Fall 10-1-2013

Ready2Teach: Shifts in Teacher Preparation Through Residency and Situated Learning

Ryan Andrew Nivens
East Tennessee State University, nivens@etsu.edu

Citation Information

Nivens, Ryan Andrew. 2013. Ready2Teach: Shifts in Teacher Preparation Through Residency and Situated Learning. *Southeastern Regional Association of Teacher Education Journal*. Vol.23(1). 13-17. http://srate.org/JournalEditions/231/pdf/Nivens.pdf ISSN: 1068-1752

Ready2Teach: Shifts in Teacher Preparation Through Residency and Situated Learning

Ready2Teach: Shifts in Teacher Preparation Through Residency and Situated Learning

Ryan Andrew Nivens: East Tennessee State University

Residency models for education in the medical profession have existed for many years. Nationwide, policies are being implemented to bring this model to the field of teacher preparation. How this plays out within education programs is less researched, and there is a need to document the transition from traditional teacher education, that is, education that is based heavily in the college classroom, to a residency model, where preservice teachers spend a significant amount of time in an elementary school classroom. This paper describes how a year-long residency model is implemented and presents the changes in curriculum, scheduling and challenges encountered.

The Ready2Teach (R2T) program is a statewide approach to the overhaul of teacher education programs within the Tennessee Board of Regents, one of America's 10 largest institutions of higher education. The R2T program, in part, comes as a response to various policy groups calling for reform. In a news release, this was the sort of language the R2T program responded to,

> "sweeping recommendations are part of a report by the Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning, convened by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to improve student learning" (NCATE News & Press Release)

This paper provides a description of how the K-6 teacher preparation program at East Tennessee State University has changed in response to the R2T program. Among these shifts are:

- year-long residency during the senior year, and
- co-teaching model in field experiences

This paper addresses these two shifts by first describing the previous program, the changes made, and discussing how this impacts the curriculum when coursework is partially replaced by increased field experiences. Details of how this is handled in a mathematics methods course are presented for a concrete example of the shift to situated learning. In particular, the article presents how shifts from simulation-style projects to projects that involve actual children in the classroom affect the course. Furthermore, we discuss how the increase in field hours has moved from 60 hours to 211 hours. This increase has required four courses, math, science, language arts, and reading to each give up the equivalent of 1 credit hour each in exchange for extensive K-6 teaching experience.

Table 1. Previous Credit Distribution of Program

For the past decade, our K-6 teacher education program consisted of the required credits in four categories as shown in Table

Total General Education	41
Total Interdisciplinary Studies in Education Major	41
Total Professional Education	26
Total Professional Semester	12

1. With the accountability and assessment movement in education came many changes in policies toward colleges of teacher education. In Tennessee, the medical model was considered to be the preferable model to follow regarding preparing teachers (c.f., Hoffman, Hosokawa, Blake, Headrick, & Johnson (2006)). Extensive training for faculty and administrators began in 2009, with an emphasis of problem-based learning and residency (see Valle, et al (1999) for problem-based learning in medical schools). The recommendations from the state were to increase field experiences and implement problem-based learning into coursework for teacher candidates (Barron, Preston-Sabin, Kennedy, 2013). Emphasis was placed on having a full year of residency to replace traditional student teaching, while not abandoning all seat time for methods coursework.

Introduction of New Ready2Teach Program

The changes required by the Tennessee Board of Regents resulted in the credit distribution in four categories as shown in Table 2. Comparing Tables 1 and 2 reveal that while the general education credits remained the same, the middle categories became more balanced out (see Appendix A & B for detailed comparisons). The change in name of the final category was made to emphasize the residency nature of the program. This is more than just a change in name, but reflects a philosophy of how the program runs.

Table 2. Ready2Teach Credit Distribution of Program

To implement a full year of residency, four courses sacrificed 1 credit hour each in exchange for 200 hours of field placement experience in

Total General Education	41
Total Interdisciplinary Studies in Education Major	34
Total Professional Education	33
Residency II Experience	12

the first semester of the senior year. Our pre-service teachers begin their residency the week before the public schools open, meaning that they are able to work with their cooperating teachers from the very start. In this way, children start the school year with the residency teacher as a part of the class. Residency continues throughout the academic year, with the first semester requiring the previously mentioned 200 hours as well as the second semester requiring full-time placement in the classroom. Our pre-service teachers experience the first week of K-6 school in August up through statewide testing in April.

Scheduling Implementation

Scheduling course times and schedules were the first noticeable changes we made. First we changed course times so that they met once per week rather than twice per week (see Tables 3 and 4). One of the biggest reasons for this adjustment was to consolidate schedules for faculty. Both the old and new schedules had preservice teachers on campus only two days per week. However, teaching two sections meant that faculty would need to teach four days a week. While this has not been a problem in the past, the transition to fall-only Residency 1 may require that we have three sections of students, which would be difficult to schedule given our commitment to have the same professor teaching all sections of the Residency course.

