

Teaching for Change: Instructional Support in a Bilingual Setting

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Abstract—The goal of this paper is to provide educators an overview of international practices supporting young learners, arming us with adequate information to lead effective change. We will report on research and observations of Service Learning Projects conducted by one South Texas University. The intent of the paper is also to provide readers an overview of service learning in the preparation of teacher candidates pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. The objective of noting the efficiency and effectiveness of programs leading to literacy and oral fluency in a native language and second language will be discussed. This paper also highlights experiential learning for academic credit that combines community service with student learning. Six weeks of visits to a variety of community sites, making personal observations with faculty members, conducting extensive interviews with parents and key personnel at all sites will be discussed. The culminating Service Learning Expo will be reported as well.

Keywords—Elementary education, junior achievement, service learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

LOOKING at international practices and standardization throughout Europe, educators develop global views, providing knowledge and skills allowing one to monitor and adjust to standards, accordingly. Goals in the United States of America are unattainable, in spite of mandates of high stakes exams.

Factors impacting the United States of America are similar to those in the European Union. Immigration, poverty, economic crises, race and cultural differences, students' language ability, mobility of families, fragmented families, mainstreaming special needs students, delinquency, alcohol and tobacco abuse, updating technology, teacher requirements, on-going staff development, and budget considerations are familiar to Europeans as to educators in the United States.

It has been well established that during the early schooling years, Kinder – 8th grade, learners form attitudes, values, self-esteem, academic interests and strengths, especially linguistic ability. It becomes pivotal that educators advocate for student success without compromising a student's native language.

During the sophomore year while enrolled in an Induction Level Course, students from a South Texas University engaged in a Service Learning Project by delivering the Junior Achievement Curriculum, a well-recognized economics program across the United States. This paper attempts to provide an overview of the Junior Achievement Curriculum delivery, as conducted by teacher candidates pursuing a

Bachelor of Science in Education Degree. Aspects of the curriculum embedded in the coursework will be shared, too.

The group of 22 college sophomores dedicated six weeks, allotted into three sessions of two weeks each at three different levels. That is, two weeks were spent in an elementary setting, two weeks were dedicated to the middle school level, and two weeks were committed to the high school level. The Junior Achievement Curriculum targets grade levels from Kindergarten thru High School/12th Grade. The experience provided teacher candidates with a superlative and unique opportunity to be integrated into various teaching communities; thus, helping to positively influence and support the teacher candidates' decisions to become educators.

The positive impact of the six week experience on the teacher candidates is one worthy of replication. The teacher candidates' visits to public schools ranging from Kindergarten thru High School/12th Grade permitted them to solidify their wish to join the world of education.

An overview of the community is as follows. The study was conducted from the experiences of sophomore teacher candidates implementing the Junior Achievement Curriculum in a city located in a South Texas bordering Mexico. The city has two school districts. Presently, each district services approximately 35,000 students. A significant percentage of the population is considered to be of low socioeconomic status. Both districts have English language learner populations exceeding 75% of their enrollment.

II. METHOD

A. Participants

The research sample consisted of 22 college sophomores between the ages of 21 years and 23 years. Prior to enrolling in the College of Education's induction level course, none of the participants reported any experience in the public school setting.

B. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine sophomore students' reflections from the field in three different settings: Elementary, Middle, and High School. The study also sought to highlight experiential learning for academic credit that combined community service with student learning.

C. Research Questions

The following questions directed the qualitative portion of this study:

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Elementary

- Question 1: To what extent did the teacher candidate feel successful in the elementary teaching experience?
- Question 2: To what extent did the teacher candidate gauge the significance of the elementary teaching experience?
- Question 3: To what extent did the teaching experience impact your decision to become an elementary educator?
- Question 4: Identify at least two teaching strategies that you have seen used in the elementary classroom. Describe them.

Middle School

- Question 5: To what extent did the teacher candidate feel successful in the middle school teaching experience?
- Question 6: To what extent did the teacher candidate gauge the significance of the middle school teaching experience?
- Question 7: To what extent did the teaching experience impact your decision to become a middle school educator?
- Question 8: Identify at least two teaching strategies that you have seen used in the middle school classroom. Describe them.

High School

- Question 9: To what extent did the teacher candidate feel successful in the high school teaching experience?
- Question 10: To what extent did the teacher candidate gauge the significance of the high school teaching experience?
- Question 11: To what extent did the teaching experience impact your decision to become a high school educator?
- Question 12: Identify at least two teaching strategies that you have seen used in the high school classroom. Describe them.

