

Proceedings of the
2012
Roosevelt University
Mini-Conference on Teaching
Volume 8

April 6, 2012
Murray-Green Library
Auditorium Building
Chicago Campus



Editorial preface

The Eighth Roosevelt University Mini-Conference on Teaching (“RUMCOT”) was held at the Chicago Campus on April 6, 2012.

This year’s version was notable not only because it revived the RUMCOT tradition after a year’s absence, but also for its variety and collegiality. More than a dozen members of the faculty and staff presented papers, oversaw roundtables and displayed the latest technology for teaching.

These proceedings provide a summary of many presentations from the conference. The authors address topics that are relevant to teaching at Roosevelt University, such as developing students’ math skills, enhancing student engagement and integrating service learning into courses.

I hope you find these readings interesting and helpful. For additional information about effective college teaching, you can explore related book and video holdings in the university libraries, found by accessing the library’s webpage at <http://www2.roosevelt.edu/library/> and clicking on the link for “Faculty Resources.”

RUMCOT 8 and these proceedings are sponsored by the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Center for Teaching and Learning’s informal and entirely uncompensated advisory board for their support during the 2011-12 school year. The members are Margaret Policastro, Steve Meyers, Colin Roust, Nona Burney, Gary Wolfe, Vince Cyboran, Amanda Putnam, Priscilla Perkins, June Lapidus, Amelia Hicks and Linda Wilkinson — every one of them devoted to excellent teaching and student learning.



Linda Jones
Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies
Director, Center for Teaching and Learning, 2011-12

ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY MINI-CONFERENCE ON TEACHING

April 6, 2012

Integrating Service Learning into Class: Merging Educational and Social Justice Goals

Amy L. D. Roberts, Department of Psychology
 Kimberly A. Dienes, Department of Psychology
 Steven A. Meyers, Department of Psychology
 College of Arts and Sciences

Math PReP: Placement Reassessment Program

Cathy Evins, Department of Mathematics and Actuarial Science
 Mary Williams, Department of Mathematics and Actuarial Science
 College of Arts and Sciences

ROUNDTABLE: Concept mapping in Doctor of Pharmacy instruction and assessment to link emerging clinical didactic concepts with biopharmaceutical sciences content

David Fuentes, Department of Clinical and Administrative Sciences
 College of Pharmacy

ROUNDTABLE: Are we teaching what we are supposed to be teaching and is it working? The effectiveness of an Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Program

Jin-ah Kim, Department of Early Childhood Education
 Lynne Firsell, Department of Early Childhood Education
 College of Education

ROUNDTABLE: Transgender Awareness in the Classroom

Carrie Brecke, director, Writing Center
 Lucas Barnhill, student
 College of Arts and Sciences

ROUNDTABLE: Incorporating Study Skill Development Within Content-Based Courses

Jeff Helgeson, Academic Success Center

ROUNDTABLE: Exploring Student Engagement: What are indicators for successful teaching and learning?

Margaret Policastro, Department of Specialized Studies
 Becky McTague, Department of Specialized Studies
 Tammy Oberg DeLaGarza, Department of Specialized Studies
 College of Education

