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Growing Effective CLD Teachers for Today's Classrooms of CLD Children

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Growing Effective CLD Teachers for Today's Classrooms of CLD Children

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Abstract

Using a case study design, this investigation examined the effective teaching characteristics of nontraditional, culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) student teachers placed in rural, elementary schools with high populations of Latino/a students. Data collected reflected high percentages of effective teaching characteristics in multiple domains with specific indicators reflective of consistent teaching over time. A discussion of these findings considered aspects within the distance-delivery model that facilitated the CLD participants' development of effective teaching and noted (1) consistent leadership, (2) explicit teacher instruction within CLD school settings, and (3) the strong cohesive nature of the CLD participants' cohort as positively affecting the CLD participants' teaching effectiveness.

A particular student caught my attention.... The student is a girl who comes from Honduras.... She is lost and she likes it when I am there. Although she is placed with students who can help her, she is still just following along. She told me that some girls make fun of her because she cannot talk English.... I asked her if she like[d] having me there, and she said, "Can you always stay with me?" I

have made a decision to try as much as I can to teach her when I can, and [to] be a tool for her to be motivated into learning English. I was very sad for her, because when I learned English, I was emerged [immersed] without any help. I remember that frustration, helplessness, and exclusion. (Giselle's written reflection, October 30, 2009)

Giselle is a culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) elementary education teacher candidate—a bilingual Mexican American, who reflects in her writing a shared “social and cultural experience” with her CLD student (Quiocho & Rios, 2000, p. 488). Through her ability to empathize and navigate cultural and linguistic boundaries in the classroom, Giselle is more likely to implement culturally-responsive practices for Latino/as, like her elementary student. Unfortunately, creating an equitable learning environment for other CLD students is dependent upon how effective the teaching force in the United States diversifies its members with teachers of color.

The call for more minority teachers is not new, as many scholars have identified a significant lack of teacher-candidates from racial, ethnic, and language minority groups in our teacher education system (Gay, Dingus, & Jackson, 2003; Grant & Gillette, 2006; Kauchak & Burbank, 2003). However, the gap between the increasing number of CLD children in our U.S. elementary classrooms and the ethnic/racial disparity of their teachers continues to widen (Wenger & Dinsmore, 2005). Currently, Latinos represent the largest racial/ethnic group in this increase of CLD students (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005–2009b). Many of these students are also English Language Learners (ELLs), with nearly 30 million families reporting Spanish as their primary language (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005–2009a). This is in stark contrast to the nearly 84% of U.S. teachers who are White (U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, 2003–2004) and mostly monolingual.

In fact, evidence of similar CLD student demographics in rural U.S. schools is being observed, as well. In the two communities where the current investigation took place, Latinos/as comprise more than 50% of one city's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005–2009c). In the two public school districts involved in the study, nearly 60% to 70% of the school children are identified as Hispanic (Kansas State Department of Education, 2008–2009), but the state percentage of Hispanic teachers is 1.7, lower than even the national average of 6% (U.S.

Department of Education Institute of Educational Statistics, 2006). Unfortunately, this situation compounds the existing “rocky terrain” of a Latino/a’s educational landscape, as research indicates he or she is retained a grade level at a rate that is 3 times higher than that of the overall population and is much more likely than other students to drop out of high school (Valenciana, Weisman, & Flores, 2006, p. 82). Arguments supportive of increasing the number of Latino elementary teachers include valuing ethnic minority teachers as role models for diverse populations (Genzok, Lavadenz, & Krashen, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995), providing culturally and linguistically-relevant instruction (Villegas & Clewell, 1998; Genzok & Baca, 1998), and affecting student school achievement positively (Gay et al., 2003). Rueda, Monzó, and Higareda (2004) suggested that teachers “familiar with their students’ daily routines and practices, with their struggles as subordinated members of society, and with their beliefs and values” (p. 55) are better prepared to provide instruction that connects to their students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds—a theoretical construct essential to effective learning.

Effective teaching that focuses on cultural and linguistic diversity must, therefore, become the goal of teacher education programs in preparing teacher candidates. So, though calls for increasing the diversity of teachers in the United States is vital to meeting the needs of CLD students in our classroom, the ultimate goal must be that teacher education programs prepare CLD teacher candidates to demonstrate characteristics of highly-effective teachers.

At a university in the midwestern region of the United States (given the pseudonym of midwestern state), the Equity & Access Partnership (Shroyer, 2004), within the College of Education (COE), was created with such a goal in mind. This multi-institutional collaborative teacher preparation model addressed the continuum of teacher development while concurrently emphasizing state and national needs of Latino students and ELLs. The model included five goals: (1) K-16 Curriculum Renewal, (2) Recruitment and Retention, (3) Teacher Licensure, (4) Professional Development, and (5) Induction through Teacher Mentoring Programs. Because of specific attention within the project regarding the need to diversify the U.S. teaching force, this study focused only on the second goal of recruiting and retaining CLD teachers—or the grow your own teacher initiative. This goal, as did the other goals, placed K-12 students at the center of its efforts, as the partnership’s

and COE's vision was to develop teacher candidates who were effective at meeting the needs of all CLD children in their classrooms.

