



The **OHIO** Journal of  
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# The **OHIO** Journal of Teacher Education

Spring 2019. VOLUME 33 . NUMBER 1

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Dr. D. Mark Meyers, Xavier University  
EDITOR

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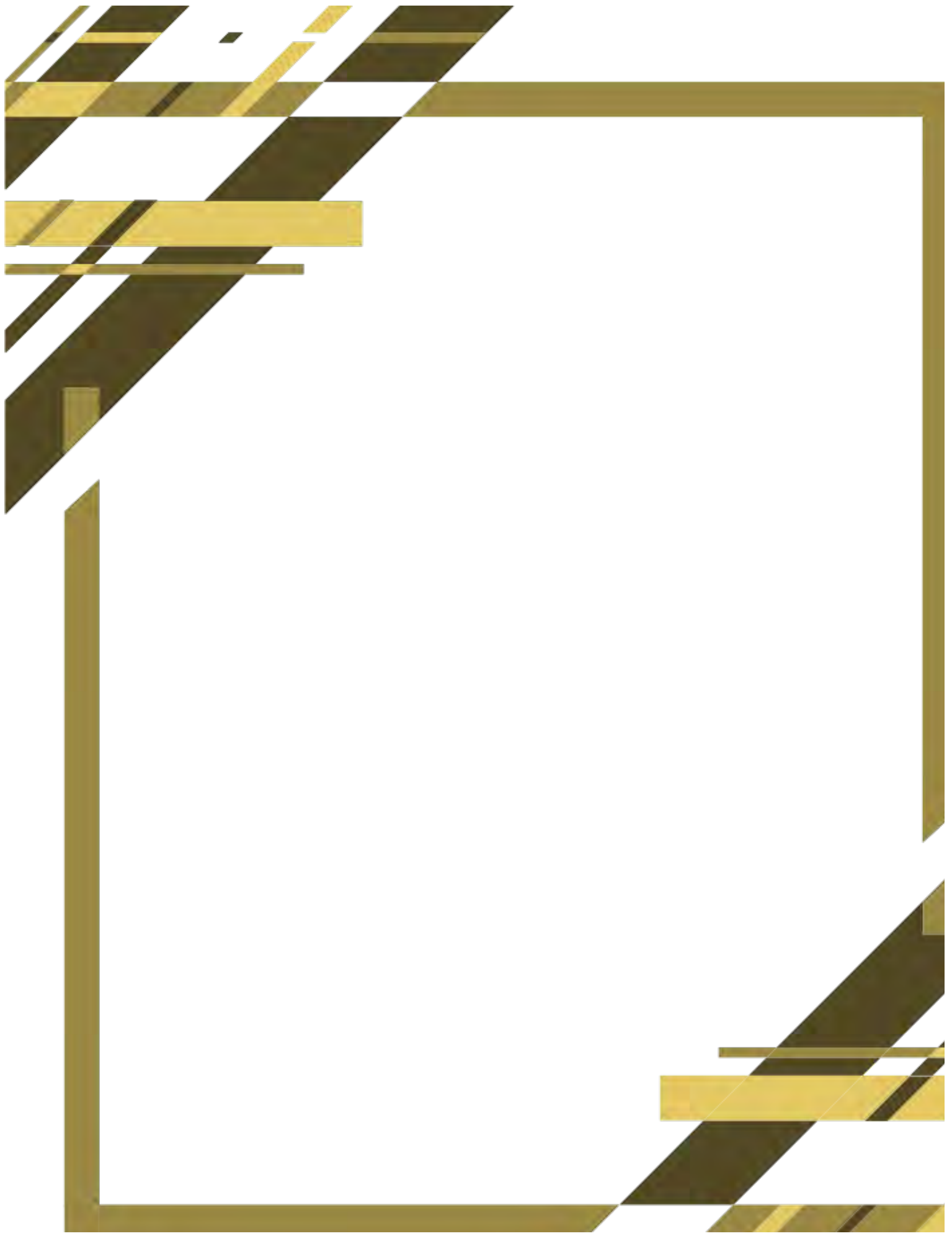
## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome from the The OHIO Journal of Teacher Education Editorial Team. We are honored and privileged to shepherd this journal for the educational community of Ohio

The OHIO Journal of Teacher Education (OJTE) is an online journal. We invite all forms of article formats, as seen in the publication and manuscript guidelines included inside the journal. However, we do invite authors to utilize the online format. The use of links and other interactive devices will allow the online journal to be more than simply a pdf of articles that you can print at your own workstation. In the future, the hope of the editorial team is to develop a truly functional online journal experience which can open the world of practice to our readership.

We will strive to build upon the solid foundation left by the previous editorial teams and move the OHIO Journal of Teacher Education forward as a resource for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and all with an interest in teacher education.

Dr. Mark Meyers, Editor





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## A CALL FOR EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Ohio Journal of Teacher Education (OJTE) is looking for interested individuals to join the Editorial Board of the journal. We are looking to establish a board that represents the Colleges and Universities of Ohio as well as offers a broad spectrum of content expertise.

If interested, please submit a one page letter of intent that includes your College or University, your educational background, and your content area of interest to the co-editors.

Dr. Mark Meyers at  
[oatejournal@gmail.com](mailto:oatejournal@gmail.com)

We look forward to hearing from you.

# A Graduate Course in Digital Teaching and Learning and its Impact on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Technology Integration for Classroom Teachers

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## *Abstract:*

*Districts often assume that adding more technology will be the answer to movement in the direction of 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning. But technology alone does not build the 21<sup>st</sup>-century classroom. This article will explore the importance of sustained professional development for classroom teachers and discuss the success of a continuing professional development (CPD) opportunity in the form of a graduate course in digital teaching and learning, and examines its impact on 21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching and learning for teacher participants.*

## **Introduction**

If we look through the windows of classrooms in P-12, we *may* see environments geared to preparing students for an industrialized-age of the past, rather than preparing students for 21<sup>st</sup>-century life in the new millennium. Twenty-first-century teaching and learning needs to have a progressive educational framework that has a different paradigm than its predecessor. This new paradigm seeks to promote personalized learning that fosters creative and critical thinkers who can communicate and collaborate effectively. This paradigm may not be considered a new paradigm by some since it can be considered a reinvention of a former model of education by such theorists as Dewey, who believed that teaching strategies need to align closely with how students learn. However, this newly considered or reconsidered paradigm challenges teachers to keep up with the ever-changing learner, who thinks and learns differently and needs to be prepared for a technological, global world.



“Simply watching videos...or even taking a turn at an interactive whiteboard is no longer enough. These 21<sup>st</sup>-century learners are highly relational and demand quick access to new knowledge, [and] they are capable of engaging in learning at a whole new level” (Blair, 2012 p. 8). With this increased demand for students to use technology effectively and leave the classroom with a deeper understanding of more than just the core curriculum and standards, the *one-size fits all* model has become obsolete.

It is probable that classroom teachers are aware of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills and may even want to infuse the use of technology to embody a 21<sup>st</sup>-century classroom. However, a desire or even an openness to integrate technology for 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning does not guarantee that teachers can automatically change their teaching. They also cannot effectively implement technology just because they have the technology in their schools and/or classrooms. The effective and appropriate use of technology integration is a significant obstacle 21<sup>st</sup> teachers are faced within their classrooms (Goertz, 2015). To overcome this obstacle, professional development is essential in preparing teachers to be 21<sup>st</sup>-century educators who are more flexible, creative, and challenging in order for students to be learners who can adapt to a rapidly changing world filled with endless possibilities (Kereluik, Mishra, Fahnoe, & Terry, 2013).

This article will discuss how the process of change can occur in a classroom through sustained professional development. This sustained professional development took the form of a graduate course entitled; Introduction to Digital Teaching and Learning. The research question asked was: can a graduate course impact teacher practice and promote movement towards a technology-focused 21<sup>st</sup>-century classroom?

## Literature Review

### Professional Development and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classrooms

Twenty-first-century learning demands that *passive* use of technology in the classroom shift to *active* use. Students need to make connections and see relationships between concepts and understandings by creating and analyzing instead of consuming. Teachers also need to foster collaborations by interacting with students in other classrooms, in others states and countries, in addition to collaborating with community members and experts in the fields they are studying.

The “idea is to progress from using technology to perform the same tasks already done by hand to using technology for new tasks that would otherwise not be possible” (Herold, 2016).

Technology should not be used by doing old things in new ways, such as watching a political speech on YouTube but should be used by doing new things in new ways requiring a new way of learning. Though the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been with us now for 20 plus years, the implications of practice that utilize technology in new ways are not always seen in classrooms. Professional development (PD) is key in this movement to the new pedagogy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. “Teachers are not using technology to effect meaningful changes in student outcomes, but primarily as aids to delivering content...the problem arises from the emphasis having been placed on the technology while the solution lies in shifting the focus toward pedagogy, emphasizing *how*, rather than *what*” (Albion, Tondeur, Forkosh-Baruch, & Peeraer, 2015, p. 658).

The amount of technology readily available for access to teachers and educators is not always what hampers teachers in their effective use of technology. The acquisition of technology hardware and software continues to grow in schools and districts and it is not uncommon to walk into schools today and see 1-1 technology being used. However, having technology does not ensure an understanding of how to use technology. It is the type of PD or

lack of PD that hampers. Teachers are typically provided with only short workshops or training sessions to learn how to utilize the technology and software their districts obtained for classroom use. Districts send classroom teachers to a variety of workshops throughout an academic year, often forgoing any extended follow-up. Marzella (2011) felt that effective training and/or PD must go beyond a short workshop. He encouraged more continued PD that also provided supervision that was ongoing. “Teachers have stressed a need for “additional support and professional development to further implement technology practices in their classrooms” (p. 45). “It is difficult, if not impossible, to impact teacher beliefs in a one-time workshop. That is why ongoing professional development is essential” (p. 49).

There is also a disconnect between teachers and principals when asked about their preparedness and PD access. When principals were asked about the integration of technology within their schools and classrooms, many believed their teachers were prepared with ample access to professional development 57% of the time, while teachers believed they were only 17%-36% prepared with ample access (Mazzella, 2011).

In the graduate course discussed in this article, teachers also provided comments that focused on the lack of PD and the importance it played in providing effective technology implementation. The following are comments provided by students at the end of the course (see Table 1).

Table 1- Teacher Comments from Graduate Course

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### **Teachers Comments on Professional Development in Their Schools**

“In my classroom, I try to incorporate technology when possible. I have a cart of Chromebooks, an Elmo, and Chromecast boxes in which we can display findings on our TVs from our computer. We have access to many of these things that, as a district, we are being told to use, but we haven't had the much professional development of how to use these available tools. It has been a little trial by error for some of the programs that we have tried to incorporate. “

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“I rarely use my smartboard for anything but projecting from my computer. I wish I was more rehearsed with it.”

“One thing that I have really enjoyed is opening up to the possibility of using technology in the classroom. At first, I was a little nervous because I didn't feel as though I truly had a deep understanding of the technology, or programs, that I thought would be useful within my classes. However, I am not the only teacher in the room. These students have taught ME so many things about the computer and technology that they have helped me get more accustomed to using it.”

“I agree that the use of technology, along with a great many ideas that are being tossed around these days, comes with little to no PD on exactly how to implement technology in the classroom. I am certainly not opposed to adding a bit of technology to my teaching. It would be nice to have some ideas on how to go about it.”

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When proper ongoing support is provided, teachers explain they are able to: create new and different ways for students to take in information, differentiate for readiness levels and create materials that match both readiness levels and interests, differentiate for interest, and create alternate ways students can demonstrate what they know and have learned (Mazzella, 2011). Coaching and learning communities have played an important role in successful PD. “Research suggests that teachers participating in a PD program that includes coaching or mentoring are more likely to implement new instructional methods” (Hanover Research 2014, p. 4). In learning communities, teachers are able to not only access information but also share and collaborate with other teachers. Another type of on-going support that was discussed by Mazzella went beyond coaching and learning communities. It provided information repositories where teachers had continuous and immediate access to many resources for use and implementation of new technologies and software. Marzella stated that “the overarching goal of technology professional development should be to provide teachers with opportunities to

observe, practice and reflect on new technologies and it should be conducted over extended periods of time” (p. 49).

The *PD: 21st Century Skills Implementation Guide* (2009) stated that movement towards a 21<sup>st</sup>-century classroom can occur when there is a proactive school administrator that leads the collaboration between teachers, parents, and students and creates a shared vision of what a 21<sup>st</sup>-century school would look and feel like. There needs to be a solid support system put in place with specific technology specialists and coaches to guide teachers and encourage peer support through the process of adopting 21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching in their classrooms.