Math PReP: Placement Reassessment Program

Cathy Evins

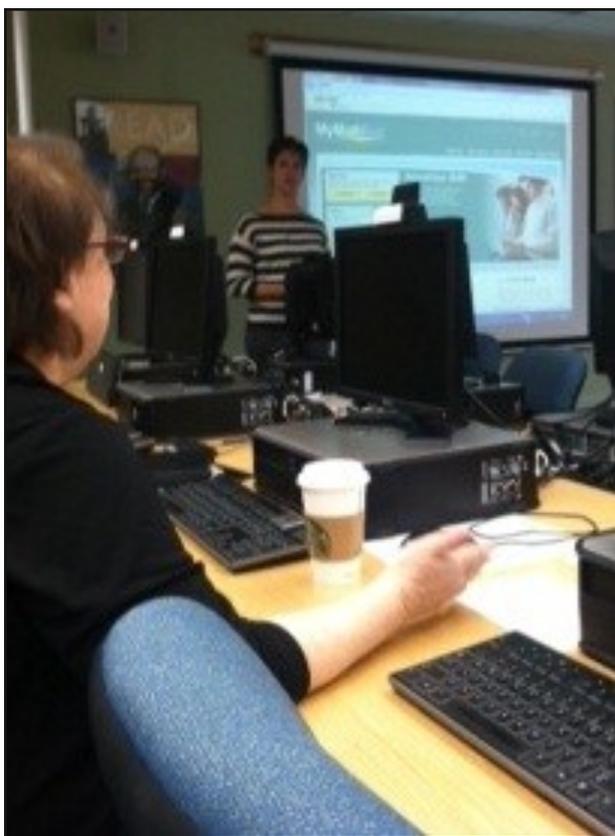
Mary Williams

Department of Mathematics

College of Arts and Sciences

Roosevelt University has about 7,000 students at two different campuses. Most of those students have at least some math requirement. Typically there are about 47 sections in the fall semester and 38 sections in the spring semesters of developmental and general education math (Pre-Algebra classes to the Pre-Calculus)—about 1,300 students per year.

Currently, students' math placement is based on ACT scores (or SAT scores, though ACT is more common) or on results of the Roosevelt University Assessment (RUA). The RUA, a Compass product, is administered if the ACT score is more than two years old or if a math course has been taken since high school. ACT



Cathy Evins presents details of Math PReP.

scores can be somewhat problematic to use for placement since students may have taken the ACT during junior year but may have taken another math class during senior year. Further, the math skills and concepts tested on the ACT do not align perfectly with skills and concepts in these math classes. With the Compass test, there is some control over content, but because of the adaptive nature of the test, not all students will see the same questions. Also, many students do not appreciate the importance of their performance on this test. Many students thus believe they have been misplaced by our placement process, usually thinking that they should be placed in a higher-level math class.

We wanted to create a program that would give students the ability to be moved up if they were, indeed, misplaced. Even if the placement was correct, students' feeling of being misplaced can negatively affect their attitude toward a class, especially one that does not count for college credit. We wanted to deal with these issues in a way that would be most beneficial to the students.

The goals of the Math Placement Reassessment Program — Math PReP — are simple:

- To allow students to challenge their math class placement and be placed into the correct math class before the semester starts.
- To reduce the number of students enrolled in developmental math courses.
- To build students' confidence and better prepare them for their math courses.
- To retain these students at Roosevelt University by helping them move into college-level math courses more quickly.

Math PReP does not count for credit hours nor does it result in a grade for a course; it only allows the student to review material and possibly move into a higher-level math course. Stu-

dents are informed about the program by the advisors, who work closely with the math department.

Math PReP is a self-paced review and testing program. For a small fee (\$50) students have 16 weeks of access to a program created in MyMathTest, a Pearson Publishing product. After registering with the MyMathTest site, students take a pre-test that covers the material of the course in which they have been placed. The performance on the test generates a study plan, a list of practice problems that have MyMathTest “help” tools, such as “Help Me Solve This” and “View an Example” and short video lectures. Students work on the study plan on their own to review, relearn or learn the material. Once the study plan is complete, students take the test again. Because of the algorithmic nature of the testing program, the pre-test and the post-test cover the same skills and concepts but do not comprise the same questions. The student must earn 75 percent or higher in order to be moved to a higher-level course. If students wish to review concepts, we will still give them an initial test. However, the study plan will be for them to review the concepts taught in the prior course or work on concepts to be covered in the course that they will be taking.

Since the program began in summer of 2009, 195 students have registered for Math PReP. Of those, 126 took full advantage of the program; 86 placed into a higher math course (Table 1).

Nine students passed more than one course and one of these students passed three courses! For those we are able to track, 83 percent passed their next math course after “testing” out of a math course with Math PReP.

While not every student completed the student plan and returned to

take the post-test, this is not seen as a complete failure. For some students who originally felt they had been placed in a class below where they should have been, taking the pre-test with Math PReP confirmed that they, indeed, did not remember the material for the class. These students will enter this class realizing that they do have something to learn. As stated earlier, students’ attitudes are very important in these classes. Some students, however, may have lacked the discipline to complete the study plan on their own time without strict deadlines.

