



Feature Article

The Impact of Program Redesign on Partnerships and Clinical Practice

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Abstract

This study investigated the ability of a redesigned teacher preparation program to effectively meet the needs of teacher candidates and partner school districts. The study examined the effects of the redesigned school of education program on perceptions of teacher candidates, administrators, teachers in partner districts, and faculty members. Findings from school-partnership districts and the school of education were explored. The goal was to use best practices to meet the needs of teacher candidates and provide rich theoretical and clinical experiences in diverse school settings. Findings indicated a change in perceptions of teacher candidates in understanding the importance of equity in the teaching process and of the connection between theory presented in the classroom and application in settings of diverse learners. Teachers and principals indicated an appreciation for renewal through the collaborative experience with teacher candidates during field experiences.

Introduction

The School of Education program at Northwest Missouri State University did not reflect current best practices; in fact, many courses had not been revised in 20 years. The curriculum offerings were outdated and the State Department of Education had recently changed compendium requirements that the School of Education must offer students to meet requirements for licensure/certification. The program changes required were significant, including additional experiences and credit hours

in assessment, literacy, and language-acquisition coursework. Simultaneously, university administrators at Northwest Missouri State University were experiencing state and federal pressure to decrease students' time to degree. State funding had declined over the previous 20 years from 70% to 30% of university costs, resulting in increased pressure to attract students for the cost of attendance. The School of Education was particularly impacted because fewer in-state students aspired to become PK-12

teachers (Katnik, 2016). In response to the compendium change, many universities in the state were adding hours to the degree. In response to these changes, the Dean of the School of Education challenged the faculty, many of whom were new to the university, to think creatively to initiate a redesigned program that would meet the requirements of the State Department of Education but not raise the number of credit hours. Faculty accepted the challenge and began a comprehensive redesign of coursework using a collaborative approach.

Collaborative inquiry is among the most promising strategies for strengthening teaching and learning (David, 2008). At the same time, collaboration may be one of the most difficult to implement. Faculty collaboration does not occur naturally; it evades prevailing norms of teacher isolation and individualistic approaches to teaching. Essential elements of effective collaboration are ensuring adequate time to collaborate and adhering to a set of norms fostering a positive culture (David, 2008). The institution possessed both qualities.

Using the collaborative principles espoused in David (2008), the intensive work of redesign began with 5 retreat days in which faculty members came together to begin the journey to redesign and reinvent the curriculum for the School of Education. All faculty from the elementary and early childhood programs, middle and secondary education programs, the Assistant Director of Teacher Education, and the chair of the Department of Professional Education agreed the redesign needed to be grounded in research on effective teacher-education programs, aligned with the State Teacher Standards. Further, the new design had to be responsive to the needs of PK–12 schools in the four-state area from which most teacher candidates are recruited. With an emphasis on collaboration in the School of Education, content faculty members from the campus-wide Professional Education Unit also needed to be included. Best practice, including a report on clinical practice commissioned by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher

Education (AACTE, 2018), indicated that students should be involved in multiple clinical field experiences in a variety of locations to support the application of theory to PK–12 classrooms.

In the fall of 2018, the university placed 537 first- and second-year education majors in local community districts for clinical observation and early-level field experiences. Faculty liaisons collaborated with PK–12 teachers in the field experience sites to design experiences aligned with the coursework delivered in the university educator-preparation program. The university placed first-year education majors in school districts in the first 7 weeks of their program and provided opportunities to observe and work with PK–12 students in well-coordinated, carefully-constructed, scaffolded experiences designed by the PK–12 teacher-partner and university faculty liaison. Not only did the teacher candidates participate in field experiences within the 35-mile radius in a rural setting, but they also took part in an additional set of clinical-practice opportunities during their 3rd and 4th years to work in an urban school district, with strong results (Linda Smith, Farnan, Seeger, Wall, & Kiene, 2017). This urban clinical experience featured the chance to work with students from marginalized, underrepresented populations of individuals from diverse ethnicities, students living in systemic or concentrated poverty, and many English-language learners. Best practices, informed by theory, guided the redesign.

Theoretical Framework

Multiple theoretical constructs inspired this study. Change theory informs the process used in the redesign of the School of Education coursework and field experiences. Fullan (2006) defined seven core premises undergirding effective change. These include a focus on motivation over a period of time and the building of knowledge and skills to create the change. Meaningful change requires purposeful thinking and change is messy; change takes persistence and comfort with ambiguity. Systems seek stability; creative tension arises when the vision is different from the reality (Senge,

1990). The reality of increased requirements established by the State Department at the same time as the effort to decrease the numbers of hours to obtain a degree undergirded the move toward change. An adaptive culture is needed for change to occur (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). Shared responsibility, development of leadership capacity, and the institutionalization of reflection and continuous learning characterize an adaptive culture (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 165).