### **Professional Development that Works**

It is important that practitioners understand the need for effective PD in transforming classrooms into 21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching. Just as there is a need for individualized and differentiated education for students, there is also a need for individualized PD for educators. To support the need for individualized in-service training, it is important to understand what types of PD have been effective in transforming to this new paradigm. The first type of effective PD that has been identified was action research. This form of PD was first used successfully implemented in education by Stephan Corey (as cited by Mertler, 2013) back in the early 1950's. Mertler stated that Corey “argued that the major benefit of action research as an in-service was that it promoted a continuing process of professional development in a climate where teachers not only pose the research questions, but also test their own solutions, as well” (p. 39). By using action research, educators are able to find effective personalized solutions in their own classroom with their own students using their own teaching styles. “The action research process can serve as a mechanism for educators to directly engage in data-driven educational decision making, which can result in a high degree of professional empowerment with respect to what happens in their own classrooms

or schools” (p. 39). Teachers are able to analyze their own classrooms and reflect on the effective customized strategies that work for their students versus having PD that may interest a teacher, but not serve their personalized teaching needs.

A test of whether action research is an effective PD solution “is whether educators can conveniently access research-based knowledge for improving practice” (Albion, Tondeur, Forkosh-Baruch, & Peeraer, 2015, p. 660). Online communities and blogs can provide teachers with this type of access and also promotes collaboration between educators. Teachers can create their own mass media in the form of a personal blog and share this or can actively participate in the work of online learning communities (Rudenko, et al., 2016). Teachers can share their findings from an action research study they conducted or their experiences in formal education, advanced training courses on blogs, wikis, or websites. Educators are able to take an active role in self-educating themselves beyond traditional PD. By combining their informal and formal PD, teachers are able to create more effective and engaging lessons. “The collaboration process of design provides opportunities for teachers to reflect on the intentions and implications” (Voogt et al., 2015, p. 260).

Albion, P., Forkosh-Baruch, A., & Tondeur, J. (2013) believed it was beneficial that teacher educators are included and involved in the process of creating what was referred to as *Teacher Professional Development* (TPD). They suggested that each TPD develop a joint-vision between technology, education, and local policymakers to allow TPD to be seen as a continual process, promote research, and further educational action plans for local, national and international levels.

The idea of a continual process of professional development (CPD) or sustained learning was proposed by the International Summit and identified as beneficial for classroom teachers

(Cordingley, Bell, Rundell, and Evans, n.d.). The positive outcomes for teachers that experienced continual professional development included greater confidence, enhanced beliefs in their power to make a difference to their students' learning, the development of enthusiasm for collaborative working, a willingness to take risks and try new things, and enhanced knowledge and practice. The positive outcomes for students included enhancement of student motivation, an improvement on student performance, better organization of work, use of collaboration as a learning strategy, and the development of a wider range of learning activities and strategies in class for students.

Kereluik, Mishra, Fahnoe, & Terry (2013) believed there was a paradox in CPD in that “*nothing has changed*, but at the same time, *everything has changed*. The core ideas and goals of education have not changed, but the specifics of how these ideas and goals are implemented are changing” (p. 130). The change is a process that is experienced over a period of time and is the primary reason why sustained PD works. CPD supports a process of change and supports teachers who are agents of change. “As teachers interact in [these] communities, they share knowledge, exchange perspectives and tap into each other’s expertise” (Voogt, et al, 2015, p. 262). It is this continual sharing and continual exchange of research overtime that has benefitted practice.

In addition to CPD and action research, there is also a third form of professional development referred to as *formal* PD. This form of professional development can be in the form of a college or university course, in-service training, or an administration’s plan for district-wide PD. “Educational systems are fundamentally based on disciplinary knowledge and require teachers to be adequately trained and proficient in the disciplines, knowing when and why to use technology is more important than knowing the technology, and the need to know how to

facilitate meaningful interactions and relationships with technology” (Kereluik, Mishra, Fahnoe, & Terry, 2013, p. 133). In some ways, a formalized form of PD, as a college course supports both the continual process of learning and the continual process of action research, particularly if action research is a required part of the course.

For formal PD to be effective, Hancock (2011) believed that standards that clearly define the effectiveness of this type of PD is needed. These standards empower educators to understand the proficiency and types of training needed for effective teaching. In 1979, Finland made a critical decision that required every teacher to earn a master’s degree in education in order to receive the same professional status as doctors and lawyers receive in their respected fields. Envision21: Deep Learning, by the Catalina Foothills School District in Tucson, Arizona (Kamerzell, 2016) was an example of formal professional development that reflected standards. The plan included an outline for six years that included a specific vision of commitment to prepare students well for a 21<sup>st</sup>-century life with a focus on deep learning. It involved training and professional development for its teachers. Accrediting bodies in the United States p also provide similar required standards that measure quality as the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE).

In addition, a case study in Australia called the *Digital Education Revolution, DER* identified “a systematic and integrated approach for PD in all phases from pre-service to in-service for classroom teachers” (Albion, Tondeur, Forkosh-Baruch, & Peeraer, 2015, p. 665). The DER called for professional learning standards that supported the framework of TPACK, which was a model that reflected 3 distinct areas that effectively woven together produced effective teaching with technology. The 3 areas included Technological Knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge, and Content Knowledge (TPACK). This plan recognized that



educators require the confidence built from these three areas to effectively use online tools and hardware. to engage students. This called for both professional learning for existing teachers and standards to support and encourage effective PD.

The framework of standards was developed by using current research and questionnaires about technology from current pre-service educators. This case identified a gap between research and practice in education. It stated that design-based research was needed that included innovative practices implemented by classroom teachers who took the time to reflect on the innovative process to deepen their understanding of their practices. This process would then empower teachers to be able to demonstrate the how and why of their innovative teaching to others.

This case also recognized that the topic of professional development cannot be discussed without discussing the additional barriers that could inhibit the effective integration of technology. The case identified the need for resources and ongoing support and the freedom to be released from an inflexible curriculum that leaves little time to explore other teaching options. Albion, Tondeur, Forkosh-Baruch, and Peeraer (2015) discussed that one way to eliminate these types of barriers was to create a coordinator for Teacher Professional Development. This type of coordinator proved to be effective in seven primary schools in Australia and in grades 9-12 where the standard was to have students graduating with the skills in technology that would promote employment. In addition, funding in the plan empowered schools to buy computers for all students in grades 9-12, supporting 1-1 technology.

Blair (2012) also identified similar barriers to technology integration and discussed the need to eliminate these barriers by changing the mindset of teaching and technology. This mindset would then provide professional development that was teacher-centered, meets high

standards, engages and changes practice over time. Educators' should be facilitators and students should be problem-solvers who are given the opportunity "to discover, explore, analyze, evaluate, create and design" (p. 10-11).

### **Methodology**

In Spring of 2015, the writer developed a three-hour, distance education, semester course for 21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching titled; *Introduction to Digital Teaching and Learning*. The course is currently a required course for the Master's Degree in Content and Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction.

Participants in the course were mostly licensed classroom teachers, though nursing students in their graduate program have been encouraged to take the course. The majority of the teachers in this study were currently practicing. Several of the students were on maternity leave or in the nursing program. The course is offered once a year in the fall semester. Nineteen students took the course in Fall 2016, and 14 students took the course in fall 2017, for a total of 33 students.

The course began by providing a foundational understanding of 21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching and learning and the new paradigm for personal learning. This foundation was provided for the first 8 weeks of course with discussions on current practices and a wiki that supported a collaborative understanding of the new paradigm. It was the faculty author's belief that transformational learning will only occur when teachers have a deep background and understanding of this new pedagogy. Once this is developed, teachers can build classrooms of change.

To begin with a point of reference, the following topics were clarified during these first 8 weeks.

*21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching*- teaching that allows the student to be a problem-solver and investigator. It allows students to take the lead in their learning and fosters student-led projects that investigate real-world issues while applying content understandings.

*21<sup>st</sup>-century learning*- developing skills that promote life-long learning including collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.

*A new paradigm*- a shift in the understanding of what and how to teach. Individualized learning is key. Students become entrepreneurs of their own interests and skills.

*Personalized learning*- students chose their pathways to learn.

*Technology integration*-integrating technology on a new level of transformational teaching.

After the initial 8 weeks/4 modules, students focused on applying their new knowledge. They were asked to create an action plan for change and apply their knowledge of the new pedagogy to their own classrooms using the SAMR Model (Walsh, 2016). Though the SAMR model has been challenged by others because there was not enough research-based and theoretically-based evidence for the model (Hamilton, Rosenberg, Akcaoglu, 2016), it provided students with a taxonomy framework to which to begin to analyze their present-day use of technology and has been used by others in a similar fashion (Romrell, Kidder and Wood, 2014). Following this SAMR analysis, students were asked to create a 3-day lesson plan that integrated technology on a higher level of SAMR than they were currently using. They videotaped themselves teaching these lessons and shared these videos with each other on a wiki. Students had an opportunity to provide feedback to each other on this wiki.

Students also developed action plans that highlighted their goals and steps in moving forward into a highly effective digital classroom. The course with a collaborative mind-map about this learning experience.

### Data Gathering and Analysis

At the end of the semester, students were provided a six-question survey that addressed the effectiveness of the course as it related to changing practice for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since the topic of 21<sup>st</sup>-century classrooms was discussed in the first 8 weeks, it was assumed that participants of the survey (students) would clearly understand the meaning and implications for the use of technology as discussed in this article. Two questions dealt directly with the issue of effectiveness in its relationship to 21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching and learning (see Table 2).

TABLE 2- Effectiveness of TCED 6905

N=28

<b>Question 1: Did this course serve as effective professional development for 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning?</b>		
<i>Answered: 28/28 fall 2016; N=19 fall 2017; N=9</i>		
<i>Skipped: 0</i>		
Yes	89.29%	25
Maybe	10.71%	3
No	0.00%	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>28</b>
<b>Question 2: On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highly effective, how effective was the course for your professional development?</b>		
<i>Answered: 23/28 fall 2016; N=14 fall 2017; N=9</i>		
<i>Skipped: 5</i>		
<b>5 – highly effective</b>	<b>43.48%</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>4 – effective</b>	<b>43.48%</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3 – neutral</b>	<b>8.69%</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2 - ineffective</b>	<b>4.35%</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 – extremely ineffective</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>23</b>

Eighty-nine percent of the 28 students from both Fall 2016 and 2017 felt that the course served as effective professional development for 21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching and learning (Question 1). Eighty-seven percent felt it was effective or highly effective in meeting their professional development needs as a classroom teacher. Two of the students who answered the survey were neutral, with one student feeling it was ineffective for their professional development.

Three of the 6 questions from the survey were open-ended questions. Twenty or twenty-one out of the 28 students (71-75%) who completed the survey, answered these questions. One-hundred percent of the 9 students who completed the survey in fall 2017 answer each open-ended question. Answers from these students related to the parts of the course that had the biggest impact on their growth in 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning (Question 3), identified changes they saw themselves making as a result of the course (Questions 4), and identified things they will walk away with as a result of the course- (Question 5). The summary of their answers is identified in Table 3.

The last survey question was irrelevant to this article since it was a question seeking suggestions for course improvement. The few suggestions made in both semesters related to the functionality of one of the 2.0 technologies used in the course, dates of assignments and one student who hated the wiki. It is believed that this one student is the only student who had a difficult time with the wiki. This is feedback in itself, since students who find the technology difficult will not find the experience positive for their learning.

