

2015 AACTE Best Practice Award in Support of Multicultural Education and Diversity

Texas Christian University College of Education
Fort Worth, Texas

Program submitted:
Early Childhood through Grade 6 Program (EC-6)



THEORY: CONCEPTUALIZATION OF PROGRAM

Reflecting on the research literature, our faculty identified knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to help new teachers develop understanding, confidence and commitment to work with diverse groups of children in urban elementary schools. We wanted to develop a program that would align university coursework to the tenets of multicultural education and prepare future educators to teach children who are also academically diverse learners (Banks, 2001, 2015; Cummins, 2005, 2001; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings 1994, 2005, 2006; Moll, 2005; Nieto, 2003, 2002). Thus, we created a program in which EC-6 preservice teachers choose a certification route of English as a Second Language (ESL)/ Bilingual or Special Education. Both tracks of students receive comprehensive instruction and experiences teaching in urban schools. Through the infusion of multicultural education in our EC-6 program, we promote educational equity while also meeting state and national standards (Souto-Manning, 2013).

Effective teaching requires a strong set of skills developed through rigorous instruction and clinical experience (Green, 2014). Extensive urban teaching experiences are an important component of our program. We aim to prepare our future teachers for the challenges and joys of teaching in urban schools, as well as provide them with the skills, strategies, and passion to teach each child well. As noted in the recent survey, Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), released by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), American teachers today work harder under much more challenging conditions than teachers elsewhere in the industrialized world. They also receive less useful feedback, less helpful professional development, and have less time to collaborate to improve their work (Darling Hammond, 2014). At TCU, our goal is to provide ongoing, meaningful mentoring and instructional coaching throughout the program. Through infusing multicultural elements in the program each semester, and preparing all preservice teachers for high need teaching areas, we are preparing our graduates for multicultural schools.

As a part of their early childhood preparation, all preservice teachers in the EC-6 Program participate in initiatives of the college's Center for Public Education (CPE) and Alice S. Neeley Special Education Research and Service Institute (ANSERS). This work ensures that candidates learn to work effectively with diverse students in K-6 classrooms. The work of the Centers is to design research, community partnerships, and integrated instructional classroom techniques that develop EC-6 candidates' abilities to be culturally responsible in their teaching practices. Throughout their college experiences, EC-6 preservice teachers receive special attention to develop their abilities to effectively address (a) individualized learning differences, and (b) strategies for teaching English language learners.



PRACTICE

Curriculum: Multicultural Education and Diversity Pedagogy

The learning experiences in the program encompass both the personal and instructional dimensions of multicultural education, diversity, and culturally responsive teaching. The personal dimension involves the cognitive and emotional processes teacher engage in; while the instructional dimension includes materials and strategies for teaching. These dimensions intertwine in the learning and teaching process, and are critical to the development of multicultural teachers (Richards et al., 2007).

Multicultural experiences are embedded in specific courses, as described in the paragraphs below.

Pre Admission—Freshman and Sophomore Year

- Critical Literacy and Children's Literature
- Critical Investigations

Junior Year

- Elementary Curriculum: Social Studies
- Promoting Language & Literacy
- Study of Exceptional Students
- Academic Success in Special Education

Senior Year

- Learner Centered Teaching: Families
- Learner Centered Teaching: Foundations
- Professional Induction: Curriculum for Diverse Learners: ESL & Special Education
- Seminar in Bilingual Education: Teaching in Bilingual/Cross-Cultural Schools



Field Placements

The current Field Placement list for the EC-6 Program is included in the Appendix. We are intentional in the field placements and supervision of our EC-6 program. We seek diverse schools in terms of culture, language, demographics, ethnicity, race, and exceptionality. The list of schools provides a glimpse of our dedication for diverse clinical experiences.

Pre Admission Early Childhood Block—Freshman and Sophomore Years

Critical Literacy and Children's Literature

This course offers an introduction to the analytical study of children's literature with a focus on children's books that grapple with social issues and that highlight multiculturalism. We explore books in which authors address topics such as homelessness, divorce, race, war, disabilities, gender, sexual orientations, and learning a new language. While studying these texts, students discuss ways to integrate children's literature throughout the EC-6 curriculum; teaching children the value of cross cultural friendship and understanding. Examples of specific course assignments related to multicultural education include a Critical Literacy Text in which preservice teachers choose a topic, such as racism, poverty, sexual orientation, learning a new language and develop a text set of 3-5 examples of children's literature about this topic. They also develop Book Trailers: Small groups of students study children's books that address diversity and multiculturalism. The groups create book trailers (video clips) to provide "book talks" to the entire class. Topics include: families in crisis, cross cultural friendship, sexuality/ sexual orientation, immigration and language learning, and special needs/ being different.

