



NEWSLETTER

At the Crossroads of Teacher Education

THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS IS A FORMIDABLE UNDERTAKING, AND IN THE LAST DECADE IT HAS BECOME A GROWTH INDUSTRY. HISTORICALLY, “NORMAL SCHOOLS” HAD THE RESPONSIBILITY OF TEACHER TRAINING. FRAMINGHAM STATE COLLEGE IS GENERALLY ACKNOWLEDGED TO BE THE FIRST IN THE U.S., HAVING BEEN FOUNDED IN 1839. THROUGHOUT THE LATTER 20TH CENTURY, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, WITH GREATER OR LESSER DEGREES OF SUCCESS AND OFTEN IN CORRELATION TO THE PROGRAM’S ABILITY TO GENERATE REVENUE, HAVE ASSUMED THE ROLE OF TRAINING TEACHERS; IN MANY CASES, THE NORMAL SCHOOLS EVOLVED TO BECOME MAJOR RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS (FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY AND UCLA, FOR EXAMPLE), AND TEACHER TRAINING BECAME AN ANCILLARY RATHER THAN PRIMARY MISSION.



As a profession, teacher education has reached tenuous consensus that there are certain “courses” requisite to becoming a successful teacher; however, more and more, we are hearing from our customers (to conscript a term from the business folks) that our graduates are not being trained effectively. Indeed, we have spent much time on the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions of our graduates, but have we heeded what schools and school districts are telling us about how well our graduates perform in their first (induction) years of professional practice?

Now new competitors have entered the fray, and they pose real challenges to the traditional programs. Online programs, alternative certification, Teach for America, and the anathema to any die-hard teacher educator—ABCTE—and others are contesting the iconography and divine right of colleges and universities to provide the newest generation of those whose challenge it will be to shape young minds.

Traditional programs are full of traditional courses: methods and materials, educational psychology, growth and development, how to teach art/social studies/English/language arts/math/science at various grade levels. Then we add and stir health education, physical education, public speaking,

reading, art, music, technology, other foundations courses, and a plethora of field experiences. We force-feed state mandates such as drug abuse prevention, safe schools, standards of conduct, state curriculum standards, state assessment standards, state induction standards, performance standards within numerous constructs, and NCATE (or other accreditation), and we begin to see why traditional teacher educators are frustrated, tired, and often ineffective. We seem to have lost our vision of what our graduates need to know (knowledge), need to be able to do (skills), and need to value (dispositions) to be effective in the classroom with children. However, with the demographic changes that have affected our communities, states, regions, and nation, we may have lost our way. We have become so entrenched as teacher educators that we may be training our graduates to teach content, but not to teach children.

At the risk of being iconoclastic, I maintain that traditional programs do a fine job preparing new teachers to teach the top 25% of the kids in our schools—indeed, those kids whom anyone could teach; however, how are the newly minted graduates with shiny new teaching credentials prepared to deal with the other 75%: children of poverty, children of color, children of immigrants, children of

distress, children of extremes of rural or urban blight, children with one or no parents, children of disengaged families, and the myriad indicators of failure in the becoming-more-toxic culture of public schools? Here’s an insight: “Teachers cannot teach what (and WHOM!) they do not know.”

The series of articles in this newsletter represents respected educators and addresses some issues that most—but certainly not all—traditional (read: “college/university-based”) educators may not, do not, cannot, or will not address. These strategies hold great promise and are grounded in a research base. Common threads run through all of these articles: engagement, community, giving back, social and civic responsibility, school climate, service-learning, and, of course, dropout prevention.

As we sit at the crossroads as a nation to determine how we recruit, train, place, assess, and reward good teachers, we hope to stimulate the conversation toward the determination of “what matters most.” The children can be the beneficiaries; will we provide the obligatory stewardship?

—Nancy Cassity Dunlap, Ph.D.
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School Climate—There Should Be No Debate for Teacher Educators

by Terry Pickeral

Without a doubt, dropout prevention is an issue policymakers, education leaders, businesses, and citizens care about. The consequences of young Americans not completing high school affect individuals, communities, our economy, and our democracy.