In the near future, we would like to offer Math PReP year-round and increase the availability of testing time and assistance. We’d like to offer a version of this program to all students before they take the math placement test, to allow them to review before taking the test. Additionally, we are considering replacing our current math placement exam (Compass) with a testing system using MyMathTest.

We would also like to expand the program by moving beyond just placement reassessment. We’d like to offer a similar program of testing, practice and retesting to other departments. The College of Education has expressed an interest in a program to prepare students for the math portion of the test required for teacher certification. Science and Economics would like to use the program to allow students to review and master some math skills needed for their classes.

		Pass	No pass (with retest)	No retest	Totals
Course	Math 090	15	6	10	31
	Math 099	45	21	44	110
	Math 100	24	1	12	49
	Math121/122	2	0	3	5
		86	40	69	195

Math 90 = Pre-Algebra
 Math 099 = Introductory Algebra
 Math 100 = Intermediate Algebra

Math 121 = College Algebra
 Math 122 = Pre-Calculus (Math PReP for 121 and 122 added recently)

Table 2: % who did retest	65%
% who did NOT retest	35%
% of registered who passed	44%
% of retested who passed	68%

Table 3: Analysis of results by course

	% who retested	% of retesters who passed
Math 090	68%	71%
Math 099	60%	68%
Math 100	76%	65%
Math 121/122	40%	100%

Table 4: Performance after Math PRoP

Grade in Subsequent Math Course	Number of Students
A	18
B	16
C	14
D	4



Jeff Helgeson of the Academic Success Center leads a roundtable session on study skills.

Note taking:

“... the encoding process that occurs during note taking can alter a learner’s cognitive process since it forces the student to listen, organize ideas, and relate material to his/ her existing knowledge.”

Integrating service learning into your class: merging educational and social justice goals

Amy L. D. Roberts

Kimberly A. Dienes

Steven A. Meyers

Department of Psychology

College of Arts and Sciences

Too often students' experience in higher education is to absorb information passively. It is then students' responsibility to apply this material to areas of their lives (e.g., families, careers, or communities) at some later point in time. However, faculty can use a teaching method that simultaneously links information taught in the classroom with the skills and insights that students learn when they volunteer in their communities. *Transformational service learning* allows students to use course knowledge in a way that helps others outside of the university, and it provides them with an opportunity to become agents of social justice.

Transformational service learning has several key ingredients. First, students spend a significant amount of time at an external site (such as an agency, school, or hospital) as part of the class requirements. This typically occurs outside of the regular class meeting time. The focus of the site's work needs to connect with themes that are closely related to the class. Second, the work that the student performs at the site needs to be meaningful and mutually beneficial for the organization and the university. In other words, the students' responsibilities must not only be enriching or challenging for the student, but the community partner also must find it helpful for their own operations. Third, the instructor needs to provide students with the opportunity to identify and reflect on the connections between the site work and the course material. Instructors accomplish this objective through in-class discussions as well as written assignments emphasizing these linkages. The most common written product is the reflective journal, in which students describe the work they complete at the site, make concrete connections between the

class and site information, and describe their personal reactions to the experience.

At Roosevelt University, our service learning program is distinguished by its commitment to social justice. Students have the opportunity to interact with people who have been underprivileged, and they learn how to make a difference individually or on a broader level through civic action. Instructors often direct students' attention to how societal forces affect those whom the community partner assists. Students can expand on their service learning to interview community members to identify relevant issues, conduct relevant policy analysis, use research methods to assess the scope of the problem and disseminate findings to influence change. Professors can also build on service learning to create class assignments that positively impact others on a political level, allowing students to advocate for those who are disenfranchised. These sorts of projects can ask students to contact their elected officials to concretely explain how a particular piece of legislation has a direct bearing on the community in which they serve. Thus, transformational service learning allows students to observe and to have an impact at two levels: the individual, micro-level as well as the social, macro-level.