Critical Investigations

This course provides a thorough and systematic exploration of the U.S. education system and teaching profession. Students carefully examine education as a cultural institution, the professional characteristics of education, and the discipline of teaching. These concepts are grounded in 12 hours of observation in K-12 settings. The readings and field experience provide the opportunity for students to better examine the field of education and diversity of schools, K-12.

Junior Year

Beginning the junior year, preservice teachers are in or cohort groups. This year includes structured clinical experiences in diverse school for 70 hours during the two semesters, supervised by their university professors. In the spring semester of the junior year, special education certification track preservice teachers teach weekly lessons at Starpoint School, the only university laboratory school in the U.S. for children with special needs, and located on TCU campus. The ESL/Bilingual certification track students are placed in a school with a high population of English language learners (ELL).

Elementary Curriculum: Social Studies

This course is designed to introduce preservice teachers to social studies curriculum and instruction in the elementary classroom. Based on current theory and research and with particular emphasis on active citizenship and diversity, the course is intended to help future teachers become instructional decision-makers who will utilize innovative and effective practice and resources for teaching meaningful social studies. Several class readings, activities, and assignments address cultural and linguistic diversity specifically.

Example readings:

- Cruz, B. C. & Thornton, S. J. (2008). Social studies for all: ESOL strategies for the elementary classroom. *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 21(2), 11-16.
- Heinrich, J. S. (1998). What not to teach about Native Americans. In B. Bigelow & B. Peeterson (Eds.), *Rethinking Columbus* (pp. 32-33). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.
- The Council on Interracial Books for Children. (2008). 10 Quick ways to analyze children's books for racism and sexism. In A. Pelo (Ed.), *Rethinking Early Childhood Education* (pp. 211-213). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.
- Wade, R. C. *Social Studies for Social Justice*. (2007). Teachers College Press.

Promoting Language & Literacy

This class includes many multicultural components. The course content of Dr. Silva's course includes a thorough discussion of literacy development for ELLs including linguistic domains, cognitive domains, and the sociocultural dimension. The class prepares students for teaching ELLs, through understanding of literacy development and instructional practices. Preservice students develop text sets, building on the literacy development and sociocultural, linguistic and cognitive domains.

Study of Exceptional Students

This class includes several elements of diversity. For example, an important component of the class is learning the importance of accepting responsibility for the learning of all students, teaching strategies for diverse learners, and effective strategies for teaching children with learning disabilities. Class projects include a child study project, an in depth study of a child to better understand the nature of his or her disability, and strengths and challenges in everyday life. Preservice teachers also teach a lesson to at least two students from different disability categories.

Academic Success in Special Education

This course builds on multiculturalism in the form of preparing preservice teachers to teach children with exceptionalities in the education process. The course addresses how to design and deliver explicit instruction to students who are underperforming in typical classroom settings. A unique aspect of this course is that preservice teachers teach 10 sessions at Starpoint School, TCU's laboratory school for children with disabilities. Preservice teachers teach one to three students using the lesson design and instructional procedures learned in this class.



Senior Year

During the fall of the senior year, preservice teachers complete a practicum, spending 96 hours observing and teaching in public schools, as a university professor observes and provides instructional coaching and mentoring. In the spring semester, students complete a Professional Induction class, prior to beginning 12 weeks of student teaching with ESL or special education placements.

Learned Centered Teaching: Families

This class provides a unique examination of diverse forms of families, assumptions about families, and a critical examination of culture and poverty. Preservice teachers learn communication skills for building relationships with parents and guiding parental involvement.

Learner Centered Teaching: Foundations

This course explores the foundations of educational thought, practice and policy through the works of influential philosophers and culturally diverse authors. Through lectures, readings, study groups, discussion, and team and individual assignments, students learn about perennialist, essentialist, pragmatic, critical pedagogy, and postmodern influences in education. Students study ethics and legal issues as they apply to the professional development of.

Professional Induction: Curriculum for Diverse Learners: ESL & Special Education

In this intensive class leading into student teaching, preservice teachers develop anti-bia unit of study designed to meet the cultural, linguistic, and developmental needs of diverse learners. The readings for this class include publications from the Anti-Defamation League and multicultural curriculum development, and an all day workshop facilitated by the Anti-Defamation League.

INTERNATIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

European Teacher Education Network (ETEN)

The value we place on multicultural experiences extends globally as TCU's College of Education is an active member of ETEN. Our participation includes partnerships with other ETEN universities with international student exchange opportunities. Each year we host international students within our teacher education program. During their senior year, EC-6 preservice teachers may complete 4 weeks of student teaching in an international context, such as in Canada, the Netherlands, England, Sweden, Belgium, Italy, Hungary, or Switzerland. In 2014, 25% of our student teachers in the EC-6 program completed an international student teaching experience.

Study Abroad in the EC-6 Program

The EC-6 program offers a study abroad experience in which preservice teachers gain knowledge of international educational approaches, advocacy, and policy in countries such as The Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, France, and England. In Amsterdam, students attend lectures at the Association Montessori Internationale and tour landmarks such as the Anne Frank House. In Germany, students observe classrooms housed in United States Department of Defense schools.

In Geneva, students visit the European United Nations (UN), the International Labour Organization, and Save the Children; they learn about various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) advising the UN. In Paris and Normandy, students examine history, culture, and the impact of World War II on educational practices worldwide. At the program's conclusion, students tour TCU London.



EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

Number of EC-6 Preservice Teachers: 87
African American: 4 White: 72 Hispanic: 7
American Indian: 2 Multiracial: 1 Non specified: 1

We acknowledge that our preservice teacher population is not as racially diverse as we would prefer; there are many challenges in recruiting students to TCU, primarily the high cost of a private education. Our college developed a recruitment plan to target more racially diverse high school graduates, and to provide them access and information about financial aid. Because our program is small, we are able to mentor, guide, and provide extensive multicultural teaching experiences that would be very challenging at much larger institutions. The collaborative nature of our small college, and our passion and dedication to providing a high quality education for all children, sets us apart from other programs.

We evaluate multiculturalism infusion in the program in two ways. First, we examine our students’ state teacher certification exam results. Competency 2 on the Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) test is the multiculturalism and diversity standard, and there are multiple questions on the test relating to Competency 2. In tracking the past three years of data, 2012, 2013, 2014, our EC-6 program completers had a 100% pass rate on this exam.

Second, we examine Student Teaching Evaluations submitted by clinical placement supervisors and cooperating teachers. These evaluations include three multicultural competencies. Below, we note scores on these competencies for the last two years.

| Competency | 1 Unsatisfactory | | 2 Below Expectations | | 3 Proficient | | 4 Exceeds Expectations | |
|--|---------------------|------|-------------------------|------|-----------------|------|---------------------------|------|
| | 2013 | 2014 | 2013 | 2014 | 2013 | 2014 | 2013 | 2014 |
| Maintains supportive, respectful environment | | | | | 9% | 2% | 91% | 98% |
| Recognizes and provides for individual differences | | | | | 13% | 8% | 87% | 92% |
| Interacts equitably with ALL students | | | | | 7% | 4% | 93% | 96% |

More importantly, through our program’s systematic field based components, university professors provide consistent instructional coaching to our preservice teachers. This type of mentoring is often the most meaningful as it is individualized, and connected to teaching practices in urban schools. Letters from educators, and other school district personnel, to document best practices are included in this application.

FACULTY

TCU’s positive environment was commended in the Chronicle of Higher Education survey, Great College to Work for in 2014. According to survey results, faculty feel supported for travel and research, and as a result faculty have confidence in senior leadership, and are satisfied with their jobs at TCU. Workload policies and practices permit faculty to engage in a wide range of professional activities, including teaching, scholarship, and service to support their professional growth—with college and university financial support.



CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON LESSON LEARNED

Each year we strive to improve. This year, our focus is on recruitment of preservice teachers to our program. Faculty met to form a recruitment plan—to target more diverse students. To continue to strengthen our program, our Dean continually requests donors for endowed scholarships and funding. International and multicultural teaching experiences are important to us. There is a fund available in which preservice teachers with a financial need may apply for funding help for international study; however, we need greater financial support in this area to provide access to international experiences for all of our EC-6 preservice teachers.

In closing, we take to heart TCU's mission of preparing ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community. The inclusion of multicultural teaching experiences, observations, and critical reading and reflection is infused through our EC-6 Program. We systematically reflect on ways to infuse multicultural education within the program to continuously find ways to improve. The size of our college, and the passion and expertise of our faculty, allow us to provide individualized urban and diverse field based experiences for each preservice teacher in our program. The letters from the educational community, included in this application, document what this program means to our graduates and community partners.

2490/2500

APPENDIX

Alumni Reflections

Field Placement Sites for EC-6 Program

Syllabi of Core Courses

Recruitment Plan for 2014-15

Letters of Support

