

A Collaborative Experience: Partnering with a Local Agricultural Education Program to Provide Teaching Opportunities for Pre-service Teacher Candidates

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Introduction and Need for the Innovation

Agricultural education has espoused experiential learning as a means to provide for meaningful learning (Andreasen, 2004). Teacher preparation units often use microteaching sessions as a means to prepare candidates. While micro-teaching may require teacher candidates to use information and skills important to teaching (Allen & Eve, 1968), some of the “real-life” experiences are missed in micro-teaching situations. Examples of “real-life” experiences which are not experienced in a micro-teaching session include classroom management issues, planning for more than one forty-minute class, and the inability to act upon reflections of where future class sessions should be directed based upon the outcome of that particular lesson.

To address the need for a more “real-life” teaching experience for their pre-service teacher candidates, the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at Pennsylvania State University formed a partnership with the State College Area High School’s agricultural education program. Through the partnership, teacher candidates are exposed to a *real* program with *real* students; the major goal of the venture.

How It Works

The teaching experience is “housed” as an assignment in an existing Agricultural and Extension Education course in the department. Teacher candidates have the opportunity to prepare and teach class for at least three consecutive days in the high school agriculture program. Students choose from one of five topic areas (due to the need to address topics currently being taught at the high school program). The areas from which students can choose are; Agricultural Science, Companion/Pet Science, Horticulture, Wildlife, or Agricultural Mechanics (specifically, Small Engines). Once teacher candidates select their topic area, they must submit a brief outline to the course instructor, as well as the high school instructor, to ensure the lesson can be financially supported and that it enriches the content of the course.

After teacher candidates receive approval of their topic area, they must develop lesson plans for each of the three days, which they will teach. The teacher candidates must be certain that materials for the lessons are available in the department, or that supplies can be purchased for the lesson. Teaching dates and times are coordinated between the teacher candidate, university instructor, and the high school agriculture instructor. The day prior to beginning their three consecutive days of teaching, candidates observe the class which they will be instructing. The candidate is responsible for teaching the class for the next three days. Immediately following

each class session, the teacher candidate meets with either the university instructor or the high school agriculture instructor to reflect on the experience (Posner, 2005) and brainstorm ideas for improvement for the next day's lesson. One of the three class sessions is videotaped. The candidate must watch the session and critique their teaching.

Results To Date and Implications

The three-day teaching episode experience is in the third year of implementation. Teacher candidates are reflecting on each lesson that they teach, but more importantly are guided through the reflection process and developing ideas, which they can implement the very next day; an advantage that may not be available through traditional micro-teaching. The lessons are taught to high school students, but there is some comfort afforded to the candidate due to the fact that the high school instructor is present should he be needed.

Future Plans and Advice to Others

Forming a partnership of this magnitude with a local agriculture program has benefits for both the university and the local high school. The high school agricultural education program, and the students in the program, benefit from the enrichment-type topics which are taught by the teacher candidates. The university benefits by having an avenue for teacher candidates to secure "real-life" experience in the classroom. Before initiating such a partnership, both the university instructor and the high school agriculture instructor must agree on the format and goals of the project.

Future plans include continuing with the three day version of the teaching. Other programs may decide to implement a full week program, if the course timeline allows for this structure. Also, it is recommended that all three class sessions be videotaped. Through the videotapes, teacher candidates can critique themselves and see what students were hearing, seeing, and doing during the lesson. By videotaping all three sessions, the candidate can also see improvements which were made following the reflection exercise.

Costs and Resources Required

DVD Camcorder	\$535.00
DVD's (1 per student - \$3.00 each)	\$ 90.00
<u>Consumable supplies for teaching</u>	<u>\$200.00</u>
Total	\$825.00

References

- Allen, D. W., & Eve, A. W. (1968). Microteaching. *Theory into Practice*, 7(5), 181-185.
- Andreasen, R. J. (2004). Integrating experiential learning into college of agriculture capstone courses: Implications and applications for practitioners. *NACTA Journal*, 48(1), 52-57.

Posner, G. J. (2005). *Field experience: A guide to reflective teaching*. (6th ed.). New York: Pearson Education, Inc.