Service learning and lessons learned

To illustrate how to make an existing course into a service learning course, we present the example of the transformational learning course, Psychology 254: Childhood and Adolescence. The Childhood and Adolescence course introduces students to the social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of children from the prenatal period through adolescence. The challenge for instructors in this course is to give students a real, meaningful experience of child and adolescent behavior that they can apply to the facts and studies that they are learning about in class. What better way to do this than to give

students actual experience with children and adolescents? Service learning is a perfect way to meet the instructional needs of the students in this course while providing service to community organizations and forging important community partnerships.

The key to optimizing students' learning in their service learning placements is to provide structure for the experience. In designing the service learning version of *Childhood and Adolescence*, we adapted a behavioral observation assignment Dr. Dienes had previously used for this course. Students were asked to observe and take notes on the behavior of two separate children at the service learning site. Subsequently, students wrote up their behavioral observations in two five-page papers, called *Active Learning Projects*, that integrated information from the class and their textbook. The Mansfield Institute was able to provide a list of local child-serving organizations with previous relationships with Roosevelt University. We allowed students to choose their sites from a list of previously contacted agencies. Because choosing and contacting sites was up to the students, we also gave them a deadline by which they should have made contact and established an agreement with a community partner. Students were given an agreement worksheet to fill out and turn-in. Students completed the 20 hours of service learning we required on their own schedule. This was further structured by having a required check-in after 5 and 10 hours of completed field work.

There are several lessons we have learned through creating and implementing this course that likely apply to other service learning classes.:

- A strong structure for the service learning experience helps to ensure success.
- Starting early is critical: Students need to make contact with and be placed in their service learning locations as soon as possible.
- Setting deadlines and structuring assignments should be based on an ideal timeline.
- Knowing ahead of time what the require-

ments of the community partners are is important. This can be facilitated by being in contact with these partners before the beginning of the course.

- Keeping in touch with students and community partners is critical.
- Incorporating service learning experiences into the classroom environment increases both retention of information and enjoyment of learning. When we taught new concepts in class, we would ask for examples from students.

The inclusion of a teaching assistant funded by an internal grant from the Mansfield Institute was instrumental to our implementation of the service learning component for *Childhood and Adolescence*. The teaching assistant checked in with the sites, monitored the students' accumulation of hours, and helped with grading the *Active Learning Projects*. The selection of an appropriate TA is another lesson we have learned. Teaching assistants for service learning courses should be highly organized and motivated. They should also feel comfortable interacting with undergraduates as well. In conclusion, structure for the course (including graded assignments and a strict timeline), beginning early, contact with community partners, and the selection of a responsible TA are all important for the successful implementation of a service learning course.

Conclusion

When a service learning course is successful, it can have a transformative effect on the students involved in the experience. We have had students come and visit after the course and discuss how their experience encouraged them to change their major to psychology, and decide to work with children in the future. Students have written in their evaluations that the service component helped them learn and remember information they had read about or heard in class. They enjoyed the real life application of knowledge. Also, listening to other students' examples in class helped them learn, and increased their attention and enthusiasm during

class. As one student stated, “the site participation helps out kids and gives us hands-on experience of the material learned.” One of the most beneficial outcomes of the service learning experience is finding a future position. We know of several students who have been hired by the community partner for whom they worked after they graduated. We similarly assume that it is beneficial to have this experience on their resume when looking for a future job.

The Mansfield Institute can be very helpful for faculty members who want to incorporate transformational learning into their own classes. Whether it involves assistance in finding community partners or personalized consultations in

“The site participation helps out kids and gives us hands-on experience of the material learned.”

— A student

www.roosevelt.edu/MISJT/TransformationalLearning.aspx) and their blog features profiles about examples of different implementations at Roosevelt University (see <http://misjt.blogspot.com/>).

Many instructors have similarly benefitted from the annual internal grant programs that provide funds to hire teaching assistants, purchase related materials, or assist with transportation, or provide incentives for community partners for the use of transformational learning.

developing or revising a class, the staff and faculty associated with the Mansfield Institute are always available. The Institute’s website contains additional information about transformational learning (see <http://www.roosevelt.edu/>



Carrie Brecke of the Writing Center and student Lucas Barnhill lead a roundtable discussion on transgender awareness.

