

THE EFFECTS OF INTENTIONAL PAIRING OF TEACHER CANDIDATES AND
COOPERATING TEACHERS IN EARLY FIELD EXPERIENCES

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all of the students I have had the opportunity to teach. You have made me sing, dance, laugh, cry, wonder, reflect, and shake my head in disbelief. You have shaped me in innumerable ways, thank you.

To my children: Sara, Elija, and Jon Mark, you are my inspiration and my life's work. I love you!

ABSTRACT

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Field experiences are critical components of educator preparation programs. The opportunity for a teacher candidate to collaborate with an experienced mentor in an authentic classroom environment can be of great benefit to the teacher candidate, the cooperating teacher, the students in the class, and the reciprocal partnership between the educator preparation program and the school district. When pairing teacher candidates with cooperating teachers, current practices are generally random and based on the number of candidates needing placement and the availability of qualified cooperating teachers willing to engage in the process of mentoring a pre-service teacher. This mixed-methods, pragmatic case study research investigates the effectiveness of an intentional, inverse pairing of teacher candidates and cooperating teachers based on their perceived competency levels in the Texas Teacher Standards. Surveys were sent to the participating teacher candidates and cooperating teachers, asking them to score themselves on a Likert scale indicating their level of competency in each area. Qualitative data were also collected from both the teacher candidates and the cooperating teachers to inform the pairing process. The data were analyzed, and pairings were made, matching teacher candidates with lower competency levels with cooperating teachers who reported higher competency in each standard. At the end of the ten-week field experience, teacher candidates were once again asked to score themselves on their perceived level of competency. Cooperating teachers scored the teacher candidate(s) with whom they worked in each standard based on what they had observed and experienced while

collaborating over the ten-week period. Findings reveal that teacher candidates rated themselves higher at the conclusion of the field experiences after working with a cooperating teacher on tasks and experiences related to the Texas Teacher Standards. Ratings of the cooperating teachers were lower than that of the teacher candidates. Additional qualitative data suggest areas in which to strengthen the field experience and content covered in prerequisite courses. Implications for future research could include adding additional layers to the data collected to inform the pairings and professional development or training opportunities for teacher candidates and cooperating teachers to provide a framework for their collaboration.

KEY WORDS: Field experience; Teacher candidate; Cooperating teacher; Intentional pairing; Mentorship.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Background of Study

The knowledge and skills required of an effective educator develop over time through various experiences. Traditional academic pursuits and pedagogical study are only a portion of the critical preparation that produces high-quality classroom teachers. Collaboration, immersion in an authentic educational setting, and lived experiences are also integral components of the development of a professional educator. University-based educator preparation programs spend a great deal of time providing instruction on effective instructional methods and teaching strategies. Teacher candidates do not always know which methods or strategies to use in specific, everyday teaching situations (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). Most educator preparation programs attempt to connect theory to practice through a series of scaffolded experiences in authentic classroom settings. Opportunities for this type of experiential learning are known as field experience or practicum courses. They serve a critical role in preparing future educators, allowing them to gain experience and sharpen their skills in a supportive environment.

Personal Connections

Throughout my career as an educator, I have not remained stagnant in my development, but rather, I have been shaped by engaging in study, collaboration with others, and immersion in authentic experiences. Matriculating through an educator preparation program while earning a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies provided a specific, situated context that prepared me for entering the classroom. Although the

acquisition of knowledge and the study of theory and method was a part of that preparation, my experiences in the field, authentic classroom environments, and working with in-service teachers provided a depth of understanding that scholarship alone could not replicate. As I gained experience in the role of a classroom teacher and began to collaborate with preservice teacher candidates working as interns in the classroom, this appreciation and acknowledgment of the importance of lived experiences deepened and expanded. My understanding of the need for appropriate, effective collaborations between the cooperating teacher (CT) and the teacher candidate (TC) grew, and I began to reflect on the success and effectiveness of my experiences and interactions in the field. I began to feel that aside from my responsibilities as a teacher of record in a pre-kindergarten through twelfth-grade (PK-12) school setting, I was obligated to serve as a mentor and co-learner with the teacher candidates and clinical teachers placed in my classroom.

Components of Field Experiences

Aside from personal preferences and the differences in individual personalities, there are vital factors to consider when forming collaborative partnerships for field experience opportunities. When pairing teacher candidates and cooperating teachers during early field experience opportunities in a university-based program of study, it is essential to consider each participant's knowledge, skills, dispositions, and roles. In most cases, degree programs outline specific areas in which teacher candidates should receive support and mentoring while engaging in field experience hours during their course of study. According to the Texas Education Agency, instruction in and opportunities for instructional planning and lesson delivery, development of knowledge of students and

learning practices, deepening content knowledge, understanding of effective learning environments, the ability to utilize assessment data to inform instructional decisions, and a sense of professional practices and responsibilities are expected outcomes of a high-quality educator preparation program. Teacher candidates enrolled in courses containing a field experience component should have opportunities to learn from cooperating teachers who have the ability and competence to support growth in these areas.

Universities work to develop strong partnerships with school districts to provide efficacious placement opportunities in which their teacher candidates can benefit from authentic educational experiences in PK-12 classrooms.

Statement of the Problem

The methods for pairing teacher candidates with cooperating teachers in local school districts are often left to chance in field experience courses in educator preparation programs. The Texas State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) works to ensure a high level of preparation and practice for teachers through the collaboration of educator preparation programs (EPPs) and the Early Childhood through grade twelve public and private schools within the state (TAC §228.1(a)). EPPs require a minimum of 30-clock hours of field-based experience prior to the compulsory clinical teaching semester (TAC §228.35(e)1). These field-based experiences must include a minimum of 15 clock hours in which the candidate is engaged in instructional or educational activities during which a content-certified teacher is providing instruction (TAC §228.35(e)1Aii). These content-specific, certified teachers are referred to as cooperating teachers (CTs). The students learning under the supervision of the EPP are teacher candidates (TCs). Most universities and educator preparation programs have established practices for pairing CTs with TCs

that meet the needs of their programing and reflect the nature of their partnerships with the school districts with which they collaborate. The process through which CTs and TCs are paired for collaboration during field experience courses is unique to the participating institution and program of study. However, convenience, the willingness of CTs to work with a candidate, content area certification qualifications, and campus-specific logistical considerations provide the foundation for these pairings in many cases. Darling-Hammond (2006) states, “Often, the clinical side of teacher education has been fairly haphazard, depending on the idiosyncrasies of loosely selected placements with little guidance about what happens in them and little connection to university work” (p. 308). It is concerning that a critical component of educator preparation programs, such as the pairing of CTs and TCs, is left to chance in many aspects.

In the educator preparation program in which I teach, the professors who facilitate the early childhood and elementary-level professional preparation courses containing a field experience component identify a campus with which to work. They establish contact with a campus-level administrator to request a list of classroom teachers who, in the administrator's opinion, possess the knowledge and dispositions to support and provide mentorship for TCs. The university supervisor may or may not have any knowledge of the prospective CT or their instructional philosophy. The pairing process is informal, and TCs are often placed with a CT with limited or no analysis of the assets, competencies, or challenges associated with the individuals involved. This random pairing of CTs and TCs is undoubtedly convenient and expedient, but factoring in individual strengths and competencies would potentially provide additional opportunities for growth, contextualized support, and learning during the field experience. This study introduces a

unique model for the intentional pairing of CTs and TCs based on the self-perceived competency levels of the participants. Data collected from this research provides a deeper examination of an additional method for intentional pairing practices that encourages focused support, individualized goal-setting opportunities, and the development of a higher level of confidence and perceived competency in the participating TCs.

Purpose of Study

Although SBEC works to ensure high levels of educator preparation and practice, there is much variance in the methods and procedures from one EPP to another. Field-based courses seek to provide learning and professional growth opportunities in TCs through observation, targeted practice in teaching lessons, implementation of effective classroom procedures and expectations, and development of effective instructional practices based on accepted educational theory. One of the goals of an EPP is to work within the framework of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) to provide supportive and effective field experiences in which TCs can apply their learning and practice critical skills.

Historically, the participating educator preparation program has randomly paired CTs with TCs during the field experience placement within a course. These pairings are primarily based on the number of participating TCs and the availability of appropriately credentialed CTs within partnering school districts. This study attempted to determine if an intentional pairing, rather than a random pairing, of CTs and TCs within a field-based experience, showed an increased level of competence in the TC throughout a 10-week field experience. The results inform pairing practices moving forward as the EPP works

to provide increased support and high-quality experiences for the TCs. It also provides insight into strengthening the mentorship relationship between the TCs and the CTs in future semesters.

One of the foundational goals of educator preparation programs is to prepare TCs for success in the classroom as professional teachers. To support this objective, TCs are placed in field experiences in which they work under the supervision of a CT and university supervisor. Pairing TCs with a CT who can provide guidance and support in areas in which the TC has identified as areas for improvement was the aim of this study, and the following research questions guided the research:

- What are the perceived levels of competency regarding the Texas Administrative Code Teacher Standards and identified dispositional characteristics of teacher candidates prior to their first formal field-based experience?
- What are the perceived levels of competency regarding the Texas Administrative Code Teacher Standards and identified dispositional characteristics of cooperating teachers prior to working with a teacher candidate during their first formal field-based experience?
- What are the differences in the levels of perceived competence in the TC at the conclusion of their first formal field-based experience compared to their perception at the beginning of the field-based experience?
- What are the differences in the levels of competence in the TC as indicated by the CT at the conclusion of the first formal field-based experience compared to their competence at the end of the field-based experience?

By collecting responses to these questions, the study sought to determine if an intentional pairing of TCs and CTs, informed by the participants' perceptions of competencies and targeted areas for improvement prior to placement, resulted in a perception of higher competency and development of targeted skills when measured at the conclusion of the TCs first formal field experience. The results of the study can inform the current practices for pairing TCs and CTs in the BSIS EC-6 program, provide insight into potential needs for professional development for university faculty, TCs or CTs, and strengthen the reciprocal relationships with cooperating PK-12 school campuses.

Significance of Study

This study provides additional support for the supposition that an intentional pairing of CTs and TCs based on perceived levels of competencies of both groups resulted in a more efficacious experience for the TC and an increased perception of competence in specified areas targeted for improvement. The analysis of the perceived competency levels in the participating TCs and CTs provided a framework for the collaboration and planned experiences during the field-based experience. This framework guided the decisions made by the CT and the TC during the mentorship process. It also served to assist the TC in identifying areas in which they wish to develop knowledge, skills, or dispositions during the field-based experience. The intentional pairing of CTs and TCs according to their perceived levels of competency in each of the Texas Administrative Code Teacher Standards provided a foundation and justification for this framework. The development of a pairing method informed by the perceived levels of competency of the participants provided a situated context for the research.

Philosophical Stance

When conducting research in the social sciences, a debate about appropriate research paradigms has historically centered around the ideas of positivists at one end of the spectrum and the interpretivists at the other (Nudzor, 2009). The importance of using research methodologies that fit the purpose of the research, whether quantitative or qualitative in nature, and combining facets of both methodologies is stressed by Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005). Therefore, this study took a pragmatic philosophical stance. In the field of Education, research is often conducted in non-clinical environments that are subject to many outside influences. Because this research was conducted in primary school classrooms over a ten-week period, there were many unanticipated and uncontrolled factors that influenced the environment each day. The collection of both qualitative and quantitative data was intentional. This mixed-methods design will facilitate the interpretation of the results.

The pragmatic philosophical perspective is demonstrated in this project as I allowed my research questions to drive the design and methodology of this study. I incorporated the use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis to ensure the data being gathered was relevant and appropriate to address the research questions. This pragmatic view of research is no less rigorous than traditional research because well-established design models and methodologies are employed; however, these may be combined and applied according to the advantages and limitations of the study.

As the researcher, I applied a critical lens to this study. Having served as a teacher candidate, a university field experience instructor, a classroom teacher, and a cooperating

teacher, I am informed by a variety of experiences related to this project. I understand that the CT and the TC relationship has a significant impact on the learning and development of both parties. As an educator and faculty member in a higher learning institution who works simultaneously with in-service and pre-service teachers, I am uniquely situated to observe the collaborations between CTs and TCs within course-directed field experiences. Although my experiences provide a unique perspective, I inherently bring a degree of bias to the research. Therefore, my role was mainly situated outside of the interactions and collaboration of the participants. I collected data on the CTs' and TCs' perceptions related to their work together via an electronic survey. Other than my communication with the participants outlining the project and instructions for accessing the survey, I did not engage with them. I was not the instructor for this course, and I did not know any of the participants personally.

