

Using Supervised Tutoring to Enhance Teacher Candidates' Learning of HLPs

CEEDAR Scale-Up Conference
September 29, 2017

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Undergraduate comprehensive K-12 special education and collaborative elementary/special education programs at SCSU: Field experiences

- SED 225/EDU 200 – Classroom observations
- SED 365 – Supervised tutoring (math)
- SED 435 – Supervised tutoring (reading)
- SED 449 – Small group instruction (reading, math, content areas); includes collaboration
- EDU 450/451 – Student teaching

SED 365 – Academic Assessment and Remediation

- First 7-8 weeks of semester: pedagogical content knowledge about assessment and math
- Assessment content includes types and purposes of assessment; utility of CBM in screening/PM; ethical considerations in assessment
- Math content begins with important components of math; role of automaticity/fluency in math achievement; general education expectations

SED 365 – Academic Assessment and Remediation (continued)

- Math content also includes common patterns of math difficulties (e.g., procedures for calculation vs. math problem-solving); value of explicit, systematic instruction; value of manipulatives and visual representations
- Candidates design their own formative assessments for time, money, place value, fraction concepts
- Candidates are provided with assessments for fact fluency, calculation procedures, word problems
- In-class practice of math assessments with a peer

SED 365 (continued):

- Field work begins about week 8 of semester
- Tues/Thurs class – 1 session per week at local magnet school (K-8), 1 session at university
- Field work children usually in Grades 3-5
- All field sessions supervised on site by course instructor
- About 8 field sessions in total – 1 to 2 formative assessment sessions, 6 to 7 tutoring sessions
- Candidate assignments include exams, diagnostic report, lesson plans, goals and objectives, reflections, field work portfolio

SED 435 – Language Arts for Exceptional Individuals

- First 7-8 weeks of semester: content (disciplinary) knowledge about reading
- Content includes structure of language (phonics, morphology, sentence structure, discourse structure); 5 components of reading; typical reading development and grade expectations in reading; common patterns of reading difficulties (specific word recognition difficulties, specific comprehension difficulties, mixed reading difficulties)

SED 435 – Language Arts (continued)

- Field work experiences and assignments parallel the math course, but focus is on reading (especially decoding, spelling, and fluency) rather than math
- Field work children for this course typically in Grades 1-2
- Lesson plans do include work on vocabulary and comprehension, mainly via tutor read-alouds

SED 435 – Language Arts (continued)

- Candidates must come to tutoring with an appropriate read-aloud book
- Course instructor provides texts for children's own reading (usually decodables)
- Candidate selects appropriate text based on initial assessment results, with assistance from course instructor
- All assessments in this course purchased by or provided to candidates (e.g., Core Phonics Survey, MASI-R, informal letter-sounds test)

For each course, diagnostics and lesson plans are organized (approximately) around important components of math/reading

- Key components of math: facts, calculation procedures/algorithms, concepts, word problems, functional math (time/money)
- Key components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension

Diagnostic report for both courses:

- Begins with introduction: test setting, assessments administered, student's behavior during testing, validity of test administration
- Main body of report: subheadings for each assessment administered
- For each assessment: Begin with a brief description of the assessment; tell specific skills student has mastered; what s/he needs to learn next

Example for SED 365 diagnostic:

“The informal assessment of problem solving contains the types of math word problems that children typically learn to solve in the elementary grades. All problems are read aloud to the student and may be repeated as needed. On this assessment Kylie was consistently able to solve one-step word problems involving basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, as long as those problems had no irrelevant information. Next, she needs to work on more complex problem types that involve distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, as well as problems with more than one step.”

Diagnostic reports conclude with a final summary section that:

- Describes the child's overall pattern of strengths and weaknesses across all assessments
- References general education expectations by estimating an overall level of achievement
- Briefly discusses the approach to be taken in tutoring
- Conveys enthusiasm for working with the student

Example for SED 435 diagnostic:

“William has important strengths in his vocabulary knowledge and broad language comprehension. He also has good knowledge of sight words expected for his grade level. However, he would benefit from additional work on phonics skills and reading fluency. Based on William’s performance on these assessments, I would estimate his current level of functioning in reading to be approximately the end of Grade 1. To improve William’s phonics skills, ...”

Example for SED 435 diagnostic (continued):

“...I will use sorting activities to teach him syllable types such as magic e and vowel r, as well as word-building activities with letter tiles. Read-alouds of grade-appropriate books that interest William will be used to continue his vocabulary and comprehension development. William is a very friendly, eager student and I look forward to our tutoring sessions together.”

SED 365 Lesson Plan addresses:

- Facts (accuracy and/or automaticity)
- Calculation procedures (e.g., procedure for 3-digit subtraction with regrouping; procedure for long division)
- Time and/or money
- Word problems
- Behavioral objectives for each area (e.g., “Given 6 one-step word problems involving irrelevant information, Kylie will solve them with at least 80% accuracy.”)