Table 3- Open-ended Survey Results-TCED 6905

<i>Question 3: What part of the course was the most effective for your growth in integrating technology for 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning? Please name all the parts that were effective (i.e.; discussion boards, action plan, lesson plan, wiki, etc). Why?</i>	
<i>N=21 fall 2016; N=12 fall 2017; N=9</i>	
Most Effective Course Strategies	N
Wiki	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wiki. The wiki experience taught us to think outside the box with collaboration and turn the learner into an activator.</li> <li>• It was helpful to gain insight from other points of view.</li> <li>• I came upon new programs and ideas to use technology in the classroom from other members of our class.</li> </ul>	
Discussion Boards	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The most effective part of the course for my growth would be collaboration. Even though it was an online course, we were able to collaborate in discussions and wiki posts. It was helpful to gain insight into other points of views on the topic</li> <li>• Talking with others helped me to hear new ideas from others</li> </ul>	
Action Plan	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While designing the action plan, I had to not only reflect on my practices but had to map out a plan to improve my implementation of technology in the classroom.</li> </ul>	
Lesson Plan	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lesson planning assignment was extremely effective. It really made me apply the concepts we've been discussing.</li> <li>• Doing the lesson plan allowed me to be reflective and completely embody the 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning mindset. After referring to different resources it was pertinent to put those elements into practice with the implementation of my lessons. I got to reflect upon my own technology integrations.</li> <li>• I feel the lesson plan was the MOST effective part of growth for me. It made me think about how I could actually do it and then allowed me to see the videos of other teachers in the course (doing it better!).</li> </ul>	
Video	1
<i>Question 4: What specifically have you changed or will change in your practice as a result of the course?</i>	
<i>N= 21 fall 2016; N=12 fall 2017; N=9</i>	
Changes	N
Incorporating More Technology	9
Using Technology as a Tool	6
Incorporating Student Use of Technology	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have a much better understanding of how to implement technology in the LEARNING process, not only the assessment process. I will be implementing the practices as described in my action plan.</li> <li>• I have definitely allowed the students self-discovery, and use technology to start classroom discussions, turn in assignments and create presentations. Using google to my advantage, I was able to continue whole class discussions outside of the classroom through shared documents.</li> <li>• I will change the degree to which my students are responsible for their digital learning.</li> <li>• I will continue to think about how I can integrate the students at a deeper level.</li> </ul>	
Digital Assignments	3
No Change	1

***Question 5: Name one or two things that you will walk away with from this course.***

*Answered: 20/28 fall 2016; N=11 fall 2017; N=9  
Skipped: 8*

<b>Lessons Learned</b>	<b>N</b>
Resources for Technology Integration/PD	10
<b>Too many to list! Resources for integrating technology, insight into how to help my peers utilize the new paradigm.</b>	
How to grow as a professional in 21 <sup>st</sup> -century teaching	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Something that could be modified to fit my lesson plan exists. I just need to do the research and find it.</li> <li>• Teachers should be open-minded and constantly evaluate themselves to improve their professional development. Also, Professional development can be an individual goal or a group/district goal.</li> <li>• The desire to want to move forward myself and move my class forward.</li> <li>• Being a change-agent</li> <li>• 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning is a process that starts with us. We have to share our knowledge with our peers and collaborate with our students to use technology as a tool to enhance learning inside and outside of the classroom.</li> </ul>	
SAMR Model	6
Student-Centered Learning/student lead learning	5
Wiki	1
4 C's	1
Video	1
ISTE Standards	1

### Discussion

Collaboration with peers through the wikis and discussion boards played a key role in making this a successful experience in professional development for most of the students who took the course, with one exception. \_Marzella (2011) believed that on-going communication about topics explored through workshops was essential in helping teachers make changes. The readings, viewings of videos, and completion of activities were not the catalyst for anticipated classroom change with technology integration. It was the opportunities the teachers had to share their perceptions, insights, and application of course assignments with other teachers that had the impact. Collaborative, reflective practice based on a form of action research through their

dissemination of teaching in video form was found to be effective. The course also attempted to build a learning community throughout the entire 15 weeks. Students not only completed assignments, but each assignment they completed was either completed collaboratively or was individualized to be completed in their classrooms and then shared with each other. There is not enough the writer can personally say about the theory that *two heads are better than one*.

Teachers who are isolated in their own classrooms and try to integrate technology by themselves, will not be as successful as teachers who branch out to share their experiences and hear about other colleagues' experiences as well. The literature review found that *continued* professional development through similar online experiences, along with action research provided an effective form of PD (Cordingley, Bell, Rundell, and Evans, n.d; Kereluik, Mishra, Fahnoe, & Terry, 2013; Rudenko, et al., 2016; Voogt, et al, 2015). This course confirmed this belief.

The lesson planning and long-range action plan provided students with engaging, active, and personalized experiences (action research). These experiences took them into their own classroom experience to transform their teaching. This personalized learning is similar to what we are asking teachers in P-12 classrooms to do. The goal of this experience was to take the teacher one step up on the SAMR model (Puentedura, 2016) for technology integration.

Modeling the process of individualized learning is important and can transform learning not only for the classroom teacher but also for the students they serve.

To complete the course, students had an opportunity to visualize and conceptualize their learning through a collaborative mind mapping experience. This mind map put closure on the course, and also provided one more collaborative way to summarize the 15-week learning experience. One thing the writer learned from this experience is that the size of the class can provide an effective or ineffective mind map. It is much better to break a group of 20 students



into a small group of 5-6. The relationships they can be identified through a mind map related to a topic is much richer and meaningful and encourages deeper, collaborative learning.

### **Conclusions**

The feedback received from the two semesters the course was offered identified that the course was an effective method for professional development. The online discussions, wikis, and course assignments provided the students with an opportunity to learn from their own experiences, and even more powerfully, learn from each other's experiences over a sustained period of 15-weeks. This opportunity to share with each other over a period of time is what Cordingley, Bell, Rundell, and Evan (nd) referred to as continual professional development (CPD). The participating teachers had an opportunity to become change agents in their classrooms and schools (Voogt, 2015). This was exciting to see and be part of, particularly the passion that grew in these students and was demonstrated through their comments, feedback to each other and dissemination of their integration experiences. The practices they used to improve their technology integration were also sourced through research and the discussions provided encouraged even a deeper level of reflection than their own. Albion, Tondeur, Forkosh-Baruch, & Peeraer (2015) identified this type of action research as a great benefit for professional development.

The *sustained* time of the course provided teacher participant the opportunity to process information, which appeared to be the greatest resource, along with the engaged and active learning that put them into their own practices with new knowledge they acquired from the research. nothing. A sustained course over a period of 4-months provided a solution to some degree for obstacles to successful professional development and was one of the main complaints

from teachers in this course when they reflected on what was missing in other professional development opportunities. Though workshops can provide great ideas, the lack of sustainability challenges the usability of ideas in the classroom. The students in this graduate course were able to learn about a new paradigm, share about it, apply it, and then share this teaching through videotaping that was posted to a wiki. The fact that the students also had an opportunity to attend the course in their own time and in a chosen, relaxed learning environment may also be a plus for this online experience. Distance education courses appear to work well for classroom teachers, particularly if they can apply what they are learning in their own classrooms.

It may be important for innovative teachers and school administration to reflect on how one or two-day opportunities for professional development can become a catalyst for professional development that is sustained over time. All of us have attended conferences and workshops where our exciting new learning is halted with an inability to recall what we learned, particularly if the *sage on the stage* workshop was attended. This opportunity will support a process of dissemination, collaboration, and reflective practice. Collaboration, critical thinking, and individualized learning are all pieces of 21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching and learning. They are also essential skills and experiences for teachers who want to be able to move into a new paradigm for 21<sup>st</sup>-century classrooms. Administrators must think methodically about presenting professional development. Time for teachers is often a luxury. Therefore, PD must be planned carefully and rely on what research is telling us about the effectiveness of PD that is sustained over time and includes teachers as active learners in the experience.

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## Travesty in Transition: Religious Support when Including and Planning Transitions for Students with Disabilities

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### *Abstract:*

*The concept of the separation of church and state in regards to the Establishment Clause has been argued in many venues for many years. Regardless of the arguments on either side of the debate, students with disabilities face transition into adult life where religion may play an important role. Looking at the person-centered approach and analyzing interviews with religious leaders in three major world religions, the authors strive to find ways to bridge the ever-widening gap between classroom and real world, specifically the world of religious communities. Through the teachings of transferable skills in the classroom and recognizing the parameters of the Establishment Clause, teachers can assist students in transition into religious communities and become an active member of the group to the student's fullest abilities.*

### Introduction

The concept of separation of church and state has been argued for 200 years. Under the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America, the government may not establish a state religion; this part of the Constitution is known as the Establishment Clause (U.S Const. amend I). Thomas Jefferson wrote several statements about the concept in the late 1700s-early 1800s. According to Barton (2007), Jefferson's position on the purpose of the First Amendment was not to limit religious expression but to provide a form of protection against government interference with the expression of religion. In the 1878 case of *Reynolds v. United States*, the conclusions of the Supreme Court based their ruling on Jefferson's perspective that the federal government should only within a very narrow category interfere with religious expressions or values.

## Educational Context

Moving ahead 200 years in the public schools of the United States of America, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, recently renamed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) protects religious expression that is privately initiated by the student and maintains neutrality in the treatment of religion by school personnel (“ESSA”, 2017). Teachers may not promote or teach religious practice. The consequence of violation of this neutrality can lead to loss of federal funding for programs such as Title I reading, School Lunch Program, and Grants.

Lemon v Kurtzman (1971) is the neutrality litmus case for public religious instruction. The Lemon Court case determined three gauges for neutrality in public settings, commonly referred to as the Lemon Test. This neutrality test extends to the public school and is a measure for determining if the activity respects the essence of the Establishment Clause. These three factors, with parenthetical clarification, are:

- (1) Does the law (activity) have a secular purpose? If not, it violates the Establishment Clause.
- (2) Is the primary effect either to advance religion or to inhibit religion? If so, it violates the Establishment Clause.
- (3) Does the law (activity) foster an excessive governmental (public school) entanglement with religion? If so, it violates the Establishment Clause.

This article uses Ohio as an example for standards that relate to the concepts of religion in the classroom. In Ohio, religious scripture and the study of religions is introduced in sixth grade. The Ohio Content Standard describes religion as part of an elaboration of human systems influenced by geography, regions, and people.

Grade 6: 8. Modern cultural practices and products show the influence of tradition and diffusion, including the impact of major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism). The standard to be taught is : “Talk about the influence of the geographic origins and founding leaders and teachings of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism.” (Ohio Content Standards for Social Studies, p. 21.)

Students study these religions to develop a sense of a lasting influence of religious diffusion in the modern world. Diffusion is defined as the spread of people, ideas, technology, and products among places. They compare basic tenets, locations of religions in the world, and compare and contrast religious philosophies. Due to the Establishment Clause and the neutrality test, teachers must be careful to teach only the academic perspective on religion; they must not become a “Sunday school” or teach the religions unequally, placing more emphasis on one religion over another.

In Ohio, there are the standards for students with disabilities that break down the main standard. These extended standards are used for students who significantly function below grade level, are on an Individualized Education Plan, and qualify for alternate assessment on state testing as a student with a cognitive disability. The standard for sixth grade has, as previously described, incorporated the full gamut of religion exploration. The extended standards do not mention religion and concentrate on maps and globes and the movement of people. Therefore, students in sixth grade who utilize the extended standards do not learn about various religions and their basic principles.

The authors question why the instruction in world religions can occur in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade without the violation of the Establishment Clause, but cannot be a component of the transition planning of a high school student with disabilities. If you take into consideration the ecological developmental model of Bronfenbrenner it becomes apparent that religion is part of the interrelationship between major settings in the development of a well rounded



life. It is noted by Bronfenbrenner (1977) in his theory that “ for a typical American 12 year old, the mesosystem encompasses the interaction among family, school, peer group; for some children , it might also include church, camp.....”(p. 515).

Entering high school, religion, as part of the curriculum, although not required specifically by the Content Standards of Ohio religion is infused into the literature that supports influential ideas in social studies and literature coursework. For example, in an Ohio high school standard public school textbook entitled *Modern World History* (Beck, Black, Krieger, Naylor, & Shabaka, 2005) fourteen pages are dedicated to the overview of different religions. In this overview, there are comprehension questions and a section devoted to primary sources that include sections of the *Rig Veda*, *Quran*, *King James Bible*, *Annelects of Confucious*. The reading selections are contained in an appendix that presents other texts such as Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address and Plato’s “ Apology”. For example, Ohio Standard Number 2 for History Curriculum (“Ohio Department of Education”, 2011) addresses the use of primary resources, not for religious education or the perpetuance of any particular religion but to introduce the historical viewpoints contained.

Religion is addressed again in the Ohio high school English Language Art classes. The high school instruction, as represented in the high school text *The Language of Literature- British Literature* (Applebee, Blau, Caplan, Elbow, Hynds, Langer, & Marshall, 2006), uses biblical text to discuss “Facing Life’s Limitations”with verses from the *King James Bible*, Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3,“to everything there is a season”. Psalm 23 from the Old Testament is part of the discussion of overcoming adversity, and in the New Testament,

Luke’s story of the Prodigal Son is used as context for a lesson in critical thinking about life’s limitations.