Many interventions are employed in schools and communities throughout the nation including remediation programs, after-school programs, small classes, a focus on motivation, service-learning and other engaging pedagogies, parental engagement and many others—all attempting to reducing the dropout rate.

Teacher educators are responsible for ensuring the next generation of teachers is equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to motivate and educate all students across

all grade levels. Interestingly, as we review pre-service teacher curriculum, syllabi, and pedagogies employed in teacher education programs, the topic of school climate is absent. Yet, school climate is one of the most important contributors to student achievement and success.

School climate is the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures. It is common sense that how we feel (e.g., safe, connected to others whom we feel care, engaged in learning and teaching) matters.

In reaction to a compelling body of research—demonstrating that school climate promotes student learning, academic achievement, school success, and healthy development as well as effective risk prevention, positive youth development, and increased teacher retention—the U.S. Department of Education recently developed an initiative on school climate. Under this new program, the Department will provide federal financial assistance to eligible state educational agencies to develop rigorous measurement systems to help assess individual school's climates to determine how safe and supportive they are. The program also provides funding for programmatic interventions in the schools with the biggest challenges, as determined by the measurement system the state develops. By bringing a rigorous measurement system to the issue, we seek to help states target interventions to their most at-risk communities.

This federal initiative along with strategies implemented by school climate advocates should yield an increased focus on school climate in P-12 schools, and hopefully teacher preparation programs will take heed and integrate and sustain quality opportunities for pre-service teachers to understand and establish safe, quality,

and equitable school climates as they enter the profession.

In order for school climate to become an important topic integrated into teacher preparation programs, policymakers and education leaders need to take important steps, including: provide professional development to teacher education faculty to increase their school climate knowledge and skills and assist them to determine how to integrate school climate into their courses; integrate school climate research into courses focused on effective strategies and contexts for student achievement and success; encourage P-12 school partners to provide quality opportunities for pre-service teachers to examine school climate in their observations, internships, and student teaching; establish quality, safe, and equitable classroom climate in teacher education courses to model school climate and provide an opportunity for pre-service teachers to experience the impacts of school climate; include school climate in courses focusing on effective strategies for at-risk and high-risk students so that pre-service teachers understand the importance of context as well as content in P-12 classes and schools; and encourage teacher education faculty to conduct research on school climate to better understand how school climate contributes to (and inhibits) P-12 student achievement and success.

School climate should move to the core of teacher preparation programs as a critical element of school norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures. Research particularly demonstrates that the school's context encourages or discourages student engagement and retention; thus, there should be no debate on its importance in teacher education and P-12 schools.

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National
Dropout Prevention
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NEWSLETTER

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Network Notes

Meet Our Guest Editor

■ Nancy Cassity Dunlap is Associate Director *Emerita* of the Eugene T. Moore School of Education at Clemson University. She received a Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina and has additional graduate studies at the University of London and the University of Virginia. She has been a public school teacher and administrator, a university professor and administrator, and a teacher educator. Her professional interests include instructional technology, public and education policy, teacher education and service-learning, and economic development/education connections.



Plan Now for the 2011 Annual At-Risk Youth National FORUM

■ The 23rd Annual At-Risk Youth National FORUM is set to come once again to Myrtle Beach, SC, February 20-23, 2011. The theme of the 23rd FORUM is "Expanding, Improving, and Enhancing School and Community Relationships to Increase the Graduation Rate" and will feature two pre-conference sessions that address these issues. Pat Davenport will focus on relationships with parents; Gayle McGrane will be providing a workshop on building authentic relationships with youth at risk. In addition, our keynoter will be Dr. William Preble, who will address relationships at the school level. It promises to be a terrific conference! You can now register online for this outstanding professional development event! Go to www.dropoutprevention.org/conferences.