D. Significance of the Study

The significance of this Service Learning Project for this South Texas University sophomore student body was three-fold: The teacher candidates were introduced to a teaching experience in a highly structured situation with a prepared, organized, concise curriculum.

They were able to explore three levels of teaching:

- Elementary Grades – Kinder thru 5th Grade
- Middle School – 6th thru 8th Grade
- High School – 9th thru 12th Grade

Given the varied levels and teaching opportunities, our teacher candidate sophomores, early-on in their studies, were able to assess themselves, their skills, interests, and abilities, so they could decide if teaching was truly the career of choice for them, and, if so, what student age-levels had they found to be more amenable for their interests and capabilities.

If teaching had not proven to be the correct match for the teacher candidate, there was still adequate time to change the student's major. Past experience had shown that less than 10% of the sophomore teacher candidates involved in this Service Learning Project, upon completion of the project, concluded that teaching was not their calling.

E. Key Terms

Junior Achievement – Volunteer delivered program fostering experiential learning that intends to inspire students to dream and reach their potential [1].

Service Learning – Terms used to reference a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities [2].

Service learning is a process of involving students in community service activities combined with facilitated means for applying the experience to their academic and personal development. It is a form of experiential education aimed at enhancing and enriching student learning in course material [2].

Service Learning Expo – Term used to refer to a culminating exposition that occurs upon completion of each semester while enrolled in the education field experience course.

Teacher Candidates – Term used to refer to college students who are pursuing a bachelor's degree in education.

Induction Level Course – Term used to reference and introductory course in education.

F. Overview of Implementation of Service Learning in the Community

The experiences within the Junior Achievement Program in the South Texas School Districts provided a broad spectrum of opportunities for our teacher candidate freshmen to work with various age groups, with topics that exhibit a micro-picture of the business world, and they get to experience what goes on in a typical classroom [3].

Very helpful for the teacher candidates involved in the Junior Achievement project was the fact that the curriculum protocol established procedures for our student-teachers, and within a few weeks of the Service Learning projects, these established procedures became routines, thus providing a solid base of experience in the area of school expectations and routines for teacher candidate freshman in their first course of teacher development. When compared to other forms of experiential learning like internships and cooperative education, it is similar in that it is student-centered, hands-on and directly applicable to the curriculum [4]. The statements above are further supported by the U. S. Department of Education in a document entitled, *Improving Teacher Preparation: Building on Innovation* [5].

The Junior Achievement procedures / routines included the following, all of which were clearly explained to our teacher candidate sophomores [1].

Prior to delivering the lessons, the teacher candidate sophomores must:

- Plan dates and times for class observation and weekly visits.
- Notify volunteer/teacher of any schedule changes.
- Discuss appropriate procedures for canceling and rescheduling.
- Exchange telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.

- Promptly return volunteer/teacher's phone calls/e-mails.

Teacher candidates must become familiarized with:

- School rules,
- Children with special needs, and
- Classroom management expectations.

Critical guidelines are reviewed with the teacher candidates by a designated Junior Achievement (JA) representative. Such guidelines require the professional educator engaged by the school district to:

- Remain in the classroom.
- Maintain discipline.
- Provide feedback to the volunteer and suggests possible improvements.
- Help facilitate classroom activities and grouping.
- Reinforce lesson content between visits by the volunteer.
- Create a welcome, positive and supportive environment for the students and any volunteer in the classroom.
- Become the school liaison between the JA, the volunteer, and the school.
- Thank the volunteer at the program's end, perhaps providing comprehensive feedback to the volunteer.

Further Teacher Candidate classroom guidelines follow:

- Prepare lessons as outlined by the Junior Achievement program.
- Complete and submit required criminal background check.
- Is on time, and is professionally dressed.
- Is a positive role model for the students.
- Learn to be an experienced resource.
- Ask the classroom teacher for feedback.

Once the basic procedures had been established, it became imperative that teacher candidates be familiar with the academic content and with the concepts to be introduced and implemented in the designated classroom.

1. Elementary Service Learning Curriculum

One example of the elementary service learning curriculum follows. From grades Kindergarten thru fifth grade, teacher candidates are expected to deliver five volunteer led sessions. Each session is held for approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

In kindergarten, the curriculum provided is built on compelling stories focusing on helping, working, and saving, combined with hands-on activities to engage youngsters. The first grade curriculum introduces concepts of needs and wants. It attempts to help children analyze their own skills to determine ways they can support their families. In the second grade, see how every job or profession needs specific skills. Critical in the second grade is the recognition of productivity in lifestyle that adds to the self-esteem of the individual.