Another framework informing this study is the role of partnerships with PK–12 schools in meeting the educational needs of teacher candidates. In the Missouri, the Department of Education requires 155 hours of field experiences for teacher candidates in their content area or area of emphasis. Teacher candidates need partnerships with PK–12 schools to enable them to work in school districts, learn from practicing teachers, and apply the knowledge collected in the classroom to reality. Multiple sources support the guiding principles of rich clinical practice including the AACTE (2018) report on clinical practice. State education requirements and emphasis from national accreditors—the Association for Advancing Quality in Education (AAQEP, 2019) and the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP, 2013)—aided in developing mutually beneficial partnerships. Principles and expertise from traditionally excellent education programs that are members of The Renaissance Group (2018) informed the imperative for mutually beneficial strong partnerships between college and school systems. These principles became driving forces in developing the curricular redesign. Specifically, the redesign focused on The Renaissance Group Principle 3: “The education of teachers incorporates extensive and sequenced field and clinical experiences in various settings with effective supervision.” Similarly, Principle 7 was influential in our redesign. It called for the continuing professional development of teachers through shared responsibility of the individual candidate, other professional educators (such as partner districts), and university faculty (The Renaissance Group, 2018).

This study was informed by multiple theoretical constructs on equity and student development. Using ecological-systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), teacher candidates are introduced to the systematic ways learners develop as social and cultural beings. During the first semester, a Phase I course titled, *Ecology of Teaching*, provides candidates with the opportunity to explore six bioecological layers that influence the developmental context of learners. A critical social-justice lens supports the bioecological layers to enhance understanding of the impact of development on teaching and learning. The five systemic layers of relationships that influence a child’s development are (a) the microsystem and relationships in direct contact with the child; (b) the mesosystem and the connection between relationships in the child’s microsystem; (c) the exosystem and those structures in which the child does not have direct contact; (d) the macrosystem and larger cultural contexts, attitudes, beliefs, developing and industrialized countries, socioeconomic status, poverty, and ethnicity; and (e) the chronosystem representing changes in time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Candidates then transition to another Phase I course titled, *Developmental Foundations*, that delves into the tension between constructivism and behaviorism while providing exposure to culturally responsive teaching language and practices (as in Gay, 2000). This field experience-based course introduces students to methods of observation and noticing of developmental constructs in educational settings. Students learn about educational theorists such as Pavlov, Skinner, Bandura, Gesell, Bayley, and Chomsky. Through intentionally designed field work and guided discussion, candidates learn to interpret their observations and attention from the lens of developmental and learning theories. Relying on the work of Chappuis and Stiggins (2017), candidates learn strategies for developing and implementing formative and summative assessments and analyze the resulting student-level data. Dweck’s (2006), research on growth mindsets’ connection to classroom culture

and the relationships between verbal and nonverbal communication and their impact on teacher relationships (see Keith, Tornatzky, & Pettigrew, 2015) were influential in coursework development.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the redesign of the School of Education program to meet the needs of teacher candidates, the Educator Preparation Program (EPP), and the partner districts of the EPP. We evaluated two other constructs in the study: (a) the effects of the redesigned School of Education program based on the perceptions of teacher candidates, and (b) the effects of the redesigned School of Education program based on the perceptions of administrators and teachers in the partner districts.

Research Questions

1. How can the educator-preparation program be redesigned using best practices to meet the needs of teacher candidates, the EPP, and partner districts?
2. What is the impact of the redesigned education program on teacher candidates, the EPP, and partner districts?

Change Theory

Critical to any major change in an organization is a thorough knowledge of the change process. Without change knowledge, the reform will fail (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2005). When examining the literature on the topic of change, the voice of Lewin is clear (Burnes & Bargal, 2017). Lewin was committed to making a better world that provided the motivation for all work on social change. Lewin defined change as a process including three stages: unfreezing, moving, and freezing. Unfreezing means rethinking the status quo and breaking from the current traditions and ways of performing. In this stage, most resistance can occur. In the moving stage, change begins to occur; in the freezing stage, the change is institutionalized and slowly becomes the status quo. According to Lewin, during these stages of

change, the change agent continually thinks about the mechanism to change the current state to the desired state (Burnes & Bargal, 2017).