Beyond the Bully Pulpit

■ Our latest publication has been authored by Edward Lambert, Jr. In *Beyond the Bully Pulpit, the Mayor's Role in Dropout Prevention*, the former mayor of Fall River, Massachusetts, provides school leaders and citizens with the information they need to share with their mayors so collectively they can combat the dropout crisis in their communities. Mr. Lambert currently serves as Director of the Urban Initiative at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, where he also teaches public policy and public management. The Urban Initiative conducts research, technical assistance, and policy analysis to benefit municipalities, the state, and the region. In 2008, the Urban Initiative was selected to serve as the first national satellite of the National Dropout Prevention Center.



Solutions to the Dropout Crisis

This Fall on Solutions

■ The fall offerings on *Solutions to the Dropout Crisis* have included three outstanding programs which are now available through the archives or iTunes. In September, the program focused on family engagement by showcasing the work of Families and Schools Together (FAST) with our guest, Pat Davenport. In October, Ed Lambert, former mayor of Fall River, Massachusetts, and author of *Beyond the Bully Pulpit*, spoke about the mayor's role in dropout prevention. And in November, Drs. D'Ette Cowan and Ann Neeley of SEDL provided an important program on professional learning communities. These staff development opportunities are available online whenever you need them!

New programs will be broadcast once again beginning in January as the Solutions team takes a holiday break!

www.dropoutprevention.org/webcast

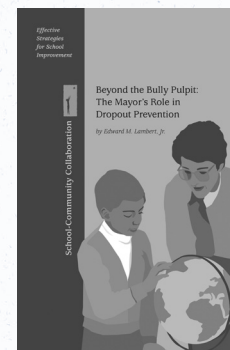
Events

Feb. 20-23, 2011 Myrtle Beach, SC
23rd Annual At-Risk Youth National FORUM—Expanding, Improving, and Enhancing School and Community Relationships to Increase the Graduation Rate

www.dropoutprevention.org

April 6-9, 2011 Atlanta, GA
22nd Annual National Service-Learning Conference—The Time is NOW!

www.nylc.org/conference



New Resource Library Coming!

■ The NDPC/N web staff are developing a new resource for your use: an online Resource Library complete with such resources as reports in PDF format, Web sites, and videos. These will be in a searchable database and provide you with your very own virtual bookshelf of dropout prevention materials.

Program Profile

Call Me MISTER: A Unique Model of Teacher Education

by Roy Jones

Scholar James Comer noted: “When bankers lose money, they make an adjustment. When products are defective, manufacturing firms examine both the materials and the processes. When a patient remains ill or dies, the physician or medical profession searches for a new cure.

But when students underachieve or act out in response to their frustration—especially if the student has been labeled as less capable or undesirable by society—school staff often assume that the problem lies in the student, or family income, or race, or religion, not in the process of education in the building.” Such a prognosis seems much too bitter a pill to swallow for insecure teachers and administrators to admit easily that they may hold a significant share of the responsibility for student failure.

In a recent interview, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan was lamenting our country’s drop from number one in the world to number 12 in the world for the number of college graduates between the ages of 24 and 34. He went on to mention only one in four Americans held a college degree. In contrast, the average dropout rate is about one in four nationwide annually, which amounts to about 1.25 million school children. Factor in race and poverty, the dropout rate ranges between 40 to 70% in many communities. If 95% of students are capable of learning, then how can we explain, much less accept, why such a dreadful number of students have been casualties of our educational system? Interestingly, he believes the solutions to

Call Me MISTER relies on a cohort, peer-development strategy to encourage personal growth, sharpen skills, improve positive mind sets, and develop qualities and dispositions appropriate to become highly effective teachers.

this national crisis lie in the vision, creativity, aspirations, and entrepreneurship at the local community level.

At least one-third of all elementary and secondary school children are considered at risk, with a disproportionate number made up of minorities, children in poverty, and migrants from Latin American countries and Asia. The phenomenal cultural transformation in this country over the past several decades has challenged our educational philosophies, strategies, behaviors, and preparation. Without a doubt, it is the responsibility of our educational establishment at every level to meet the seemingly overwhelming epidemic confronting our nation.