The third grade curriculum examines characteristics of cities and media as integral parts of daily life. As curriculum progresses to the next level, fourth grade students are introduced to the use of resources to produce goods and services in communities. It is in the fifth grade that students are introduced to high demand STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics jobs [1].

2. Middle School Service Learning Curriculum

Students in the 6th – 8th grades participated in six sessions led by the TAMIU sophomore volunteer. Each class session lasts 45 to 60 minutes.

One curriculum topic posed to the middle school student is that of pursuing an education beyond high school. This topic helps the middle school teenager evaluate career options based on interest with the ultimate goal of helping understand the economic benefits of staying in school.

A second curriculum topic presented to the middle school teenager is the concept of globalization. Practical information about the key aspects of the global economy, what makes world trade work is discussed.

An evaluation of the future is a third topic offered with the middle school curriculum. Here the middle school teenager explores potential careers and may begin to recognize basic job seeking tools.

3. High School Service Learning Curriculum

Students were required to participate in five to seven sessions, led by a volunteer. Each session lasted 45 to 60 minutes.

Today more than ever, all students, especially high school students, need to know how to manage and protect their finances. Junior Achievement and Carnoy have long advocated programs that introduce students to the basics of making wise financial decisions [1], [6].

One topic covered in the Junior Achievement high school curriculum is the establishment of a business plan with the intent of setting a foundation for competition in a global economy [1]. The knowledge required to keep a job is addressed in the second phase of the high school curriculum. An exploration of economic basics, such as supply and demand, is introduced in the third phase of the high school curriculum [1], [6].

By making economics engaging and relatable, the curriculum intends to help students better understand the impact they have on the economy as consumers and taxpayers, and it teaches important personal financial lessons about spending, saving, and investing.

Given six weeks of involved teaching experiences via Junior Achievement, it was the researcher's goal to provide teacher candidate freshmen enrolled in the *Introduction to Teaching* course, the opportunity to examine if teaching is a viable career for them. Teacher candidates were provided the opportunity to work with students in three major grades – level blocks, thus giving them a prelude of what age-group they might like best to teach. It is the researcher's opinion that this Service Learning Project is an effective and efficient way for our teacher candidates' students to experience real-life exposure to a teaching career, without any long-term commitments.

III. RESULTS

A. Assumptions

For this study, the following assumptions were made:

- Teacher candidates were college level sophomores.

- Survey was confidential to the best ability of the participants.
- Public school educators had previous experience with implementation of service learning project.

B. Limitations of the Study

The number of participants in the study was based on students enrolled in one section of the induction level education course. The sample size of surveys completed can fluctuate based on external factors such as participants being absent to complete the survey. The length of the survey, too, may be overwhelming to participants.

C. Conceptual Framework

Because economic woes continue to play a vital role in day-to-day activities, factors such as education of financial matters must start early in the curriculum [6]. The survey was intended to generate insight from the perspective of incoming teacher candidates as they begin to embark in the education field. Over the course of a semester, data was obtained gradually.

D. Instrument

A survey was selected for this study because the number of participants was small. The survey was feasible with a population this size. The research design for the quantitative portion of the study provided the framework for planning and conducting the study. The topic of this study was chosen from one of the course components. The review of the literature focused on service learning projects and motivational strategies.

E. Procedure

A Likert Scale survey was created to assess the 12 questions used in this study. The 12 questions were derived from definitions of service learning and motivational strategies addressed throughout the course.

The Likert Scale has 5 subscales ranging from 1 to 5: 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Undecided, 4 – Agree, and 5 – Strongly Agree. Given that the group participating in the study do not receive an evaluation of performance, a reflective paper was required upon completion of delivery of targeted grade level curriculum.

F. Design

The study was conducted using a quantitative research design. The investigation and data analysis required use of correlation coefficient research and analysis of the central tendencies based on the responses to the 12 questions.

G. Data Collection Procedures

Data for the study was composed from the Likert Scale survey administered to the participants. The demographics of the survey served as the independent variables that were analyzed in terms of motivation, significance, impact, and strategy implementation. The twelve questions that were used from the survey were the dependent variables that were used to find any correlation between both independent and dependent variables. IBM SPSS Statistic 20 software was used to determine any correlation between variables and was used to compute mean and standard deviation. The Pearson

function capability of the software was used to establish any correlation. The data gathered from this software was verified using various functions of Microsoft Excel.