Theoretical Frameworks

As the demand for equity and accountability for student achievement among CLD students increases, institutions of higher education are acknowledging the need to reexamine mechanisms in place for recruiting, preparing, and retaining minority teacher candidates in their programs of study (Flores, Clark, Claeys, & Villarreal, 2007). Furthermore, there is also a critical need for high-quality programs that prepare teachers to work in rural communities (Knapczyk, Chapman, Rodes, & Chung, 2001). Two particular theoretical perspectives framed the design of the Equity & Access Partnership to meet the goal of "growing" highly-effective, CLD elementary teachers who would meet the needs of increasing numbers of CLD students, specifically in rural areas. These perspectives were (1) research and pedagogy focused upon developing teacher candidates' effective teaching characteristics by using collaborative partnerships formed for communities of practice and (2) research related to teacher education programs of study that successfully recruited and retained Latino/a teacher candidates.

Collaborative Partnerships Formed for Communities of Practice

Darling-Hammond (2006) cited features of exemplary teacher education programs—programs that "produce graduates who are extraordinarily well-prepared"—as including "strong relationships, common knowledge, and shared beliefs among school- and university-based faculty jointly engaged in transforming teaching, schooling, and teacher education" (pp. 305–306). A key finding of The Committee on Teacher Education investigation was that the integration of related strategies across courses and field experiences positively impacted the effectiveness of beginning teachers (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Consequently, Darling-Hammond (2006) maintained that integrating extensive, well-supervised clinical experiences linked to pedagogy and theory is best facilitated by immersing teacher candidates in professional development schools (PDS) where they can be supported by PDS curriculum, faculty, and administration. This

pedagogical practice of universities joining with school districts to create communities of practice, whereby teacher preparation programs promote beginning teachers' learning about "practice *in* practice," has been shown to be quite successful (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 122; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005). Teachers who graduate from teacher preparation programs where the strategy of PDS is actualized "feel more knowledgeable and prepared to teach" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 310). Furthermore, when such partnerships are formed within communities of high CLD student populations, teacher candidates gain skillfulness in working effectively with diverse student populations (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Melnick & Zeichner, 1998; Shroyer, Yahnke, Bennett, & Dunn, 2007). This "venture[ing] out further and further from the university" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 302) to build strong relationships with partner school districts has prompted initiatives, according to Cortez and Cortez (2004), that further the cause of diversifying the teaching force.

Recruitment and Retention of Latinos/as Within Teacher Education Programs of Study

Villegas and Clewell (1998) identified several initiatives for "expanding the pool" (p. 123) of minority teachers—teacher cadet programs in high school, partnerships between community colleges and 4-year universities, and the encouragement of teaching assistants and para-professionals to enter into teacher education programs of study. The third suggestion of paraeducator to teacher or "grow your own" bilingual teacher projects has been initiated and proven to be successful (Flores, Keehn, & Pérez, 2002, p. 501). Specifically, the Latino Teachers Project was created by involving multiple higher educational institutions and state and local school agencies to provide a nontraditional teacher education program that targeted paraeducators already working in minority schools (Beckett, 1998). In discussing the model, Beckett cited indicators of program success as including an attrition rate of less than seven percent and a majority of 32 graduating teachers (94%) teaching in local hard-to-staff schools. As another example, the career ladder project in Colorado's success for 34 paraprofessionals' first phase of the "ladder" was defined by a zero percent attrition rate in the program. These Coloradan candidates maintained a grade point average of 3.0 on general education coursework at the

community college and completed their associate's degrees as part of the program (Bernal & Aragon, 2004). As with the Latino Teacher Project, the overarching goal of this second program was to produce and increase the number of qualified bilingual/English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers by establishing course pathways that led participants through community colleges, on to 4-year institutions, and ultimately to teacher licensure. Data collected from this first phase reflected the participants' voices regarding the value of social, academic, and financial supports provided within the model. Although both programs yielded investigative implications relative to how to successfully recruit and retain Latinos into teacher education programs, limited evidence are offered regarding the demonstrated effective teaching characteristics of the Latino/a teacher candidates within each program.

In contrast, Flores et al. (2002) described a case study of teacher candidates in two bilingual teacher projects: (1) Title VII Escala "Grow-Your-Own" Project and (2) Project Alianza, in terms of their demonstrated performances as effective bilingual teachers. In a collaborative partnership between Escala, which recruited paraprofessionals from five school districts in the San Antonio area, and Alianza (a multistate endeavor), which recruited *normalistas* or Mexican-trained teachers from across the border, both cohorts joined into one university class of bilingual education trainees. These researchers used case study methodology to study representative participants from each cohort to gain perspectives of their teacher trainees' experiences and development. In their conclusions, Flores et al. shared how both cohorts were attuned to the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive needs of their CLD students. They maintained that the representative teacher trainees integrated personal "prior experiences with developing knowledge and new practices" and implemented "a variety of instructional approaches to address their bilingual students' needs" (p. 517). Additionally, they reported that four of the seven case-study participants had completed their respective programs, passed state-mandated teacher exams, and were demonstrating competence as first year teachers. Such research demonstrates particular qualities of effective CLD teachers, but clearly, more research is needed to describe more precisely the effective teaching attributes CLD teachers' offer to CLD students. Consequently, a need for examining the characteristics of Latino/a, non-traditional teacher candidates in terms of their effectiveness as bilingual, CLD teachers is warranted.