Guidelines, presented by Secretary of Education Richard Riley for the U.S. Department of Education in 1995 in “Religious Expression in Public Schools, A Statement of Principles”, reinforce that public schools “may not provide religious instruction, but they may teach about religion, including the Bible or other scripture”. In keeping with the First Amendment’s mandate of government neutrality toward religion, any study of religion in a public school must be educational, not devotional. This principle holds true whether teaching about the Bible occurs in literature, history or any other class and whether the course is required or an elective” ( “First Amendment Center”,nd.). Also according to the First Amendment Center, associated with the Diversity Institute at Vanderbilt University, there are several key points that are involved in the constitutionality of the use of religious material as primary sources in public schools. Issues are raised on who teaches the class, how the class is taught, and the nature of primary source materials.

“The Anti-Defamation League strongly suggests that such classes (religion based ) be taught by school personnel who have some training in Establishment Clause issues”(“Anti-Defamation League”, n.d). The lesson cannot be from any specific religious influence and cannot promote or discourage religious affiliation.

Schools should avoid the use of instructional materials and lessons that are of a devotional nature, such as those used in a Sunday school. Supernatural occurrences and divine action described in the Bible may not be taught as historical fact in a public school...When teaching about the Bible in a public school, teachers must understand the important distinction between advocacy, indoctrination, proselytizing, and the practice of religion.” (“First Amendment Center”,nd.)

Haynes and Thomas (2007) in *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education* present the opinion of 17 religious and educational organizations. These organizations ( i.e. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, National Education Association) agreed that the following points separate the teaching of religion verses teaching religion in a public school .

- The school’s approach to religion is academic, not devotional.
- The school may strive for student awareness of religions, but should not press for student acceptance of any religion.
- The school may sponsor study about religion, but may not sponsor the practice of religion.
- The school may expose students to a diversity of religious views, but may not impose, discourage, or encourage any particular view.
- The school may educate about all religions, but may not promote or denigrate any religion.
- The school may inform the student about various beliefs, but should not seek to conform him or her to any particular belief.

In the case of *Zorach v Clauson* (1952), it was determined that students could leave school to receive religious education during the school day if the programs were determined to be “non-coercive” and not supported by public funds. This precedents created an access blockade for students with special needs to specific religious education in cooperation with their community religious organizations at the school during the day. This blockade occurred because most students with disabilities do not have the ability to leave school without assistance from a parent or caregiver. However, students with special needs are unique because they are mandated under Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to have the opportunity to transition to a full community involved adult life; a life that may include participation in a religious community.

## Transition Services

The definition of transition services according to IDEA is “designed to be within a results oriented process that focuses on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the “child’s” movement from school to post school activities, including postsecondary education...community participation” (Wright 2006, p.56; IDEA, 2004). Activities that are supported under the transition umbrella that guide successful integration into the community include vocational skills, functional and academic proficiency, adult service programming , and community experiences that consider the “child’s” preferences and interests (Wright, 2006). This concept of community experience and post-school living objectives alludes to the idea that all aspects of the student’s life must be included in the transition planning. Transition planning needs to include skills necessary to participate in religious services when religion is an important part of the student’s world. This leads for transition services to become more person-centered, including all aspects of a student’s life.

The term “person-centered planning” emphasizes an individualized approach to transition where the individual is focus of the planning. The planning now becomes “with the individual, not about the individual” (Steere, 2007,p. 46). The transition team should consist of the individual, parents, and other community members that are involved in the student’s life and cultural participation (Steere). These support systems guide the individual with disabilities in planning for the future, inclusion in activities, and preparing for inclusion in the adult world (Steere). Person-centered planning has been traditionally used to facilitate transitions from institutions to community inclusion and the respective culture (Steere). For example, Steere cites a case of a young man “Mike” in his transition

planning process where both a teacher from Mike's current school and minister were present. During the transition process, strengths of Mike were addressed and the experts developed plans for Mike to be successful in various areas of school and community. The minister stated that he would "try to involve Mike in some additional recreational activities through church in hopes that these could lead to potential friendships" (Steere, 2007, p. 51). The teacher and parents agreed to meet for an IEP ( Individualized Education Plan) meeting to update the goals and objectives of Mike's IEP to reflect the experiences in the community. (Steere).

Transition should be a partnership between the school and the community of the individual. This partnership should allow for seamless transition and preparation for a student for integration into community participation during and after high school. When we eliminate one area of a student's life, we are not adequately preparing the individual for ALL aspects and environments of that individual's life and therefore inadequately transitioning an individual into the community. By eliminating one area of a student's life, we are also denying them the opportunity for full personal ecological development ( Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

### **Research on Importance of Bridging the Gap between Religious Communities and Schools**

Individuals in three religious communities- Catholic, Islamic, and Jewish- were interviewed to gather their perspective on what teachers might do to support inclusion of the young people with disabilities in the religious community? This section presents a qualitative ethnography look at the issues and obstacles to the incorporation of religious education in transition planning from the perspective of religious leaders. The combination

of need and interest directed the researchers to address feasibility of assisting with the incorporation of culturally based religious education in the transition process. The formidable obstacles centered around the First Amendment .

### **Religious Experts**

Religious experts were chosen for convenience – they all were within a 25 mile radius of the research base and willingly consented to be interviewed. Two religious leader from the Catholic, Islamic, and Jewish faith were selected to speak to us on the topic prompt. These religious leaders were interviewed regarding their opinions of the benefits and struggles for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities into their respective communities and how educators might assist in the inclusion process.

### **Procedure/Analysis**

Religious leaders (RL) responded to the following prompt: How can teachers help students prepare for inclusion in religious communities? The leaders discussed a variety of different ideas that could be utilized, but all focused around functional, social, and cultural skills necessary for complete and full integration into a religious community. The following responses directly reflect the ideas regarding functional skills necessary for integration and inclusion into religious communities. Responses indicate the religious affiliation and the age group of the leaders. Alphabetic indicators are used to indicate individual experts within the same religious group.

Using constant comparative analyses, two themes emerged as critical for person centered transition planning. These two themes center on the idea of functional/academic

skills necessary for participation in religious communities, social skills necessary for active participation in religious communities and multicultural education skills required for participation and understanding of different religious settings.

**Interviews-Academic/functional skills needed for transition.**

Jewish Religious Leader (RL) 30-40 A: Ok let's say...let's say that you're...you've decided that every other week you're in contact with the rabbi...Say you...said individual is going to have to be up in front of 100 people, that might be something that makes them nervous, could you do more of that...or...Or they have to walk around in a circle could you work more on that.

Jewish RL 30-40 B: I would say, just starting a dialogue, I mean there are many times when we know something isn't not 100% right but, I mean I also teach in our synagogue's Sunday school well a lot of the times the parents will say "well, I explain to my teacher 100% what's wrong but Sunday school isn't REAL school, these aren't REAL educators, these aren't.." you know so sometimes we know we are dealing with something yet we don't know exactly what. So encourage dialogue between the family and if there is a teacher who has the time to spend, like you're doing right now half an hour meeting could make the difference in a child, helping them to prepare because it is an important ritual. Kids start practicing about a year in advance and like I said it's catered to the child so the more we understand about a person the better we are to cater to them. Um...I'm also the Youth advisor, I do a lot here, and so from that respect working with different youth groups across the religion, across different religions really is helpful. I'm part of a region where we have a lot of special needs teenagers that come to the conventions and a lot of the times the synagogues are sensitive,

if they know what to be sensitive to. Sometimes they just fail because something hasn't occurred to them, this piece of carpet, where it's not a step but it's a stumbling block for someone who's visually impaired or whatever. We don't always know what to look for.

Catholic RL 41-61 : Yea, but it's just its structure, follow directions and remember what you're supposed to do. All with the readied guidance of adults nearby, they're not holding their hands but there is someone nearby (researcher note: discussing what goes on during religious rituals).

Islamic RL 30-40 : I think the best way is just like you would have them go into a library, into a quiet setting. And each child can only take on so much. You know some children can only sit for five minutes only and some kids can sit 20. I guess it just depends on each child. Just like you would they would go on field trips, you know that kind of thing how you prepare them for that is all I can think of. I mean with so many different services and religions, I don't know, unless you knew what that child goes to.

### ***Application in school setting.***

Functional/academic skills can be integrated into everyday education. Even though some skills may be appropriate for a typical 5 year old, we may have to continue to reinforce these social skills as the child reaches an older age. For instance, we usually teach students in preschool how to wait your turn quietly, which is a skill that is also necessary in a religious service (i.e. receiving communion) and may need to be continually reinforced as the student transitions. Several other examples of functional/academic skills that are part



of a traditional program and applicable to transitional planning for the young adult learner in transition to a full adult community participation in religious communities might be:

- Transitioning from kneeling, sitting and standing
- Reading/following music/words in a hymnal or service
- Standing in line transfers to communion other wait times
- Following instructions
- Walking in a line
- Geography of the venue / space / moving from one space to another
- Names of the various locations in the church, synagogue, mosque, etc.- vocabulary
- Finding the wheelchair space in the building (ie in the service area, accessing altar if applicable)

### **Interviews- Social skills needed to transition.**

Religious leaders addressed the importance of social skills for the integration of into a religious community. The religious leaders specifically discussed the concepts of social acceptance and social skills needed to participate in activities. Leaders spoke to the importance of parental involvement in teaching skills needed for inclusion. The responses from religious leaders that directly speak to these concepts are as follows:

Islamic RL 30-40: It's important too for them to have to deal with other people who are Americans , because I would assume that some Muslim parents would say that when they teach their kids like when they teach me, someone like me, we're different from them that we're not exactly like them there's beliefs that we have that are different and they believe something different. But it's important to tell a Muslim family with a disabled child that you can't teach something exactly like that, because when you do they will think they are either better than that person or that they are different in itself. So it's not good. I mean I think that it's very important that if the family is not educated especially. I mean my mom is educated and my dad is educated and they were able to teach my sister in a way she

accepts everybody. And she believes, she lets everyone believe in what they believe in it has no problem with it and at the same time practices what she needs to practice in Islam.

Jewish RL 30-40: For us if it's not about the individual what purpose does that text serve....There is only one other problem I could see at some congregations are so large...for example the... they do 500 students a year. And while they were accepting about changing the process for students with...it was...there were two problems...1. It took a lot of time and energy and resources and they have a great system of getting people in, training them, having bar mitzvah and it's...so that was one problem finding the time to make a special training process and 2. ... setting precedent. They didn't want to set something for one student that wouldn't be accepted to others...

Catholic RL 61-81: We believe in the Catholic Church we believe the parents are the primary religious educators of their children. Parents have the primary responsibility to share their faith with their children. If they're in our school, we try to help them. If they're in our public school religion program we try to help them but we believe it's their primary responsibility. Like by word and example to teach, help the kids believe and learn about the disciples. So devotion, the bible, family prayer, come to church on Sunday, set a good example. That's huge. That's a bigger than anything we can do. ...Oh yea. We're not mind readers. So yeah if we have a child in a wheelchair. ...We help them. So hopefully we turn to us and say to us we need some help this is a special situation. ....Oh yea we can't always tell what kids need.

### ***Application in school setting.***

The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, in their article “Teaching Social Skills” stated a definition for social skills from Gresham, Sugai, and Horner (2001) that defines five dimensions (as cited in Bremer & Smith, 2004) : (a) peer relational skills, (b) self-management skills, (c) academic skills, (d) compliance skills, and (e) assertion skills” (p. 333-334). These social skills are more important in community settings because they are used by others to determine an individual’s perceived competence (Bremer & Smith, 2004). When preparing transition planning for students with disabilities, teachers need to be aware of social competence and develop transition plans that allow our students to be socially competent across different social settings. Competency across settings may include religious communities and IEP teams need to consider this factor when writing transition plans. Social skills that may be necessary to fully participate in religious communities include:

- Being on time
- Appropriate greeting
- Language for public interaction
- Recognition of the register of voice expected in different areas (religious service vs gym class)
- Using/learning critical people’s names and how to address them (example: Rabbi, Father, Priest, Deacon, Imam)
- Asking for directions when confused
- Expected behavior in different areas (such as what is appropriate in a gym is not appropriate in the classroom)
- Sitting in your own space without disrupting your neighbor
- Taking turns when speaking
- Requesting a turn to speak (example raising hand)
- Answering in a group (example choral responses)
- Appropriate behavior during service (when it is appropriate to get up to go to the bathroom, when it is appropriate to raise hands, when is it appropriate to dance)
- What is customary clothing to wear to attend the service

A group of Montessori teachers attending a Catholic service “ discovered that in many respects the church is a kind of goal towards which our method was oriented. Some of the exercises which did not seem to have any definite external goal in the [Montessori] school found their practical application within the church” (Montessori,1967, p. 295). The Montessori teachers who saw the priest expecting quiet in his church connected this expectation to a game of silence that is played Montessori classrooms for ages 3 to 6. Evidently, the skill of being quiet can be taught in a classroom and can be generalized to a religious setting.

