a. How did you come to this characterization (How did you construct knowledge?)

General Question #7 – Areas of Personal Strengths and Improvements as an Effective Educator

1. Tell me 3 areas of strength that will make you an effective educator?
2. What about 3 areas of improvement?
3. Identify THREE areas of teaching practice in which you feel most confident of your ability.
4. Identify THREE areas of teaching practice in which you know you need more experience.
APPENDIX F – HIC APPROVAL FORM

NOTICE OF EXPEDITED APPROVAL

To: Chavon Jackson
Teacher Education

From: Ellen Morten, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Behavioral Institutional Review Board (BIRB)

Date: September 24, 2010

RE: HIC # 1097
Protocol Title: Preparing Teacher Candidates to be Effective Educators who are Reflective, Innovative and Committed in Diversity

Funding Source: N01 MD 0003714

Expiration Date: September 23, 2011

Risk Level / Category: Research not involving greater than minimal risk

The above-referenced protocol and items listed below (if applicable) were APPROVED following Expedited Review Category (IRB 107) by the Chairperson/designee for the Wayne State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the period of 09/24/2010 through 09/23/2011. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals that may be required.

- Revised Protocol Summary Form, Date Received 09/22/10
- Letter of Support from Livernois Public Schools, dated 09/22/10
- Revised Research Informed Consent Form, sub-title: Group Leader Form, dated 09/22/10
- Revised Research Informed Consent Form, sub-title: Participant Form, dated 09/22/10

* Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. You may receive a "Continuation without Amendment" approximately two months prior to the expiration date. However, it is the Principal Investigator’s responsibility to obtain renewal and continue approval before the expiration date. Data collected during a period of lapse approval is unapproved research and can never be approved or published as research.

* All changes or amendments to the above procedures will require approval prior to the date of approval, and approval by the HIC BEFORE implementation.

* Adverse Reactions/Unanticipated Events (ARUPE) must be submitted on the appropriate form within the timeframe specified in the HIC Policy (http://www.hic.wayne.edu/forms.html).

NOTE:

1. Upon notification of an impending regulatory site visit, formal notification and/or external audit the HIC office must be contacted immediately.

2. Forms should be accessed via the HIC website at each use.

*Based on the Expedited Review IRB, received November 1998.
REFERENCES


http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/innovative


*College quarterly (1195-4353),* 8 (2).


ABSTRACT

PREPARING TEACHER CANDIDATES TO BE EFFECTIVE URBAN EDUCATORS WHO ARE REFLECTIVE, INNOVATIVE, AND COMMITTED TO DIVERSITY

by

CHAVON L. JACKSON

December, 2011

Advisor: Dr. Kathleen Crawford-McKinney
Major: Curriculum and Instruction
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent a teacher education program prepares teacher candidates to be effective urban educators who are reflective, innovative, and committed to diversity based on the perceptions and insight from students. As the nation grapples with an extreme range of outputs from our public schools, an investigation into such an integral component of developing effective educators is essential, if not mandatory (Spring, 2009). Given the goals and standards for educators today, teacher education programs have to consider their role in this process and determine what is required of them to support teachers who are prepared for multiple experiences and a diverse group of students (Darling-Hammond, 2006). While effective educators challenge themselves to be exemplary in the field, teacher education programs are equally challenged to provide experiences and the necessary pedagogy that will demonstrate and model the expectations of these teacher candidates.
This study examined the claims presented by Wayne State University’s College of Education and its role in the preparation of teacher candidates. The methodology for this research was a qualitative case study to evaluate the teacher candidates and their perception of developing a university’s claims of preparing them to be reflective, innovative urban practitioners who are committed to diversity. A collection of teacher candidate interviews, artifacts, field notes and reviewed documents were analyzed and the findings presented in a rich and detailed account. While there are several qualities of an effective educator, this study focused on three qualities that have emerged from the College of Education’s theoretical foundation of constructivism and a review of the literature; it is the ability to be an effective urban educator who is reflective, innovative and committed to diversity.

