

Public Abstract

First Name:Gary

Middle Name:D

Last Name:Gabel

Adviser's First Name:Lisa

Adviser's Last Name:Dorner

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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Title:LEARNING FROM CHANGE: HOW TEACHERS ADAPT TO DEMOGRAPHIC STUDENT POPULATION CHANGES

This research explores how veteran teachers respond to demographic changes in their school's student populations, specifically: When demographic change occurs in a student population, how do veteran teachers respond? What are the veteran teachers' beliefs and practices as they interact with students who differ from the ones they have always taught? Specifically, do veteran teachers continue with similar (1) beliefs about students, (2) pedagogical approaches, and (3) ways of interacting with family members? Or do teachers develop new ideas and approaches, perhaps viewing the changes as an opportunity for growth or a transformational learning experience? Framed by transformational learning theory, this research has implications for designing professional development for other veteran teachers.

Seventeen veteran teachers took part in this qualitative study at an elementary school in the Midwestern United States, which was representative of many schools across the country experiencing rapid changes in the proportion of students from immigrant and lower socioeconomic families. Participants completed online questionnaires and semi-structured face-to-face interviews.

Over 74% of the veteran teacher participants believed success with a new student population only occurred after forming relationships with individual students. Thus, relationships, rather than standardized instructional practices, determined academic agendas and sometimes led to a transformational change in teachers' beliefs. Findings suggest that in conjunction with other professional development, school leaders should add instruction for teachers on how to build and understand the importance of relationships with students.

Keywords- Demographic Change, English Language Learners, Professional Development, Transformational Learning, Veteran Teacher