As stated by a expert, social skills to transition youth into religious communities may simply include “working with kids on walking in line”, a fundamental skill for the participation in religious services. This skill can be taught in school when walking to lunch, walking to specials, walking from class to class etc. These skills do not promote religious content and therefore should not violate the Establishment Clause.

### **Awareness of religions as an academic component of social skill.**

Awareness of religious diversity is an academic component of social skill development is often overlooked due the fear of entanglement with the Establishment Clause. This awareness involves recognition of religious freedom and tolerance for diverse religious viewpoints. Our leaders cited social and cultural skills required to include students into the communities that would be helpful in creating smooth transitions.

Goals on a student’s IEP cannot be directly focused on religion. Despite this, the academic standards require sociological instruction of different cultures and this instruction is intertwined with religion. Due to this entanglement between culture and religion, it is assumed we should be teaching vocabulary and basic tenets that are

appropriate in regards to the instruction of different cultures without overstepping the Establishment Clause. Students can learn the definition of words like chalice, communion, cathedral, mosque, chapel, and synagogue.

### **Application of Social Skills and Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education as a program should help students develop a better understanding of their own backgrounds and of other groups that compose our society. Through this process, the program should help students learn to respect and appreciate cultural diversity, overcome ethnocentric and prejudicial attitudes, and understand the sociohistorical, economic, and psychological factors that have produced the contemporary conditions of ethnic polarization, inequality, and alienation. (Suzuki, 1984, p. 14)

Many cultural skills that can be taught in a classroom as an academic component demonstrates the social skill of respect for others and do not violate the Establishment Clause may include:

- A social comparison of religions that includes basic tenets i.e. major religious figures, such as Jesus was a central figure of Christianity, Muhammad was a central figure of Islam, and Moses was a central figure in Judaism, and core beliefs/tenets of other religions as a history/social studies/ geography.
- Identifying and understanding different attire worn by different religious leaders and its significance. In various religious settings women must adhere to dress codes appropriate that may require covering various sections of her body while a man must remove his hat or shoes.
- Textbooks allow teachers to discuss culture in the classroom in a historical context. In the textbook *Modern World History* by Beck, Black, Krieger, Naylor, and Shabaka published by McDougal Littell (2005) for high school students the text incorporates, at the end of the textbook, a section entitled "World Religions and Ethical Systems"- it is there for reference but appears not to be part of the main curriculum. For each world religion there is a paragraph on the history of the religion, rituals, leadership, worship practices Pictures show the cultures worshiping and a diagram breaks down the different religious sects in that religion. The final chart in this section of the text outlines a comparison of followers, deity names, holy books, founder, leadership, and basic beliefs of six major religions –Buddhism,Christianity, Hinduism,Islam,Judaism,and Confucianism.

Educators can suggest resources to enable the individual with disabilities to benefit from their religious experience, resources such as Erik Carter's (2007) *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities: A Guide for Service Providers, Families, and Congregation*. Teachers can draw attention to the different cross generational perspectives and encourage dialogue between the family. One individual interviewed stated that, "If there is a teacher who has the time to spend this might make difference in helping a child prepare" for religious events such as Bar Mitzvah or Confirmation. The religious leader who taught religious education declared that, "we are not mind readers... we can't always tell what kids need" to be successful in the religious community.

### **Analysis of Themes**

When the authors looked at the themes of functional life skills, social skills, and cultural understanding, they found the concepts that our religious leaders discussed as a whole can be taught inside the education settings without violating the Establishment Clause. For example, teachers can teach basic functional skills such as walking in a pattern or social skills such as introducing someone in the classroom. These skills do not establish any religion, but teach transferable skills that can be taught in various settings. These skills allow individuals with disabilities to be inclusive in any setting: work, school, religious, community, and home.

By teaching skills that can be transferred from setting to setting, we can support transition. Three major skill set areas are essential to transition planning: functional, social and cultural. By including these areas in transition planning we allow students the opportunity to actively and fully participate in their religious communities. The functional, social and cultural skills are vital to transition planning, not only because they are essential

components listed in IDEA, but also because they allow students to access community resources. The access to community resources in transition planning are referenced in IDEA (2004) as “a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.” (Wright, 2014, p.56)

### **The Lemon Test**

Do these ideas suggested by the Religious Leaders and the application of these ideas to education pass the Lemon Test? Referring back to Lemon Test to determine if these applications violate the Establishment clause, we argue that the transferable activities and skills proposed should not violate the Establishment Clause.

(1) Does the law (activity) have a secular purpose? If not, it violates the Establishment Clause:

- Transferable skills that are necessary for transition from school to community do have a secular purpose, so therefore it passes this statement and therefore does not violate the Establishment Clause.

(2) Is the primary effect either to advance religion or to inhibit religion? If so, it violates the Establishment Clause:

- Transferable skills do not advance or inhibit religion and therefore it does not violate the Establishment Clause.

(3) Does the law (activity) foster an excessive governmental (public school) entanglement with religion? If so, it violates the Establishment Clause:

- Transferable skills do not foster excessive government entanglement with religion and therefore does not violate the Establishment Clause.

Teachers must be careful that they are teaching transferable skills when specifically looking at transition planning. While it is important that curriculum include exposure to world religions when we are specifically planning the transition of students from school to community participation, we need to be cognizant of skills that can be taught within the religious overview that are transferable. As teachers, we can ask our students “Where else would we use these skills? Can anyone think of where we use this skill?” We could ask students to bring a text from their life that they see as important and we could work on definitions of vocabulary (when the vocabulary is not religious in nature) and fluency of the text to be able to read the text without aid. For students who cannot read the text, we can provide text to speech context of the reading so that the student can access the text in the community.

### **Working Together as a Collaborative Team**

Working together as a team was considered an important component of transition planning by the religious leaders. As a group, they expressed that when they were included by parents and educators into the conversation of what skills and accommodations the student needed, they could help guide students and young adults in participation in activities within the religious community. One expert stated “We are not mind readers”. This statement speaks to the need for student, parent, teacher, and outside community members to work together in all aspects of the transition process.

Transition teams can create a corollary between the skills that they are learning in school to the skills necessary to participate in community involvement, including religious



communities. It is possible that in one transition age classroom, young people can be reading from any given religious text: The Bible, The Torah, the Koran, tribal stories, etc, but these could be read 1-1 or silently, where the sole purpose of these readings be for fluency only. Comprehension of these text should be the responsibility of religious leaders. Classrooms can study many religious holidays and provide Skype or video chat experiences for students who are transitioning to share with others who are experiencing the same transition point in their religion, typical or disabled, in order to feel like part of the community. Teachers might encourage the individual to Skype or video chat with their specific religious leader, provided those conversations be done in a way that provides confidentiality for a student.

### **Implications for Inclusion for the Educator**

Through social skills and multicultural education, a transition specialist or intervention specialist can facilitate activities that help students with disabilities build skills that aid in the integration into communities, secular and religious. The focused attention on standardized testing and rigorous academic standard has narrowed the ability to deviate from the standards or expand a curriculum to include courses and experiences that prepare the student to be an active expert in post-secondary secular and religious communities. The expectation for students to meet achievement scores and the repercussions for the teachers when students do not meet these expectations forces programs to eliminate anything that is not directly related to the results of standardized testing.

. For the student with disabilities, postsecondary inclusion into secular and religious communities requires that teachers are prepared to teach social emotional skills and

multicultural education that include components of all religious organizations. Inclusion of students in any community fosters a sense of belonging and gives them a support system outside of their immediate family. Religious communities can provide a sense of belonging to a group and for some individuals is an important facet of their lives. Schools should be providing supports to allow these students to be included in these communities to their fullest extent. Schools can implement these skills a part of a social skills instructional period (social emotional learning) or through academic education (history and ELA classes). It is the recommendation of the authors that instruction occur in as many settings as possible.

The first element of a comprehension plan for transition planning that includes religious and secular communities is to advocate policy change. For the sake of our children, we must advocate that policy change where plans for post-secondary community participation should be required on every child's Individualized Education Plan. Part of the transition plan, that is mandated at age 14, should include student-centered planning for educational experiences for both secular and religious post-secondary community participations.

The second element of this plan is a local cultural shift in the schools that provides guidelines that require teachers to integrate social skills and multicultural education into lesson plans. These guidelines would emphasize religious understanding, change myopic perspectives and develop a positive disposition toward religious differences of others.

The third element necessary for guidance in student-centered transition planning is a set of explicit expectations as a guiding framework to ensure student participation and student input in the transition planning. Although guidelines for transitioning are part of

the IDEA, some state IEP forms (i.e. Ohio) only include post-secondary education, career and independent living. Transition into community based groups such as a religious organization may not be a priority in the transition planning process.

Realigning academic programs to incorporate the student transition planning process that includes preparation for inclusion into community based programs is the fourth element of preparing teachers and schools to integrate this concept. Globally, multicultural education which include religious components and the social skills needed for inclusion and participation can be integrated into existing courses. This new mindset may require specialized training and the collaboration with the community experts to prepare this area of need and begin developing inclusionary programs.

A comprehensive plan that includes a coherent curriculum that delineates the coursework, social skills instruction, and specific activities directed towards preparing teachers who are competent in facilitating student-centered transition planning programs is critical for the successful inclusion of students with disabilities into the community based program of their choice. Ideally, this curriculum should range from kindergarten through high school. In order for implementation of this program, teachers will need to collaborate and develop longitudinal plan for these experiences. The teachers will need to collaborate with community leaders to develop a partnership that fosters sharing of necessary skills for inclusion and transition planning. To prepare a new generation of teachers competent in all aspects of multicultural education including a religious components. To provide the students with disabilities the best possible transition into an included community setting, colleges should work with the local community to supplement traditional pre service teacher coursework with a new emphasize on cultural

understanding and tolerance towards others and the practical academic and life skills needed for the student's successful inclusion into a post-secondary community based program of their choice.

Transition planning should represent the person as a whole. When we are working together, including all aspects of a student's life into transition planning, we build successful transitions for students. Teachers can help build skills necessary for post-secondary activities inside of school and religious leaders can guide the religious-specific concepts outside of school. Both need to be working together to communicate the necessary skills for an individual with disabilities. We put in place school to work programs that build skills. Skills can be taught so that individuals can be successful anywhere, not just work or school. These same programs need to be considered for inclusion into religious communities.

Students between the age of 18-22 with a disability are permitted to defer diploma and stay in the educational community. During this time, transition planning dictates that students have access to and build bonds within community entities that will support them in the adult world. These young adults with disabilities do not live or work in vacuums where one section of their life is segregated from the other. We would not assume this with any young adult. There is a need for targeted, cooperative transition planning to ensure the opportunity for full community participation, participation that provides the option to select a religious component.

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## Teacher Education: Are we preparing teachers for the learning environments that exist in their schools?

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### *Abstract:*

*The multi-year process of induction into the teaching profession provides an opportunity to nurture the growth of a newly minted professional. However, this may not be the case for all entrants into the profession. A look at the costs, benefits and the return on investment made by the novice professional is discussed in an overview, as well as the experiences of an individual professional in concert with a university mentor. The constraints and possibilities for the individuals and the profession are discussed as a result.*

### Introduction

In order to gain a better understanding of how we prepare teachers, it should be noted that completion of a teacher education program and an Ohio teaching license is only the beginning of the knowledge and skills required to become a highly effective classroom teacher. A multiple year process involving numerous professionals awaits. The expectations for a beginning teacher require a great deal of documentation of (P-12) student learning and evidence that supports teacher effectiveness while demonstrating the application of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Beginning teachers know their academic content areas, due to the fact that most of them earned A's in their content and pedagogical courses. Beginning teachers know their academic content areas, due to the fact that most of them earned A's in their college education classes. However, creating an effective learning environment will only succeed, if the principal provides the leadership required and guide the mentoring of the new teacher during the crucial initial years in the profession.



**This is where the story begins for all young aspiring teachers.**

Newly trained teachers are anxiously enthusiastic to begin their professional practice. They are excited to set in motion their journey and apply all the strategies that their teacher education program has immersed them in, as they completed the academic rigor of becoming a licensed teacher. The education professors, the classroom teachers and the university supervisors have challenged, motivated and modeled for their students the professional dispositions and academic content knowledge that are required in order to become a successful professional educator. Young teachers understand the challenges of the task ahead of them, but they are ready, willing and able “to roll up their shirtsleeves and get to work.” Young teachers are well prepared and realize that they are entrusted with guiding our most precious resources, children. However, due to the rigorous requirements, economic drain and lack of support given to the young teacher, this environment creates a cause and effect of emotional failure.