Partnerships

The guiding conceptual model of the AACTE clinical practice brief (2018) places an imperative on high-quality clinical practice supporting quality partnerships. Such partnerships are mutually beneficial to classrooms in the partner districts and to classrooms in the university, which is a requirement of national accreditation (AAQEP, 2019; CAEP, 2013). If each partner does not gain from the experience, the partnership will not continue (Stephens & Boldt, 2004). Partnerships between schools and universities where teachers and teacher candidates keep learning benefit both institutions (Nobles, Dredger, & Gerheart, 2012). Teacher-education programs benefit from collaboration with professional-development school partners as educators revise curriculum to meet the needs of partner schools (Holen & Yunk, 2014). The combination of research, theory, and practice benefits the full and equal participation of partner schools (Holen & Yunk, 2014, p. 4). Although reflective practice underlies the renewal of teaching and learning in PK–12 and university classrooms, partnerships between PK–12 schools and universities require ongoing care to ensure sustainability. The CAEP (2013) and AAQEP (2019) standards support such partnerships for educator-preparation national accreditation, addressing collaboration, clinical partnerships, and practice as a way to support the learning of teacher candidates and all PK–12 students. Having the university and the school district involved in the planning of clinical field experiences allows the needs of both entities to be met (Reischl, Khasnabis, & Karr, 2017). For a partnership between an EPP and a school district to continue, it must become part of the culture of both institutions, rather than an isolated event (Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015). Another facet of the redesign was an intentional emphasis on socially just practices.

Equity

As the unique student demographics of schools change, requiring culturally responsive teaching pedagogy, candidates must be prepared to teach in districts with racial and ethnic diversity. Social justice is a philosophical belief that, along with personal actions, centers on treating individuals with “fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity” (Nieto & Bode, 2012, p. 12). Candidates understand the importance of using students’ cultural experiences and backgrounds to help inform their teaching and learning. Candidates gain a deeper understanding of various contextual dimensions such as race, culture, and socioeconomics, and their impact on motivation, ability, and achievement in the classroom. Understanding the unique context of students also helps candidates gain better insight into how teachers can use students’ cultural experiences to inform learning, teaching, and instruction (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Eckert, 2011; Rivlin & Robinson, 1968). A deeper awareness and understanding of the unique demographics of various schools and communities that impact them helps candidates adjust their biases and assumptions, and any preconceived notions about teaching. Teacher candidates are able to better understand the larger global implications of teaching students from various backgrounds. Exposure to rural, urban, and suburban settings provides an opportunity for candidates to immerse themselves in a variety of school settings (Merryfield, 2000; Ukpokodu, 2010). Further, candidates become equity advocates who understand the correlation and connection to student achievement. They understand teaching beyond books and recognize the value of experience in the learning and teaching process. Last, they understand the commitment necessary to become an effective teacher and to continue in the field of education.

Field experiences in urban areas can change the perceptions of teacher candidates who participate in them. Involvement in field experiences produced significant changes in how teacher

candidates viewed their ability to make a difference and in their beliefs about diversity (Smith, Farnan, Seeger, Wall, & Kiene, 2017). After a clinical experience in an urban setting, developed by the rurally based EPP and district leaders to promote exchange of ideas and encourage appreciation and promotion of diversity, the findings were apparent:

After the urban field experiences candidates were: 1) more likely to use curricular materials and instructional practices fostering diversity, 2) more aware of (K-12) students’ experiences and cultural backgrounds, and 3) noted diverse schools were ‘very different’ than those they attended (Smith et al., 2018, p. 6).

Leaders in the EPP and the PK–12 school systems have seen the impact of strong clinical practice, and wanted to build more opportunities to blend theory and practice for candidates.

Methodology

This study used a nested-case-study approach with concurrent analysis of qualitative and quantitative data sources. The researchers examined one redesigned educator-preparation program to determine how it met stakeholder needs and determine its impact on partnerships and clinical practice. A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). The “what” is a bounded system, a single entity or unit around which boundaries exist (Smith, 1978). In this case study, the EPP was the bounded system. Using the case-study approach, three main data sources were synthesized. First, we drew on multiple measures of teacher-candidate perceptions. Next, we analyzed principal and mentor-teacher feedback, as their voices were paramount because the focus of the study involved partnerships and expanded clinical placements in schools at earlier points in the program. Finally, we determined how faculty perceived the redesign and development of new partnerships. Analysis of teacher-candidate reflections assisted in the search for contextualized meaning, understanding of the

impact of redesigning the program, and how the redesign impacted partnerships. When considering methodology, the researchers used Merriam's (2009) technique of purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling builds on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which they can learn the most. We triangulated data until it reached saturation, when themes emerged to enable us to clearly depict the impact of the redesign for candidates and the EPP, and on partnership development and clinical practice.

