

Public Abstract

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Title:AN EXAMINATION OF HOW EXTENDED FIELD EXPERIENCES, INTEGRATED COURSEWORK, AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS INFLUENCED THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOUR FIRST YEAR TEACHERS' LITERACY BELIEFS AND PRACTICE

The purpose of this multi-case study was to examine how a field based senior year program that integrated field experience, coursework, and school partnerships influenced the development of four first year teachers' literacy beliefs and practice. The four teachers involved in this study were hired to teach in elementary primary classrooms in three different public school districts.

Within each case study, collected data consisted of fieldnotes from classroom observations, informal notes from follow-up conversations, pre and post interviews with the teachers, and classroom artifacts such as lesson plans and daily schedules. Constant comparative techniques were used to identify categories which were ultimately compared across cases.

Results indicated that university coursework, district commitment to teacher preparation, and mentor support combine to assist first year teachers in making reflective decisions which help them develop effective literacy practices. Combining coursework and field experience extends novice teachers' opportunities for teaching philosophy development. When the field experience includes the support of a strong mentor teacher, and the building sustains a solid literacy program with measures of accountability for teaching literacy in place, teaching development is enhanced. Findings also revealed that a variety of experiences in different classrooms with different literacy programs may help first year teachers more critically examine literacy programs and practices and engage in reflective planning and decision making. Immersion into a field-based senior year program may allow for quicker progression along the novice to expert teacher continuum. The implication of this study is that teacher preparation should be embedded in classroom practice.