Theoretical Framework

The idea that learning takes place within a situated context and is accomplished through interactions with one's physical surroundings, including social interactions, composes the framework for this research study. These interactions with oneself, the environment, and others allow the learner to develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to the context in which they occur. The theories of Social Constructivism and Social Learning paired with Cognitive Apprenticeship instructional design inform the methods used in this research study. The following paragraphs outline each of the components of the theoretical framework that informs this work. Then, the application of all three will be discussed as they are combined to be used as a lens through which to view the research.

Social Constructivism

Vygotsky's (1978) Theory of Social Constructivism established the idea that all knowledge is constructed through social interaction. It supposes that learning is collaborative and interactive. Learning occurs in a situated context, and new knowledge passes through the filters of the social, environmental, and individual contexts before being assimilated into existing knowledge. This theory supports the idea that TCs can develop skills, knowledge, and dispositions through interactions with the classroom environment, collaboration with experienced CTs, and reflecting on their own beliefs and practices. Bickhard (1998) suggests that individuals construct knowledge by incorporating existing skills and understanding into new experiences. This idea provides a theoretical foundation as the TCs bring their prior knowledge, personal bias, and lived experiences into the unique environment of the field experience. The construction of new knowledge is scaffolded by the TC's existing knowledge and prior experiences (Shank, 1993). This perspective allows for the construction of new knowledge and understanding as the TC transitions from a focus on academic, conceptual learning contained in the content of their foundational courses into the practicum-based field experience courses associated with their educator preparation program. The formal field experience applies the Social Constructivist Theory as it places TCs with CTs in an authentic, situated environment. However, when individuals interact with someone more experienced or more competent, the potential for learning is increased.

Social Learning Theory

Observation, imitation, and modeling are the processes through which people learn from one another, according to Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Nabavi, 2012). This theory supports the idea that learning can occur by observing and imitating others who possess greater competency on a given task. For instance, in this study, the supposition is that as TCs observed and interacted with CTs who modeled specific skills and behaviors, they began to increase their level of competency in those areas. Due to the TEA requirement that CTs hold a state certification in the content area in which they are teaching and have a minimum of three years of experience as the teacher of record in a classroom, the assumption is that they possess more experience and a higher level of competence than the TCs who are entering their initial field experience as part of their educator preparation. This practical experience provides the CT with a body of knowledge that allows them to share their learning and insight from their own authentic interactions with students while working in a classroom setting.

Cognitive Apprenticeship

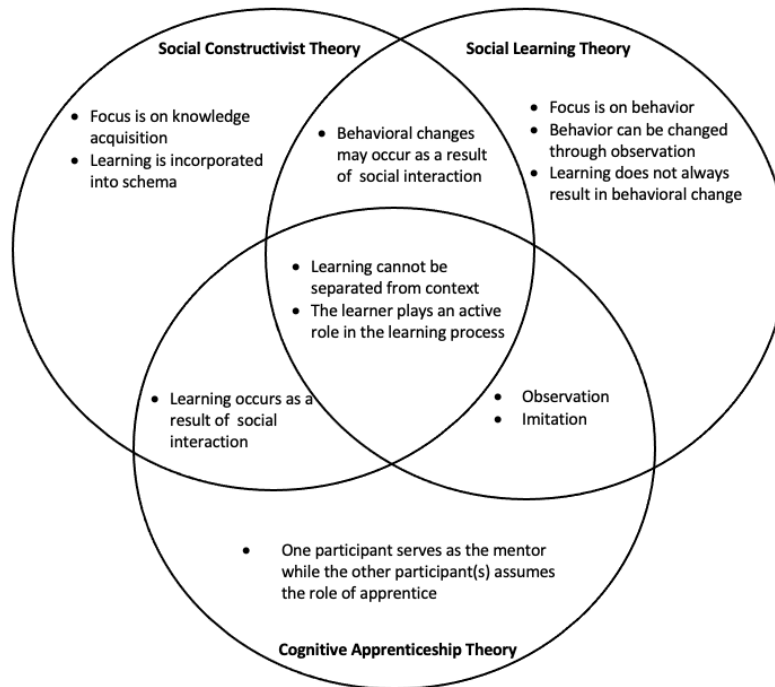
Cognitive Apprenticeship is an instructional design model taken from Situated Learning Theory developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in the late 1980s and then later expanded through the work of John Brown (*Learning Theories*). The Cognitive Apprenticeship model is based on the process in which learners engage in observation, practice, and reflection while working with a more experienced individual (Dennen, & Burner, 2008). Because the learning process is collaborative, cognitive apprenticeship must occur in a social setting. A learner cannot engage in the process in isolation.

According to this model, the expert engages in modeling, coaching, reflection, articulation, and exploration during the apprenticeship.

Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory is related to situatedness because learning always takes place within a situated, contextualized environment. The idea of a situated context was ideal for this research study because the CTs classroom provided the situational context. The TC engaged in peripheral participation during the first two weeks of the field experience placement. Peripheral participation involves a great deal of observation before moving into the guided participation element in which the CT provides structured guidance within the situated context. The CT must be mindful of the TCs zone of proximal development (ZPD) and engage in scaffolding to support effective learning.

Summary of the Theoretical Framework

The relationship between Social Constructivism, Social Learning Theory, the Cognitive Apprenticeship model, and the intersections between them support the intentional pairing of TCs and CTs within the situated context of a field experience. This research study enabled both the TC and the TC to actively participate in a collaboration that incorporates a mentorship model in a contextualized setting. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framework for this study.

Figure 1*Illustration of Theoretical Framework*

The following section presents a review of the literature related to the importance of authentic field experiences for pre-service teachers and the use of mentorship in professional and academic settings. Specifically, a review of literature that informs the use of a mentorship model in the area of educator preparation will indicate that additional research would benefit the field.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Mentorship Model

The role of the CT when working with a TC in a field experience cannot be underestimated. One of the most significant influences on TCs during their preparation is the CT (Guyton & McIntyre 1990; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990). Working with a mentor has been used to instruct others and pass on learning and expertise since time has been recorded. It is the prevailing approach used in education to prepare pre-service teachers. Although mentorship has provided a foundation for the acquisition of skills and the construction of knowledge throughout history, mentorship models have been applied haphazardly in many formal educational settings in the past century. Educator preparation programs routinely place TCs in contexts where a mentorship model is utilized but is loosely defined or constructed as the collaboration evolves. These pairings are rarely purposeful or intentional. The existing literature indicates a need for more contextualized pairing processes when assigning TCs to CTs. A pairing that identifies and works toward specific, individualized objectives could potentially provide a greater level of competence in developing the skills of TCs.

Historical Perspective of Mentorship

Humans have passed knowledge and skills throughout history from one person to another; children learn from parents, students learn from teachers, and apprentices learn from master tradespeople. Although aspects of mentorship can be identified in many learning experiences, it is more complex than just observation and mimicry. The use of

the word “mentor” can be traced back to *The Odyssey* (Homer, ca. 750 B.C.E./1999). Homer introduces the world to the great warrior-king Odysseus in his epic poem. Due to the long periods of absence from his family caused by leading his army during the Trojan War, Odysseus enlists the help of his friend, Mentor. Odysseus charges Mentor with the care and education of his young son, Telemachus. In an article by Anderson and Shannon (1988), the authors point out that the mentorship of Telemachus by Mentor was intentional, nurturing, insightful, and supportive.

Contemporary Mentorship

According to the literature, mentorship models are used today across various applications. The effect of mentorship is difficult to measure, and there are no quantitative analyses of literature associated with mentoring. However, Eby et al. (2008) reviewed three significant areas in which mentorship models were regularly utilized. The research supports the idea that a wide range of positive outcomes is associated with an intentional collaboration between a mentor and a mentee in the areas of youth mentorship, mentorship in the workplace, and academic mentorship opportunities (Eby et al., 2008). Across all disciplines and applications, basic assumptions about the use of a mentoring model are similar. A mentor is someone who provides support and guidance to a novice in the field (Kram, 1983; Hobson et al., 2009). Additionally, the mentee benefits from the collaboration with the mentor (Jacobi, 1991; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Rhodes et al., 2005).

Mentorship in the Workplace. In the 1970s, studies began to emerge examining the role of mentorship in professional relationships. Several of these studies discuss

mentorship in corporate settings. They identify mentorship as an individual of greater knowledge and skill supporting and guiding a novice associate in areas related to career development (Alleman, 1986; Levinson, 1978). The main goal of a mentor/mentee relationship is for the mentor to provide guidance and support while encouraging the mentee to become a competent professional, according to Lopez-Real and Kwan (2005). Bova and Phillips (1982), identify six types of mentors: traditional mentors, supportive bosses, organizational sponsors, professional mentors, patrons, and invisible godparents. All of these types of mentors play a role in the mentee's professional development; however, the methods and motivations behind the relationships vary enormously.

Mentorship With At-Risk Youth. A meta-analysis conducted by Raposa et al. (2019) examines initiatives working with youth who are at risk of substance abuse (Rhodes et al. 2005), depression (Herrera et al. 2013), exhibiting aggressive behaviors (Jolliffe & Farrington 2007), or as a deterrent for undesired behaviors (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). This study concludes that there are moderate benefits to youth who engage in mentoring programs. However, the study suggests additional benefits to collaborations that are targeted and limited to a specific amount of time.

Mentorship in Academic Settings. Eby et al. (2008) suggest that mentorship models utilized in academic settings result in stronger associations with desired outcomes than those in the workplace or when working with youth. The authors state that there may be several possible reasons for this finding. Many academic mentoring experiences focus on a specific set of performance outcomes. These mentoring experiences are often a part of the institution's mission, and mentors in the educational setting are often trained in the use of effective strategies and practices associated with mentoring. These findings create

a strong argument for using mentorship models in academic settings. Much of the literature related to mentoring undergraduate students surrounds mentorship in undergraduate research practices. Literature involving mentorship in undergraduate programs at the university level is plentiful in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs (Apriceno et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2011; Lopez & Duran, 2021), medical/nursing programs (Ford et al., 2016; Salamonson et al., 2017; Sng et al., 2017), engineering programs (Hanna & Sullivan, 2005; Zhu, 2017). The literature indicates the use of a mentorship model provides benefits for undergraduate students and academic programs through increased student retention, improved self-efficacy, and development of effective communication and collaboration skills. Although mentorship models are used effectively by a variety of disciplines, educator preparation programs have historically utilized a mentorship model grounded in opportunities for TCs to work alongside experienced teachers in field experience settings.

Mentorship in Educator Preparation

Educator preparation programs offer a variety of experiences and opportunities to TCs to provide a diverse, high-quality preparation for work in the field. Courses on educational theory, pedagogy, methodology, and even psychology are components of many university-based degree plans. In addition to traditional, academic lecture-style courses, educator preparation programs are encouraged, if not required, by state education agencies to provide field experiences or practicum courses that take place in partnering K-12 schools. These field-based courses occur under the supervision of both a university supervisor and a mentor or cooperating teacher. Purposeful clinical placements are often the capstone experiences for TCs and allow opportunities to engage in the

process of teaching (American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education [AACTE], 2018; Darling-Hammond, 2012; National Association of Professional Development Schools, 2008; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010). Another reason field experiences are found to be valuable spaces in which to implement a mentorship model is that they are collaborative in nature, allowing the CT to engage with the TC in a shared classroom environment. The TC and the CT work together to construct new knowledge as they interact with one another, the students, and the environment. (Mercer, 2005, 2010). This type of collaboration allows the TC to connect the learning they have experienced in the university lecture hall to their lived experiences in the field (Dani et al., 2019).

Historical Perspective

The field of educator preparation in America has used a mentorship model throughout its history. Normal Schools became known for the systematic preparation of teachers, and by the 1860s, practice teaching in a model school was a common requirement (Brottman, 1974; Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014). Since that time, the training of teachers has incorporated a variety of models of practice teaching, student teaching, and clinical teaching to provide authentic mentorship experiences before entering the profession. Presently, educator preparation programs require student/clinical teaching, as the culminating event in their course of study.

In the mid-1980s, two reports called for increased standardization of qualifications for professional educators, a process through which effective teachers could be educated and rewarded, and a call to recognize teachers as professionals in their

field (Johnson, 1987). These reports caused many college educator preparation programs to reflect on the instruction and experiences offered to their teacher candidates. The Holmes Group (1986) suggested that educational reform should begin at the level of educator preparation programs at universities across America. The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (1986) represented the view that certification of professional educators should be issued to ensure that teachers met newly established national teacher standards.

