

Reports of Research

The Dilemma of Traditional Teacher Preparation Programs

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Abstract

An anonymous *Student Exit Survey* provided an opportunity to assess the perceptions and experiences of teacher candidates during their student teaching seminar. Five years of survey distribution resulted in 1338 completed surveys with 548 students providing open-ended comments, resulting in 577 qualitative comments (41% fill-in response rate). Teacher candidates communicated satisfaction with their preparedness to work with students, highlighting areas of strength: lesson planning, content knowledge, ability to create a community of learners, self-reflective practice, and satisfaction with clinical experience. Candidates also communicated areas of need for more information: federal guidelines, working with parents, and knowledge of recent research. An examination of teacher candidates' qualitative responses indicated a strong desire for additional clinical experiences and practical applications. Ways to address teacher candidates' needs in light of current educational mandates and criticism are addressed.

Acts of Labeling: How First-Graders Challenge Their Academic Labels

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Abstract

This article demonstrates how academic labels were assigned to students in a first grade class. Many of these academic labels resulted from various literacy practices that were mandated by school officials, such as the school curriculum and teacher accountability measures. As students in this study interacted with these labels, the article describes how they chose to challenge these negative academic labels that they were assigned. The qualitative data presented in this article gives insight into some of the negative effects of labeling and raises questions relating to classroom practice and how it can be a powerful tool to support the academic and social development of learners.

Sharing Perspectives

Listening to and Understanding the Needs of Mentor Teachers in a Clinical Residency Teacher Preparation Program: A Critical Piece of the Puzzle

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Abstract

This paper reports on the experiences of mentor teachers in a clinical residency teacher preparation program during the first two years of implementation. The results illustrate the importance of using feedback from mentor teachers to make programmatic improvements. The purpose of this paper is to offer insights into the experiences of mentor teachers in a clinical residency program, especially as they pertain to effective means of support.

Academic Literacy Skills Test (ALST): Supporting Teacher Candidates

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Abstract

To be eligible for New York State teacher certification, teacher candidates must pass the Academic Literacy Skills Test (ALST). This test assesses teachers' skills in reading complex text and formulating a written argument based on various sources. Approximately one-third of teachers have difficulty passing the ALST. In response to these test outcomes, many colleges now provide test-preparation materials and courses – an example of a one-credit course is outlined in this article. These stopgap measures, however, need to evolve into a long-term plan that supports teachers' reading and writing skills.

What Would Ruby Ratliff do? A Hypothetical Interview with Diane Ravitch's Great Teacher

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Abstract

The “reform” agendas have plagued the United States educational frontier since No Child Left Behind legislation. Dr. Diane Ravitch has provided wisdom, insight, passion, and logic to the field. As a leading educational historian, Ravitch supported these reform agendas. In 2006, she realized the reforms were built on incorrect assumptions, poor theory and non-existent research. Ravitch documents this disastrous period. She also includes a description of her highly effective high school teacher, Mrs. Ruby Ratliff. Ravitch wonders about what Ruby would have thought of today's educational reform. This article purports to answer the hypothetical question “what would Ratliff do?”