Participants and Setting

Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, MO has an enrollment of 6,000 undergraduates, and is located in a very rural, geographically remote, isolated area. Maryville, MO has a population of 11,972. The moderately selective university enrolls approximately 1,025 students with education majors comprising 658 elementary teacher candidates and 367 secondary teacher candidates, primarily from a four-state region; each state is within 50 miles of the university. Each year, approximately 23% of the teacher candidates are Pell Grant eligible. In addition, 96% of teacher candidates identify as White with 2% Latin(x) and 2% Multiracial. Finally, 36% of teacher candidates are the first in their family to attend college. Of the 21 faculty members of the School of Education, 15 were women. Only two individuals of color were on the faculty when the study took place.

The School of Education partners with 12 PK–12 school districts within a 35-mile radius of the university. Teacher candidates provided/arranged their own transportation when attending local early and midlevel field experiences. During the 2017–2018 school year, approximately 531 freshmen and sophomore teacher candidates participated in field experiences with 12 partner school districts. In addition to rural field experiences, teacher candidates took part in two early and midlevel field experiences in urban school districts using university-sponsored bus transportation.

Table 1 depicts the socioeconomic status of partner districts based on the percentage of students who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, the racial demographics of the districts, and the total district enrollment.

Table 1
PK–12 Demographics Where Educator Preparation Program Clinical Field Placements Take Place.

District	% F/R	Race: % White	Race: % non-White	Total
Maryville	33.2	91.9	*	1,401
Jefferson	32.2	*	*	125
NE Nodaway	45.8	*	*	205
W Nodaway	54.4	*	*	232
Nodaway Holt	46.3	*	*	199
S Nodaway	47.9	*	*	175
N Nodaway	45.4	*	*	205
Albany	59.3	*	*	398
Bedford	42.36	95.69	*	465
Savannah	32.2	94.1	*	2,306
Clarinda	38.34	90.72	*	1,063
N Andrew	39.5	*	*	356
Independence	71.4	56.6	41.1	14,321
St. Joseph	71.4	73.6	3.0	11,256

* Indicates the number/percent has been suppressed due to a potential small sample size.

Realizing that one of the major forces that leads to successful implementation of change efforts (Fullan et al., 2005) is developing a culture of evaluation, education faculty members met to design a quantitative/qualitative survey that would speak to the extent to which the objectives set forth in the redesigned program had been met in the first year of implementation. In the spring of 2018, researchers administered the survey to all 256 students who had participated in Phase I

courses during the 2017–2018 school year: 77 students responded to the survey.

The data collection consisted of (a) surveys of feedback from first-year students on experience in the new program and (b) feedback from students, faculty, and PK–12 mentor teachers and principals. All survey questions were identical. As a component of the coursework, we collected and analyzed reflective narratives for themes from each of the 256 students. We electronically provided narrative surveys with identical questions to 264 PK–12 mentor teachers and principals in the districts within the 35-mile radius who hosted the field experiences, with 26 responses returned and analyzed for themes. We analyzed narrative responses from the surveys using axial coding. We coded open-ended questions to identify themes. We worked independently, identifying important phrases and consistent themes with open coding, using the themes as the designation for data categories. See Table 2 for the three data sources we analyzed to obtain our results.

Table 2
Data Sources Used

Population	Method
University students	Quantitative and Qualitative feedback Surveys were electronically distributed. The survey consisted of 13 quantitative and qualitative questions.
PK-12 teacher and administrator	Narrative feedback Narrative surveys were electronically distributed consisting of 5 open-ended questions.
University faculty	Narrative feedback Narrative feedback forms consisting of 5 questions was electronically distributed at the end of the term.

Results by Research Question

RQ1. How can the educator preparation program be redesigned using best practice to meet the needs of teacher candidates, the EPP, and partner districts?

The process used in the redesign of the education program included faculty work to create a vision of what the program could look like, advisory-council meetings including faculty groups of PK–12 teachers and administrators, and local business professionals answering the following question: “What are the graduates of the School of Education doing well and what do the graduates of the School of Education need to do better to serve the needs of the students in the PK–12 schools?” Using a backwards-design model of curriculum design based on the work of Wiggins and McTighe (2005), the faculty collaboratively worked to fully understand the state professional standards and the state governing rules of EPPs. Site visits of other teacher-education programs built faculty knowledge of extended student-teaching experiences. Faculty made connections with university content professors and with community colleges for the seamless matriculation of students. Ultimately, the university implemented courses, followed by annual reviews.