On being a “trans ally”

Be open to using the pronouns a trans person wants you to use. If you make a mistake, quickly correct yourself. This is the most important step of being an ally: recognition and affirmation of one’s true self.

Exploring student engagement: what students tell us about indicators for successful teaching and learning

Margaret Mary Policastro
Becky McTague
Tammy Oberg DeLaGarza
Department of Specialized Studies
College of Education

Much attention in higher education is centered on the notions of student engagement and how it is seen as an indicator of successful classroom instruction. Moreover, as retention becomes an increasingly important topic, studies show that students who are engaged are more likely to graduate. According to Tinto (1993), students are more likely to persist and graduate in settings that provide academic, social and personal support and in which they are actively involved in their own learning.

Recent research shows that the more time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities such as studying, interacting with faculty members and peers about substantive matters, and practicing and applying what they are learning, the more they benefit from a wide range of desired outcomes. These valued outcomes include strong knowledge of the discipline, analytical reasoning, problem solving, effective communication, etc. Further, research shows that effort is seen as the key to strong performance and that holds for every field of endeavor and setting (Kuh, 2011). Therefore, this article will highlight the following:

- Defining what student engagement means and how some Elementary Education students at Roosevelt University define student engagement and what it means to them.

- A discussion of what educationally purposeful activities include and how to make the student learning experience more engaging; aligning with effective teaching and learning within a social justice mission.

Definition of student engagement

Newmann (1992) defines student engagement as students making a psychological investment in learning. They try hard to learn what school offers, taking pride not simply in learning the formal indicators of success (grades), but in understanding the material and incorporating or internalizing it in their lives. Kenny, Kenny and Dumont (1995) identified five indicators for student engagement in college. They include the level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences and a supportive learning environment. According to Kuh (2012), student engagement represents two interdependent components. The first is what students do, such as the time and energy they expend on worthwhile activities. The second component is what the institution does to induce or require students to do the things that matter to their learning, such as how it organizes the curriculum, other learning opportunities, and support services, and how it uses other resources.

We asked undergraduate students the following three questions:

1. What does student engagement mean to you? Can you define it?

Newmann (1992) defines student engagement as students making a psychological investment in learning.

2. Give some examples of when you have been engaged in your own learning while in college. Be as specific as you can and describe the engagement with examples.
3. Give some examples of when you know for sure that you have not been engaged in your learning while in college. Be specific and describe the situations with examples.

Below is a sample of student responses:

Student engagement means ...

“Positive actions, intrigued in the lesson and looking to put knowledge to use in life”

“Actively involved in class and activities, participation, cooperation, working with others, effort”

“Putting forth effort, asking questions, asking for more examples, connecting to life, active role”

When you’ve been engaged in learning ...

“Class discussion where we all had fun participating; took something away with me after each class”

“Doing group work, teacher is involved and provides input and feedback, professor is passionate about the subject”

“Class discussions, groups work, class projects”

When you’re not engaged in learning ...

“My mind wanders when I am not engaged, don’t attend class, doing work to get it done, not doing my best work”

“I’m not engaged when teachers ramble and make no point, busy work with no meaning”

“Straight lecture, professor not enthusiastic, busy work, no respect from the teacher”

We think it is quite interesting that the students are metacognitive about their levels of engagement in their own learning. Further, they

seem to know when they are engaged and can give examples when they are and are not engaged. The next section goes deeper into how one class incorporates educationally purposeful activities that are exemplars for student engagement.

Educationally purposeful activities

In our READ320 class we incorporate students’ concepts of engagement into authentic group discussions, practical problem-solving situations, and cooperative class tasks. Another example of how we engage students in understanding course content and meeting course objectives is service learning.

Bingle, Hatcher, and MacIntosh (2006) define service learning as a course-based experience that has three distinct properties associated with the experience: students participate in an organized service learning that is meeting a specific community need, students reflect on the service learning experience, allowing them to understand course content and discipline related issues, and students, as they reflect, gain an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

After tutoring Latino elementary students in an after-school program for 10 weeks, our students’ reflections demonstrated the effectiveness of engaging them actively in service learning as a methodology for meeting course objectives.