Current Practices

As a result of these reforms, many educator preparation programs now incorporate initial field experiences early in the course of study to allow TCs to experience an authentic classroom environment while being supported by program faculty. These field experiences attempt to provide a wide variety of experiences in authentic, contextualized situations. Dodds (1989) suggests that TCs engaging in field experiences should have the opportunity to connect the theory of educational practices with the practical application of the same. However, not all field experiences are effective at connecting theory to practice. Many TCs revert to the practices used by the teachers who taught them as children (Lortie, 1975; Stofflet & Stoddart, 1994). A greater number of field experience hours does not necessarily equal a higher quality experience and preparation for TCs (Allsopp et al., 2006; Korthagen et al., 2006; Zeichner, 1980). TCs are often overwhelmed with procedural and managerial challenges and find there is no time to reflect on their experiences and connect theory to practice (Fuller, 1969; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). Donegan-Ritter et al. (2022) indicate a significant variation in the quality and effectiveness of field experiences. While in classrooms, TCs often face

practices and instructional strategies that conflict with the theoretical and pedagogical training contained in their educator preparation coursework (Grisham, 2000; Grossman, 2005).

Allowing opportunities for TCs to transition from learning in the university classroom to a field experience placement requires a collegial partnership between the institution of higher learning and the K-12 school. Placing TCs with CTs in partnering schools promotes and strengthens these reciprocal relationships (Dani et al., 2021). These models also allow reflection and critical discussion surrounding pedagogy, practices, and beliefs about teaching (Kochan & Trimble, 2000).

An increased focus on creating effective partnerships between universities and local school districts resulted in the Professional Development Schools (PDS) model, which attempted to solve this issue (Shroyer et al., 2014). According to Darling-Hammond (1995), the PDS focuses on collaboration between all educational community members. PDS schools seek to expand teachers' roles, allowing them to engage in collaboration, critical thinking, and decision making while providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to learn in a supportive environment (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). Although the use of PDS benefits many educator preparation programs, they do not take into account the individual strengths and areas for improvement needed in TCs entering an initial field experience. CTs who serve as mentors to TCs in interactive, structured environments such as a PDS model can help mold a future population of highly-qualified teachers who are familiar with the procedures and challenges of working in a PK-12 school setting and are equipped for success.

Summary

Mentorship models have been utilized throughout history to support students and learners in all disciplines and professions. Existing literature suggests many benefits from a less competent individual working collaboratively with someone with more skill and expertise. Many models can be applied to mentorship, some more effective than others; however, research indicates limited training or professional development to prepare mentors or mentees for the experience (Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Valencia et al., 2009). Often, TCs and CTs enter a field experience placement with little understanding of identified areas for improvement or explicit focus for learning (Dani et al., 2021). There is no definitive list of experiences that a TC should have during a field experience placement that will give them the foundation they need to succeed in the field (Wilson & Floden, 2003). The current literature does not speak to the benefits or limitations associated with the diversity of experiences found in field experiences (Singh, 2017). It can only be assumed that a poorly planned and executed field experience that had limited connection with the educator preparation coursework experienced by the TC would be ineffective (AACTE, 2010). Although studies often measure a TC's feelings of efficacy at the conclusion of a field experience, no research reported the perceived competencies of TCs prior to a field experience.

Existing literature makes a strong case for the benefits of mentorship and field experiences in educator preparation programs. However, there is a need to examine the components and intentionality of effective models. A pairing model that provides a specific framework for the collaborative efforts of the TCs and the CTs in the field combined with an opportunity to reflect on the experience as it is happening could

strengthen the experience for all participants and provide a lens for establishing future goals. The use of a mentorship model in which the intentional pairing of TCs and CTs was based on the competencies of the participants may yield additional, highly specific benefits for the TC. This research study paired TCs with CTs based on their perceived competencies to determine if there is a benefit to the TC when working with a mentor based on such a pairing method.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This study applies a pragmatic philosophical stance. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that pragmatic research design is not associated with a specific philosophical stance or concept of reality but focuses on the issues highlighted by the research questions. This inquiry provides insight into the problem. It is challenging to identify an appropriate research design without becoming distracted by the epistemological criteria of a chosen method rather than focusing on the questions the research is attempting to answer (Smith et al., 2011). As a result, the research design for this study addressed specific research questions related to exploring the differences in the levels of perceived competence in TCs at the conclusion of their first formal field-based experience compared to their perception at the beginning of the field-based experience when strategically paired with a CT who indicated high levels of perceived competency in areas in which the TC felt they needed additional support. It also examined differences in perceptions of the TCs' self-reported competency levels compared to the CTs' perception of competency displayed by the TC at the end of the semester. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed to determine the changes, if any, in the perceived level of competence in TCs when intentionally paired with a CT, indicating a high level of competence in areas of the Texas Teacher Standards identified by the TC as an area for improvement during the field experience course.

Research Questions

One of the foundational goals of educator preparation programs is to prepare TCs for success in the classroom as professional teachers. To support this objective, TCs are placed in field experiences in which they work under the supervision of a CT and university supervisor. Pairing TCs with a CT who can provide guidance and support in areas in which the TC has identified as areas for improvement was the aim of this study, and the following research questions guided the research:

- What are the perceived levels of competency regarding the Texas Administrative Code Teacher Standards and identified dispositional characteristics of teacher candidates prior to their first formal field-based experience?
- What are the perceived levels of competency regarding the Texas Administrative Code Teacher Standards and identified dispositional characteristics of cooperating teachers prior to working with a teacher candidate during their first formal field-based experience?
- What are the differences in the levels of perceived competence in the TC at the conclusion of their first formal field-based experience compared to their perception at the beginning of the field-based experience?
- What are the differences in the levels of competence in the TC as indicated by the CT at the conclusion of the first formal field-based experience compared to their competence at the end of the field-based experience?

By collecting responses to these questions, the researcher sought to determine if an intentional pairing of TCs and CTs, informed by the participants' perceptions of

competencies and targeted areas for improvement prior to placement, resulted in a perception of higher competency and development of targeted skills when measured at the conclusion of the TCs first formal field experience. The results of the study can inform the current practices for pairing TCs and CTs in the BSIS EC-6 program, provide insight into potential needs for professional development for university faculty, TCs or CTs, and strengthen the reciprocal relationships with cooperating PK-12 school campuses.

Research Design

This study incorporated a survey design to collect descriptive, quantitative, and qualitative data about the participants and their experiences in a field placement during one semester. Using a Likert scale to gauge the level of perceived competence regarding the Texas Administrative Code Teacher Standards and a series of open-ended questions, the collected data informed an intentional pairing of TCs with CTs. The analysis of these data resulted in an intentional pairing of TCs and CTs based on an inverse relationship of levels of competency in specified criteria, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Model for Intentional Pairings of TCs and CTs



Participants

Participants included the TCs and CTs from a field experience-based course taught in a comprehensive, regional university in the eastern part of Texas. TCs enroll in this course during the second semester of a TCs junior year as part of the BSIS EC-6 program of study. Participating TCs had previously engaged in courses in the EC-6 degree plan prior to this semester that provided approximately 50 hours of observation and short-term, targeted interactions in the PK-12 classroom setting. At the onset of this study, TCs engaged in their first formal field experience-based course as part of the university's educator preparation program. Enrollment in field-based courses was capped at 15 TCs to promote increased interaction and collaboration between the TCs, CTs, and the university supervisor. The participating TCs engaged in a 10-week field-based experience. The course required them to spend six hours each week observing, planning, and teaching in a kindergarten through third-grade classroom under the supervision of the CT and a university supervisor. The content area and methodological focus in this field-based experience centered around Reading/English Language Arts and Science. This course was the first formal field-based experience associated with the TCs educator preparation program and their first formal association with a CT.

Participating District Data

The participating campus is part of an independent school district with a population of approximately 7,840 students. The district consists of one high school, one middle school, five elementary schools, seven primary schools, and one alternative behavioral campus. The student population consists of 43.7 % Hispanic, 23.1% White,

28.5% African American, 1.0% Asian, and 3.51% of two or more races. Within the district population, 75.1% of the students are economically disadvantaged.

Participating Campus Data

All CTs who participated in the study were classroom teachers at a primary school with which the university had a long-term partnership. Teacher candidates from the university's EPP were placed on the participating campus for the past six semesters for field experiences and clinical teaching opportunities. The university and the participating campus enjoyed a robust reciprocal relationship. Several of the teachers on the participating campus are graduates of the university's EPP. The participating campus serves students in pre-kindergarten through second grade. Table 1 represents the demographic data for the participating campus. It is interesting to note that the demographic data representing faculty on this campus do not reflect the diversity represented in the student population.

Table 1

Campus Demographics Data

	African American	Hispanic	White	Asian	American Indian	Multiple/no response	Total
Students	121	86	47	2	0	17	273
Faculty	1	0	18	0	1	0	20

A total of 273 students attended this school. Of those students, 121 identified as African American, 86 as Hispanic, 47 as white, two as Asian, and 17 as multiple/no

response. 58% of the student population identified as male, and 42% identified as female. Thirty-six students on this campus received Special Education services at the time of this study. The campus employed 20 classroom teachers. A single teacher identified as African American, 1 as American Indian, and 18 as White. All the teachers on this campus identified as female. Teachers on this campus had an average of 5.7 years of experience. This descriptive data is interesting because corresponding data from the participating district where this campus is located indicated teachers had an average of 11.4 years of experience when the reported data included all campuses across the district.

Cooperating Teacher Data

There were seven CTs participating in the spring semester to support the initial field experience course at the university. Five of the CTs received a recommendation for certification through an EPP associated with a four-year university. A recommendation for one of the CTs occurred after the TC completed a Master's degree in Special Education. One CT received a recommendation for certification through an alternate certification program not associated with a university. Of the seven CTs, three have taught for more than ten years, one has taught between six and ten years, and three have taught in the public school setting for three to five years. Five of the seven teachers are currently working in second grade, and two are working in first grade. All the CTs have experience hosting TCs in the classroom. Three CTs report having worked with four to six TCs during their careers. Two CTs report having worked with seven to ten TCs in their classrooms, and two of the CTs report having worked with more than ten TCs during their teaching experience. Table 2 provides the years of experience, grade level taught, and the number of TCs each CT has worked with prior to this study.

Table 2*Cooperating Teacher Data*

Name of CT	Years of experience	Grade level	# Teacher candidates
Ms. Allred	3-5	1	7-10
Ms. Baker	6-10	1	7-10
Ms. Carson	3-5	2	4-6
Ms. Daniels	3-5	2	4-6
Ms. Estrella	+10	2	4-6
Ms. Fernandez	+10	2	+10
Ms. Griffin	+10	2	+10

Teacher Candidate Data

The participating TCs were working toward their Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies (BSIS) with a concentration in Early Childhood through Sixth Grade. All the teacher candidates were seeking state certification in EC-6. They were required to take the TExES EC-6 Core Subjects exam before being permitted to take the second field experience-based course the following semester. All of the candidates were on track to complete clinical teaching and graduate within 18 months of this study. Each TC enrolled in the same section of the field-based experience course. They were entering the first course in the BSIS EC-6 program that requires a formal field experience component. Each TC spent a minimum of 6 hours each week for 10 weeks in the elementary classroom observing the CT and gradually building lesson plans and assuming instructional roles. All CTs participated in a required one-hour lab in which the university supervisor guided the TCs in reflection on best practices, lesson planning,

formative assessment, and differentiation. Prior to this semester, the TCs had limited experience in a classroom setting through the program of study. Requirements for prerequisite courses included approximately 50 hours of observation and targeted opportunities for planning and instructional delivery.

Instrumentation

Before TCs were paired with a CT at the onset of the semester, an initial survey was distributed to all TCs enrolled in the field experience course. See Appendix A. The researcher administered a similar survey to the CTs working with a TC during the semester. See Appendix B. The first section of the survey requested descriptive information from the participants. The second section of the survey prompted the participants to indicate their perceived level of competence with regard to the Texas Administrative Code Teacher Standards using a Likert scale. The initial survey asked both TCs and CTs to rate themselves 1-5 on a Likert scale based on their perceived competence in the areas of instructional planning and delivery, knowledge of students and student learning, content knowledge and expertise, learning environment, data-driven practice, and professional practices and responsibilities. The survey included several open-ended questions in the final portion. At the conclusion of the 10-week field-based experience, each TC completed a final survey following the same format. See Appendix C. The final survey for the CTs was significantly different from the initial survey they completed at the onset of the semester. Each CT completed a survey based on the differences observed in the performance of the TC at the end of the field-based experience compared to their performance at the beginning of the semester. See Appendix D.

Initial Survey

The initial surveys and the open-ended questions provided information to inform the pairing of TCs with CTs. Research in educator preparation field-based experiences had not previously used this method for pairing TCs with CTs based on their perceived competency in each area for matching participants. The initial surveys aimed to encourage the TCs and the CTs to reflect on their individual knowledge and practices. In addition to ranking themselves in each of the six standards, participants identified an area of strength and an area for growth. The participant scores were recorded for each standard and used to pair each TC with a CT for the field experience. The researcher used the initial survey data to pair a CT with a high level of perceived competence in a specific area with a TC who indicated a lower perceived competence at the onset of the study.