The findings indicated that candidates were prepared to receive their future students because they developed their pedagogical knowledge, reflective practices and connected theories to practices. These findings led to the following three implications:

- Implication 1: Educators must fully understand the cognitive process of knowledge attainment in order to reach all students for learning.

- Implication 2: A restructuring of teacher education programs to formally transition students into the role of novice teachers will develop their understanding as to the responsibilities of an educator, not a student who teaches. Additionally, faculty will improve the development process for these novice teachers if they model best practices, explain their pedagogical rationale throughout the course and evaluate novice teachers’ practices prior to the final teaching experience with students.
Implication 3: The urban education agenda is to elevate students from a survival state of mind into knowledge of their full potential. Contrary to critics of deficient thinking, I argue that many, especially urban students, come with a host of challenges that has to be addressed in order for them to absorb academic content. Each student’s needs have to be evaluated and taken care of which peels away the divisive barriers to learning, layer by layer.
My purpose is to express my highest potential and helps others do the same. I am a philanthropist at heart with an economist mind. I believe that achieving excellence in the human experience requires knowledge of how things work on this Earth. In order to improve the quality of life, I have focused my studies in one aspect of human development and that is education. Through education, people develop skills and abilities by learning knowledge and new ways of thinking. It is one of the most important avenues by which individuals achieve a higher sense of purpose. As such, I am passionate about reaching people wherever they are through reading materials, presentations, advising, and one-on-one conversations. For over ten years, I have taught all grades levels from kindergarten through higher education. The global, broad outlook of power, wealth, goods and services enlightens my efforts to bring resources to individuals who often have to do more with less. This is what led me to an undergraduate major in Economics and a pursuit of a study abroad in France. It has also brought a deeper understanding of the distribution of goods and services. Through a wide range of experiences I developed insight in real estate, financial consulting, business management, political campaigning and nonpartisan government policies.

My goal is to discover the possibilities of reaching broader audiences. In education, I have acquired a full skillset which includes:

**Oral Communication**
- Create presentations and professional development workshops for audiences of 8-500 people
- Multimedia/Technology Integration
  - Power Point
  - Video
  - Audio
  - Podcasts
- Differentiated Instruction

**Written Communication**
- Published Writing—Dissertation: *Preparing Effective Urban Educators to be Reflective, Innovative and Committed to Diversity*
- Proposals for AERA 2011, 2012 Conferences
- Course Syllabus
- Instructional Supplements to Course Work, Professional Development Workshops
- Formative, Summative, and Performance Assessments
- Student Leadership Handbook

**Educational Leadership**
- Member-Advisory team for the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC)
  - Examined and implemented new mission, themes, and curriculum for teacher education program
  - Edited Wayne State University College of Education (COE) Conceptual Framework
- Auditor, Wayne State University COE Admissions Department
  - Examined Admissions Policy
  - Wrote findings as part of WSU TEAC inquiry brief
- Assistant Principal—Master’s Internship Job Shadow

**Research**
- Qualitative Methodological Studies, Expert
- Quantitative Methodological Knowledge
- Program Evaluations
  - Presentation in Doctoral Seminar: *Participant-Oriented Evaluations using Stakes Responsive Evaluation Model*

**Program Development**
- Member, Development Team for Pre-Service Courses Content and Curricula

**Multimedia/Technology Integration**
- Create presentations and professional development workshops for audiences of 8-500 people
- Power Point
- Video
- Audio
- Podcasts

**Differentiated Instruction**
- Effective Urban Educators to be Reflective, Innovative and Committed to Diversity
- Published Writing—Dissertation: *Preparing Effective Urban Educators to be Reflective, Innovative and Committed to Diversity*
- Program Evaluations
  - Presentation in Doctoral Seminar: *Participant-Oriented Evaluations using Stakes Responsive Evaluation Model*