On civic responsibility:

“I never realized how strongly the Latino parents feel about their kids’ success in school. After every session with children, I am approached by parents who ask me how their children did. Once I offered a suggestion of a reading activity they could do at home with their kids, and they seemed really thankful. The next time I saw the kids, I realized that the parents actually did the activity with them. My responsibility as a teacher goes way beyond the activities we do in the classroom.”

On personal growth:

“After comparing the opportunities to access literacy

in my community with those opportunities to access literacy in the Latino community, I was bothered. How can we expect the (Latino) kids to compete if they don't have a lot of different ways of being exposed to books and text? I mean, their number one source of literacy was street signs!"

On academic enhancement:

"Today I used the Making Words activity we practiced in class. It was much tougher with 1st graders than it was with college classmates! This activity really helps early readers."

In addition to internal shifts in thinking, our future teachers increased their repertoire of research-based literacy strategy instruction methodology with quality children's literature that is culturally relevant.

In conclusion, student engagement is critical to the enhancement of the quality of learning that is tied to both retention and graduation. Further, preparing students for the world of work after college requires that they are engaged in meaningful learning experiences during their entire college careers.

For information on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) go to www.nsse.iub.edu where you will find a reliable questionnaire that asks students how often they participate in activities that are connected to learning.

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A faculty group discusses student engagement.

Study skills at Roosevelt University

Jeff Helgeson

Tutor Coordinator

The Academic Success Center

Faculty should be aware of the unique diversity of educational experience/preparation of Roosevelt University students and seek to incorporate some basic study skills approaches within classrooms.

Your class, in general

General suggestions to overcome diverse levels of study skill preparation and a broad range of student demographics:

- Develop a consistent routine
- Require notes to be taken for each session
- List main topics for students during a session
- Conduct notes-based recall at the beginning of each session
- Assign weekly Blackboard/online discussion group class note comments/"posts"

Note taking

Note taking incorporates visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles to help foster generative learning. It also helps to build "spaced repetition" into the classroom experience, which can help increase retention.

Stefanou, Hoffman, Vielee – "Note taking in the college classroom as evidence of generative learning" (2007)

"... students learn best when they are active constructors of knowledge."

PubMed Central (www.education.com) "Study Skills and Taking Notes" (2010):

"... the encoding process that occurs during note taking can alter a learner's cognitive process since it forces the student to listen, organize ideas, and relate

material to his/her existing knowledge, and the student is able to retrieve the information based upon his/her unique organization and structure for later review."

Ask students to maintain a notebook for class notes, and encourage note taking for each class session.

Learning Styles

- **Auditory:** prefers oral instructions, listening based
- **Visual:** prefers images, graphs, maps, written instructions
- **Kinesthetic:** prefers touching, moving, writing, and "doing" – learning from experience.

Reasoning types

- **Deductive:** prefers to develop a general/overall understanding, then "fill in" details
- **Inductive:** prefers to receive examples before developing an overview/general understanding

Necessary learning skills

Listening, note taking, reading, writing

Listening (not just "hearing")

- "Listening" is an active process that includes: focusing attention, interpreting both oral and visual information, summarizing, paraphrasing, and interpreting.
- The average rate of human speech is 125 to 175 words per minute.
- The average rate of thought is 400 to 600 words per minute.
- The speech-thought gap allows "critical listening" to occur – an active process, involving carefully directed auditory perception, observation of visual (non-verbal) information, conjecture/speculation, summary of content, paraphrasing, developing questions

based upon attentive listening.

“Poor listeners:”

- Too quickly decide that something is dull.
- Allow their minds to wander and become inattentive.
- Become distracted by the way something is presented.
- Listen only for facts and do not construct generalizations, draw inferences, derive implications, perceive the significance of content.
- Are distracted by examples.

“Good listeners:”

- Look and listen with attention.
- Avoid judging until after the presentation of content.
- Observe, speculate, think about the content presented.
- Paraphrase into their own terms.
- Exhibit patience and tolerate silences.