Final Survey

Participants received a final survey via email during week 10 of the placement. The final TC survey asked the participant to score their perceived level of competency in each area of the Texas Teacher Standards after they had completed their field experience collaborating with their CT. The final surveys distributed to the CTs after the semester asked the CT to provide information about the competency level of the TC in each of the six standards. Collecting data from both the TCs and the CTs allowed the researcher to view the perceived competency of the TCs from differing perspectives. The findings from this research study could provide additional data about the effectiveness of an intentional pairing model.

Procedures

The researcher visited the TCs in their Field Experience orientation class during the first week of the semester. The researcher explained the research study and distributed the link to the initial TC survey to every TC through the online course module. During the same week, the researcher emailed each CT, providing an overview of the study, an explanation of the purpose of the data collection, and the link for the initial survey. There was no point value linked to participation in the research study. All participation was voluntary. The participants completed the surveys using the secure, anonymous link provided by the researcher. All initial survey responses were protected in a password-protected platform on a password-protected university server, and each participant was assigned a pseudonym in place of their name.

At the conclusion of the 10-week field experience, the researcher emailed the TCs, thanked them for their participation in the study, and provided a link to the final TC survey. The researcher reminded the TCs that there was no point value linked with involvement in the research study, and participation in the study was voluntary. The researcher emailed each of the participating CTs, thanked them for their involvement in the research study, and included a link for the final CT survey. All final survey responses were collected and stored in a password-protected platform on a password-protected university server.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the initial TC and CT surveys were used to pair TCs with a CT who indicated a high level of competence in areas in which the TC indicated a lower level of perceived competence. Independent analysis of the survey data and preliminary pairing of TCs and CTs was completed by the researcher, the course professor, and the program coordinator for the BSIS EC-6 program from the participating university. The course professor has extensive experience working with TCs during field experience placements and has taught the field experience course at the participating campus for the past eight semesters. The BSIS EC-6 Program Coordinator works with aligning curriculum through all education courses within the degree. The program coordinator is heavily involved in all aspects of providing high-quality field experience opportunities for TCs within the EC-6 concentration.

Pairings were determined by asking the evaluators to independently identify the three criteria in which individual CTs indicate the highest perceived level of competence. Each evaluator then identified the three criteria in which each TC indicated the lowest level of perceived competence. The evaluators then preliminarily paired a TC with a CT who indicated a high level of competence in a criterion in which the TC indicated a low level of competence. After the preliminary pairings were made by each of the evaluators independently, they met to triangulate results and make final decisions for the intentional pairing of the TCs and CTs. Based on the survey data, all TCs were paired with a CT who indicated an equal or higher level of competence in every standard, with the exception of one TC who was paired with a CT who indicated a lower level of competence in two of the six standards. Once the pairings were determined, both the TC and the CT received

notification of the intentional pairings. All participants were encouraged to use their survey responses to guide their work together during the ten-week placement.

Typically, there are two TCs assigned to each CT on this campus. During the ten weeks that followed, the CTs provided guidance and mentoring to the TC in the prescribed areas. At the conclusion of the field-based experience, the TC completed a similar survey, indicating their perceived level of competence in each criterion. CTs also completed a post-experience survey about the level of competence they perceived in the TC at the conclusion of the field-based experience.

Data from the pre and post-survey results were compared to determine differences in the levels of perceived competence in TCs at the conclusion of their first formal field-based experience compared to their perception at the beginning of the field-based experience. Survey results were also analyzed to determine the differences in the observed self-competency of the TC and the level of competency indicated by the CT at the conclusion of the semester.

Summary

The use of an intentional pairing model to provide specific, targeted mentorship to TCs in an early field experience course provided a framework by which the CT leveraged their competence and expertise to provide supported learning experiences within a situated context. Using quantitative and qualitative data to measure the development of the TC during the 10-week field experience, this research study may be used to inform the pairing practices currently used in the educator preparation program at the institution. This research could potentially be used to inform the practices of other EPPs and

undergraduate programs for preservice teachers. The following section presents the results of this study.

CHAPTER IV

Results

This research study was conducted to determine the effect of an intentional mentor-pairing model based on the perceived self-competence of teacher candidates during an initial field experience. TCs were paired with CTs that self-reported strengths in areas in which the TCs reported a need to improve.

Survey data were collected before the pairing process and used to inform the assigned partnerships between TCs and CTs. After the field experience, a second survey collected data on the perceptions of competency levels of the TCs after they participated in a semester-long field experience placement assignment. The field experience placement lasted for ten weeks on the campus of a primary school local to the university during a spring semester.

Research Questions

Pairing TCs with a CT who can provide guidance and support in areas in which the TC has identified as areas for improvement was the aim of this study, and the following questions guided the research:

- What are the perceived levels of competency regarding the Texas Administrative Code Teacher Standards and identified dispositional characteristics of teacher candidates prior to their first formal field-based experience?
- What are the perceived levels of competency regarding the Texas Administrative Code Teacher Standards and identified dispositional characteristics of cooperating

teachers prior to working with a teacher candidate during their first formal field-based experience?

- What are the differences in the levels of perceived competence in the TC at the conclusion of their first formal field-based experience compared to their perception at the beginning of the field-based experience?
- What are the differences in the levels of competence in the TC as indicated by the CT at the conclusion of the first formal field-based experience compared to their competence at the end of the field-based experience?

By collecting responses to these questions, the researcher sought to determine if an intentional pairing of TCs and CTs informed by the participants' perceptions of competencies and targeted areas for improvement would result in a perception of higher competency and development of skills throughout the TCs first formal field experience. The results of the study can inform the current practices for pairing TCs and CTs in the BSIS EC-6 program.

Data Analysis

This study surveyed TCs and CTs at two specific data points, one at the beginning of the placement and the other at the conclusion of the placement, to identify ways the BSIS EC-6 program can effectively support candidates and develop high-quality preparation methods for pre-service teachers. The researcher used pseudonyms to protect the identity of both TCs and CTs during the data analysis. The results of the surveys were used in a variety of ways. Data from the initial surveys informed strategic, purposeful pairings between TCs and CTs. Data from the final surveys determined whether the TC

perceived an increased level of competency in their ability to meet the Texas Teacher Standards and compared the TCs' level of perceived self-competence with the CTs' perception of the same.

Initial Surveys

The initial survey link was sent to TCs and CTs during the first week of the spring semester. The TCs and the CTs had been identified by the course roster and the campus administrator, but no pairings had been assigned. Six of the seven CTs requested to work with two TCs, while one requested a single TC placed in her classroom. All survey data were collected and analyzed before pairings were made.

The initial survey asked both TCs and CTs to rate themselves 1-5 on a Likert scale based on their perceived competence in the areas of instructional planning and delivery, knowledge of students and student learning, content knowledge and expertise, learning environment, data-driven practice, and professional practices and responsibilities. These criteria were taken from the Texas Administrative Code's Teacher Standards and were used to inform the pairings of TCs and CTs.

Teacher Candidate Initial Survey Data. There were 13 TCs enrolled in the field experience course, and all of them indicated in the introduction of the survey that they agreed to participate in the research study. Each TC was asked to rate their level of competence in the TAC Teacher Standards on a Likert scale of 1-5 with one being the weakest and five being the strongest. Table 3 displays the data collected from the TC initial survey.

Table 3*Teacher Candidate Initial Survey Data*

Names of TCs	Instructional planning and delivery	Knowledge of students and student learning	Content knowledge and expertise	Learning environ.	Data-driven practice	Professional practices and responsibility
Annie	2	2	2	3	2	2
Belle	4	3	4	5	5	5
Callie	2	3	4	5	4	4
Denise	4	5	4	3	2	3
Ella	3	5	3	5	4	4
Faith	4	3	2	5	4	4
Ginny	2	4	3	5	3	5
Holli	2	2	4	4	4	3
Inez	3	3	2	4	3	3
Janice	3	4	3	5	5	5
Kelli	4	3	3	5	5	4
Laura	3	3	4	5	5	5
Molly	3	4	2	5	5	4
Mean	3.00	3.38	3.08	4.54	3.92	3.92

All TCs' self-reported scores range from 2-5. The standard with the lowest mean was instructional planning and delivery ($M=3$). TCs felt confident in their ability to establish a supportive learning environment. This is demonstrated in standard four ($M=4.54$). Interestingly, the TCs felt quite confident in all areas as they entered the initial field experience course. Having never enrolled in a course containing a long-term, formal

field experience prior to participating in this study, the TCs were basing this perception on a theoretical understanding of theory, pedagogy, and methodology rather than a lived experience. Qualitative data collected using open-ended questions on the initial survey provided additional data regarding TCs' perception of their level of competence prior to their initial placement. Five TCs stated that empathy for students was their strongest characteristic as a TC. Creating a connection with the students was reported by three TCs as their strongest characteristic. Organization, lesson planning, instruction, and previous experience with children were also mentioned as strengths. TCs expressed interest in learning about teaching strategies, classroom management, and organization from their CTs.

Cooperating Teacher Initial Survey Data. There were seven CTs who participated in the research study. Each CT was asked to rate their level of competence in the TAC Teacher Standards on a Likert scale of 1-5, with one being the weakest and five being the strongest. This data was used to match TCs with CTs. Table 4 displays the data collected from the CT initial survey.

Table 4*Cooperating Teacher Initial Survey Data*

Names of CTs	Inst. planning and delivery	Knowledge of students and student learning	Content knowledge and expertise	Learning environ.	Data-driven practice	Professional practices and resp.
Ms. Allred	3	4	3	4	4	4
Ms. Baker	4	5	3	5	4	5
Ms. Carson	5	5	5	5	4	4
Ms. Daniels	4	4	3	4	3	4
Ms. Estrella	4	5	4	5	4	4
Ms. Fernandez	5	5	5	5	5	5
Ms. Griffin	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mean	4.29	4.71	4.00	4.71	4.14	4.43

All CTs' self-reported scores range from 3-5. Two of the CTs scored themselves at a five in every standard. Knowledge of students and Learning environment were the two standards with the highest mean. Content knowledge and expertise and Data-driven practice were the areas with the lowest mean score.

Qualitative data collected with the initial survey provided some additional data regarding CTs' perceptions of their level of competence prior to being paired with a TC. Two of the CTs indicated that forming a connection with their students was their greatest strength. Other areas of competence listed by the CTs included classroom management, modeling instructional practices, data interpretation, and communication. Five of the CTs expressed their desire to share their experience and knowledge with the TCs was their

primary motivation for working with TCs during their initial field experience. One CT stated that she was not given a choice about working with a TC, and another said that she chose to work with TCs because she has extra help in the classroom when a TC is placed in her room.

Informed Pairing of CTs and TCs. The data was analyzed, and preliminary pairings were made by the researcher, the course instructor, and the EC-6 program coordinator. Each of the analysts worked independently to pair a TC with a low perception of competence with a CT who indicated a high level of competence in each standard. Once each of the three analysts created a preliminary set of pairings, they met together to make final decisions about pairing CTs with TCs. Table 5 provides information about the pairings.

Table 5*Pairings Based on Survey Data*

Names of CTs and TCs	Inst. planning and delivery	Knowledge of students and student learning	Content knowledge and expertise	Learning environ.	Data-driven practice	Professional practices and resp.
Ms. Allred	3	4	3	4	4	4
Annie	2	2	2	3	2	2
Ms. Baker	4	5	3	5	4	5
Ella	3	5	3	5	4	4
Ginny	2	4	3	5	3	5
Ms. Carson	5	5	5	5	4	4
Callie	2	3	4	5	4	4
Molly	3	4	2	5	5	4
Ms. Daniels	4	4	3	4	3	4
Faith	4	3	2	5	4	4
Inez	3	3	2	4	3	3
Ms. Estrella	4	5	4	5	4	4
Denise	4	5	4	3	2	3
Holli	2	2	4	4	4	3
Ms. Fernandez	5	5	5	5	5	5
Belle	4	3	4	5	5	5
Janice	3	4	3	5	5	5
Ms. Griffin	5	5	5	5	5	5
Kelli	4	3	3	5	5	4
Laura	3	3	4	5	5	5

All of the TCs were paired with a CT who scored themselves higher in all standards, with the exception of Faith, who scored herself higher than her CT, Ms. Daniels, in standards four and five. Once the pairings were made, the TCs were introduced to the CTs, and the participants followed the field experience course curriculum throughout the semester. In addition to observing in the classroom, working with small groups of students to support learning, and developing collegial relationships with professionals working on their campus, each TC developed a lesson plan and delivered instruction for one English Language Arts/Reading (ELAR) and one Science content lesson during the semester.