The Call Me MISTER program was born 10 years ago to address the specific needs confronting the African-American male in South

Carolina. Statistically, there were and still are more Black males who will spend the night in a prison cell than in a college dormitory this fall. Fewer than 1% of elementary grade teachers were African-American men in the state. A significant number of our high school graduates over the past decade have declared they’ve never experienced

having a Black male teacher in their entire school career. What did Clemson University decide to do about it? What makes the Call Me MISTER model unique? What is the Call Me MISTER Experience? What are the implications of the program’s success for dropout prevention and reshaping teacher education preparation programs?

The Mission of the Call Me MISTER (acronym for Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) initiative is to increase the pool of teachers from a broader, more diverse background, particularly among the state’s lowest performing elementary schools. College student participants with high academic potential, a demonstrated commitment to teach, and a servant-leadership orientation are selected from among underserved, socio-economically disadvantaged, and educationally at-risk communities. It is expected that a MISTER who completes his program of study and becomes certified to teach will assume a teaching position in a public school and teach one year for each year he received financial support from the Call Me MISTER program. Several MISTERS who graduated among the first cohort have already fulfilled this obligation and continue to remain in the



Call Me MISTER (Continued)

classroom while pursuing advanced degrees.

Call Me MISTER relies on a cohort, peer-development strategy to encourage personal growth, sharpen skills, improve positive mind-sets, and develop qualities and dispositions appropriate to become highly effective teachers. The process is conducted through the program's living-learning community where students are housed together and take their classes together. Systematic, guided study occurs on a regular basis throughout the academic year and through summer internships. The teaching profession is raised beyond a mere vocation to a true calling for program students. MISTERS believe they are destined to save lives through their work as pre-service and eventually professional teachers.

Call Me MISTER is a grow-your-own program. Upon completion of their academic program, MISTERS often return to their home communities or a similar community to give back toward its development. As part of their education, MISTERS are engaged, at some level, among the program's multiple outreach programs

designed to serve children from kindergarten through high school. They also learn to interact with parents and extended family members who support the children they are serving. These systematic exposures, which begin from the first year of their involvement with the program, up to their graduation day, serve as a valuable experience in leadership and service for MISTERS.

What makes Call Me MISTER unique? The MISTERS are nurtured from their first day in the program. Their dispositions are captured thusly:

- Developing a BELIEF system that you can and must be the change you expect to see in the world;



The Call Me MISTER Experience truly emphasizes the development of the whole student. The program strongly believes in the development of the affective domain; this is much more difficult to measure but significantly influences positively or negatively the cognitive side of our students.

Call Me MISTER is housed within the College of Health, Education, and Human Development, Clemson University. Its

theme is "The Engaged College with the Personal Touch"! Emotionally, to be touched is "to concern oneself with." It is a powerful feeling felt deep in the soul... inspired. Dr. Marion Newman writes, "When one is touched, he is moved. And when one is moved to action, anything can be accomplished." Call Me MISTER takes it seriously!

For more information, to obtain resources, and to hear the interview on Call Me MISTER, tune in to the NDPC *Solutions to the Dropout Crisis* Archive: <http://www.dropoutprevention.org/webcast/ep.php?ep=00014>

—Roy Jones, Ph.D., Director
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- Embracing your personal journey and committing oneself to ongoing personal development;
- Learning the importance and value of becoming a champion for children, education, and the teaching profession;
- Growing-Your-Own-Talent system of young men who dedicate themselves to making a difference in their own communities;
- FEARLESSNESS!!

It is very important to note that MISTERS are well prepared to enter any classroom and teach any child, regardless of his or her demographic profile. MISTERS learn the importance of how to establish connections with their students as a crucial dimension in their ability to foster learning.



Innovative Reform to Create Student Engagement and Success

by Allison Jacques

This October, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) was awarded \$42.4 million in federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant monies to help train, reward, and support effective teachers and principals in high-need and hard-to-staff areas. As the grant's work progresses with personnel in multiple elementary, middle, and high schools, one aspect will focus on the dropout rate of students and on the pedagogy that is needed to work with the distinctive needs of those identified as at risk.

In awarding the funds, United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan reinforced the role of effective teachers, "Nothing is more important than great teaching. These grants will help schools build a culture that celebrates excellence in the classroom and helps all teachers improve their practice."

