Chapter 16
Adopt-an-Apprentice Teacher:
Re-Inventing Early Field Experiences

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this chapter was to explore the impact of a field-centric, grade-band, and subject-area specific field experience model that is linked to corresponding coursework on novice teacher candidates' conceptions of what it means to be a teacher. Grounded in the work of scholars such as Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky, this study explores three questions: What aspects of the Adopt-an-Apprentice program do teacher candidates view as beneficial to their understanding of the profession and their development as teachers? What benefits, if any, do classroom teachers derive from hosting teacher candidates in the Adopt-an-Apprentice program? What is the impact of grade band/subject-area field experiences on teacher candidates' conceptions of being a teacher? Using quantitative and qualitative surveys, the study illustrates how coursework linked to authentic application in clinical settings empowered novice teacher candidates to understand and engage content, pedagogy, and standards.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education has evolved in the past twenty years to attempt to better address the complexities of contemporary classrooms by finding better ways to prepare teacher candidates to meet the needs of PK-12 students. Ball (2000) contended that fragmentation between theory and practice existed in teacher preparation and called for the integration of knowledge and practice to help candidates develop as ef-

fective teachers. Effective teacher education programs will need to continue to connect the ideas and strategies taught in college classrooms with the real-world context of PK-12 classrooms. The goal of this study was to explore the impact of a field-centric, grade-band and subject-area specific field experience model—linked to corresponding coursework—on novice teacher candidates' conceptions of what it means to be a teacher. To address varying definitions such as *clinical experiences*, *internships*, and *field experiences*, in this chapter "field experiences" or "early field experiences" refer to experiences occurring in school settings *prior to* the now-common methods semester that typically precedes student teaching.

BACKGROUND

The means by which teacher candidates learn to teach has been the subject of exploration by numerous researchers in the past three decades. While research from the 1980s and 1990s demonstrated that teacher candidates spent most of their time in campus classrooms absorbing knowledge *about* teaching, with a single, final semester of *applied* teaching (Huling, 1998), research by the late 1990s spotlighted successful programs that featured systematic, long-term collaboration (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998).

Since then, calls for improved teacher preparation through early, frequent, varied, and purposeful field experiences in authentic school settings have multiplied (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2009; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Coffey, 2010; Zeichner, 2010). Darling-Hammond (2010) has long argued that the clinical side of teacher education is frequently "haphazard" and "dependent on the idiosyncrasies of loosely selected placements with little guidance about what happens in them and little connection to university work" (p. 40). In addition, Zeichner (2010) argued that the lack of meaningful partnership between colleges of education and K-12 schools signified the core problem in teacher education.

Studies have explored various models of candidate learning and teaching during student teaching internships, from advocating smaller changes such as co-teaching (Baeton & Simons, 2016; Heck, 2010), to more explicit work in collaboration (Weiss, Pellegrino, & Brigham, 2017), to a total re-configuration of educator preparation with a focus on the critical role of field experiences (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Meyer, 2016). In particular, a Standard authored by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) advocates the shared, reciprocal role of clinical partnerships, where:

The provider works with partners to design clinical experiences of sufficient depth, breadth, diversity, coherence, and duration to ensure that candidates demonstrate their developing effectiveness and positive impact on all students' learning and development. (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2013, 2.3)

In short, research consistently cites strong partnerships between universities and schools, along with coursework examining teacher practice, as a hallmark of quality education programs (Ball & Forzani, 2011; Cochran-Smith, Villegas, Abrams, Chavez-Moreno, Mills & Stern, 2015; Coffey, 2010; Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Farlow, 2002; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001).

With these calls for earlier and more frequent field experiences, Wideen et al. (1998) contended that transforming the beliefs of novice teacher candidates is one of the goals of early and extensive field ex-

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