Final Surveys

The researcher sent the link for the final survey to TCs and CTs after the TCs had been in the classroom placements with the CT for ten weeks. The final survey asked TCs to, once again, rate themselves 1-5 on a Likert scale based on their perceived competence in the areas of instructional planning and delivery, knowledge of students and student learning, content knowledge and expertise, learning environment, data-driven practice, and professional practices and responsibilities. The final survey for the CTs asked them to rate their TC on a Likert scale using the same standards. The goal of this collection of data was two-fold. First, a comparison of how the TCs felt about their own development and growth in the identified areas would provide data related to the effectiveness of the field experience through the lens of the TC. Second, the responses collected from the CTs would provide insight into the preparedness of the TCs at the close of their first formal field experience through the lens of an experienced educator.

Teacher Candidate Final Survey Data. The final survey for the TCs prompted the TCs to reflect on their learning and development during their initial field experience. They indicated their perceived level of competence on the Texas Teacher Standards at the close of the semester. This data was then compared to their responses from the initial survey. Table 6 provides information on how the TCs scored themselves at the end of their field experience as compared to their perceived level of competence at the beginning of the semester.

Table 6*Teacher Candidate Initial and Final Survey Comparison*

Name of TC	Instructional planning and delivery		Knowledge of students and student learning		Content knowledge and expertise		Learning environ.		Data-driven practice		Professional practices and resp.		Mean for each TC	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Annie	2	5	2	5	2	5	3	5	2	5	2	5	2.17	5.00
Belle	4	5	3	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.33	4.67
Callie	2	5	3	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	3.66	4.67
Denise	4	4	5	5	4	4	3	5	2	4	3	3	3.50	4.17
Ella	3	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4.00	5.00
Faith	4	4	3	5	2	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	3.66	4.33
Ginny	2	4	4	5	3	4	5	5	3	5	5	4	3.66	4.50
Holli	2	5	2	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	3	4	3.17	4.83
Inez	3	4	3	4	2	4	4	4	3	5	3	5	3.00	4.33
Janice	3	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	4.17	4.50
Kelli	4	4	3	4	3	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4.00	4.17
Laura	3	5	3	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.17	5.00
Molly	3	4	4	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	3.83	3.83
Mean	3	4.54	3.38	4.69	3.08	4.62	4.54	4.69	3.92	4.54	3.92	4.62	3.64	4.62

The results of the final survey show all TCs' self-reported scores range from 3-5; however, there are some points of interest when comparing the TCs' perceived level of competence at the beginning of the semester to their self-reported scores at the close of their initial field experience. Overall, TCs reported growth in all six of the Texas Teacher Standards over the span of their initial field experience as well as in their individual mean

score. Two areas in which TCs indicated the highest levels of growth are Instructional planning and delivery and Content knowledge and expertise. An increase of 1.54 was reported in each of these areas. The standard with the most nominal reported growth was Learning environment. This result is not surprising since it was the area scoring highest in the initial survey. The reported growth in this area was 0.15. According to the qualitative data collected in the final TC survey, the experience of the TCs when working with their CTs was varied. Six of the TCs reported benefit from opportunities for observation, but only one mentioned the CT allowing interactive experiences with the students in the classroom. One TC expressed frustration that she observed similar activities each day with little opportunity for working with students in the class other than the two formal lessons she was required to teach during her field experience.

Cooperating Teacher Final Survey Data. The final survey for the CTs prompted them to reflect on the learning and growth of the TCs assigned to their classrooms for an initial field experience. The CTs were asked to score their TCs level of competency on the six Texas Teacher Standards at the close of the semester after spending ten weeks in the classroom working with the CT and the students. Although one of the CTs completed the first part of the final survey, she was unwilling to provide a Likert scale ranking for the two TCs with whom she worked. Table 7 provides an overview of how CTs scored each TC in each of the standards at the end of the semester.

Table 7*Cooperating Teacher Final Survey Data*

Name of TC	Instructional planning and delivery	Knowledge of students and student learning	Content knowledge and expertise	Learning environ.	Data-driven practice	Professional practices and resp.	Mean for each TC
Annie	3	3	3	4	4	4	3.50
Belle	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.00
Callie	3	3	4	5	5	3	3.83
Denise	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ella	4	5	3	5	5	5	4.50
Faith	3	3	3	3	3	4	3.16
Ginny	4	5	3	5	5	5	4.50
Holli	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Inez	3	3	3	3	3	4	3.16
Janice	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.00
Kelli	4	4	4	4	5	4	4.17
Laura	4	4	4	4	5	4	4.17
Molly	3	3	4	5	5	3	3.83
Mean	3.00	3.18	3.00	3.64	3.82	3.45	3.35

The scores provided by the CTs when asked to reflect on the competency level demonstrated by the TCs at the end of the semester range between 1 and 5. One CT did not score the TCs who were placed in her classroom, so their scores are reflected by n/a. It is clear that some of the CTs scored their TCs lower in all areas than other CTs.

The data that were collected was compared to the self-perceived level of competency reported by the TCs at the close of the semester. Table 8 provides

information on how the CTs scored their TCs at the end of the field experience as compared to their perceived level of competence of the TCs at the end of the semester.

Table 8

Cooperating Teacher and Teacher Candidate Final Survey Data

Name of TC	Instructional planning and delivery		Knowledge of students and student learning		Content knowledge and expertise		Learning environ.		Data-driven practice		Professional practices and resp.	
	CT	TC	CT	TC	CT	TC	CT	TC	CT	TC	CT	TC
Annie	3	5	3	5	3	5	4	5	4	5	4	5
Belle	1	5	1	4	1	5	1	5	1	4	1	5
Callie	3	5	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	3	5
Denise	n/a	4	n/a	5	n/a	4	n/a	5	n/a	4	n/a	3
Ella	4	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Faith	3	4	3	5	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	5
Ginny	4	4	5	5	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	4
Holli	n/a	5	n/a	5	n/a	5	n/a	5	n/a	5	n/a	4
Inez	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	5	4	5
Janice	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	4	1	3	1	5
Kelli	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4
Laura	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	5
Molly	3	4	3	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	3	5
Mean	3.00	4.54	3.18	4.69	3.00	4.62	3.64	4.69	3.82	4.54	3.45	4.62

An analysis of the data shows that in all areas, the TCs rated themselves higher at the end of the field experience than the CTs rated them. The standard with the largest

discrepancy is Content knowledge and expertise. The mean for the TCs was 4.62 in this area, while the mean of the CTs reporting was 3.00, with a difference of 1.62. The standard with the least discrepancy between the TCs and the CTs was Data-driven practice with a difference in the means of 0.72.

Qualitative data provided by the participants at the conclusion of the study indicate that of the seven participating CTs, five of them would be interested in participating in an intentional pairing of CTs and TCs in the future, one indicated that she would not be interested, and one did not answer the question. All 13 of the participating TCs indicated that they benefitted from the mentorship of the CT. One TC expressed frustration that the CT did not provide adequate opportunities for practice in delivering instruction and interaction with the students in the classroom.

Summary of Results

The research questions guiding this study provided a lens through which the findings may be viewed. An inverse pairing method was used to match TCs with CTs based on their perceived competency in the six Texas Teacher Standards. These standards served as a framework for the TCs and the CTs to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in themselves and then leverage that understanding into targeted areas for growth. The pairings of TCs and CTs were based on a method that placed a TC with a low perceived competency level with a CT who indicated a higher perceived competency level in each of the areas. At the close of the semester, the self-perception of TCs' competency in the Texas Teacher Standards was compared to the CTs' perception of their performance in the same areas.

Summary of Teacher Candidate Experience

Overall, the responses of the TCs were positive. According to the survey, the participating TCs reported an increase in their competency with regard to the Texas Teaching Standards as a result of participating in an initial field experience using an intentional pairing method. The qualitative data gathered shows that all of the TCs felt that they benefitted from the mentorship of the CT with whom they were paired.

Summary of Cooperating Teacher Experience

Initially, the participating CTs provided data on their self-perceived competency within the framework of the Texas Teacher Standards. Analysis of this data alongside the data set provided by the participating TCs allowed a unique, intentional pairing of TCs with CTs for this field experience. The participating CTs represented a wide range of classroom experience and experience working with TCs. Each CT rated their competency level between 3.67 and 5.0 in all areas on the initial survey.

After working with TCs twice each week for 10 weeks, the CTs reported their perception of the TC's competency level in each of the six standards. The TC rated themselves higher than the CT's rating in each case. The qualitative data collected from the CTs included a suggestion by three of the participants that an additional layer of data could be used to examine the educational philosophy and beliefs about teaching practices to further inform the pairings of TCs with CTs.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

This research study examined the effectiveness of an intentional pairing method for matching preservice TCs with experienced CTs based on their perceived competency levels in the six Texas Teacher Standard domains. The following research questions guided this study:

- What are the perceived levels of competency regarding the Texas Administrative Code Teacher Standards and identified dispositional characteristics of teacher candidates prior to their first formal field-based experience?
- What are the perceived levels of competency regarding the Texas Administrative Code Teacher Standards and identified dispositional characteristics of cooperating teachers prior to working with a teacher candidate during their first formal field-based experience?
- What are the differences in the levels of perceived competence in the TC at the conclusion of their first formal field-based experience compared to their perception at the beginning of the field-based experience?
- What are the differences in the levels of competence in the TC as indicated by the CT at the conclusion of the first formal field-based experience compared to their competence at the beginning of the field-based experience?

By collecting responses to these questions, the study sought to determine if an intentional, inverse pairing of TCs and CTs that is informed by the participants'

perceptions of competencies would result in a perception of higher competency at the conclusion of the TCs' first formal field experience. Survey responses from 13 TCs and 7 CTs prior to the start of an initial field experience provided the data used to inform the pairings. Each TC was paired with a CT who indicated proficiency in an area in which the TC reported an area for improvement. This chapter will discuss the findings of this study and provide implications for practice and future research opportunities. It will also acknowledge the limitations of the study and situate the findings within the current literature on mentorship and field experience opportunities for preservice teacher candidates.

Summary of Results

Intentional Pairing Practices: Research Questions One and Two

Pairing TCs with CTs for early field experiences is often a matter of availability and convenience. This study attempted to pair TCs with CTs using an informed, inverse pairing method based on the six Texas Teaching Standards. The first two research questions were used to determine the perceived level of competency of the TCs and the CTs. The TCs received a survey asking them to rank their level of competence on a scale of 1-5 in each of the six Texas Teacher Standards. This exercise was intended to allow the TCs to identify areas in which they felt they could benefit from a strong mentor. The standards in which the TC reported a low level of competency became an area for targeted support when working with the CT during the field experience. A survey was also sent to the CTs at the beginning of the semester before pairings were made. CTs were asked to reflect on their own level of competency in each of the six standards and

rank themselves on a scale of 1-5. This exercise was intended to allow CTs to identify strengths in their professional roles and provide opportunities to leverage these strengths into opportunities for mentorship of their TCs.

The Teacher Candidates. TCs ranked themselves above the median of 2.50 in all but one instance. This indicates a level of confidence as the TCs entered their first formal field experience. One candidate ranked herself with a mean of 2.17, which was significantly lower than any other TC. Interestingly, this particular TC revealed that she had experience working in daycare settings as well as helping in a pre-kindergarten classroom during her senior year of high school. This previous experience may have helped the TC to anticipate the experience of working in a classroom with greater accuracy than her fellow TCs.

The area in which the TCs indicated the lowest competency was that of planning and instructional delivery. The TCs ranked themselves with a mean of 3.0 in this standard. This is not surprising since they were about to begin their first formal field experience. In the EC-6 program, the TCs previously had opportunities to plan lessons based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards but have had limited opportunities to deliver the planned instruction in an authentic classroom setting. An example of this was provided by Janice in the initial survey of teacher candidates. She stated, “Making a good lesson plan is one area where I’d like to improve. It would be fantastic if I could find someone to work with me on how to make a great lesson plan and be more confident in my lesson ideas and teaching.” Another TC, Ginny, said, “I wish to improve on lesson planning skills and how to execute these efficiently.” The TCs lack of opportunity to gain experience in a classroom setting may also be a consequence of

COVID-related restrictions causing many observation hours required in prerequisite courses to be conducted virtually instead of in physical spaces.

Although TCs expressed some lack of confidence in lesson planning and delivery, they exhibited a higher level of perceived competency in the area of creating a supportive learning environment. The mean score on the TC initial survey for this standard was 4.54. This may be explained by an intentional focus on social-emotional learning, developmentally appropriate practices, creating child-centered environments, and positive classroom climates in the course content of the two prerequisite courses taken by the TCs prior to their field experience semester. Molly, a TC stated in her initial survey response, “My strongest characteristic as a teacher candidate is my ability to work and connect with the students. I feel that I excel at building connections and trust with the students.” Another TC, Janice, wrote, “My strongest characteristic as a teacher candidate would be the amount of patience and kindness I have for the students when in a classroom setting.” These examples provide evidence that the TCs feel that communication and establishing a supportive, personal rapport with students contribute to their perceived competence in creating a supportive learning environment.