This is the third time in four years that South Carolina's public schools have received federal funds from this grant source. This award of \$42.4 million is the fifth largest for a statewide education agency. The grant utilizes the state's highly effective Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), SC TAP. Through the grant, the SCDE will work with 1,700 teachers and principals—affecting over 20,000 students in 42 schools within 12 school districts. In the process, a comprehensive model of reform will emerge that will enhance professional development and compensation for highly effective educators. The ultimate end goal, however, is greatly improved student achievement.

Clearly, one panacea for dropouts is student engagement and student success. Both are firmly linked to an effective teacher. Through the grant, SC TAP offers a new model of incentives for recruitment and retention of effective teachers and administrators needed for at-risk students. It has four components:

- Multiple career paths that give teachers a chance to advance their careers while continuing to work directly with students to increase student achievement;
- Performance-based accountability, using multiple measures of student and teacher achievement in a fair and rigorous manner;
- Ongoing, applied professional development that helps teachers acquire the skills to address their needs as well as the needs of students; and
- Performance-based compensation that can mean higher pay for teachers and principals based on student achievement measured using a value-added growth model, as well as instructional excellence as evaluated by a valid, reliable, and rigorous assessment.

Through the implementation of a performance-based compensation system, using value-added measures that are reliable and transparent, the educational culture will be enhanced and will increase the ability to recruit and retain highly effective educators. These new recruits will ultimately affect student achievement, specifically those students who are at risk.

State Superintendent Jim Rex notes, "Through these efforts, we'll reach the tipping point of moving from a pilot project to a full-blown statewide model of reform. This will be a reform effort that involves teachers every step of the way, starting with their voting to implement the reform and continuing with teachers being the main decisionmakers about their individual developmental needs and unique needs within their classroom. It will be a reflection of the power teachers hold over their professional growth as well as their compensation."

The design of professional development, through the grant using the SC TAP model, mandates that teachers be retrained to understand



their unique needs as well as those of their students. Through an ongoing, applied, professional development model, teachers will analyze aspects of students' realities—from social, academic, cultural, familial needs, and more—that might have gone unrecognized. Indeed, it is the students' needs that trigger the catalyst for change. Students and teachers receive services, which help guide stronger academic performances. Through constant analysis, students in distress, who once fell through the cracks, are identified in the earliest stages allowing specific needs to be individually addressed through the growth of the teacher strategies.

SC TAP has been a successful partner with multiple schools and districts throughout South Carolina. It has been at the forefront of innovation and data management related to reform with professional growth and performance-based compensation. The model proves that performance-based compensation, implemented with the proper efforts, support, and buy-in from educators, will encourage students to grow beyond expected arbitrary benchmarks. These effective teachers will not only engage all of their students but ensure their success.

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Program Profile

Engaged, Involved: Future Teachers Make a Difference Through Service-Learning

by Debbie Mercer

Years of preparation and countless hours working with students precede a new teacher entering the classroom through a traditional college program. During these preparation phases, a prospective teacher is exposed to and practices a wide range of teaching techniques, pedagogies, and assessments. Perhaps none have as great an impact as the potential of implementing service-learning into their classrooms.

While everyone searches for the silver bullet, service-learning can actually deliver a variety of positive outcomes. Most importantly, it engages. By engaging future teachers in service-learning projects while in college, they are more likely to implement service-learning with their own students. This committed involvement reduces boredom, reaches at-risk students, and actively involves students in their own learning.

Further, if teachers are engaged, student engagement follows. At Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, service-learning opportunities abound that engage prospective teachers in service activities that support their academic learning. Opportunities are infused throughout the teacher preparation program in a variety of ways.

First, numerous field experiences allow students to serve local schools while applying teaching pedagogies. The K-State Professional Development School model is built on a foundation of what students need to learn in partnership with a school's particular needs. For example, tutoring of students that need individualized attention is part of our early field experience. This focus on high-need students is a critical piece in preparing our students to attend actively to individualized needs. Special reading assistance programs and homework help sessions have emerged from

these experiences, thus equating to a fulfilled need by a particular school. Field experiences are also designed to help classroom teachers and schools through activities such as before- and after-school programs, family programs (for example, family math night), and special program events (for example, science fairs). Students' academic learning is magnified during their involvement in service-related experiences. Students are required to work with a diverse group of students, including linguistically diverse students, throughout their field experiences again reflecting authentic world settings.