An additional impetus for programmatic and clinical practice change came from suggestions made by a team of administrators and teachers on the School of Education advisory council. As a result of the advisory council’s input, there was a significant increase in the number and diversity of opportunities for clinical field experiences. Field experiences start in the first term of teacher candidates’ first on-campus year, to make candidates more aware of their chosen career and augment a sense of commitment to the craft at a much earlier point in the program. An increased emphasis on assessment and data literacy emerged, accompanied by strategies to assist PK–12 learners who had experienced trauma in their lives. The advisory council advised additional pedagogy (supporting content while focusing on teaching tools) for secondary candidates.

The education of teachers became an all-campus responsibility, undertaken in collaboration with PK–12 school personnel, as described in Principle 1 of The Renaissance Group (2018). Course descriptions were approved through the

committee structure of the university. Educators identified competencies for the courses, and collaborative teams developed the classes. Participants identified field-experience sites and built course plans.

Table 3 shows the sequence of the redesign process. The planning was completed in Year 1, course writing in Year 2, and implementation of the redesigned courses in Year 3.

Table 3
Process of Redesigning the Educator Preparation Program Based on the Dean's Challenge

Year and day	Process
Year 1	Advisory Council input sought
Day 1	Five days' release time for faculty to work (established norms and a monthly time to collaborate) Envisioned redesigned program Established advisory council Ongoing literature review
Day 2	Worked to fully understand the state professional standards for teacher candidates Worked to fully understand the state compendium of the governing rules for Educator Preparation Programs
Day 3	Benchmark review of Northwest Missouri State University regarding student teaching
Day 4	Designed the phase model
Day 5	Involved university secondary partners in reflection on the redesign proposal
Year 2	Connections with community colleges for seamless matriculation of students Course development and objective writing Advisory Council feedback solicited on the model
Year 3	Courses implemented Redesigned program implemented

RQ2: What is the impact of the redesigned education program on teacher candidates, the EPPs, and partner districts?

The quantitative data revealed the most impactful experiences of the redesigned program. We extracted two themes from qualitative data in the teacher-candidate responses: (a) change in perceptions of the role of a teacher, and (b) understanding of the application of theories learned in the classroom.

Impact of the Redesign on Teacher Candidates

The result of the electronic survey revealed teacher candidates ranked the impact of the clinical field experiences as good or excellent. Teacher candidates rated experiences in the large urban/suburban districts as most impactful. Participants found experiences during the coursework to be second most impactful, including the poverty simulation facilitated by the Children and Family Center of the local county seat, where participants assumed a role and acted through situations they might encounter in adverse situations of poverty. This experience improved teacher-candidate understanding of the PK-12 students' unique contexts. The experiences, in addition to the revamped curriculum, were highly impactful, especially for candidates' sense of preparation, professionalism, and diversity. As one candidate explained, the newly designed program achieved its goals of changing candidates' perceptions while preparing them to teach with culturally relevant approaches.

I was not completely aware that teachers had to take into consideration so many different things about their students including where they came from, what kind of experiences they had, their dispositions, and what type of learning style they have. I also learned that to be a good teacher you have to be prepared to adapt to anything, use your students' experiences to help you teach, and be culturally responsive based on their needs and experiences. (Candidate 1)

Teacher candidates made meaning of their field experiences by recounting specific observations during school visits and the feelings associated with those events. By reflecting on and giving voice

to their experiences, early teacher candidates were able to gain a better understanding of the unique demographics and context of rural, urban, and suburban schools, and to provide a glimpse into those schools' worlds. Teacher candidates used professional-learning communities (DuFour, 2004) and written narratives to reflect on instructional content and field experiences. Candidates could then adjust their perceptions about teaching and recognize the value of experience as a tool for learning and teaching.

I believe that I personally learned a lot about teaching and the different pieces that combine to make a great teacher. Before taking the education courses Ecology of Teaching and Developmental Foundations this semester, I had not thought of teaching much past someone in the front of the room simply presenting information to all of the students, but I now realize that there is more to it than that. (Candidate 2)

It became evident, through analysis of the data, that candidates could apply the knowledge gained when observing in PK-12 classroom settings. Evidence from candidate statements included their narrative reflections, recounting their requirement to process the clinical experiences reflectively and deeply. The process required candidates to bridge theoretical constructs to real-life experiences in school environments. Participants achieved a more holistic view of teaching by observing, reflecting, discussing, questioning, and connecting classroom learning with various field opportunities. Candidates shared their thoughts on school and classroom culture, climate, structure, appearance, assets, deficits, and incidents seen in the PK-12 classrooms.