**The Academic Rigor begins**

Teacher Education Programs are charged with the responsibility of preparing preservice teachers through state approved teacher licensure programs. In Ohio, preservice teachers are required to fulfill the following requirements.

- A. Complete a bachelor’s degree from a state – approved teacher preparation program
- B. Pass state required OAE exams for content and professional knowledge in each licensure area
- C. Complete an Ohio teaching credential application

Each teacher candidate must meet specific standards within the teacher education program, in order to be recommended by the School of Education for an initial teaching license in Early, Middle or Secondary Education. Beyond being accepted to study at a university or college, teacher candidates must progress through different levels of

evaluation, referred to here as ‘gates. ‘Examples of the sequential gates that the candidate must complete are:

- A. Admission to the Teacher Education Program
  1. Teacher Candidate must maintain a specific University GPA
  2. Teacher Candidate must complete ENG 101 with a grade of B or better
  3. Teacher Candidate must complete EDEL 100 Introduction to Education with a grade of B or better
  4. Teacher Candidate must complete required mathematics courses with a grade of a C or better
  5. Teacher Candidate must apply for Admission to the School Of Education and receive an acceptance letter from the Chair.
- B. Admission to Clinical Practice (Student Teaching)
  1. Teacher Candidate must have completed and earned a B or Better in all courses that have an ED prefix (foundation courses and methods courses), along with passing the majority of the concentration courses required by the university.
  2. Upon successful completion of the Ohio Licensure pre-requisite courses the Teacher Candidate must apply for student teaching, submitting an application, resume and submit a current clean BCI/FBI check, along with completing an interview process.
  3. The Teacher Candidate must pass the OAE academic content exam prior to commencing student teaching
  4. The Teacher Candidate must be admitted to student teaching, be assigned by the university in a school setting for one or two semesters and work alongside of a qualified and approved classroom teacher/mentor.
- C. Program Completion/Recommendation for Licensure
  1. A classroom teacher and a university supervisor for a minimum of 12 weeks will mentor the Teacher Candidate.
  2. Teacher Candidate will receive successful evaluations from both Classroom Teacher/Mentor and University Supervisor.
  6. The Teacher Candidate will pass the required 3 or 4 OAE exams’, depending on licensure area, as outlined by the state of Ohio
  7. The Teacher Candidate will complete/ submit the edTPA portfolio, a summative assessment to Pearson for national scoring.
  8. Upon completion of the University required core courses and the Ohio Licensure required curriculum, the Teacher Candidate will open a safe account with the Ohio Department of Education and apply for an initial teaching license.

At the completion of the program and the successful application to the State of Ohio via the SAFE account, the university's licensure office will sign off on the completed application.

The Teacher Preparation Program will be declaring the readiness of the Teacher Candidate to enter the profession and initiate the Four-year Resident Educator Program.

### **The Financial Rigor**

Rereading and notating the list of gates that all young aspiring teachers must successfully walk through are overwhelming and draining. But those do not fully explain the financial cost involved. What does a 4-year teaching degree cost in the state of Ohio? In examining the public and private Ohio university tuition, fees and room/board cost for each year, young education majors have either large unforgiving student loans or work jobs that take away from their opportunities to learn and serve children. A few examples of the cost eye opening to the young teacher.

- Ohio State University: \$27, 037 (\$9,718 tuition, \$12,292 room and board, \$2,042 books, supplies and fees)
- University of Cincinnati: \$22,118 (\$9,322, tuition, \$11,118, room and board, \$1, 678 fees)
- Xavier University \$51,310 (\$38,530 tuition, room and board \$12,780)

However, these are only the institutional costs, they do not include unique costs required for all Teacher Candidate in order to complete their applications for licensure. These requirements include:

- Apply for an Initial Teaching License: \$160
- Required OAE exams' \$160 each X 3 or 4 exams= \$480 -\$640
- EdTPA Fee \$300
- Criminal Background Tests: (Required annually during the program) @ \$75 = \$300 for four years

Looking at these figures, and reminding ourselves the typical student invests in higher education for four years with a higher resulting investment, an important question arises.

*What are the returns on this substantial investment for the novice teacher?*

While starting salaries vary from district to district across a given area, the average starting salaries are provided by the National Educational Association for all states. The average starting salary nationwide in the most recent report (2016 school year) was \$38,617. For Ohio, the average starting salary was \$35,249, while Indiana was \$35,241, and Kentucky \$36,494. For Catholic Schools, there is also variation from diocese to diocese, but for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati in the most recent data, the average starting salary was reported in a range of \$27,000 to \$30,000.

With the salaries in many cases barely exceeding the cost for a single year of education and training, if at all, many novice teachers start their careers with an added concern about finances in addition to the worry about how to put into practice all they have learned during their academic journeys. Are the Teacher Candidates burdened with additional worries concerning their finances as they enter the profession?

### **Theory into Practice**

Putting idealistic theory into practice is a challenge for the young aspiring teachers. The Xavier students all understand and buy into the world of theory. Lev Vygotsky provides the research that teachers understand and desire to implement. The Xavier students practice the concept of scaffolding and work diligently to create an environment that encourages all learners' cognitive development within the child's zone of proximal development. (Powell 2019). As the young teacher prepares to become an effective

educator, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory is always in the forefront of supporting the basic needs of all children, while understanding that the community around them shapes the learning of the children.

In the text, *The Flat World and Education*, Linda Darling-Hammond described how teachers have inherited dysfunctional learning environments and school systems have not yet transformed themselves from the factory model. (LDH 2010) Darling-Hammond gives many examples of the importance of building relationships between teacher and student, but lack of time and too much testing continues to dominate the daily life of a teacher. It is clear that underprepared Teachers and lack of support by school administrators creates the out of control environment that sends a young teacher on a frustrating path to failure. Often Principals stat that "Their door is always open", which is an outstanding leadership policy. However, teachers become immersed in the rigor of the school day, curriculum requirements and testing demands, which often prohibits the importance of ongoing relationship development required for effective teaching. This would be similar to the classroom teacher who ends a presentation with the ubiquitous statement, 'Any Questions?' Typically, students respond to such questions without any response, as they believe the request is in name only. Could novice teachers be viewing the 'door is always open' in the same light?

As higher education teacher preparation programs began to develop young teachers, we usually begin by studying theory and then moving theory into practice. Professors spend an enormous amount of classroom time in class lectures and small group discussion influencing attitudes of aspiring teachers. The teacher candidates that we work with have a heart for children and are willing to jump through the hoops required by the

state for teacher licensure, because they can see the benefit of their investment in the results for their students. But is this without limit?

In the text, *Your Introduction to Education Explorations in Teaching* by Sara Davis Powell, the teacher candidate learns the Characteristics of the Profession, Effective Teaching Practices, Similarities and Differences of Student Learning, Curriculum, Assessment, Accountability and many other aspects of how to be a successful classroom teacher. When Xavier teacher candidates are asked why they want to be a teacher, there responses include the following remarks:

- “I want to be a role model and help children thrive.”
- “I want make the world a better place by showing students that we are inclusive in the classroom”
- “I want to make a difference in the daily lives of children, so they can make a difference in the world”

The education majors acknowledge and demonstrate academic content knowledge and skills that are required through extensive teacher preparation programs. However, when the question “Why Become a Teacher” was presented, the answer always revolves around caring, compassion and advocacy for the whole child. Unfortunately, the driving force behind a young teacher candidate’s choice to become a teacher does not translate in many schools and classroom environments they experience when entering the profession. This disconnect results in many teachers leaving the profession.

In the work, *Teacher Turnover: Why it Matters and What We Can Do About it?* (Carver-Thomas, Darling-Hammond) it was reported that teachers leaving the profession create 90% of open teaching positions. What does the research report as the reason behind this statistic? Lack of Teacher support and teaching conditions were some of key factors

concerning young teachers leaving the profession. The research addressed the critical teacher shortage and the cost of attrition to student learning, student achievement and district budgets. No one wins, when young teachers leave their classroom and give up on the teaching profession. The question becomes, what can or should be school systems be doing to onboard their new professionals. These are persons called to serve who have a clear rationale and investment into this journey, yet they are turning away in vast numbers. Their view has changed as the equilibrium between investment and return on investment has been shifted so far their professional lives are now out of balance. How does this manifest for an individual teacher candidate moving toward becoming a professional educator? Perhaps an example would help to illustrate the point.

### **And So It Begins**

In 2015, Halley Rankin arrived at Xavier with the desire and passion to become a teacher. Halley is an impressive young professional that had previously earned a Master's Degree in Communication, but soon realized that she was motivated to make a difference in the emotional, social and cognitive needs of children. Observing Halley in class and as a long-term substitute teacher in the most diverse public school in Cincinnati, The Academy of World Languages, her commitment was evident and her work in the classroom was perfection. Halley entered the Xavier Early Childhood Cohort and earned the Ohio and Kentucky Teaching License in Early Childhood and Elementary Education in 2017. As a Xavier graduate student, Halley earned a 4.0 GPA and received outstanding observation reviews from her mentor teachers and Xavier supervisors. Halley had all the strategies required in her tool kit to become a successful teacher and she was eager to set up her classroom, meet her children, their families and serve the community.

## Halley Rankin's Story

I have been told more than once that the first three years of teaching are the hardest of one's career. While at a new teacher orientation for a large public school district, a room full of teachers, some just out of college and others, like me, further on in years after trying other careers or raising families, heard from those who had survived their first and second years in the district. They were replete with promises that you can survive and things will get better eventually. Similarly, a valued mentor and fifteen-year veteran teacher shared recently that she cried every day for the first three years of teaching.

- As a new teacher, now in my second year, I have many questions as I reflect on my experiences including many successes and more failures.
- I wonder if the tearful three-year phenomenon has become an assumed rite of passage for those of us bravely entering this challenging profession.
- Is it necessary for professional growth, or simply entrenched in the culture of education because it is what happened to so many before me?
- Why are these years so difficult, and how can we ease the shock for teachers who are as much individuals as the children and families they endeavor to serve?
- How can we attract and keep qualified and talented teachers who are motivated to improve education if the sales pitch to join the profession includes words like survive, one day at a time, and hang in there...it gets better?
- How can new teachers find their voices to as empowered advocates for their students in the midst of jaded veteran teachers and administrators?

I chose to pursue teaching after years of feeling a call to make an impact on something beyond a company's bottom line. My goal is to be part of improving a community, committed to teaching its young citizens essential skills as individuals with bright futures as contributing members to society. Little people who possess self-regulation skills and high executive functions. I carefully chose a masters of education program that trained me to believe that education means addressing the needs of the whole child, no matter race,



creed, or socioeconomic status. I relished the cocoon of my teacher education program where my ideals were fostered by my professors, mentors, and classmates. I saw veteran teachers in action, making great impacts on their young students and student teachers.

I had the opportunity to learn from mentors with very different teaching styles. However, they prioritized individualized instruction for their students. For example, I spent time in the field shadowing a kindergarten teacher who maintained strict routines in her classroom with little room for negotiation or student input. However, her fast pace and assertive tone provided the necessary consistency for her young students to learn routines quickly so she could provide individualized and responsive instruction in a small group setting. Daily small group and skill based centers in language arts and math were quick, requiring attention for short periods of time, which allowed young learners to attend to tasks for developmentally appropriate length of time with variety and frequent physical movement. Clear expectations and immediate feedback to all students without regard to favoritism maintained a respectful classroom environment.

Another field experience with a second grade teacher demonstrated the same commitment to individualized instruction in a literature centric environment that provided seven and eight year olds strong routine and expectations while allowing for some choice within certain parameters. Students had the necessary tools to demonstrate learning through a variety of modalities. The workshop curriculum model, utilized across the school district, allowed independent practice and flexibility for the teacher to provide appropriate support to students along the continuum of their skill and comfort levels. A more informal communication style from the teacher created a warm and familial classroom community while maintaining high expectations.

My experiences in these very different but equally effective classrooms has been my lifeblood as I have experienced two challenging years as a new teacher. Two years in which I, too, have spent many afternoons awash in tears and self-doubt.

