

## Expanding the Paradigm of Teacher Preparation: The Student-Mentor-Teacher Model

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Just as many other education programs around the country are re-thinking and re-inventing their field experience schema for education majors, the Division of Educational and Psychological Studies at Dillard University (DU) is embarking upon the same venture. With NeATE accreditation approaching this fall, many aspects of our program are in the process of being revamped. Presently, all of the faculty members in the Division are pondering the types of experiences our students participate in while in the field. This paper will inform you of one type of field experiences we are considering for our education majors.

The "**Student-Mentor-Teacher**" Model evolved from a need in a middle school in New Orleans, LA. After a visit to the school with students in my methods course, I was informed that the school needed volunteers to mentor and tutor students in the area of mathematics. Given that the course I was teaching for the semester was a mathematics methods course, I thought this would be an excellent opportunity for my students to gain practical teaching and field experience at the school.

I presented my class with the needs of the school and the students agreed to a site visit at the school to participate in an orientation about the Help One Student to Succeed (HOSTS) program. The coordinator of the program pairs up mentors with students that need tutoring in mathematics. After an orientation of the program, education students from the Division of Educational and Psychological Studies at Dillard University (DU) decided they wanted to participate. However, transportation and time scheduling was a problem. To eliminate the problem, I discussed moving the class from the university to the middle school campus. Within minutes, the DU students, the coordinator of the HOSTS program, and I had decided to move the class to the middle school.

This decision allowed the university professor to teach for one hour before the DU students began their tutoring session. The professor then asked the coordinator of HOSTS to arrange for the DU students to be paired in teams with a mentor teacher at the school to allow the students to gain field and teaching experiences after the tutoring session, thus the "Student-Mentor-Teacher" **Model** was created. This partnership with the middle school and this model of teacher preparation will enable DU middle level education students to become effective classroom teacher, by experiencing the three roles in the program. The three roles are: being a **student** in class, being a **mentor** to a middle level student, and taking on the role as a **teacher** in the classroom with a mentor teacher at the site.

According to the Louisiana State Department of Education, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NeATE) and the National Middle School Association (NMSA), there needs to be a collaborative partnership established between middle school sites and university teacher preparation programs. Within the NMSA's *Position Statement on Professional Preparation of Middle Level Teachers* (2001) the following is stated:

The movement toward collaboration in teacher preparation with school-based faculty is a relatively new phenomenon and is a movement against the historical tide of separation of teacher preparation program from school sites ... often when middle school teacher education programs have developed; they have often done so without developmentally responsive middle school sites to use as clinical settings. For these and related reasons, to a large extent, middle schools and middle school teacher preparation have developed on similar parallel tracks, each fighting for recognition and legitimacy, but relatively uninvolved with each other.

To reverse this pattern, collaborative partnerships, which move in two simultaneous directions, are essential. First, the collaboration with middle school faculty (school site based teacher educators) and university-based middle school teacher educators should integrate both faculties in planning, implementation, direct teaching, assessment, and continuing oversight of the program.

A second direction that partnerships should move in is the creation of site-based delivery of middle level teacher preparation programs. To achieve high levels of success, delivery of the program should move out of the university setting to the school where the work of real middle level teachers and young adolescents is an ongoing, daily event and where middle school interns have numerous opportunities for authentic teaching performances with appropriate audiences (NMSA (2001) and McEwin & Dickinson (1995, 1996).

## **Collaborative Partnership**

This statement confirmed my decision to form a collaborative relationship with the middle school that resulted in site-based delivery of the course. The "Student-Mentor-Teacher" Model of collaborative teacher preparation will assure that DU education students are being prepared to teach in the most effective method suggested by education organizations, agencies, and researchers (NCATE, 2001; NMSA, 2001; McEwin & Dickinson, 1995, 1996).

After much reflection upon the design of the model and programmatic standards for teacher preparation for middle level education, the following four distinct purposes suggested by

McEwin, Dickinson, Erb, and Scales (1995) were aligned to this model/program of middle level teacher preparation:

- (a) expanding and enriching developmental knowledge;
- (b) contact with diverse learners;
- (c) practice in finding one's teaching self; and,
- (d) practice in operating in a middle level organization (p. 34).