There is a lot a teacher can learn even from students. A life where you never stop learning sounds very exciting to me. Throughout my experiences in the Kindergarten class I have learned being a teacher is the best possible job a person can have. (Candidate 3)

Comments provided by teachers hosting and

collaborating with candidates in clinical practice settings also reflected the impact of the redesigned School of Education program. Of teachers who hosted field-experience students for 5 hours each of the first 2 semesters, all but one teacher expressed willingness to host and learn with candidates in clinical field experiences in the future. This part of the new process was considerably more successful than previous placements, as clinical faculty engaged in a true partnership, built on a foundation of partnership, theory, and best practices in the preparation and development of future teachers. The process aligned with expectations from the CAEP (2013) and AAQEP (2019) in support of national accreditation and the state's expectations and directives while honoring the expertise of the teachers: "I welcome observation, especially if the observer is willing to lend me their perspective. I would love to learn with these students and us their feedback from my own reflection" (representative teacher comment in survey data).

Yet teachers and candidates were not the only beneficiaries of the redesigned programs. Administrators immediately saw improvement in the preparation of future teachers (current candidates) aligned with the survey data. Principals of PK-12 that hosted students in the first 10 hours of clinical field experience cited refreshing and renewing concepts for PK-12 teachers (Shroyer, Yahnke, Bennett, & Dunn, 2007). During the first year on campus, principals indicated appreciation of the teacher candidates in their classrooms because of the collaborative engagement with their classroom teachers and the fresh ideas evidenced in the interaction: "We appreciate students talking to teachers, seeing what they are trying to do. It makes our teachers try to implement new things because students are there" (Principals' perception). In addition to teacher candidates, teachers, and administrators, another group was profoundly impacted by the effort to redesign our programs and practices. Our faculty found great meaning in the work, the change, and the results.

Faculty Perceptions of Impact

Several faculty members who responded to the narrative survey spoke of the impact of the redesign. Responses cited the application of education theory to real-life educational environments. By Week 9 of their first on-campus year, teacher candidates were in buildings much different from those from which they graduated and witnessed the effect of caring teachers and structured classrooms. Through students' reflection narratives, evidence emerged of their change in sense of agency to impact positive change related to socially just practices and the importance of equity. Candidates revealed an increase in awareness of poverty, race, and gender. One faculty member described, in detail, an impactful clinical experience that achieved several goals while assisting teacher candidates to move beyond mere exposure to diversity into an infusion of socially just practice in their lessons, after participating in a field experience in a diverse setting:

The overall experience of the field trip was eye-opening for the students. They had the opportunity to observe many things that will impact their future teaching and help develop their own pedagogy. Students were able to observe a wide range of disruptive behaviors with the middle school and high school students and how teachers and administrators responded to the disrespect and defiant behaviors in the classrooms. They were able to see what a school impacted with extreme poverty, 100% free and reduced, and high trauma looked like first hand. The students were able to observe a large variety of pedagogies, environments, personalities, and instruction between the three schools. This opportunity allowed students to be culturally aware of populations they may not have had exposure to in their schools, which aids in their understanding the complexities of teaching. (Faculty Member 1)

Another faculty member found great value in developing effective partnerships:

I personally thought the opportunity for students to see that building trusting relationships with your students is a critical component of teaching was powerful. The co-teaching model at the elementary school seemed to be of a big interest for many students as they had never observed teaching in a non-traditional classroom prior to this experience and how they responded to whether or not they themselves could be an effective teacher working in a co-teaching model. The field experiences resulted in students reflecting on their own assumptions and biases. Overall, I believe the field trip was a monumental moment for these future educators. (Faculty Member 2)

Discussion

The EPP now includes a minimum of 555 hours of clinical field experiences beginning in the first on-campus year. Candidates observe actual PK–12 classrooms by the 7th week of their first year on campus. Field experiences occur in multiple placements in small rural districts, urban schools with elevated levels of racial and socioeconomic diversity, and suburban districts.

All education majors take coursework in the same sections of the basic freshmen and sophomore classes, allowing them to learn from each other regarding teaching young children, secondary students, and special-education students. Each phase of coursework includes a professional-learning community, guiding students through conversations and reflections based on field experiences where they observe actual practices they have studied in the classroom.

The student-teaching experience will be expanded in 2020 to a full-year experience for elementary and special-education majors; middle school, secondary, and K–12 majors will spend 45 hours of field experience in the location where they will student teach prior to the student-teaching semester. Students will attend an education capstone class while student teaching with a focus on a delivery system near the locations where they

are working, as well as a return to campus for additional professional development.

Changes to the School of Education program occurred in a planned process over a 3-year period. Collaborators sought and used input in the design from school partners and from faculty members across campus. An organization must be unfrozen for change to occur (Lewin, as cited in Burnes & Bargal, 2017), and the redesign process attests to the malleable nature of the institutions that are frequently regarded as static: PK-12 school districts and university programs.