The Cooperating Teachers. CTs also reported high levels of perceived competence on the initial survey. All CTs scored themselves above the 2.5 median score. The lowest reported mean was 3.67. This was reported by two of the CTs, Ms. Allred and Ms. Daniels. Both of these CTs had between 3-5 years of experience in the classroom. The partnering university requests that in-service teachers working with field experience TCs have a minimum of three years of classroom experience before serving as a CT. The next mean scores were 4.33, 4.33, and 4.76. Two of the CTs scored themselves with a

mean of 5. Not surprisingly, the CTs reporting a high level of competence in all standards were two of the three CTs with more than ten years of experience in the field, and both reported having worked with more than ten TCs during those years. This indicates that years of experience teaching in a classroom impacts the CTs perceived level of competence with regard to the Texas Teacher Standards.

When asked why the CT is willing to work with TCs, three mentioned the desire to support TCs and share their expertise with pre-service educators. Ms. Daniels said, “I hope to offer positive experiences and learning opportunities for our future teachers.” Another CT, Ms. Allred stated, “I feel it is important for students to have this field experience early on to assist with establishing their goals for their career long term.” One of the CTs expressed appreciation of the opportunity to learn from the TCs in her classroom. Ms. Baker answered by saying, “I learn as much or more from the candidates as I am sure they learn from me. It is refreshing having interns be a part of our classroom family. Each one in the past has been so helpful, so hands-on and supportive of both the students as well as myself.” This response indicates a desire to collaborate and learn from new experiences. No matter the motivation or purpose, all of the CTs possessed the qualifications to be paired with a TC for the semester.

The Effects of Intentional Pairing Practices: Research Questions Three and Four

The third and fourth research questions were designed to measure the effectiveness of the intentional pairing method used to assign TCs to CTs for their first formal field experience. Once the TCs and CTs were paired, they began to work together for three hours two mornings each week. The focus of the work and daily responsibilities

of the TC was unique to each classroom. However, the entire semester was situated within the framework of the inverse pairing of TCs with low reported competencies in areas in which CTs reported high levels of competency. The third research question investigated the experience of the TC with regard to their development and growth in areas of low competency during their field experience while paired with a competent CT. The fourth research question explored the CTs' perception of the development and growth of the TCs in those same areas. This examination of the same phenomena from two perspectives provided a unique lens for evaluating the effectiveness of a field experience.

The Teacher Candidates' Perspective on Their Own Performance. After 10 weeks in the field experience placement with the CT, the TCs were asked to submit a final survey to gauge their growth and development, if any, in the six Texas Teacher Standards. Once again, each TC rated their perceived level of competency on a scale of 1-5. The researcher sought to discover the answer to the following question: What are the differences in the levels of perceived competence in the TC at the conclusion of their first formal field-based experience? The final survey indicated that in all six of the standards, TCs' mean scores were higher than their scores on the initial survey. It is interesting to note that the TC who scored herself lowest on the initial survey $M=2.17$ exhibited substantial perceived growth during the ten-week period. She scored herself highly competent in all areas on the final survey $M=5.0$. Overall, the data indicate that the intentional pairing of TCs with CTs was effective in increasing the perceived competency of the TC.

As reported in the results section, instructional planning and delivery were scored lowest on the initial TC survey. Participants began the semester with a mean score of 3.0 in this standard. The final survey revealed a mean score of 4.54. This increase supports the belief that providing opportunities for planning and delivering content area instruction in an authentic classroom environment is a critical factor in developing confident, competent TCs. As the TCs gained experience in planning and delivering instruction, they were able to identify the needs of individual students in response to their teaching. This is evidenced in one TC's comments included in the final survey. Callie stated, "I feel like an area I could improve or develop would be creating modifications and accommodations for students who may need extra support. This is an area I am still learning about and have not quite grasped completely." This is valuable insight that could be shared with the TCs next CT in the second formal field experience the following semester. By encouraging TCs to reflect on what they have learned and set goals for moving forward in a focused and systematic way and intentionally pairing the TCs with a CT who is able to offer support and mentorship, the preparation of the TC could be strengthened, and a higher quality educator produced.

In the area of creating supportive learning environments, TCs initially scored relatively high $M=4.54$. As reported, this may be due to the foci of prerequisite courses. However, growth was observed in the results of the final TC survey in this area $M=4.69$. Although TCs have spent a number of hours in observation tasks in previous courses, the field experience semester is the first time they are able to engage and interact with PK-12 students for an extended time and cultivate relationships within a classroom setting. This is illustrated in a comment by one of the TCs as she responded to the final survey. Denise

said, “I feel that my strongest characteristic as a teacher candidate is my experience in real teaching environments.” Another TC, Inez, stated, “My strongest characteristic would be understanding children and their emotions.” Engaging in authentic, situated classroom environments in collaboration with a CT provides the opportunity for TCs to gain experience in an established learning environment and learn about themselves as future teachers.

It is important for TCs to experience diverse settings and work with a variety of colleagues throughout their preparation. This allows them to view teaching through multiple lenses and perspectives as they assimilate their academic knowledge and their lived experiences. It prepares them for the challenges they will face in the field and provides first-hand experience working through authentic situations while being supported by university faculty and their CT. The qualitative data gathered from the final TC survey indicated that the experiences of the TCs were varied. Although all TCs were assigned to the same campus, their interactions with their CT, students, and the classroom environment were unique to each. TCs spent six hours each week in the classroom placement. Six of the TCs reported opportunities to observe and learn through watching their CT, but only one described the benefit of being able to “interact one-on-one with students.” This is in contrast to another TC who indicated she “saw the same thing every day and never really had the opportunity to work with the students until I taught my lesson.” It is desirable to provide diverse experiences for TCs; however, the program could benefit from conducting training for CTs prior to working with TCs. The training should provide a suggested timeline for the semester and a list of experiences that would benefit the TC. A handbook could be developed that provided a framework for field

experience placements and included a list of the roles and responsibilities for TCs and CTs.

The Cooperating Teachers' Perspective on the Performance of the Teacher Candidates. At the conclusion of the 10-week field experience, the CTs were asked to provide insight into the development of their TCs. They completed a survey in which they ranked the performance of the TCs with whom they worked with regard to the six Texas Teacher Standards. These data were used to address the fourth research question. What are the differences in the levels of perceived competence in the TC as indicated by the CT at the conclusion of the first formal field-based experience compared to their competence at the beginning of the semester? The data collected from this question is especially informative when paired with that of the third question in which TCs rated their level of perceived competency at the conclusion of the field experience. It should be noted that one of the CTs completed the first part of the survey but did not complete the Likert scale indicating the competency levels of the two TCs with whom she worked.

According to the available data, the CTs ranked the TCs lower than the TCs ranked themselves in every standard area. The area with the most significant difference was content knowledge and experience. This discrepancy is not surprising since TCs are novice teachers at the time of their first formal field experience and do not have a large amount of experience. The TCs are working on gaining clearance to sit for their content area state-certification exam during the semester they are engaged in their field experience course, so many of the TCs have not yet passed that exam and proven a strong content knowledge. It is assumed that the TCs will continue developing and improving in this standard. Several of the CTs commented that the TCs need to gain confidence, take

more initiative in the classroom setting, and use questioning strategies effectively. When asked about an area in which the TC could improve/develop their skills, knowledge, or dispositions, Ms. Carson answered, “Using questioning when working with students in a way that makes them think about their answers.” Ms. Daniels's response similarly stated, “[Teacher candidates need] willingness to engage in meaningful and constructive conversations and questioning with students.” These skills can be further developed in TCs through continued opportunities to engage with experienced CTs and students in authentic educational settings.

The standard in which the ranking of the CTs and that of the TCs was closest was data-driven practice. This may be due to assignments contained in the field experience course requiring the TCs to examine grade-level data, complete an assessment analysis reflection, set instructional goals, and make decisions based on student performance. The TCs worked with the CT to create content area lesson plans to support the identified instructional goals. With the assistance of the CTs, the TCs examined informal, formative assessment data to plan and deliver lessons in the reading and social studies content areas. Campus administrators met with TCs to analyze campus and grade-level assessment data and provided guidance and examples on how to use this type of data to inform instructional decisions. This type of engagement and collaboration provided scaffolded support for the TCs as they learned to use data to inform instructional decision-making in the classroom.

The qualitative data gathered from the CTs in the final survey asked the CTs to comment on what they felt were the strongest characteristics of the TCs at the conclusion of the semester. Four of the CTs indicated that the TCs were engaged and willing to learn

from the CT and the students while engaged in a field experience. Three reported that the TCs were consistent and punctual in their attendance. When asked about what the TC could improve upon, two of the CTs stated that the TCs needed improvement on their ability to ask meaningful questions that prompted critical thinking in students. The need to communicate clearly and effectively about expectations for the field experience and to ask questions to clarify understanding when working with CTs was mentioned by two of the CTs as areas in which the TCs could improve. The qualitative data indicated the university program should address the issue of questioning to promote critical thinking in students within courses taken prior to field experience placements. An analysis of the course content could highlight where this skill is being emphasized within the course sequence and identify any gaps in content that may be causing this challenge for TCs engaged in a field experience. A solution to issues related to communicating expectations for the field experience could, again, be supported by the creation of a handbook that provides a framework and timeline for TCs and CTs engaged in field experiences

Connection to Existing Literature

The results of this study support the existing literature in emphasizing the importance of high-quality field experience opportunities for TCs. As a result of research and recommendations provided by the Holmes Group (1986), many EPPs recognized the importance of providing field experience opportunities early in a TC's course of study. In addition to time spent in a clinical teaching placement, many EPPs incorporate modified field-based experiences within the required coursework. This allows TCs the opportunity to work with a university instructor and an in-service teacher simultaneously in

contextualized situations. The connection between theory and practice can be emphasized and encouraged (Dodds, 1989).

The creation of Professional Development Schools (PDS) allows EPPs and school districts a framework through which to develop a strong mentorship model to support TCs in these field experiences. This study provides an additional lens for evaluating and improving the collaboration between TCs and CTs. Encouraging TCs to reflect upon and evaluate their competency in specific areas allows them to identify personalized goals as they enter a field experience placement. Intentionally pairing TCs with CTs who are able to provide modeling, critical feedback, and opportunity for practicing the skills needed to meet the goals of the TC individualizes the experience and adds an additional layer of support for the TC.

Existing literature suggests that mentors in academic settings should be trained in the use of effective practices and strategies related to mentoring (Eby et al., 2008). Examining the experience and knowledge classroom teachers possess are areas in which additional research would be beneficial. Professional development involving CTs and TCs could be constructive. At this time, the participating EPP does not provide training opportunities for CTs who work with TCs in field experiences prior to the clinical teaching semester.

Connection to Theoretical Framework

This research is directly related to Vygotsky's Theory of Social Constructivism and Bandura's Social Learning Theory. The TCs participated in social interactions with the CTs in a situated classroom setting. TCs engaged in observation, interaction, and

imitation while paired with the CTs. These interactions encouraged the TCs to accommodate or assimilate new information into their understanding of the application of educational theory. The CTs provided guidance and instruction within the TCs' zone of proximal development (ZPD) early in the semester and then challenged the TC to take on new roles and responsibilities as their understanding and skill developed.

The opportunity to work collaboratively with a more experienced individual to increase competency and expertise is grounded in the Cognitive Apprenticeship instructional design model. The CT engaged in modeling, coaching, reflection, articulation, and exploration during the field experience while the TC moved from peripheral participation to guided participation within the contextualized setting. This increased responsibility allowed the TC to build confidence, receive targeted feedback, and practice skills associated with their established goals. Once again, a professional development series focused on effective mentoring practices could strengthen these connections. Developing confident, well-prepared, highly-skilled mentors to work with TCs could positively impact the preparation of preservice teachers.

Limitations of Study

Sample Size. All research is limited by threats to credibility and validity. A significant limitation of this study includes a small sample size associated with a single section of a field experience course at a regional, comprehensive university in the southwestern part of the United States and collaboration with a single primary campus. Although the sample size was small, the response rate for the TC initial and final surveys was 100%. The response rate for the CT initial and final surveys was also 100%.

However, it should be noted that one of the TCs did not complete the final survey in its entirety. The findings of this study could be generalized for use in other educator preparation programs to inform intentional pairing practices for field-based experience courses and to promote additional research on effective pairing methods.

Self-Evaluative Data. The intentional pairings of TCs and CTs were based on survey data regarding the self-perceived level of competency of the TCs and the CTs in specific domains. Self-reported data is subject to the perceptions of the participants and is, therefore, inherently unreliable to some extent. The data collected in this study was codified, pseudonyms were used to replace the names of the participants, and the responses of individual participants were kept confidential. The collection of survey-based, self-reported data is low-risk, and participants were encouraged to view their responses as an opportunity to benefit from an intentional pairing process rather than one that is random. Additional data collected on the levels of competency of the TCs and the CTs based on formal proficiency evaluations conducted by trained evaluators could be used to add an additional layer of data collection to the study.