The "**Student- Mentor- Teacher**" Model has been designed to allow students participating in this pilot program to experience the following components of an effective middle level education teacher candidate, as listed by NMSA (2001):

- Student volunteers in a middle school to observe the program
- Model integrated curriculums in the college course work
- Pre-service teachers participate in scheduling, integration, and teaming work with schools
- Use of long-term case studies to help middle level teacher education students recognize the multiple problems young adolescent students experience
- Teach team building
- Use an inquiry approach to learning and teaching
- Service learning - community-based learning
- Professors model good middle grade practices - simulations at the site
- Provide students opportunities to talk with practitioners - principals, teachers, middle grade students, parents, etc.
- In observations/field experiences write up positives and negatives
- Grow your own schools - educate the teachers, show them good examples
- Use technology - virtual visits, being part of school programs

- Establish a shared vision between school and higher education institution
- Supervision - liaison from school

Additionally, the collaboration between the middle school faculty (school site based teacher educators) and university-based middle school teacher educators will allow both faculties to integrate in planning, implementation, direct teaching, assessment, and continuing oversight of the program. According to the NMSA (2001) and McEwin & Dickinson (1995, 1996), collaboration should include:

- (a) Establish a dialogue and mutual trust between two important elements of the profession (middle level schools and teacher preparation programs);
- (b) Initiate positive change that will influence all participants;
- (c) Improve the professional knowledge and skills of teachers resulting in increased student reaming;
- (d) Provide opportunities for conducting joint research projects;
- (e) Offer leadership opportunities for teachers, professors, and administrators, and other stakeholders; and,
- (f) Attract resources to the school site. The movement toward professional development school initiatives and school-university partnership programs which emphasize the performance of critical teaching aspects with authentic audiences and settings is already underway in some middle school teacher preparation programs.

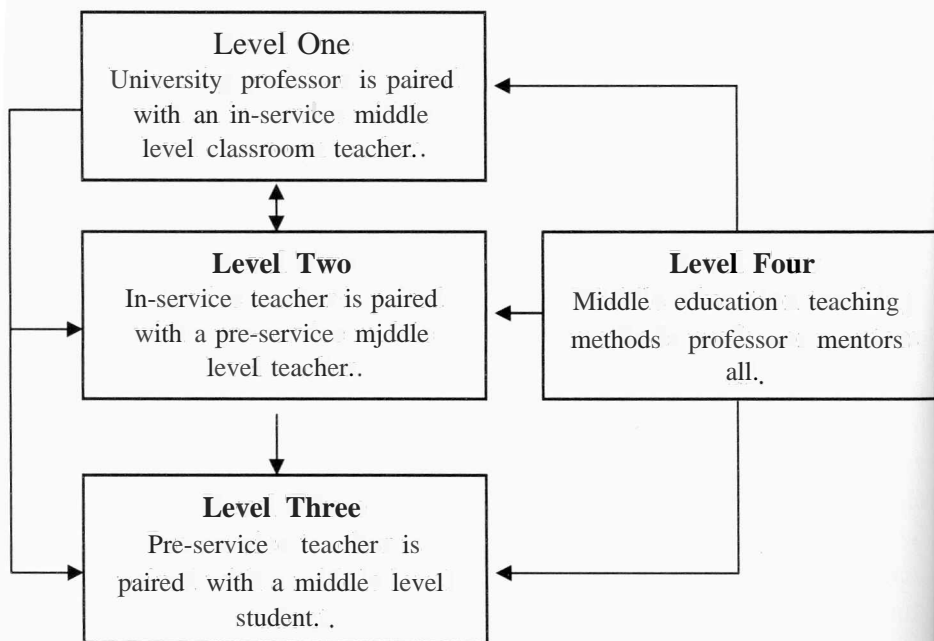
## Outcomes of the Pilot Model

The pilot model was very successful in the first two semesters of its implementation. Pre-service teachers were able to integrate themselves in planning, implementation, direct teaching,

assessment, and critically reflect upon teaching and learning at the middle level. As a result, this pilot project evolved into a multi-level mentoring model. This model has four levels of mentorship. The first level is a mentoring relationship between the university content area faculty and the in-service teacher. Level two mentoring is between the in-service teacher and pre-service teacher and the third level is between the pre-service teacher and the P-12 student. The final level of the model is the content teaching methods faculty that mentors and guides the participants in the other three levels (see figure below).