### **Where do we go from here?**

According to the AACTE Clinical Practice Commission ([www.aacte.org](http://www.aacte.org) 2018), effective clinical practice, research and clinical partnerships are woven throughout the teacher education program providing a strong foundation for putting theory into practice. The Commission clearly defines the importance of strong pedagogical training within the clinical practice. Additionally, the Commission outlines the importance of a healthy clinical partnership that is aligned to the teacher educator's preparation program. AACTE's work is powerful and no one in education can deny that the schools and the university must work hand in hand to prepare the next generation of effective teachers.

Unfortunately, it is clear in Halley's heartfelt narrative that depicts the lack of support and understanding of the importance of mentoring young teachers. Is Halley's story unique to her classroom? It is apparent from the teacher retention numbers that there is a disconnect between teacher education, clinical partners and school districts.

Higher education, school administrations and policy makers must continue to work together to prepare teachers for tomorrow's children. We know that the research supports that young teachers must have mentoring and support within the classroom setting. This is a call to action. We must collaborate with one another to create the environment that will strengthen the profession of teaching and we must uplift young teachers, so they can continue their goal of be the best teacher for their children.

We must build a clear continuum of development, from teacher candidate to novice teacher, from novice to veteran teacher, and from veteran teacher to mentor for future teachers. The goal for the entirety of this continuum must be the same, the development of an engaged faculty who create environments where students learn. In this manner, the investments, both academic and financial, made by the novice teacher remain in balance, and the scales of investment tip in favor of teacher retention for each generation of educators.

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# Supporting Emotion Regulation in Children Three to Five Years Old: An Integrated Preschool Classroom's Approach

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## *Abstract:*

*Teaching preschool is a responsibility which is impacted by the need to address many developmental domains. However, by investing time in teaching rules, expectations, and emotion regulation, we can more effectively provide our students with the foundation needed to be a successful student. The Responsive Classroom® and The Zones of Regulation can be adapted to meet the developmental level of preschool age students and allow for the teaching of necessary skills and strategies to ensure a calm, responsible, and effective learning environment to be developed.*

## Introduction

Preschool teachers take on an enormous responsibility in a child's educational journey: creating a solid foundation in all developmental areas to allow for a strong start in school age education. Many preschool educators feeling confident in supporting fine motor, gross motor, adaptive, cognitive, and social-communication skills, but perhaps the most difficult developmental area to support in preschool age children is the social-emotional developmental domain. Many teachers in the preschool field do not have a solid understanding of how social emotional development, especially emotion regulation, impact learning. As a preschool educator, more often than not, I hear many other preschool educators complain about children's emotional or explosive behaviors and that they cannot control them. Many ask why the student's in my classroom do not have these behaviors.

My response is that many of my students do; however, I have learned in my own experiences that it is essential to take the time to teach my students the necessary tools, skills, and knowledge needed to begin to self-regulate and control their own behaviors. Throughout the years, I have discovered that it is essential to take an entire month at the beginning of the school year to explicitly teach my students classroom appropriate behaviors and expectations, as well as tools to use when our feelings or emotions don't necessarily match the situation we are in. I involve the students in this study as much as possible in order to create a sense of ownership in their behavior, as well as the expectations in the classroom. Two curricula that I use to facilitate this study in my classroom are The Responsive Classroom® and The Zones of Regulation. Both curricula were developed for school age classrooms; however, I have since intertwined and adapted both curricula to meet the needs of the students in my integrated preschool classroom.

### **The Responsive Classroom®: An Overview**

The Responsive Classroom® is a proactive approach to discipline that actively engages the students in creating a safe, respectful classroom environment. “Often referred to as an efficacious, positive, or judicious approach, it aims to help children develop self-control, begin to understand what socially responsible behavior is, and come to value such behavior” (Brady, Forton, & Porter, 2010, p. 7). According to Brady, Forton, and Porter (2010), “the primary goals of this approach are to:

- Establish a calm, orderly, and safe environment for learning
- Help children develop self-control and self-discipline
- Teach children to be responsible, contributing members of a democratic community
- Promote respectful, kind, and health teacher-student and student-student interactions” (p. 2)

This approach focuses on the belief that “discipline is a subject that can be ‘taught’ just as we teach reading and writing and math, and that children learn best when they’re actively engaged and invested in constructing their own understanding” (Brady, Forton, & Porter, 2010, p. 2).

At the beginning of the school year, the teacher and the students collaboratively discuss goals for social and academic learning. The students and the teacher then discuss and collaboratively create minimal, simple rules needed to ensure that their goals can be achieved throughout the school year. The students “understand that the rules are there to keep them safe and help them achieve their goals in school” (Brady, Forton, & Porter, 2010, p. 2). After the rules have been developed, it is essential that the rules are explicitly taught and modeled, just as classroom routines and expectations need to be.

In this approach, the use of interactive modeling is essential in ensuring the students gain a deep understanding of what the expectations are. From there, this approach teaches the use of logical consequences and proactive teacher responses when misbehavior does occur. “Teachers using this approach help children become aware of how their actions can bring positive and negative consequences to themselves and others. When children misbehave, teachers use respective strategies to stop the misbehavior and restore positive behavior as quickly as possible so that children can continue to learn and the teacher can continue to teach” (Brady, Forton, & Porter, 2010, p. 7-8).

### **The Zones of Regulation: An Overview**

Leah Kuypers created the Zones to “support people in managing all the feelings they experience, without passing judgment on what people are feeling or how they are behaving” (Kuypers, 2016, p. 1). Social regulation is very complex and involves the

development and integration of many neurological skills. Due to this complexity, many of our students come to us with deficits in the neurological skills needed for social regulation. As a result, The Zones of Regulation can be used to “address many of these underlying deficits in order to improve self-regulation and social success” (Kuypers & Sautter, 2012, p. 9). The curriculum teaches students to learn and recognize when they are moving to a less-regulated state, as well as the emotions, feelings, precursors, and physiological reactions that go with it. Students are then taught when and how to use specific tools to help regulate their emotions in each Zone. It is important to note that “social skills and self-regulation go hand in hand. If we are unable to control our internal state and/or overt behaviors in order to adapt to various social demands, we will have minimal success in social situations. People may label this as being non-compliant, disruptive, hyper, anxious, inflexible, or lazy. These labels point to a deficit in what we call social regulation” (Kuypers & Sautter, 2012, p. 9).

Although created for school-age children, this curriculum can be adapted and taught to meet the needs of preschool age children. When using the Zones of Regulation, it is essential that no zone is viewed as a “bad” zone; everybody, both children and adults, experience each and every zone at some point throughout our daily lives. Consequences should never be tied to a Zone; instead, we should focus on the tools and strategies to regulate our emotions in each Zone. The Zone we are in is determined by how we feel on the inside, not the behavior on the outside” (Kuypers, 2016, p. 1). “The Zones uses a systematic, cognitive behavior approach to teach self-regulation by categorizing all the different ways we feel and states of alertness we experience into four concrete Zones” (Kuypers & Sautter, 2012, p. 9).



Red Zone: “extremely heightened states of alertness and intense emotions” (Kuypers & Sautter, 2012, p. 9). My preschool students describe this zone with the following words: angry, excited, frantic, hysterical

Yellow Zone: “slightly heightened states of alertness and elevated emotions” (Kuypers & Sautter, 2012, p. 9). My preschool students describe this zone with the following words: frustrated, worried, funny, silly

Green Zone: “a calm state of alertness... [we are] ready to learn when in the Green Zone. This is the Zone students predominantly need to be in the classroom” (Kuypers & Sautter, 2012, p. 9). My preschool students describe this zone with the following words: proud, happy, satisfied, ready to learn

Blue Zone: “low states of alertness” (Kuypers & Sautter, 2012, p. 9). My preschool students describe this zone with the following words: sad, sick, blue, crying, upset

When teaching the Zones, the students are taught explicit emotions in each of the four zones. This is done through pictures, role play, and real-life social situations. We work through what it looks like or feels like when we move to less regulated states of emotions and explicitly teach tools, such as thinking strategies, breathing, and sensory supports, which can be used to regulate our emotions and states. Tools have different functions, including helping us to calm, become alert, or to stay in control. “When we respect our students and the feelings they have, we can approach teaching self-regulation through the perspective of understanding, compassion, and assistance, rather than behavior expectations, rewards, and consequences. In the end, we’ll do more to help them learn to self-regulate their thoughts, feelings, and internal states so they can co-exist with others and accomplish the goals, both big and small, they hope to achieve no matter what Zone they are in and whatever context they find themselves” (Kuypers, 2016, p. 3).

## **Emotion Regulation: A Month Long Study with a Year Long Review**

Our study on emotion regulation begins before my students walk into our classroom. We purposefully and strategically set-up the classroom to allow for a calm, responsible classroom to be built. Visuals are used heavily to introduce, teach, and review our classroom rules, expectations, and the Zones of Regulation. Then, the very moment my students walk into our building on the first day of school and we work diligently for over a month to ensure that the students have a deep knowledge and understanding of the responsible behaviors that are needed in the classroom. My classroom team works diligently to model respect, self-control, and responsible behaviors. We teach what we feel are the simplest of skills, including “standing on a star,” “standing on a line,” or “catching a bubble,” as well as what “quiet hands, quiet feet, and quiet mouths” look like. We use strategies such as interactive modeling to break down these expectations and help the students to gain a deep understanding of these expectations in the classroom.

While explicitly teaching responsible behaviors, we are drawing, role playing, taking pictures and writing about our hopes and dreams of learning for the year. Some of my students hope to learn to write their name, learn math, or learn about unicorns. All of the students’ hopes and dreams are acknowledged and addressed at some point throughout the school year. Together as a community, we create “Our Hopes and Dreams” wall where we display what each child and teacher would like to learn for the year; we revisit this wall as we focus on each of the hopes and dreams throughout the school year.

After we have shared our hopes and dreams, we discuss together the rules our classroom needs in order to ensure we are able to achieve all of our hopes and dreams. We group these “little rules” under our program wide “big rules” of Be Safe, Be Kind and Be

Responsible. The students model the rules, describe the rules, and teach each other the rules for many days. The classroom team facilitates this learning, providing positive rephrasing and understanding when needed.

Once we have established our hopes and dreams, as well as the rules that will help us to achieve them, we begin talking about emotions and how we want to feel while at school. Many of my students agree that while at school, we want to be happy, calm, and ready to learn. This leads us into a discussion on the four Zones of Regulation and the accompanying emotions. Throughout two weeks, we break down, discuss, and model each Zone specifically. We accompany each Zone with songs, art activities, and small group activities that help us to truly feel each emotion in each Zone. These strategies help the students begin to understand how to recognize the feelings that we tie to each Zone.

After each Zone has been explicitly taught, we discuss tools and strategies that we can use to help calm our bodies, alert our bodies, or keep our bodies “ready to learn.” One tool that we use in our classroom is Take 5; this strategy uses 5 head pushes, 5 deep breaths, 5 hugs, and 5 hand squeezes to calm our bodies, as well as keep us “ready to learn.” This year, my students identified jumping on a trampoline and wall push-ups as tools we can use to alert our bodies when we are in the blue zone.

At the end of our month long study on emotion regulation, we review what we have learned in regard to the Responsive Classroom® and the Zones of Regulation. This review happens purposefully and frequently throughout the school year to ensure that the use of these skills stays in the forefront of our students, as well as the classroom team’s, minds. Without the consistent review, we have found that we revert back to old ways and the use of these strategies are not as effective. Classroom staff are equipped with visual supports

that help to facilitate the use of these skills in every area of the school building. In each of the areas of the classroom, rules and Zones visuals are placed to allow for continual reference, re-teaching, and review throughout the school year.

### **Emotion Regulation: Preschoolers Views**

During and after our month long study on emotion regulation, my preschool students begin using the language, skills, and strategies taught to them in spontaneous interactions. A few scenarios are provided below to provide evidence of how the time invested in teaching classroom rules, expectations, and emotion regulation can and will pay off in the end.