H. Data Analysis

A descriptive statistics was calculated based on the variables that were used for this study. The single independent variable used was compared to the survey questions that were used as the dependent variables. Questions 1, 5, and 9 related to success in the teaching experiences: Elementary, Middle School and High School. Since all participants (22) are currently college sophomores, experience had no variance on standard deviation or on mean. The three questions had a mean close to 3, which is considered proficient. The Likert Scale survey was based on delivery of assigned curriculum. All of the participants offered a minimum of six lessons at the assigned campuses, most of which were held in a bilingual setting.

1. Elementary Findings:

Question 1 (To what extent were you successful in the teaching experience: Elementary?) had a mean of 3.14 with a minimal error of 0.143.

Question 2 (Do you agree that the curriculum delivered allowed you to gauge the significance of the elementary teaching experience?) had a mean of 3.02 with a minimal error of 0.137.

Question 3: (To what extent did the teaching experience impact your decision to become an elementary educator?) obtained similar results. The implication is one in which participants felt similar on motivation, pacing and delivery matters of instruction. A mean of 3.43 was obtained on Question 2, since most participants answered a 4 (Agree).

Over 95% of the participants agreed that their experiences in their assigned elementary grade levels were favorable. In terms of curriculum, none of the participants answered at the lowest level of the survey, 1 (Strongly Disagree).

Question 4: Identify at least two teaching strategies that you have seen used in the elementary classroom. Describe them.

It is important to note that generation of Pearson correlation was attempted, but there was no correlation. Perhaps, the lack of demographic details on the survey was also a factor in yielding constants in the Pearson correlation function. There was a strong correlation between Question 1 and 3, which implies that there is a correlation between motivation, pacing, and delivery of the lessons.

2. Middle School Findings:

Question 5: (To what extent were you successful in the middle school teaching experience?) had a mean of 3.12 with a minimal error of 0.141.

Question 6: (Do you agree that the curriculum delivered allowed you to gauge the significance of the middle school teaching experience?) had a mean of 3.04 with a minimal error of 0.137.

Question 7: (To what extent did the teaching experience impact your decision to become a middle school educator?) obtained similar results. The implication is one in which

participants felt similar on motivation, pacing and delivery matters of instruction. A mean of 3.43 was obtained on Question 2, since most participants answered a 4 (Agree).

Over 95% of the participants agreed that their experiences in their assigned middle school levels were favorable. In terms of curriculum, none of the participants answered at the lowest level of the survey, 1 (Strongly Disagree).

Question 8: Identify at least two teaching strategies that you have seen used in the middle school classroom. Describe them.

It is important to note that generation of Pearson correlation was attempted, but there was no correlation. Perhaps, the lack of demographic details on the survey was also a factor in yielding constants in the Pearson correlation function. There was a strong correlation between Question 5 and 7, which implies that there is a correlation between motivation, pacing, and delivery of the lesson.

3. High School Findings:

Question 9: (To what extent were you successful in the high school teaching experience?) had a mean of 3.02 with a minimal error of 0.139.

Question 10: (Do you agree that the curriculum delivered allowed you to gauge the significance of the high school

teaching experience?) had a mean of 3.24 with a minimal error of 0.127.

Question 11: (To what extent did the teaching experience impact your decision to become a high school educator?) obtained similar results. The implication is one in which participants felt similar on motivation, pacing and delivery matters of instruction. A mean of 3.31 was obtained on Question 10, since most participants answered a 4 (Agree).

Over 95% of the participants agreed that their experiences in their assigned high school levels were favorable. In terms of curriculum, none of the participants answered at the lowest level of the survey, 1 (Strongly Disagree).

Question 12: Identify at least two teaching strategies that you have seen used in the high school classroom. Describe them.

It is important to note that a Pearson correlation was attempted to generate, but there was no correlation. Perhaps, the lack of demographic details on the survey was also a factor in yielding constants in the Pearson correlation function. The high school, too, reflected a correlation between Question 9 and 11, which implies that there is a correlation between motivation, pacing, and delivery of the lesson.