Reading assignments:

Suggest that students skim topic headings (if any), quickly read an assignment to develop a general idea regarding its content, reread and underline/note main ideas, vocabulary, references/allusions to content derived from other sources, consult a reference source for vocabulary and references/allusions, then reread content and make margin notes/annotations, as well as attempt to synthesize content and apply it to an understanding of the subject matter and its potential application to experience.

Suggestions for reading:

- Avoid distractions – read in a quiet environment.
- Read chapter headings – review all chapter headings before reading assigned materials in order to form an overview of the material.

- Skim the text – after reading the topic headings, quickly read the assigned material.
- Re-read and underline – re-read the assigned material, underlining main ideas and any “new” vocabulary.
- Check a reliable reference – using a reference source, such as a dictionary, look up unfamiliar words, as well as references to persons, places, events.
- Re-read the assigned material after “looking up” new vocabulary.
- Think things through – think about the content in terms of your understanding/experience of the subject matter.
- Compare and contrast – observe points of shared understanding between yourself and the assigned materials, as well as points of difference.
- Abstract – think about the implications/significance of the assigned material in terms of “real life” importance/meaning.

Reading Skills:

Students should be able to:

- Recognize basic vocabulary of English syntax.
- Interpret sentence forms (declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamatory).
- Identify main ideas within a text.
- distinguish between examples/ illustrations and main ideas.
- Isolate new vocabulary.
- Summarize main ideas.
- Ask relevant questions with respect to content.
- Identify logical fallacies (generalizations, false analogies, over-simplifications).
- Observe the “selective inclusion” of details.

- Derive implications from apparent references/allusions.
- Observe patterns of internal/external reference/allusion.
- Interpret manifest and latent content within a text.
- Apply information gained from reading in new contexts.
- Make notes about ideas relating to assigned readings –summarize the content of chapters, using the underlined ideas.

Writing assignments:

Provide prompts to encourage a process of first draft development, revision, proof-reading and editing, as well as specifying topics to be addressed and expectations with regard to the “submission copy” of an assignment.

Time management:

- For each hour of class time, allow three

hours of “study time” during a week.

- Avoid cramming – try to study at intervals throughout a week, not “mass practice.”
- Review notes from class and underlined sections within a text regularly between classes.
- Check the syllabus frequently to ensure that work is being completed as scheduled.

Refer students to university resources for assistance in study skills.

The Academic Success Center on the mezzanine level of room 124 in the Auditorium Building can assist students in content areas such as Accounting, Economics, Finance, Mathematics, and Social Studies, as well as in the development of standard English editing skills and MLA/ APA forms of documentation.

312-341-3818, www.roosevelt.edu/tutoring
Schaumburg Campus room 363 – 847-619-7978



Jane Curtis leads a technology session on using smart boards with iPads.

Are we teaching what we are supposed to be teaching, and is it working?

Jin-ah Kim

Lynne Firsel

**Department of Early Childhood Education
College of Education**

It is true that if we want better teachers, we need better schools, as Goodlad (1994) stated. In order to produce highly qualified teachers, teacher education programs have been continuously searching for the best possible ways to prepare pre-service teachers in the future. In many occasions, to improve preparation programs, programs have restructured the curriculum/program and/or added clinical experiences to minimize the gap between theory and practice, as Kagan(1992) stated.

Student teaching serves as a way to bridge theory, knowledge and skills learned at the university with applications in school practices taught in many teacher education programs (Britzman, 1991; Perry & Power, 2004; Sadler, 2006). Pre-service student teachers in all disciplines must learn and apply to teach classroom management, school policies, communication with children and parents/families, organization skills, and lesson planning and instructional strategies (Kuzmic, 1994).

As other programs strive to serve better education, our early childhood program at Roosevelt University has been examining the opportunities to improve the Student Teaching experience. Over the two-year period, we sought to gather students' content, practical, and professional knowledge (instructional strategies, classroom management skills and working with diverse learners and special needs children), as well as their understanding of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP).

A pilot study was conducted to determine whether early childhood pre-service teachers perceive that they have had necessary and sufficient experience and education to prepare them

for success in student teaching in urban and suburban schools.