This mentor model will allow teachers in the field to benefit from the expertise of content area university faculty while providing university faculty with hands-on knowledge about the teaching profession. Additionally, the university faculty will gain a greater understanding of the content knowledge that pre-service teachers are required to have to be effective classroom teachers. Secondly, classroom teachers are a valuable asset to the pre-service teacher's development in professionalism, pedagogy, and management. The third level of the mentorship is the pre-service teachers mentor/tutoring the P-12 students. Pre-service teachers and P-12 students benefit from this relationship because the pre-service teachers grow and develop as teachers while the P-12 students' levels of achievement increase from the additional one-on-one instruction. Finally, all three levels benefit from the pedagogical expertise of the teaching methods faculty. This is the crucial component of the model because the teaching methods professor imparts critical skills of teaching and learning at all three levels. Furthermore, the P-12 student achievement level is both indirectly and directly affected by the success of all participants in the mentoring program. Success at all levels will result in and positive effect on student achievement for both the college student and the P-12 student.

## Multi-Level Mentor Model



For the past two semesters, the model has only been partially implemented using levels two, three, and four of the mentoring model. During fall 2003, a content area professor will be included in the pilot the model. The results from implementing the first three levels of the model were very successful. We were able to develop a collaborative partnership with a nearby middle school that had a need for tutors to create a school site-based teaching methods course.

This site-based course allowed pre-service and in-service teachers to work collaboratively together. Based at the site, students were able to observe teaching and learning, participate in one-on-one tutoring, micro-teach, and reflect upon the middle level education concept. One pre-service teacher said, "I must say that this program was excellent and contributed to my growth as an aspiring educator.". This student further stated that she received an "overview and well prepared induction to the teaching profession."

One of the most rewarding reflective comments by a pre-service teacher was that she learned the importance of program design to meet the individual needs of each student and considered the program to be the most essential part of the teaching methods course.

## Implementing the Final Level

In order to create an environment to nurture the mentoring process for university faculty, in-service teachers, and pre-service teachers, a proposal was written to fund professional development for all participants, including the content area professors. This project was funded through a grant by the state to allow the primary investigator to further research this model. Several activities have happened due to the funding received from the state for collaborative professional development activities. Participants will attend the National Middle School Conference and several Saturday Academies have been planned for professional development activities of the university content professors, in-service teachers, and pre-service teachers. The Saturday Academies will focus on methodology and pedagogy in the content areas.

## Conclusion

In summary, the "**Student-Mentor-Teacher**" Model (which has evolved into the model within the multilevel mentoring model) of teacher preparation is designed to address the new paradigm in teacher education. This paradigm focuses on the development of partnerships between the schools and the universities, in which they work together to prepare teacher candidates to be teachers. DU teacher candidates will benefit from the experience of bringing together their studies in subject matter, adolescent development, pedagogy, and curriculum. Additionally, DU teacher candidates will have an opportunity to develop effective interpersonal relationships with cooperating teachers, interact with cooperating teachers in interdisciplinary teaming, and



experience first hand scheduling, advisory programs, and integrated curricula. All of these experiences will culminate in DU teacher candidates becoming effective middle school teachers.

Finally, the program is housed an urban middle school with less than 400 students. The design of the school is a learning academy that was established because of low student achievement. The school system established these academies as an effort to address the many academic problems in the city of New Orleans. This project will assist the school system in the areas of professional development of faculty and increased student achievement resulting from tutoring.

Although the middle school where the pilot program was conducted is not one of the top performing schools in the city, it provides our teacher candidates with an opportunity to experience both sides of teaching. As a teacher, one does not always experience the ideal school with the ideal pupils. If we face the reality of teaching, exposing teacher candidates to both worlds (ideal settings and settings where there are major needs) will only better prepare them to become effective teachers in any school setting with all students.

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