Chapter 14

Field-Based Teacher Education to Promote All Students’ Language and Literacy Development

Amy J. Heineke
Loyola University Chicago, USA

Aimee Papola-Ellis
Loyola University Chicago, USA

ABSTRACT

In today’s classrooms, teachers face increasingly diverse students who simultaneously learn and develop language across grades and disciplines. In this chapter, authors share how one teacher education program prepares candidates to promote language and literacy development for all students, with emphasis culturally and linguistically diverse students. Through a field-based curriculum, candidates spanning licensure areas build expertise to support students’ language development simultaneous to disciplinary learning. In line with policy initiatives at pre-service and in-service levels, this approach spirals learning across programs to develop and deepen understandings through field-based apprenticeship with faculty, cooperating teachers, and students. This chapter uses data-driven vignettes to highlight field experiences that build candidates’ expertise for supporting language and literacy development. The chapter closes with discussion and implications for preparing teachers for language and literacy in today’s inclusive classrooms, as well as directions for future research.

INTRODUCTION

As central actors in schools, teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). Ultimately, goals to improve learning outcomes for all students requires a teaching corps that brings knowledge and professional competencies to have positive impacts on diverse learners in diverse settings (Darling-Hammond, & Cheuk, 2012; Gándara & Maxwell-Jolly, 2006; Valdés, Bunch, DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3068-8.ch014
Field-Based Teacher Education to Promote All Students’ Language and Literacy Development

Snow, & Lee, 2005). However, due to various challenges of preparing high-quality teachers within the context of traditional schools of education, preparation programs have yet to consistently and comprehensively produce teachers who accomplish these outcomes (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Labaree, 2004, 2010; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanaugh, 2013). While substantive reform and evidence of improved teacher education emerges, systemic change that contributes to improved pre-Kindergarten-through-twelfth-grade (P-12) student outcomes remains elusive (Ball & Forzani, 2009, 2010; Burn & Mutton, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Zeichner, 2012; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). In this chapter, the authors explore one university’s mission to redesign teacher education, using a field-based approach to prepare candidates to support the language and literacy development of all students, with a particular lens on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for working with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Gay, 2010; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-González, 2008).

In the Teaching, Learning, and Leading with Schools and Communities (TLLSC) program, faculty have collaboratively re-envisioned teacher education. By developing instructional partnerships and embedding programs in urban schools and communities, faculty committed to breaking the century-old mold of teacher education to better prepare the next generation of teachers. Similar to other teacher educators, faculty faced the formidable challenge of preparing teachers who can enter classrooms well-equipped to immediately and consistently demonstrate positive impacts on the social, emotional, behavioral, cultural, linguistic, and academic achievement of all students, particularly those who have been historically marginalized in high-need, urban schools (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Gándara & Maxwell-Jolly, 2006; García, Arias, Harris-Murri, & Serna, 2010; Gay, 2010; Labaree, 2004; Lucas et al., 2008). With this program, faculty responded to the needs of schools by directly collaborating with local educators to prepare future teachers. Ultimately, the goal of P-12 and teacher education is the same: to promote P-12 student learning, development, and achievement. By working together, educators and teacher educators can accomplish this shared goal by increasing the number of highly committed educators who are capable and skilled in supporting all students’ learning and development.

Grounded in sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), TLLSC utilizes a field-based apprenticeship framework (Rogoff, 1994), which emphasizes the developmental process of teacher learning as situated in and influenced by the unique social and cultural context of urban P-12 schools. Within this framework, TLLSC candidates engage in increasingly sophisticated and authentic practices that encompass the dynamic work of teaching in schools and communities (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Kruger, Davies, Eckersley, Newell, & Cherednichenko, 2009). This approach to field-based teacher preparation is done through mutually beneficial partnerships with diverse schools, including public and private schools in nearby urban and suburban settings (Kruger et al., 2009). Through engagement in a professional preparation continuum and apprenticed by multiple experts in the field, candidates evolve into teachers with comprehensive expertise and flexible teaching repertoires to meet the multifaceted and unique needs of students (Feiman-Nemser, 2000; García et al., 2010; Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015). Of particular importance is the programmatic emphasis on all teachers’ roles in supporting the language and literacy development of all learners, honing in primarily on the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students (Gay, 2010; Lucas et al., 2008).

The renewed need for teacher preparation programs to focus on academic language and literacy development stems from various policy initiatives targeting both pre-service in-service teaching. The Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) has been adopted by a number of states across the nation, and a passing score is required for a candidate to successfully receive licensure to teach. The edTPA prioritizes academic language in instruction, specifically requiring that candidates discern and support