Teacher Perceptions
Perceived needs of pre-service teachers regarding gifted learners: Evidence and suggestions for teacher preparation programs

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Who are we?

- Doctoral candidates in gifted education
- Teaching assistants in classroom management course
- Classroom teachers 12+ years (ESL, special education, general education)
Who are you and why are you here in 30 seconds or less?
Purpose

• An apparent disconnect exists between pre-service teachers’ expectations regarding classroom management course content and textbook selection.

• This study investigated these perceived needs of pre-service teachers regarding the needs of gifted learners.
Research Questions

• What do pre-service teachers perceive as their needs regarding classroom management?

• In what manner and to what extent are these needs related to published textbooks and research on classroom management?
One of the biggest challenges in the transition from the college classroom to the real-life classroom is in the area of classroom management (Stoughton, 2006).

This dissonance between theory and practice is an area of recent research interest (Thibodeau & Hillman, 2003; Silvestri, 2001; Stoughton, 2006).
• Participants
  – All students enrolled in a classroom management course during fall 2007 \((n=92)\) and spring 2008 \((n=88)\) semesters.
Methods (2)

• Data Sources
  – Students posed questions to guest lecturers.

• Questions
  – 1,672 questions from 180 students
  – Posted on WebCT/BlackBoard
  – Questions were not graded

• Textbook content of two texts used in the course.
Table 1. *Lecture topics for each semester.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture Topic</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
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<th>Speaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>Course Instructor</td>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>Course Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Based Strategies</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
<td>Student-Based Strategies</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise Effort</td>
<td>Course Instructor</td>
<td>Praise Effort and Love &amp; Logic</td>
<td>Course Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Content Expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Discipline</td>
<td>Veteran, practicing teacher</td>
<td>Problem Behaviors and Discipline</td>
<td>Veteran, practicing teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Superintendent’s Perspective</td>
<td>Retired Superintendent</td>
<td>A Superintendent’s Perspective</td>
<td>Retired Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a Job</td>
<td>Elementary school principal</td>
<td>Getting a job</td>
<td>Elementary school principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Teaching</td>
<td>Student teachers</td>
<td>Student Teaching</td>
<td>Student teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Communications</td>
<td>Parent of a school-aged child</td>
<td>Teacher Panel (from the inside)</td>
<td>Practicing teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>Course instructor</td>
<td>The Essence of Math</td>
<td>Course instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Year Teacher Concerns</td>
<td>First-year teacher</td>
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<td>First-year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>Special education case manager</td>
<td>Student Panel</td>
<td>Elementary school students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis

• Questions
  – Reality-testing framework
  – Constant comparative method

• Textbooks
  – Content analysis
    • Inductive
    • deductive

• Analysis
  – Research group did initial inductive analysis
  – Researchers did second round of deductive analysis
  – Second research group completing third round of deductive and inductive analysis.
1. Learning to deal with discipline
2. Meeting students’ needs
3. Dealing with a feeling of uncertainty towards ‘real’ teaching experiences
   - Transition from pre-service to in-service teaching
4. Positive relationships
   - Parents, teachers, students, staff, & administration
Table 2. *Presence of questions relating to the four themes found*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture Topics</th>
<th>Theme 1 Discipline</th>
<th>Theme 2 Students’ needs</th>
<th>Theme 3 Transition</th>
<th>Theme 4 Relationships</th>
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Differentiation

• What kind of professional development do you have for teachers with respect to differentiation? (A Superintendent’s perspective, spring 2008)

• What three things can I as a teacher do to make learning easier for you in this class? (Student Panel, spring 2008)
Transition

• Is it normal to make lesson plans for the first year and then reuse them for the following years? (Differentiation, spring 2008)

• Have you been able to see any improvement in your weaknesses since you’ve started teaching? (First-year teacher concerns, spring 2008)
Giftedness

• How do you manage to all of the gifted and learning disabled children within your classroom without boring one group of children? (Classroom Management, fall 2007)

• Are "regular" students capable of completing "gifted" work with extra assistance? (Student-Based Strategies, spring 2008)
Giftedness

• How do I motivate students that are gifted? (Motivation, fall 2007)

• What strategies would you suggest for a gifted/talented student who does not want to participate in the class curriculum in any way? (Student-Based Strategies, fall 2007)
Burden (2006)

- Focus on theories of discipline
- Limited information on meeting students’ needs
- No information about the transition from pre-service teachers to real teaching experiences or the student-teaching process
Henley (2006)

- Main theme: building a classroom climate (management, learning, and discipline)
- Discussion about meeting students’ needs at a more philosophical level
- Limited information about real teaching experiences
Discussion

• Textbooks analyzed do not deal with all the issues about which students perceive they need to know

• Disconnect between pre-service teachers’ needs regarding classroom management and course offerings

• High frequency of fairly basic questions (i.e. What is differentiation?)

• Need for right answers when the best way to learn to teach is to teach
Changes to Teacher Education Programs

- Principles of gifted education benefit students at all achievement/ability levels.
- Understanding of differentiation and all its forms.
  - Developmental readiness
  - Learning styles
  - Product
- Emphasis on both special and gifted education
• What has worked in teacher preparation programs?
• What has not worked in teacher preparation programs?
• What do you see as lacking in teachers of gifted learners?
• What do you perceive the needed changes are?


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