SED 435 Lesson Plan addresses:

- Sounds for letters and common letter patterns
- Phonics generalizations (e.g., syllable types, syllabication rules)
- Decoding and spelling phonetically regular words
- Reading and spelling irregular words
- Reading in a book (usually a decodable)
- Fluency (usually via a re-read of a book read in the previous session), with a record of % accuracy and wcpm
- Teacher read-aloud, with new vocabulary and an EBP for teaching vocabulary (e.g., morphemic analysis)
- Behavioral objectives for each area

Candidates are expected to choose or develop appropriate instructional materials, with appropriate examples for instruction:

- In math, avoid zeroes when introducing a new skill (e.g., $50 - 27$ is more confusing than $52 - 27$)
- In reading, avoid introducing confusable sounds at the same time (e.g., don't teach too many short vowel sounds at once; don't introduce /sh/ and /ch/ together)
- Use of published or web materials is encouraged but candidate must consider if evidence-based and appropriate to child's needs; credit the source
- Use of technology is strongly encouraged (e.g., apps for fact practice or time skills; online decodables like those from Core Knowledge site)

In both courses, candidate reflections (written after each tutoring session) must consider if:

- The student was engaged in the lesson
- Lesson pacing was appropriate (a common candidate problem is difficulty completing lessons)
- Most objectives were met (and if not, why not)
- Which activities were most/least successful
- How the lesson can be improved for the next session

Examples of high-leverage teaching practices developed in SED 365 and 435:

- Explaining and modeling content and strategies in both math and reading (e.g., model the procedure for multiplying a 2-digit number by a 2-digit number; model decoding of an unknown word)
- Eliciting and interpreting children's thinking
- Diagnosing common errors in children's thinking
- Adjusting instruction during a lesson
- Building respectful relationships with students

Examples of high-leverage practices developed in SED 365 and 435 (continued):

- Setting long-term and short-term goals/objectives
- Designing single lessons and sequences of lessons
- Checking student understanding
- Interpreting results of student work
- Providing oral feedback to students
- Analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it

Features of effective practice embedded in the field experience for both courses:

- Spaced learning: Tutoring sessions are spaced across ~6 weeks and candidates have opportunities to grow and develop as teachers
- Modeling: Course instructor provides modeling in class and also for individual candidates during tutoring sessions
- Explicit coaching and feedback: Provided to candidates during tutoring sessions and also in a short class debriefing after tutoring

Features of effective practice embedded in the field experience (continued):

- Scaffolding: Occurs across the 6 tutoring sessions, with most candidates becoming increasingly independent over time
- Analyzing and reflecting on lessons

Can tutored students actually benefit from such short-term tutoring?

- Yes (Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2003, 2004; Spear-Swerling, 2009)
- Important to structure tutoring in ways that will maximize benefits to students
- In SED 365 and 435, a specific population of children is recruited from the school (e.g., mild difficulties, likely to show good attendance, children with decoding needs for SED 435)

Examples of improvements in SED 365 and 435 related specifically to CEEDAR:

- Incorporation of Gradual Release of Responsibility model in both courses
- Greater emphasis on assessment/teaching of written expression in SED 435 (e.g., presentation effects in writing; importance of text models for writing; key components of writing; writing processes)
- Revisions to SED 435 involving writing also are a base for additional writing content in SED 449
- Field work changes include greater incorporation of specific vocabulary and reading fluency content in lesson plans

Some benefits of structuring tutoring experiences in this way (i.e., embedded in methods course with instructor supervision)

- High degree of coherence between course content knowledge and field application
- Makes course content learning much more meaningful for candidates
- Many candidates especially motivated to do well in preparation for field experience
- Experience does facilitate development of important teaching competencies (e.g., explicit teaching and modeling, unambiguous feedback to student errors, use of scaffolding)
- Candidates also learn to apply some basic behavior management competencies (e.g., redirecting attention; having clear expectations for behavior phrased positively; simple reward systems)

Some benefits (continued):

- For some candidates, tutoring experience fosters a more realistic understanding of the demands of a teaching career
- Supervised tutoring experience allows for on-demand modeling and demonstration by course instructor
- Provides course instructor with a more complete picture of tutored students' skills (as compared to unsupervised tutoring), which permits better feedback to candidates
- Provides course instructor with a more complete picture of teacher candidates' skills

Examples:

- “Belinda”: Teacher candidate who is a “B” student and has somewhat weak writing skills; but is always well-prepared for field work and relates beautifully to the student; designs very engaging and instructionally appropriate activities; has a knack for clear, concise explanations and structured teaching
- “Sharon”: Has superb academic skills and writes beautifully; prepares well for field work and is warm toward student, but sometimes inadvertently confuses him with long-winded explanations; finds it difficult to be flexible at times (e.g., when session cut short due to class photos)

Some challenges of structuring tutoring experiences in this way (i.e., embedded in methods course with instructor supervision)

- Keeping course sizes small enough for meaningful supervision (current max = 16)
- Finding enough time for content coverage
- Ensuring that content not specifically related to field work (e.g., literacy needs of adolescents) receives adequate attention
- Finding schools near campus with the space to accommodate a large group of candidates at once
- Achieving consistency across different course sections (e.g., those taught in the evening or by adjuncts)

Some challenges (continued):

- Occasional problems with weak candidates who cannot be counseled out prior to start of tutoring
- Example: “Andrea,” struggled with content learning in first half of SED 435, midterm grade = F; counseled to withdraw from course, and she did
- However, candidates cannot be forced to withdraw; large amount of course grade still remains to be determined
- This happens rarely, but it does happen

Some challenges (continued):

- If content learning is separated from field component (2 courses), then candidate can be required to attain a certain performance in the first course in order to take the second one
- However, this would potentially have other disadvantages, e.g., less coherence between course content learning and field experience

Some suggestions for teacher educators
interested in adopting this kind of
tutoring model

- Build a relationship with a school over time
- Seek a consistent liaison at that school (e.g., someone who will handle parent permissions, help troubleshoot problems, etc.)
- Convey purpose and expectations of the field experience to the school; make sure those will be feasible for them to do
- Make expectations clear to candidates from outset of course

Some suggestions (continued):

- Make the tutoring experience as valuable as possible for the children/school (e.g., provide guidelines to teachers for students most likely to benefit from the program; seek input about individual students' needs and school needs)
- Be flexible and well-organized
- Administrative (SOE) support is essential for sustainability and for other reasons as well (e.g., keeping course sizes manageable)
- Overall, need a “top down” AND a “bottom up” approach

Q & A

Thank you!

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