Using a qualitative research design, data were gathered over four semesters. A total of 20 Early Childhood Pre-Service Teachers (ages ranging from 22 to 32 years old) participated in this study. All of the participants were female and consisted of 11 White, three African American, four Hispanic, and two Asians (12 undergraduate and eight graduate students). The survey was distributed at the end of each student teaching phase (14th to 15th week) in the Student Teaching seminar.

The survey questions were developed into seven open-ended questions. The questions specifically asked the students to evaluate their preparedness before student teaching in the content areas (math, language arts, social studies, and science), in the developmental areas (cognitive, motor, social-emotional, and language development), to plan developmentally appropriate lessons, to teach special educational needs and ELL children, and to teach children in urban and suburban environments. Each of six questions asked the students to explain why or why not they felt that they were prepared. The last question asked the students to evaluate what changes (if any) that the student teachers would like to see in the program and why. The final question was included to help rethink and perhaps restructure our early childhood program in order to provide an even better-quality education for future students.

The results are presented as follows.

Content areas and developmental areas

- The majority of PSTs reported that in general, they felt prepared in terms of content, professional and practical knowledge when they began student teaching.

- Hands-on experiences, lessons, units on methods courses, over 120 clock hours of field experiences, and personal experiences were the categories that PSTs felt comfortable about.
- Some PSTs expressed a concern that some of courses' content was not covered for primary grades (Grades 1 through 3). That made them feel unsure and not confident in teaching primary grades. In addition, lack of knowledge of pre-primary grade motor development was reported.

Plan for DAP lessons

- All PSTs responded that they were adequately prepared to plan DAP lessons throughout the different courses.

Special educational needs, ELL children

- Several respondents indicated that they felt somewhat prepared for teaching children of diverse backgrounds and children with special needs, but that they would have been more prepared had they participated in more authentic and hands-on experiences rather than just observations prior to student teaching.

Prepared for urban. suburban settings

- The majority of Chicago campus PSTs reported that they were comfortable teaching in urban settings while Schaumburg PSTs reported that they were not comfortable teaching in urban settings.
- Only a few of Chicago and Schaumburg PSTs reported that they were not sure about whether they were adequately prepared to teach children in urban (for Schaumburg campus PSTs) and in suburban (for Chicago campus PSTs) schools. The reasons were due to lack of exposure to urban/suburban environments and discomfort and/or unwillingness to teach in urban/suburban school settings.

Future changes

- Participants expressed concerns about the



Amelia Hicks takes part in the discussion of student engagement.

process for placements for field experiences and student teaching. The students reported that they would have liked consistently appropriate settings and that they would have liked their assignments in a timely manner.

- More extensive clinical hours should be implemented. Current early childhood pre-service teachers have to complete 120 clock hours of field experiences and 20 hours of Service-Learning. Some respondents expressed that clinical experiences should include working with children directly instead of only observing and sitting in the classroom. An interesting comment was from a graduate PST. She stated that she wanted to be placed with a classroom for an entire semester and teach more than one lesson. (Our method courses require pre-service teachers to teach one lesson in each course,

and they are placed for only 25 hours).

- Instead of having one semester student teaching, some stated that they would prefer to have an entire year of student teaching to see the beginning, middle, and end of the school year and how the classroom teachers set up and teach.
- Classroom management skills also were mentioned among participants. Although our courses cover classroom management in the course content, PSTs expressed their strongly felt need for hands-on experiences with classroom management.
- PSTs expressed the need to work with diverse children including special needs, at-risk, low-income, ELL and bilingual children.

Are we teaching what we are supposed to be teaching and is it working? So far, our early childhood program has delivered a quality education in academic content areas, DAP, lesson planning, instructional strategies and teaching in urban and suburban environments. As we are preparing for the future, continued evaluations of the program and some changes are needed to provide and understand how early childhood program can help PSTs grow as qualified teach-

ers. Currently, we, the early childhood faculty, are looking (examining) ways to better structure field experiences, course sequences and instructional strategies on classroom management and diverse learners.

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Technology showcases at RUMCOT 8

iPad goes to class

Jane Curtis
English Language Program

You, Too, Can YouTube

David Basener
Instructional Technology

So Your Class is Videoconferenced

Tim Hopkins
Desktop Support