Second, each student in the college is expected to complete 20 hours of "Professional Meetings" along with 20 hours of "Educational Community Service" before they begin student teaching. These hours are in addition to required field experience hours. All 40 hours are truly service-learning, with the Educational Community Service hours designed to be service-focused learning activities. These Professional Meetings include attending and participating in events such as college organizational/governance meetings, school board meetings, parent/teacher association functions, site council meetings and/or workshops or conferences. The Educational Community Service hours include school and/or community unpaid activities (tutoring, teaching, or working with children in or outside a school). While students are allowed the freedom to select their own service activities, all approved choices focus on fulfilling a need for the school/community agency while enhancing the prospective teacher's own academic learning. The purpose of these activities is to connect what students are learning in their teacher preparation program with engaged service while enhancing learning.

Service-learning is an engaged learning strategy that connects future teachers to the school system and real challenges faced by the students within that building. Students assume responsibility for helping address these challenges personally and then can parallel those same learning outcomes in their own students when they become teachers.

Service-learning provides the opportunity for students to work collaboratively to interact with the community role models while instilling a sense of civic responsibility.

The connection of meaningful service activities with academic learning is the heart of service-learning. Perhaps it is the greatest single pedagogy that has the power to truly reform education and make an impact on the lives of youth by encouraging their learning in an authentic setting. This teaching methodology provides opportunities for personal, social, and intellectual growth. Kansas State University feels that the opportunities for their future teachers to be involved in service-learning activities allows students to closely interact with children and gain insight into the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that effective teachers must possess.

Can service-learning impact a student's decision to drop out of school? The answer is an unequivocal "yes." Teachers must address the needs of high-risk children while preparing their students for the world beyond the schoolyard. Knowing and being able to apply 21st century skills learned through engagement is critical to a student's survival through school and beyond.

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Viewpoint

Dr. Nancy Cassity Dunlap states that up to 75% of our students have significant risk factors, and our teachers cannot teach what (and whom) they don't know. As a principal, in working with groups of educators, I have found that most came from the top 25% themselves. From my perspective, key skill areas in our teacher education programs need to focus on both the learner and the teacher. These skills enhance a teacher's ability to connect with all children, thereby increasing the probability of student learning for all children.

First is the need for developing skills in understanding children as whole people, individuals with critical needs outside of the educational domain. A teacher can have the finest skills in teaching, but if the learner is not ready to learn, the teaching is ineffective. Core work in understanding the individual—a thread running through our programs that goes back to the students, their needs, and their learning—is critical.

Personal self-reflection is second and also very critical. When I say personal, I don't mean self-reflection in teaching a specific lesson. I am referring to personal self-reflection as an individual person. Learning begins when there is trust. For the students with significant risk factors, trust begins when the student knows the teacher. When educators become comfortable with who they are through personal self-reflection, they are able to share their real selves with their students.

The third skill set builds off the second. It is critical to our new teachers, but is more difficult to incorporate as it involves the administrator as well as the educator. The skills are in learning to seek out critical feedback and practical supervision. The tradition of "supervision" in education seems to be a process of evaluation and documentation (and now compensation), not one of learning and growth. The first five years of practice should be years of learning and growth. I see most new educators

working very hard to present themselves as already "arrived" and able to do it all. Critical feedback is viewed as negative, making mistakes is marginally acceptable, and supervision is a scary process of evaluation. A model of supervision that supports ongoing critical feedback encourages deeper self-reflection and growth. A stronger, more self-aware educator emerges.

The expectations and pressure on our educators is tremendous, and the work they do is critical. Somewhere amidst standards and mandates it is easy to lose sight of the two most important elements in the educational equation: the learner and the teacher. The educator is the single most important element in the learning experience of the child. To maximize the potential for learning, we need to focus direct attention on both of these individuals in our teacher preparation programs.

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