Subjective Measures. Jahedi and Mendez (2014) report that subjective data collection measures are being used with increased frequency in empirical research. Subjective measures are often able to reflect phenomena that are difficult to measure using purely quantitative collection methods. The CT final survey was distributed to CTs at the conclusion of the field experience semester. The CTs were asked to answer some qualitative questions about the strengths, performance, and areas for improvement they noticed in the TCs. They scored their TCs' level of competency in each of the Texas Teacher Standards after observing their instructional planning and delivery, knowledge of

students and student learning, content knowledge, ability to establish an effective classroom environment, and ability to use data to inform instruction throughout the semester. Many confounding factors can contribute to the perceptions of the CTs that are not associated with the areas contained in the survey. Personal educational philosophy, differences in personality, and past experiences working with teacher candidates are some of the issues that can contribute to the perceptions of the CT. These factors can affect the way in which a CT scores a TC and influence the outcome. One way to minimize this limitation would be the addition of focus groups or targeted professional development to establish interrater reliability.

Recommendations for Future Research

Field experience opportunities prior to the clinical teaching semester provide authentic experiences for TCs to learn from skilled CTs and to practice and develop fundamental skills and dispositions in a supportive environment. Bullough et al. (2002) believe there is an increasing need for experimenting with new models of configuring field experiences to determine their effectiveness. It is important to continue examining current practices related to field experience opportunities in educational environments to inform and strengthen curricular decision-making and pedagogical application in courses that require a field placement.

One recommendation for future research is related to the limitation of the sample size this study incorporated. It would be beneficial to determine if the generally high level of perceived competency reported by the participating TCs would be replicated using a larger sample. If the research were expanded to multiple sections of the same

course, included participants from various levels of field-based courses, or utilized additional university educator preparation programs, the results could be more generally applied. Similarly, including a variety of PK-12 campuses would provide greater diversity of campus demographic makeup, classroom environment, participating CTs, and curricular materials.

Although this research provides insight into one method of pairing TCs with CTs, it would be beneficial to explore the benefits of layering additional pairing criteria when matching TCs to CTs for field experiences. For example, additional data gathered on the initial surveys prior to pairing the TCs with the CTs, could include responses from the participants regarding their personal beliefs about education and how children learn. Ms. Daniels and Ms. Carson both mentioned the potential benefit of pairing TCs with CTs who shared similar philosophical beliefs about teaching. If future research included multiple semesters of field experience, it would be interesting to provide a pairing based on similar beliefs between the TC and the CT one semester and then provide a pairing based on dissimilar beliefs the following semester. This could potentially broaden the perspectives of both the TC and the TC.

Additional research on supporting the collaboration between the TC and the CT is needed. A clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the TC and the CT is not always present in field experience placements. Many times, there is a significant delineation of authority in classrooms with a TC and a CT working together. Relationships between TCs and CTs are generally formal (Bullough et al., 2002). Professional development opportunities in which TCs and CTs could participate collaboratively could be used to strengthen the partnership. Training in effective

mentorship practices and the application of a systematic framework would provide support and set clear expectations. Longitudinal research studies could examine the effectiveness of professional development and mentorship training on outcomes such as teacher retention, teacher evaluation scores, and even student success.

Summary

Linking educator preparation practices to the effective performance of teachers in the field can provide support and opportunities for evaluation and improvement in university-based programs of study. As university-based educator preparation programs are faced with challenges related to teacher retention, teacher shortages, and an increase in alternately certified teachers, they should emphasize the benefits of supervised, collaborative, field-based experiences in which TCs are intentionally paired with highly qualified, experienced CTs. Increasingly, school districts are responding to the previously mentioned challenges by hiring teachers who are still working through preparation routes that allow them to take on the role of teacher of record before they have had adequate experience in the field. The knowledge and skill needed to be an effective educator develop over time. Understanding of educational theory, application of research-based pedagogical practices, ability to effectively collaborate, engagement in authentic educational settings, and lived experiences are all components of the development of a professional educator. Providing opportunities for the evaluation of effectiveness and continuous improvement in each of these areas is the ongoing challenge and responsibility of educator preparation programs.

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APPENDIX A

Teacher Candidate Initial Survey

Participation in this survey confirms that you are a willing participant in this study and are 18 years of age or older. You may choose to discontinue your participation in this study at any time. However, your perspective and participation in this project is appreciated. Your input will provide insight into the process of pairing teacher candidates with cooperating teachers

Name:

*Please note that your name will be encoded and your identity will not be disclosed.

Date:

Texas Certification sought:

Gender identity:

This survey is designed to assist in the intentional pairing of Cooperating Teachers with Teacher Candidates during the first formal field-based experience in their educator preparation program. Please reflect on your practices and consider your level of competence in each of the Texas Teacher Standards taken from the Texas Administrative Code as seen below. This information will be used to match you with a cooperating teacher who will potentially provide a high level of support during your first field experience based on their responses to a similar survey.

STANDARD 1 Instructional Planning and Delivery	Competence
--	------------

	Low -----High
Teachers demonstrate their understanding of instructional planning and delivery by providing standards-based, data-driven, differentiated instruction that engages students, makes appropriate use of technology, and makes learning relevant for today's learners.	1 2 3 4 5
STANDARD 2 Knowledge of Students and Student Learning	
Teachers work to ensure high levels of learning, social-emotional development, and achievement outcomes for all students, taking into consideration each student's educational and developmental backgrounds and focusing on each student's needs.	1 2 3 4 5
STANDARD 3 Content Knowledge and Expertise	
Teachers exhibit a comprehensive understanding of their content, discipline, and related pedagogy as demonstrated through the quality of the design and execution of lessons and their ability to match objectives and activities to relevant state standards.	1 2 3 4 5
STANDARD 4 Learning Environment	
Teachers interact with students in respectful ways at all times, maintaining a physically and emotionally safe, supportive learning environment that is characterized by efficient and effective routines, clear expectations for student behavior, and organization that maximizes student learning.	1 2 3 4 5
STANDARD 5 Data-Driven Practice	
Teachers use formal and informal methods to assess student growth aligned to instructional goals and course objectives and regularly review and analyze multiple sources of data to measure student progress and adjust instructional strategies and content delivery as needed.	1 2 3 4 5
STANDARD 6 Professional Practices and Responsibilities	
Teachers consistently hold themselves to a high standard for individual development, pursue leadership opportunities, collaborate with other educational professionals, communicate regularly with stakeholders, maintain professional	1 2 3 4 5

relationships, comply with all campus and school district policies, and conduct themselves ethically and with integrity.	
--	--

What do you feel is your strongest characteristic as a teacher candidate?

How do you feel you will benefit from the mentorship of a cooperating teacher?

What do you feel is one area in which you would like to improve/develop your skills, knowledge, or dispositions related to teaching?

Please describe any previous experience you have working with EC-6 grade children in an academic setting.

APPENDIX B

Cooperating Teacher Initial Survey

Participation in this survey confirms that you are a willing participant in this study and are 18 years of age or older. You may choose to discontinue your participation in this study at any time. However, your perspective and participation in this project is appreciated. Your input will provide insight into the process of pairing teacher candidates with cooperating teachers.

Name:

*Please note that your name will be encoded, and your identity will not be disclosed.

Age:

Educator Preparation Program:

Texas certification(s) held:

Gender identity:

Years of teaching experience:

Grade level of current teaching placement:

Approximately how many teacher candidates have you mentored in your role as a classroom teacher? 0-1 2-4 5-7 8-10 more than 10

This survey is designed to assist in the intentional pairing of Cooperating Teachers with Teacher Candidates during the first formal field-based experience in their educator preparation program. Please reflect on your practices and consider your level of

competence in each of the Texas Teacher Standards taken from the Texas Administrative Code as seen below. This information will be used to match you with a teacher candidate who will potentially benefit from collaboration with you based on their responses to a similar survey.

STANDARD 1 Instructional Planning and Delivery	Competence Low -----High
Teachers demonstrate their understanding of instructional planning and delivery by providing standards-based, data-driven, differentiated instruction that engages students, makes appropriate use of technology, and makes learning relevant for today's learners.	1 2 3 4 5
STANDARD 2 Knowledge of Students and Student Learning	
Teachers work to ensure high levels of learning, social-emotional development, and achievement outcomes for all students, taking into consideration each student's educational and developmental backgrounds and focusing on each student's needs.	1 2 3 4 5
STANDARD 3 Content Knowledge and Expertise	
Teachers exhibit a comprehensive understanding of their content, discipline, and related pedagogy as demonstrated through the quality of the design and execution of lessons and their ability to match objectives and activities to relevant state standards.	1 2 3 4 5
STANDARD 4 Learning Environment	
Teachers interact with students in respectful ways at all times, maintaining a physically and emotionally safe, supportive learning environment that is characterized by efficient and effective routines, clear expectations for student behavior, and organization that maximizes student learning.	1 2 3 4 5
STANDARD 5 Data-Driven Practice	
	1 2 3 4 5

Teachers use formal and informal methods to assess student growth aligned to instructional goals and course objectives and regularly review and analyze multiple sources of data to measure student progress and adjust instructional strategies and content delivery as needed.	
STANDARD 6 Professional Practices and Responsibilities	
Teachers consistently hold themselves to a high standard for individual development, pursue leadership opportunities, collaborate with other educational professionals, communicate regularly with stakeholders, maintain professional relationships, comply with all campus and school district policies, and conduct themselves ethically and with integrity.	1 2 3 4 5

What do you feel is your strongest characteristic as a cooperating teacher?

How do you feel a teacher candidate would benefit from your mentorship?

What is the main reason you are willing to work with teacher candidates?

What do you feel is one area in which you would like to improve/develop your skills, knowledge or dispositions related to teaching?

APPENDIX C

Teacher Candidate Final Survey

Participation in this survey confirms that you are a willing participant in this study and are 18 years of age or older. You may choose to discontinue your participation in this study at any time. However, your perspective and participation in this project is appreciated. Your input will provide insight into the process of pairing teacher candidates with cooperating teachers

Name:

*Please note that your name will be encoded and your identity will not be disclosed.

Date:

Name of Cooperating Teacher with whom you worked:

Please complete this survey based on your performance at the conclusion of your first formal field-based experience.

STANDARD 1 Instructional Planning and Delivery	Competence Low -----High
Teachers demonstrate their understanding of instructional planning and delivery by providing standards-based, data-driven, differentiated instruction that engages students, makes appropriate use of technology, and makes learning relevant for today's learners.	1 2 3 4 5
STANDARD 2 Knowledge of Students and Student Learning	

Teachers work to ensure high levels of learning, social-emotional development, and achievement outcomes for all students, taking into consideration each student's educational and developmental backgrounds and focusing on each student's needs.	1	2	3	4	5
STANDARD 3 Content Knowledge and Expertise					
Teachers exhibit a comprehensive understanding of their content, discipline, and related pedagogy as demonstrated through the quality of the design and execution of lessons and their ability to match objectives and activities to relevant state standards.	1	2	3	4	5
STANDARD 4 Learning Environment					
Teachers interact with students in respectful ways at all times, maintaining a physically and emotionally safe, supportive learning environment that is characterized by efficient and effective routines, clear expectations for student behavior, and organization that maximizes student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
STANDARD 5 Data-Driven Practice					
Teachers use formal and informal methods to assess student growth aligned to instructional goals and course objectives and regularly review and analyze multiple sources of data to measure student progress and adjust instructional strategies and content delivery as needed.	1	2	3	4	5
STANDARD 6 Professional Practices and Responsibilities					
Teachers consistently hold themselves to a high standard for individual development, pursue leadership opportunities, collaborate with other educational professionals, communicate regularly with stakeholders, maintain professional relationships, comply with all campus and school district policies, and conduct themselves ethically and with integrity.	1	2	3	4	5

What do you feel is your strongest characteristic as a teacher candidate?

What do you feel is one area in which you would like to continue to improve/develop your skills, knowledge or dispositions related to teaching?

Have you benefitted from the mentorship of your cooperating teacher? Please explain.

What could be done to strengthen the experience of working with a mentoring cooperating teacher?

APPENDIX D

Cooperating Teacher Final Survey Regarding Teacher Candidate's Progress

Participation in this survey confirms that you are a willing participant in this study and are 18 years of age or older. You may choose to discontinue your participation in this study at any time. However, your perspective and participation in this project is appreciated. Your input will provide insight into the process of pairing teacher candidates with cooperating teachers.

Name:

*Please note that your name will be encoded and your identity will not be disclosed.

Date:

Name of Teacher Candidate with whom you worked:

Please complete the survey below based on *your teacher candidate's performance at the conclusion of their first formal field-based experience* regarding their level of competence in each of the Texas Teacher Standards taken from the Texas Administrative Code.