TABLE I
EXTENT TO WHICH TEACHER CANDIDATES WERE SUCCESSFUL IN THE TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Grade Level	Elementary		Middle School		High School	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
Agree	4	18	3	14	18	82
Strongly Agree	18	82	19	86	4	18
Total	22	100	22	100	100	100

TABLE II
EXTENT TO WHICH TEACHER CANDIDATES GAUGED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Grade Level	Elementary		Middle School		High School	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
Agree	2	9	4	18	19	86
Strongly Agree	20	91	18	82	3	14
Total	22	100	22	100	100	100

TABLE III
EXTENT TO WHICH TEACHER CANDIDATES GAUGED THE IMPACT IN DECIDING TO BECOME AN EDUCATOR

Grade Level	Elementary		Middle School		High School	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
Agree	3	14	2	9	7	32
Strongly Agree	19	86	20	91	15	68
Total	22	100	22	100	100	100

1. Findings of the Qualitative Portion of the Study

The first objective of the qualitative portion of the study was: To what extent did the teacher candidate feel successful in the teaching experience? To what extent did the teacher candidate gauge the significance of the teaching experience? Table I illustrates that the majority of teacher candidates reported having had a successful teaching experience.

Secondly, the study sought for teacher candidates to gauge their knowledge of the significance of the teaching experience. To what extent were the teacher candidates able to gauge the significance of the teaching experience? The majority of the respondents indicated that they were able to gauge the significance of the teaching experience.

The third objective of the qualitative portion of the study was to examine: To what extent did the teaching experience impact your decision to become an educator?

The majority of teacher candidates agree that they are aware of the significance of the decision to become educators.

The fourth objective of the qualitative portion of the study sought to examine: To what extent are teacher candidates able to identify two teaching strategies used in the classroom as they implemented delivery of the assigned curriculum.

J. Findings from the Qualitative Portion of the Study

Teacher candidates were asked to identify at least two teaching strategies used in the classroom. Describe them.

Of the 22 teacher candidates participating in the study, only 14 provided written responses without indicating corresponding grade level assignment.

- I used questions to start and then moved to discussions.
- Grouping was used throughout the lecture.
- Productive talk was used to engage students in thinking and discussing.
- My two strategies were organization and pacing. In organization, I grouped students and redirected attention. Pacing helped me make sure students understand material that was taught.
- Most of the time I gave them the reality of what it is like in the world. My partners and I tried our best to give examples of how to achieve in the real world.
- I would not change my mind about the teaching field. I have loved the experience.
- The third grade assignment I received was wonderful. Teaching elementary has given me knowledge on how most third graders behave and act as well as what I must do to gain their attention.
- Being around kids and the energy made me realize how much more I want to be a coach!
- I felt very confident! Teaching is my choice for the future.
- I understand that I ENJOY working with older kids.
- As a future teacher, it makes you wonder what factors are contributing into a child's negative attitude.
- I used cooperative grouping and it helped decrease tension.
- I used prizes and relevant experiences.
- I used hands-on activities.

IV. DISCUSSION

Based upon the information reported by the teacher candidates, it became necessary for the sophomore candidates to rely on strategies and motivation techniques, as well as language limitation modifications [7]. Most of the classrooms that the teacher candidates interacted with, appeared to consist of a significant percentage of English language learners; for the border community, it is a common scenario. To the sophomore teacher candidates, it provided an opportunity to react quickly on their feet. Eight (18) of the sophomore teacher candidates reported use of visual aids such as graphic organizers, T-Charts, Venn Diagrams, and Vocabulary Frames in delivering the curriculum. All of the strategies are

supported by bilingual advocates [8], [9]. Not only were the curriculum goals satisfied, but all was accomplished with a positive experience for the public school students. The sophomore teacher candidates implemented oral and visual supports in the populations whose native language (L1) is Spanish [10]. English language learner researchers [11] and [12] continue to advocate the plight to promote use of native language to strengthen the target language instruction. Pivotal, too, to the success of the students remains the teacher and quality of education delivered [6].

Upon completion of the semester, all teacher candidates are required to highlight their efforts in delivering the prescribed Junior Achievement Curriculum for Service Learning Component of the course by presenting their findings in an EXPO. During the EXPO, faculty from the College of Education participates in evaluating and ranking teacher candidate trifolds.

Most of the teacher candidates reported a positive impact on their future teaching career. If we continue to promote the need to strengthen native language instruction as advocated by studies conducted by experts in the field [11], [13], [14], one can only strengthen the community as a whole. The need for educators to become active and strengthen the community is continuously encouraged by the U.S. Department of Education [15].

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