One change we made on a utilitarian basis was the schedule for the two sections of courses we offered during the fall semester. Knowing that requiring 211 hours of field placement would be difficult for many of our preservice teachers to manage, we took preemptive measures to avoid losing students due to scheduling conflicts. In the previous program, we would typically have two sections in the fall semester. One would be offered during daytime hours, about 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and the other was offered in the afternoon and evening, about Noon to 8 p.m. Our second change was to start all courses at 11:30 a.m. for both sections, freeing up mornings on class days to allow for additional field placement hours.

In the first semester of implementation two challenges arose. In a few limited cases, our preservice teachers were not placed in a classroom where particular subject areas are taught. For example, in the upper grades a preservice teacher may be in a science and language arts classroom. This required our preservice teachers to establish a relationship with another teacher, who is not their mentor, when our projects required them to work within a specific content area. A good example of this is a project they complete for their math methods course, in which they identify a child who has fallen behind in mathematics to conduct a diagnostic interview and plan remediation (c.f., Ashlock, 2009; van de Walle, Karp, & Bay-Williams, 2013).

A second challenge involved the interruptions encountered in the various school districts that our preservice teachers were placed in. Benchmark testing occurred in some districts at the end of the first nine weeks. In many districts, this was also the time when fall break occurred. Because the local districts all operated on independent schedules, including start date of the school year, this created about a four-week period of interruption to when our preservice teachers may have projects to complete for class, for example, conducting the diagnostic interview for the math methods assignment.

Questions that arose were how to evaluate field time in terms of teaching methods courses to K-6 students. By giving up 4 weeks of course time, we had to trust that the activities of teaching in the classroom were adequate to replace time on campus. Although the course seat time is replaced by fieldwork hours, the methods course still remains at 3 credits. We continue to determine exactly what authentic activities draw on teaching experience.

Table 3. Previous Program Schedule Challenges

	Monday (section 1)	**Tuesday (section 2)**	**Wednesday (section 1)**	**Thursday (section 2)**	**Friday Field Placement**
8:20 – 9:35	Clinical Field Seminar		Clinical Field Seminar		Field Placement Option
9:45 – 11:05	Math Methods		Math Methods		
11:15 -12:35	Literacy	Clinical Field Seminar	Literacy	Clinical Field Seminar	
1:15 – 2:35	Language Arts	Math Methods	Language Arts	Math Methods	
2:45 – 4:05	Social Studies	Literacy	Social Studies	Literacy	
4:15 – 5:35		Language Arts		Language Arts	
5:45 – 7:05		Social Studies		Social Studies	

Table 4. Ready2Teach Schedule

	Monday (section 1)	Tuesday (section 2)	Wednesday (section 1)	Thursday (section 2)	Friday Field Placement
8:20 – 11:05	Field Placement Option				Field Placement Option
11:30 – 12:50	Clinical Field Seminar	Clinical Field Seminar	Clinical Field Seminar	Clinical Field Seminar	
1:15 – 4:05	Math Methods	Language Arts	Literacy	Literacy	
4:15 – 7:05	Language Arts	Math Methods	Social Studies*	Social Studies*	

* Will be replaced by Science Methods course starting in Spring 2014

Conclusion

As we look to the coming years of this newly redesigned program, we hope to see improvements in K-6 student performance and satisfaction with our undergraduate students. The shift from traditional student teaching to a full-year of residency presents opportunities and challenges. The next challenge we face it dealing with students who must repeat a course, due to failure or withdrawal from the course. Another challenge is providing an exit out of the program for preservice teachers who determine that teaching is no longer their choice of career. A pathway we have used in the past has been a general studies degree. However, we seek to find a more specific path that includes an educational focus but that does not lead to a state teaching license.

Although creating a new program with such substantial changes is challenging, we are excited to see how our local K-6 students do with having additional access to preservice students through our extensive residency requirements. Certainly the teachers in the schools we work with are excited, and we hope that students in schools will benefit.

References

Ashlock, Robert. (2010). Error patterns in computation: Using error patterns to help each student learn (tenth edition). Boston: Pearson.

Barron, L., Preston-Sabin, J., & Kennedy, D. (2013). Problem-based learning for the pre-service teacher. Journal of the Southeastern Regional Association of Teacher Educators 22(2), 39-45.

Hoffman, K., Hosokawa, M., Blake Jr., R., Headrick, L., & Johnson, G. (2006). Problem-based learning outcomes: Ten years of experience at the university of Missouri – Columbia school of medicine. Academic Medicine, 81(7), 617-625.

Knorr, R. (2011-2012). Pre-service teacher cohorts: Characteristics and issues: A review of the literature. Journal of the Southeastern Regional Association of Teacher Educators 21(1), 18-23.

Valle, R., Petra, I., Martínez-González, A., Rojas-Ramirez, J. A., Morales-Lopez, S., & Piña-Garza, B. (1999). Assessment of student performance in problem-based learning tutorial sessions. Medical Education, 33, 818-822.

Van de Walle, Karp, & Bay-Williams (2013). Elementary and Middle School Mathematics: Teaching Developmentally (eighth edition). Boston: Pearson.

Authors Note

Ryan Andrew Nivens, assistant professor, program coordinator for K-6 education, East Tennessee State University, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, area of scholarship: Mathematics Education.