STANDARD 1 Instructional Planning and Delivery	Competence Low -----High
Teachers demonstrate their understanding of instructional planning and delivery by providing standards-based, data-driven, differentiated instruction that engages students, makes appropriate use of technology, and makes learning relevant for today's learners.	1 2 3 4 5
STANDARD 2 Knowledge of Students and Student Learning	

Teachers work to ensure high levels of learning, social-emotional development, and achievement outcomes for all students, taking into consideration each student's educational and developmental backgrounds and focusing on each student's needs.	1	2	3	4	5
STANDARD 3 Content Knowledge and Expertise					
Teachers exhibit a comprehensive understanding of their content, discipline, and related pedagogy as demonstrated through the quality of the design and execution of lessons and their ability to match objectives and activities to relevant state standards.	1	2	3	4	5
STANDARD 4 Learning Environment					
Teachers interact with students in respectful ways at all times, maintaining a physically and emotionally safe, supportive learning environment that is characterized by efficient and effective routines, clear expectations for student behavior, and organization that maximizes student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
STANDARD 5 Data-Driven Practice					
Teachers use formal and informal methods to assess student growth aligned to instructional goals and course objectives and regularly review and analyze multiple sources of data to measure student progress and adjust instructional strategies and content delivery as needed.	1	2	3	4	5
STANDARD 6 Professional Practices and Responsibilities					
Teachers consistently hold themselves to a high standard for individual development, pursue leadership opportunities, collaborate with other educational professionals, communicate regularly with stakeholders, maintain professional relationships, comply with all campus and school district policies, and conduct themselves ethically and with integrity.	1	2	3	4	5

What do you feel is the strongest characteristic of the teacher candidate?

What do you feel is one in which the teacher candidate could improve/develop their skills, knowledge or dispositions related to teaching?

Please provide your opinion of the benefits and/or drawbacks of the intentional, competency-based pairing of the teacher candidate with you, as a cooperating teacher.

Would you be interested in participating in this type of pairing as you serve as a cooperating teacher in the future?

APPENDIX E

IRB Permission



Date: Jan 12, 2022 6:58:22 PM CST

TO: Ronda McClain Debra Price

FROM: SHSU IRB

PROJECT TITLE: The Effects of Intentional Pairing of Teacher Candidates and Cooperating Teachers in Early Field Experiences

PROTOCOL #: IRB-2021-358

SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial

ACTION: Approved

DECISION DATE: January 12, 2022

ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK-IN DATE: January 12, 2023

EXPEDITED REVIEW CATEGORY: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK: To access the survey, click [here](#). It only takes 10 minutes of your time and is voluntary. The results will be used internally to make improvements to the IRB application and/or process. Thank you for your time.

Greetings,

The above-referenced submission has been reviewed by the IRB and it has been Approved. This study received expedited review, and the IRB determined that a renewal submission is needed, but only in the form of an administrative check-in submission. You will receive an email notification on the anniversary of this study approval, which will be on January 12, 2023. This study approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Since Cayuse IRB does not currently possess the ability to provide a "stamp of approval" on any recruitment or consent documentation, it is the strong recommendation of this office to please include the following approval language in the footer of those recruitment and consent documents: IRB-2021-358/January 12, 2022/January 12, 2023.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Modifications: Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please submit a Modification Submission through [Cayuse IRB](#) for this procedure.

Incidents: All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please submit an Incident Submission through [Cayuse IRB](#) for this procedure. All Department of Health and Human Services and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Study Administrative Check-In: Based on the risks, this project does require a renewal in the form of an Administrative Check-In procedure. This means you are required to administratively check in with the IRB on an annual basis. January 12, 2023 is the anniversary of the review of your protocol. **To get started with your next Administrative Check-In procedure, you will submit a Renewal Submission through [Cayuse IRB](#). A reminder email will be sent to you on the anniversary of your most recent approval of *The Effects of Intentional Pairing of Teacher Candidates and Cooperating Teachers in Early Field Experiences*.**

Please note that all research records should be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project. If you have any questions, please contact the Sharla Miles at 936-294-4875 or irb@shsu.edu. Please include your protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,
SHSU Institutional Review Board

VITA

Ronda McClain

EDUCATION

- 2022 Ed.D. in Literacy
Sam Houston State University
- 2013 M.Ed. in Elementary Education with Reading Specialist Certification
Stephen F. Austin State University
- 1995 B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies
Stephen F. Austin State University

LICENSURES & CERTIFICATIONS

- 2016 Texas Educator Certificate History, Texas Education Agency, State.
Texas Educator Certificate History Grades 7-12
- 2013 Professional Certification: Reading Specialist Texas Educator Certificate, Texas
State Board for Educator Certification, State. Certificate Reading Specialist
- 2012 Texas Educator Certificate English as a Second Language, Texas Education
Agency, State. Certificate English as a Second Language
- 2007 Texas Educator Certificate Classroom Teacher Generalist EC-4, Texas Education
Agency, State. Certificate Classroom Teacher Generalist (EC-4)
- 1995 Texas Educator Certificate Elementary Reading, Texas Education Agency, State.
Provisional Certificate Elementary Reading Grades 1-8
- 1995 Texas Educator Certificate Elementary Self-Contained, Texas Education Agency,
State. Provisional Certificate Elementary Self-Contained Grades 1-8

TEACHING AND RESEARCH INTERESTS

My teaching and research interests include language development and early literacy acquisition, teacher preparation practices, specifically with

regard to field-based experiences, and assessment. My dissertation examined the effectiveness of an intentional pairing method when assigning a teacher candidate to a mentor teacher for an initial field experience. The pairing was informed by the perceived competence of the mentor teacher and the teacher candidate based on the Texas Teacher Standards.

I am currently involved in a collaborative research project examining the efficacy of a peer-to-peer co-teaching model in a Field Experience II course. The research is seeking to determine the effects of co-teaching on the readiness of teacher candidates entering the field as first-year teachers.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2021-Present **EC-6 Program Co-Coordinator.** Stephen F. Austin State University.

2019-Present **Program Support Coordinator.** Stephen F. Austin State University.

2017-Present **Lecturer.** Stephen F. Austin State University.

Graduate Courses

- READ 5318 Creating Literate Environments
- READ 5308 Foundations of Language and Literacy
- READ 5314 Professional Learning and Leadership
- READ 5316 Disciplinary Literacy

Undergraduate Courses

- READ 3310 Survey of Reading
- READ 3320 Language and Literacy I
- READ 3330 Language and Literacy II
- READ 4340 Language and Literacy III
- ECED 3320 Field Experience I
- ELED 4330 Field Experience II

Directed Student Learning

- Undergraduate Honors Thesis, Deanna Dial (2018)
- Undergraduate Honors Thesis, Kayla Webb (2018)

2019–2021 **Coordinator/Advisor for Education Studies Concentration.** Stephen F. Austin State University.

2017 – 2019 **EC-6 Online Program Coordinator/Academic Advisor.** Stephen F. Austin State University.

2016 – 2017 **ESL/Dyslexia Specialist.** Central Heights ISD.

2007 – 2016 **Classroom Teacher.** Central Heights ISD.

1996 – 2001 **Classroom Teacher.** Kirbyville ISD.

1995 – 1996 **Classroom Teacher.** Jasper ISD.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2022 Montgomery, M. S., Akerson, A., McClain, R. S. (2022, April 3-5). *Preparing pre-service teachers to differentiate instruction with interactive technology-based lessons* [Conference presentation]. National Field Experience Conference, Greeley, CO, United States.

Abstract: This presentation will highlight how one university's field experience is equipping its pre-service teachers to differentiate instruction by leveraging the power of technology.

2021 Akerson, A., Montgomery, M. S., McClain, R. S. (2022, April 3-5). *Equipping Co-Teachers: Learning to Leverage the Power of Technology to Differentiate* [Virtual Conference presentation]. National Conference on Co-Teaching, Virtual Conference.

Abstract: COVID-19 forced many pre-service teachers (PSTs) to virtually observe in classrooms, causing a shift in how field experience courses were delivered. While there were a number of challenges with virtual observations, co-planning virtual lessons, assessing, and reflecting on the virtual teaching experience provided opportunities for teacher development not previously understood through traditional face-to-face (F2F) field experiences. Designing virtual lessons for lesson re-engagement and/or extension can give PSTs an opportunity to not only differentiate in-class learning but also to connect classroom learning with caregivers at home. The presenters will share a redesigned field experience, which includes the virtual and F2F components.

2019 McClain, R. S. (2019, October 27-29). *The online teacher candidate: Making a way for paraprofessionals and non-traditional students* [Conference presentation]. Consortium of State Organizations for Texas Teacher Organizations (CSOTTE), Frisco, TX, United States.

Abstract: With the implementation of the second phase of the Grow Your Own Grant, districts are investing in paraprofessionals and encouraging them to seek a degree. The necessity of working full time makes the ability to enroll in online classes to complete this goal extremely enticing.

- 2018 Welsh, K. A., Gresham, G. J., McClain, R. S. (2018, October 21-23). *The EPP as a service provider: Changing the narrative* [Conference presentation]. Consortium of State Organizations for Texas Teacher Organizations (CSOTTE), San Antonio, TX, United States.

Abstract: Strategies to serve as a resource for school district teachers and other leaders were discussed.

- 2010 McClain, R. S. (2010, March 12-15). *Smarty-pants: Making the most of your new smartboard* [Conference presentation]. Texas Computer Education Association (TCEA), Austin, TX, United States.

Abstract: Some tips and tricks to make your Smartboard presentations interactive and instructional. Learn how to insert links and additional resources for a truly interactive experience.

CONTRACTS, GRANTS, & SPONSORED RESEARCH

- 2018 McClain, R. S. (Principal), Straub, S. M. (Supporting), Griffin, P. B. (Supporting), Hasbun, T. C. (Supporting), Reily, S. L. (Supporting), Ezelle-Thomas, V. M. (Supporting), Williams, D. M. (Supporting), Williams, D. A. J. (Supporting), Fox, B. L. (Supporting), Vaughan, E. J. (Supporting), Vaughn, P. W. (Supporting), "CAEP Research - Alumni Follow-up Case Study", Currently Under Review, Sponsored by Stephen F. Austin State University, Other, \$0.00.

This research study provided evidence through structured and validated observation instruments and/or student surveys, to measure the extent to which completers effectively applied professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions the preparation experiences were designed to achieve. This complies with CAEP Standard 4.2. The study investigated the degree to which novice teachers impacted student learning, demonstrated research-based practice, and were prepared by the Department of Elementary Education for classroom experiences.

The participant population consisted of SFA alumni who successfully completed the programs offered through the Department of Elementary Education and completed a minimum of one year serving as a teacher of record in a classroom setting. A convenience sample of participants was identified by faculty members and program coordinators from within the Department of Elementary Education. Data collection included (1) a teacher candidate survey completed by the participant upon completion of the program just prior to graduation, the same survey completed by the participant at the conclusion of at least one year of serving as teacher of

record in a classroom setting, and the completion of the survey by the campus principal or administrator responsible for the supervision of the participant (2) assessment data from the participant's student population in the form of STAAR, TPRI, EOY summative and iStation testing data (3) an interview of the participant and the campus principal or administrator responsible for the supervision of the participant (4) formal observations of the participant in the form of PDAS or T-TESS evaluations and, (5) face to face or virtual observation of the participant delivering instruction in the classroom setting.

This study is placed in the "Contracts, Grants and Sponsored Research" section because this study was completed specifically for CAEP - an outside organization. There is no funding, however, this was a full IRB-approved study.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

2018 - Present Texas Association for Literacy Education

2018 - Present International Literacy Association

2018 - Present Kappa Delta Pi

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Service to the University

2017 - Present Professional Educators Council

Service to the College

2019 - Present PCOE Curriculum Committee

2019 - Present Professional Educators Council Advisory Committee

2019 - Present CAEP Unit Assessment Committee

2019 - Present CAEP Writing Team 2

2018 - Present College Assessment Oversight Committee

2019 Nacogdoches ISD Convocation SFA Representative

2019 Lee College Campus Visit Coordinator

2019 Cleveland ISD Employee Fair

2018 TAFE Teach Tomorrow Summit, Student Recruitment

Service to the Departmental Unit

2019 - Present Coordinator for tours of Charter School, ECHL, and Department of Education Studies

2019 - Present Showcase Saturday

2017 - Present Education Studies/Elementary Education Leadership Committee

2017 – 2020 Educator Preparation Program Interview Coordinator

2022 Interview Committee for Accounting Clerk, Member

2021 Special Education Faculty Search Committee, Chair

2020 Associate Chair Search Committee, Member

2020 Literacy Faculty Search Committee, Member

2018 Interview Committee, Member

Service to the Discipline

2022 - Present Stephen F. Austin Charter School Board Member

2018 – 2020 Kappa Delta Pi