Partnerships with PK-12 schools created an environment where teacher candidates and teachers learned, evidenced by the results of teacher candidate, teacher, principal, and faculty surveys. Teacher candidates learned teaching skills by observing in PK-12 classrooms and practicing teachers learned through reflective conversations and collaborative tasks with teacher candidates. Through field experiences, candidates were able to understand the concept of equity through poverty simulations, school board meetings, and school visits; candidates were made aware of the unique challenges faced by schools working to meet the needs of all learners. This experience helped students become more culturally aware of the need to become equity advocates for youth in schools.

Using rich clinical field experiences, candidates began to bridge theoretical constructs in practice to real-life experiences in school environments. Educators helped students achieve a more holistic view of teaching by creating a space for candidates to observe, reflect, discuss, question, and connect classroom learning with various field opportunities, thereby democratizing teacher education through rich conversation and experiences (aligned with Zeichner et al., 2015). Results from surveys of candidates, teachers, principals, and faculty revealed that, as a result of the redesigned curriculum and clinical experiences, candidates found language to understand, then share their thoughts on school and classroom culture, climate, structure,

appearance, assets, deficits, and incidents seen in the PK-12 classrooms.

Partnerships with PK-12 districts are the foundation of the redesigned EPP. With heavy emphasis on clinical field experiences, where teacher candidates experience numerous classrooms in settings that may be different from those they attended, candidates gain exposure to more opportunities to reach diverse PK-12 learners than the program was able to offer previously. Each candidate experienced field experiences in early childhood, elementary, middle school, and high school PK-12 settings. As a result, some candidates changed their teaching preference and some changed their major from education to other fields. Although the literature written on university partnerships with P-12 schools generally begins from formal agreements put into place with the signature of the superintendent of schools and university provosts (Holen & Yunk, 2014), this EPP partnerships largely formed through conversations. The EPP and its school-district partners shared a recognition that each is responsible for the creation of the next generation of teachers, requiring mutual trust between partner districts and the university. This collaboration creates strong bonds to effectively prepare educators with deep clinical experience, grounded in ongoing, multilayered reflective practice, and with PK-12 partners committed to sharing their best practices. Table 4 illustrates the impact of the redesign in changes to partnerships, culture, clinical practice, institutional commitment, energy, and outcomes.

Table 4
Before and After Education Redesign

Before Redesign	After Redesign
Partnerships: modest, limited, transactional partnerships with limited school systems, usually in rural Missouri and usually benefitting northwest more than other school districts	Partnerships: thriving, multi-faceted, mutually beneficial partnerships with numerous school systems
Partnerships: predominantly rural for most teacher candidates	Partnerships: rural, urban, and suburban for all teacher candidates

Table 4 (continued).

Before Redesign	After Redesign
Culture: limited faculty collaboration with many silos	Culture: faculty collaboration with no silos
Culture: full and associate professors drove the conversation and held most leadership roles	Culture: all faculty levels, including instructors and assistant professors, held leadership roles
Culture: curriculum change occurred predominantly through the official program coordinator	Culture: curriculum change occurred bottom-up, by the teachers and professors in concert with coordinators
Clinical practices: limited clinical practice with some variation in cooperating teacher commitment and quality. Uncertain exposure to the strongest pedagogy and evidence-based practice	Clinical practices: robust clinical practices, reduced variance in candidate exposure to strong pedagogy; masterful cooperating teachers using evidenced-based instructional practices
Clinical practices: sequenced, but less focused on the developmental continuum of PK-12 learning	Clinical practices: expanded, clarified, and sequenced to impact candidates' knowledge of the developmental continuum of PK-12 learning
Institutional commitment: limited commitment of human and fiscal resources	Institutional commitment: strengthened, with additional human and fiscal resources slated in upcoming years to support clinical practice
Faculty energy: comfortable, but not innovative	Faculty energy: strong innovative thread with a notable sense of energy permeating the climate and culture
Outcomes: strong evidence of high-quality educator preparation; gaps in candidate exposure to diversity	Outcomes: strong evidence of high-quality educator preparation; reduced gaps in candidate use of strategies and skills to promote and enhance diversity
Outcomes: state recognition of effective educator-preparation programs with some evidence of impact on PK-12 learners	Outcomes: state and national recognition for educator-preparation-program quality and evidence of positive impact on PK-12 learning; received the 2018 AASCU Christa McAuliffe Award for Excellence in Innovation in Teacher Education
Outcomes: courses taught by content experts in separate content areas	Outcomes: courses taught by content experts from different content areas as 1 integrated methods course, across several departments and university schools.