*The class is lined up in the hallway to go to breakfast. Many of the students are talking and laughing with each other. However, one student, Billy is standing quietly. Ted notices. Ted says “Billy is being responsible. He has a bubble in his mouth. He is ready to go to breakfast.” Many of the other students hear Ted’s comment and change their behavior to show they are ready too.*

*Emma and Sue are playing together in the dramatic play area. Emma takes Sue’s toy. Sue becomes sad and starts crying. Joe walks over to Sue and says “Sue, you are in the Blue Zone. Take 5 deep breaths. It will help you.” Sue looks at Joe and begins to take 5 deep breaths. A teacher walks over to the dramatic play area, acknowledges the interaction between Joe and Sue and asks Sue how she is feeling. Sue calmly tells the teacher that she is upset that Emma took her toy. The teacher asks how she can help her. Sue asks the teacher to help her talk to Emma and ask for the toy back. With adult support, Sue walks over to Emma and says, “Emma, you took my toy away. That made me feel sad and put me in the blue zone. Can you please give me my toy back? We can play with it together.”*

*The class is sitting at circle. The teacher is reading a story. Allison becomes very angry because a student next to her keeps touching her. She begins yelling at the student to stop. Ryan says “Allison is in the red zone. She is mad because he won’t stop touching her.” The teacher acknowledges Ryan’s comment and asks what we can do to help Allison. Ryan says “Let Allison come sit next to me. I won’t touch her.”*

*It is small group time in the classroom. The students are transitioning between groups. One student, Faye, is running around the classroom. Lilly walks up to Faye and says “It looks like you are in the yellow zone. I don’t think you are ready to learn. Take 5.” Faye stops and says “Will you do it with me?” The students complete the Take 5 calming strategy together. Lilly then says, “Are you in the green zone now? Are you ready to learn?” Faye nods her head yes. Lilly grabs her hand and walks her to her assigned small group to learn.*

As you can see with the above scenarios, as well as with the yearlong approach, emotion regulation in a preschool classroom is an investment. It takes a lot of time, planning, and carrying out to ensure that it is done effectively and successfully. However, as a preschool teacher who takes this investment seriously, the time spent teaching rules discipline, and emotion regulation, although a large investment, will richly pay off throughout the school year. For all of the teachers who ask me why I don't have "behavior kids" in my classroom; my response is, "I do, but I have taken the time to teach them to skills and tools to be successful." Without the investment and teaching of these skills, we will never be able to provide our students with the solid foundation needed in all other areas of development because we will always be wrapped up in the regulation of emotions and unnecessary behaviors in our classroom.

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## Give Depth to Get Depth: Interview Questions That Lead to Outstanding Hires

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### *Abstract:*

*Garnering effective candidates is at the heart of any candidate interview process. The goal may be easy to state, however the functional approaches required to reach said goal can often allude the best of intentions. Two seasoned administrators share the wisdom of the pursuit of depth for successful interviews, something that all in education can and such put into effect.*

### Introduction

Conducting interviews can be stressful, and often it is a boring process that leads to mediocre hires. Meanwhile observing a person in a job unequivocally provides more first hand information about a person's performance and potential as an employee. Actually observing a teacher teach presents meaningful information about the quality of teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom. Directly observing a counselor, administrative assistant, therapist, cafeteria worker, custodian, administrator, or any school employee best defines their abilities and skills.

Unfortunately, when administrators are hiring employees, they do not always have the luxury to observe possible candidates in their work setting. Instead, administrators base much of their hiring process on candidate interviews. So shouldn't interview questions be strategically designed to provide powerful information about the candidates? Shouldn't questions be more than generic so the best possible employee is hired?

First, some introductory interview questions are necessary in an interview to diminish the tension. Such as, “We have a copy of your resume, but sometimes a piece of paper does not capture everything about you. Would you please take two minutes to tell us about yourself professionally?” The question allows candidates to talk about something they know quite well – themselves, which puts candidates at ease. After all, interviewing is not about creating a stressful environment to see if a candidate will “break” or “cry,” but interviewing is about filling the position with the best qualified person. So begin lightly.

Hopefully the candidate will answer a few introductory questions with specifics about things he/she is proud of professionally. But if the candidate responds with general information, such as, “I taught (grade level, content) for (years). And before that I taught (grade level, content) for (years),” draw out more details from the candidate. Ask, “What things are you especially proud of when you taught (grade level, content) for (years)?” Or “What made you stand out among your peers?” Or “What three adjectives would describe your teaching of (grade level, content)?”

The purpose of a few opening questions is to relax the candidate while providing beneficial information about the candidate. In other words, listen to what the candidate highlights as relevant. Do not interrogate.

### Give Depth to Get Depth

Next, and the most important point, is the majority of interview questions must be designed to provide in-depth, meaningful information about the candidate beyond typical responses. If you want to hear, “I’ve always wanted to be a teacher since I was a young child,” then ask the mundane question, “Why did you become a teacher?” If, however, you want to truly understand if this is the best person for the position, then ask, “Teaching is a



difficult occupation from improving student achievement, advancing state scores, meeting the needs of all students, designing engaging lessons, etc. What characteristic do you possess that has always been a part of you and will help you address all the demands of teaching?"

By creating questions that have breadth, the responses will have more depth. So when writing interview questions, follow these two hints.

Hint #1 – Give depth

Hint #2 – Get depth

To give depth (Hint #1) begin by asking questions that include a description of your setting. In other words, give depth to inform the interviewee about your school and the position available to uncover if the candidate is the right fit for your school, students, staff and community.

For example, ask, "We have a school-wide behavior program, called (name of program). It involves ... (describe it). How might you implement/support this program?" Do not ask surface questions such as, "What do you think about discipline?" or "Tell us about your behavioral plan." Or you will receive programmed responses often with very little detail.

In return, as you give depth about your setting, the interviewee will effortlessly provide more specifics, or give depth (Hint #2) in their responses, and the team will gain a richer understanding of the candidate's potential.

As S. Blankenship reports, "So many times we use generic questions, and then we pay for it the entire year. Spend the time designing questions that you can't Google. If an interview results in a recommendation for hiring, the impact on student learning will be significant" (S. McKibben, 2016).

To illustrate, if you ask, “What do you think about parent volunteers?” The response will often be “I think parent volunteers are good” because the question is vague and elicits a generic response. It is highly unlikely that someone will reply, “I think volunteers are bad.”

Now change the wording of the question to give depth to get depth. “We have over 100 volunteers in our school weekly. How might you use volunteers in your classroom beyond making copies.” Or you might ask the counterpart, “We believe parent/community involvement in our school is very important. However, we have a difficult time getting people to volunteer. What might you do to get volunteers working in your classroom?”

Besides giving and getting depth, the questions inform the candidates of what is expected of them if they get the position. “Oh, I need to support volunteering.”

Scenarios or situational questions are excellent examples of giving depth to get depth.

Do not ask – Is it better to use novel sets or a textbook to teach reading?

Ask - We use novel sets on various levels to teach reading. How have you, or how might you, utilize novel sets to best meet the needs of your students? [Now the interviewee realizes what is expected if they get the job.]

Do not ask – Do you believe in inclusion or pullout of special needs students?

[The interviewees will more than likely say they use both because they want to please you. Instead describe the reading practice in your school so the interviewee does not have to choose.]

Ask - Including all students in the classroom is a must. How will you differentiate a (content area) lesson on (a topic) to meet the needs of students with special needs, gifted, and limited English language so everyone participates fully?

Do not ask – How do you get students to complete assignments?

Ask – A student refuses to complete an assignment. How do you determine an alternative assignment? [Perhaps the student is refusing to complete the assignment for religious reasons or personal reasons. By asking about an alternative assignment, the interviewee understands that forcing an assignment is not an option at your school.]

Do not ask – What is your opinion about technology in the classroom?

Ask – We are implementing a one-to-one laptop program for our students next year beginning with the grade level you are applying for. How do you envision integrating student laptops in meaningful ways in your (content area) classroom to improve student learning?

Do not ask – What do you think about collaboration?

Ask – Please describe how you will collaborate weekly with the special educator to create opportunities for the two of you to co-teach (content area).

Or ask – We encourage collaboration. Yet, what if you are on a team where one member likes to work alone. How might you work through this with the team member? [The interviewee is warned about the non-collaborative member.]

Do not ask – Do you use labs in your science class?

Ask – How do you use hands-on labs in your science class (\_\_\_)% of the time?

Here are additional open-ended examples of “giving depth” to inform the interviewee of what to expect and deal with.

- It is not acceptable for a student to fail. What interventions will you put in place to prevent failure?
- At our school parents have high expectations for their children’s academic performance. As students enter the middle school, the workload increases and the transition can be difficult. How will you positively address a parent’s concern about their child receiving their first “C?”
- A parent continually calls you and/or emails you. The parent questions the way you do things. How do you positively respond?
- Respect between the teacher and student is extremely important. But how do you go beyond respect to let the students know that you care about them and their learning. Please give examples.
- What positive strategies will you employ to deal with student absenteeism?

If an interviewee is unsure how to handle a situation that you present, the person may hesitate when answering. This does not make the person is a poor hire. It may possibly mean the person will need extra training or support.

### Staff Interviews

The “give depth to get depth” hint applies in any interview, not just with teachers.

For a counselor interviewee:

Ask - Many of our students do not believe they can attend college. How will you support them to change their mind? What specific services might you offer?

For an administrative assistant:

Ask - Multiple events happen at once - you are finishing a much-needed report for central office, the copier needs ink now, and an upset parent calls. So it takes you a minute before responding to a visitor at the front door. The visitor enters the office and chides you for taking so long. How do you positively respond to their needs and not give excuses for why you were not immediately available?

For an instructional aide:

Ask - Part of this position includes changing diapers of students who are severely handicapped. What are your thoughts? One of the authors actually had this event happen. The candidate said she would have no problem changing diapers. But the next day she called and asked to withdraw her name from the interview process because changing diapers was not something she could do. This was extremely important for the interview team to know.

Ask a student teacher or intern:

Describe what you think your typical day would be like here at (name your school) from (give the start and end time). This not only informs the candidate of the expected school hours, but the response also lets your team know if the student teacher or intern will be dedicated to being there.

Describe the physical layout of your classroom. This will uncover the interviewee's teaching style (e.g. traditional, non-traditional, child- or teacher-centered) and interviewee's priorities, such as reading, lab work, small group support, technology integration, etc.

Ask any interviewee, "What will you do first ... and second ... if you get this job?" There may not be a specific answer you are looking for but listen to what the interviewee highlights. Is that what you hope from an employee? Likewise, in the end allow candidates to ask questions of the interview team. Again, concentrate on what the interviewee focuses on and how this will impact your school.

## **In Conclusion**

According to Peterson (2002), “group interviews ... help district staff to feel involved and respected for their roles.” Clement (2013) reports, ‘Bringing teachers fully into the hiring process not only helps find the best teacher for the job, but it also helps grow teacher leadership.’ Staff members who participate in the hiring decision are more eager to assist and/or mentor the new person for success. So include the team in all aspects of the interview process from start to finish. Permit the team to view possible interview questions ahead of time, and ask the team what questions they would like to add, especially questions specific to the position/grade level/department, etc. (i.e. situational questions). Then in the interview, if a question is especially important to one team member, let another team member ask the question. For example, Calvin is very interested in questions #8, but another team member, Madilyn, asks questions #8 so Calvin can focus on the candidate’s response and take notes, rather than maintain eye contact with the candidate.

Schools cannot take a chance hiring the wrong person. Through “give depth to get depth” questions, staff members learn vital information about interviewees. At the same time, interviewees are cognizant of what is expected of them if they get the job, which leads to outstanding hires.

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## Authors:

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# PUBLICATION GUIDELINES

for the OHIO Journal of Teacher  
Education

The following guidelines are presented for publication opportunities for OJTE (the OHIO Journal of Teacher Education).

The OHIO Journal of Teacher Education provides a forum for the exchange of information and ideas concerning the improvement of teaching and teacher education. Articles submitted should reflect this mission. Their focus should concern concepts, practices, and/or results of research that have practical dimensions, implications, or applicability for practitioners involved with teacher education. The journal is regional in scope and is sent as a benefit of membership in the Ohio Association of Teacher Education.

Manuscripts are subject to review of the Professional Journal Committee (co-editors and editor consultants). Points of view are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily those of either Association. Permission to reproduce journal articles must be requested from the editors.

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**Content:** Journal issues may be “thematic” or “open.” Currently, all future issues are designated “open.”

**Length:** Manuscripts, including all references, bibliographies, charts, figures, and tables, generally should not exceed 15 pages.

**Style:** For writing and editorial style, follow directions in the latest edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Omit the author’s name from the title page. Include an 80-100-word abstract.

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**Cover page:** Include the following information on a separate sheet attached to the manuscript: title of the article; date of submission; author's name, author's terminal degree; mailing address, e-mail address, business and home phone numbers, institutional affiliation; and short biographical sketch, including background and areas of specialization.

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- August 1, 2019** Closing date for acceptance of manuscripts for Fall Journal 2019
- Publication Date: October, 2019 at OCTEO Conference**
- January 7, 2020** Closing date for acceptance of manuscripts for Spring Journal 2020
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