

Introduction

Creating Collaborations, Connections, and Contexts

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This volume of *Issues in Teacher Education* draws together two overarching themes—novice field experiences and partnerships. As a result, we are calling this issue “Creating Collaborations, Connections, and Contexts.” While this is an open issue, we decided to provide a title because of the many ways in which the manuscripts tied together. They all demonstrate how collaborations and connections, in context, contribute to the diverse field of teacher education.

Four manuscripts were selected that fit into the first theme, novice field experiences. First is “Perspective Teachers Perceptions of the Value of an Early Field Experience in a Laboratory Setting” by Leah Washburn-Moses, Tom Kopp, and Jill E. Hetttersimer. This manuscript examines the perceptions of prospective teachers to the extent to which early field experience contributed to their career decisions.

The second manuscript, “Teacher Inquiry: From Knowledge to Knowledges” by Katherine L. Kiss and Jane S. Townshend, is a discourse analysis of conversations between two interns during their field-based practicum. The authors use an inquiry-based approach to validate an epistemology of multiple knowledges. Their research broadens the scope of reflective practice in teacher preparation.

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The third manuscript, “Cultivating Pre-Service Teachers Toward Culturally Relevant Literacy Practices” by K. Dara Hill, examines pre-service teachers’ experiences in a reading methods course and the corresponding practicum in an underserved urban school. The author documents the use of expository texts that are culturally relevant and evoke deep, comprehensive discussions about race.

Finally, “The Impact of Teacher Preparation: A Study of Alternative Certification and Traditionally Prepared Teachers in their First Year of Teaching” by Wayne M. Linek, Mary Beth Sampson, Leslie Hass, Diane Sadler, Leeann Moore, and Millie C. Nylan, explores the first-year teaching experiences of two groups of teachers. One group was composed of fully certified teachers who were trained in a field-based university teacher training program and the other of university graduates who were working on their certification through an alternative teacher preparation program while employed as full-time teachers. Major differences were found in the perceived needs between the two groups, thus reinforcing concerns about the impact of alternative teacher certification.

Moving beyond the theme of novice field experiences, this volume then examines its second theme of partnerships. Teachers and teacher educators routinely engage in partnerships. They are ‘partners’ with students, families, school personnel, communities, and universities. They value and understand the core principle of building relationships in order to cultivate a context of growth and success for their students. Unfortunately, some parts of higher education institutions undervalue collaboration by providing incentives instead to individualization, e.g., tenure and promotion. The following four manuscripts stand firmly on grounds of what is best for students and communities and persist, in spite of institutional barriers, to forge connections, collaborations, and relationships.

In “Crisscrossing the University and Public School Contexts as Professional Development School Boundary Spanners” by Joyce E. Many, Teresa R. Fisher, Susan Ogletree, and Dee Taylor, describe the role of boundary spanners as a way to bridge differences between P-12 and university educators. These change agents use their strengths to understand the Other, deconstruct traditional power relationships, and draw on prior knowledge to shape the ways they engage with colleagues in their new spaces.

From our colleagues in Arizona, Audrey Beardsley and Joshua H. Barnett contend traditional colleges of education need to address their disconnection from the local schoolhouses. In their study “It Might Just Take a Partnership. . .,” the goal is to identify and understand specific educational needs within 13 high-poverty district partners in order to

provide tailored, targeted preparation, professional development, technology, and research support to the schools.

Derek Anderson and N. Suzanne Standerford, authors of “Inside Out and Outside In: Rethinking spelling in Inclusive Elementary Classrooms,” conduct a case study of second-grade teachers and their teaching of spelling nested within a school-university partnership. Drawing on sociocultural theory, they examine teacher change as facilitated by university resources.

“Collaborative Clinical Practice: An Alternate Field Experience” by Amy Lynn Dee examines how collaboration among teacher education candidates, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors enriches the clinical practice experience. The author suggests alternative arrangements for our examination and discussion.

Rounding off this issue are Janet S. Sauer and Christi Kasa, who, in their study “Pre-service Teachers Listen to Families of Students with Disabilities and Learn a Disability Studies Stance” examine the impact of pre-service teachers learn about special education from the families of students with disabilities. From interviews and observations, teachers acknowledge the complexity of families with disabilities, show a shift in their views and attitudes regarding constructs of normalcy, and gain an understanding that their role included being inclusive advocates.

This issue of the journal ends with an introduction of our book review section, written by our new Book Review Editor, Dr. Barbara Garii, who is the Associate Dean in the School of Education at State University of New York Oswego. Barbara joined us in this editorial role last year, but she is no newcomer to *Issues in Teacher Education*. In the past three years, she has been a reviewer, an author, and a theme issue co-editor. Read her wonderful new vision for reviewing books and other forms of media, and enjoy the book review by Nicole Luongo that complete this issue of the journal. And please join us in a warm Cal Council welcome to Barbara Garii.