Before Redesign	After Redesign
Outcomes: secondary teacher candidates loved their content but did not value education courses. Teacher candidates went through the program in silos with little interaction across majors/teaching levels.	Outcomes: teacher candidates from elementary, middle, early childhood, K-12, and secondary disciplines move throughout the first 3 semesters as a cohort, leading to shared appreciation for students, teaching, and learning regardless of content or level.

Note. AASCU = American Association of State Colleges and Universities

The changes presented in Table 4 represent a shift in practices to effectively address the needs of students in PK-12 schools. As programs evolve and begin to solicit, then embrace effective partnerships, faculty and PK-12 partner instructional relationships improve. In-depth clinical experiences enable teacher candidates to thrive. A partnership shift, from modest and limited collaborations, to more robust clinical experiences, was a key feature in the program redesign and consistent with AAQEP (2019) and CAEP (2013) expectations for evidence of quality EPPs. Redesigned coursework and curriculum grounded in culturally relevant pedagogy and rich clinical practices aligned with the AACTE (2018) model did indeed create a pivot in our program: teacher candidates were able to gain hundreds of hours of successful, partner-based clinical experiences with PK-12 students in urban, suburban, and rural schools. The purpose was to provide a greater understanding of how to teach with equity and effectiveness, in any setting. A significant expenditure of scarce financial and personnel resources enabled the institution to fully support education redesign.

Limitations of Study

A limitation of this study is the length of time the redesigned education program has been in place. The School of Education was only 3 semesters (just over a year and half) into the redesigned program. We considered only 1 year of data in survey responses of teacher candidates, of partner district mentor teachers, and of principals. The response rate to the survey of PK-12 teachers and

administrators was limited to those who returned the survey and may not represent all views from all partners. Adjustments in course logistics and structure are ongoing, as with any new program initiative. As of yet, no one has graduated from the program so no evaluation results are available of graduates teaching in classrooms or survey results completed by building principals on the effectiveness of candidates in PK–12 classrooms.

Conclusions

This study holds significance because educators at Northwest Missouri State University had not significantly revised the previous course of study to meet/exceed state requirements in several years. Because of the state Annual Performance Report and the impact of performance results, partner districts were previously hesitant to accept student teachers during the state testing window and some expressed the view that candidates were not sufficiently prepared to teach as PK–12 educators. This lack was noticeable in districts and buildings where many PK–12 students were not from White middle-class backgrounds. The process used to develop this study was designed to adjust the perceptions of teacher candidates and enhance their knowledge of teaching in locations different than their home schools. Additionally, the process made a difference in partner districts' willingness to have teacher candidates in their buildings throughout the school year. Teacher candidates are now in high demand, even in the first year on campus, despite their relative inexperience. Other Schools of Education can emulate the collaborative process used by Northwest Missouri State University to meet the needs of teacher candidates, partner schools, and the School of Education. The process begins and ends with a spark of inquiry, a desire to engage in real partnership development, an openness to change, and a relentless drive to continually improve the experiences of teacher candidates so they, in turn, can be the teachers needed by increasingly diverse PK–12 students.

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Appendix A: Student Survey

Please rate your agreement with the following statements (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

- The value of being immersed in education courses in the first semester was good.
- I established positive relationships with education faculty
- The course workload was manageable.
- The clinical field experiences was important to my learning.
- I established positive relationships with other education majors.
- The course work was engaging.
- The course work was relevant to my future career as a teacher.
- The course sequence was effective.
- Professional Learning Communities are important.
- The courses are rigorous and challenging.

Rank the following aspects of the redesigned program with 1 being the most impactful and 6 being the least impactful.

1. Observations make in P12 schools.
2. Field experiences in urban/suburban districts
3. Participation in Poverty Simulation
4. Pretention by John Antonetti, author in student engagement
5. Observation of parent-teacher conference
6. Attendance at a school board meeting

Appendix B: Teacher and Administrator Survey

1. The School of Education promotes professionalism for our teacher candidates. Please comment on whether or not the students met your expectations, What, if any, changes would you like to see?
2. We know that scheduling the observations was challenging, What suggestions do you have for efficient scheduling of observations?
3. Please comment on how well prepared students were for the observations.
4. Would you be willing to host a student again in the 2018-19 school year?
5. If you could be more involved in our teacher preparation program, in what ways would you like to contribute to the education of teacher candidates?

Appendix C: Survey distributed to Faculty

Considering the components of the redesigned program, what do you believe was the most impactful aspect of the program?