Method

Supported by theoretical frameworks for this study, the researchers' primary design question asked, "What are the effective teaching characteristics of non-traditional, CLD student teachers placed in rural, elementary schools with high populations of Latino/a students?" By using a case study approach, the researchers were able to explore a unique case bounded by a specific teacher preparation program, time, and rural setting. As defined by Creswell (1998), a case study is an "exploration of a bounded system or case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources rich in context" (p. 61). Such methodology offered the opportunity to relate the CLD teacher candidates' observed effectiveness within a framework of effective teaching research as well as to consider the interpretations which evolved from descriptive themes in the multiple sources (e.g., feedback/evaluation forms, videotape analyses, portfolios) of data.

Setting of the Study

The equity & access partnership. To provide context for the current study, a brief background of the Equity & Access Partnership is presented. In 2003, Midwestern State University (MWSU) began its implementation of this multi-institutional, collaborative grant project funded by the U.S. Department of Education (identified as a Teacher Quality Enhancement or TQE grant). The grant financed collaboration among and across several participating institutions— MWSU (the COE and the College of Arts and Sciences or CA & S), three community colleges, and three school districts with high Latino/a populations located in rural areas of the state. The partnership focused on K-16 teacher improvement while emphasizing institutional access and equity to diverse students. In terms of this focus, the COE at MWSU had previously implemented and sustained a CLD undergraduate education program (since 1999) on its campus with a 90% retention rate (Herrera & Morales, 2005; Herrera, Morales, Holmes, & Herrera-Terry, 2011). Unfortunately, the impact of such on-campus programs on the overall demographics of the state's student populations has been minimal.

Consequently, through the Equity & Access Partnership, the university sought to further diversify its teacher preparation program by going "off-campus" to deliver a "two-plus-two" licensure program. The

university utilized its community college partners for the teacher candidates' general education coursework (2 years) and then offered the upper-level coursework through various distance-based modalities (2 years). This allowed them to deliver a two-plus-two teacher education program to the rural areas of the state where high numbers of CLD families lived and worked. Delivering such a teacher preparation program was unique given the significant distances among the school districts, the community colleges, and MWSU, as more than 105 miles separated the two cities in the study and the main campus was approximately 333 miles away from these rural areas.

Another unique aspect about the Equity & Access Partnership in terms of this identified focus was that, although it funded the collaborative initiatives of the goals, the partnership did not provide tuition monies for the teacher candidates involved in the distance-delivered program. Some limited financial support was provided by the state legislature for payment of the upper-level MWSU coursework delivered via distance education to rural areas. Unfortunately, this state-legislated scholarship only covered about one fourth of the cost of each course. Partnership funds did supply some textbook support and travel stipends (during the candidates' student teaching semester only), but the majority of the CLD teacher candidates' financial aid support came via personal federal government loans or individually-applied-and-accepted scholarships. Additionally, because the teacher preparation program did not provide for tuition, the participants were not selected via an application or predetermined criteria and interview process. Any prospective teacher candidate could participate in the teacher education program. However, once the cohort began and continued toward completion of the program, the implemented timeline of courses required a strict adherence and, therefore, prevented many (new) participants from joining.

As a final component of their teacher education program, the CLD teacher candidates completed 16-week internships in either one of two school districts geographically located in rural areas of state in cities with Latino populations of 38% to more than 50%. Demographics for the two partner school districts ranged from total student populations of 1,713 students to more than 5,943 students, low socioeconomic status (SES) populations of 56% to 76%, and ethnic diversity populations of 62% to 78%. Latinos were noted as the largest ethnic populations in both school districts, with populations ranging from 58% to 70%.

Although the Latino populations included children from varying Latino countries, most of the Latino children were of Mexican descent.

CLD teacher candidate participants. There were 16 nontraditional, female, teacher candidates enrolled in the distance-delivered program, with four of these candidates identified as White and 12 of the candidates identified as bilingual Latinas. Because of personal reasons, two of the Latina teacher candidates had to delay their student teaching for an additional semester. Consequently, this investigation and report only included in its purposeful sample the 10, nontraditional, bilingual, Latina participants who completed their student teaching internship during the school year of 2010. Pseudonyms for the participants were used in the data collection and in this report.

Of these 10 bilingual, Latina teacher candidates, three were immigrants to the United States, six were first-generation natives, and one was a second-generation native. The age that the immigrant students entered school ranged from 6 to 22. Although all 10 participants spoke Spanish as their first language, only four were placed in specific ESL programs upon their arrival. The teacher candidates were considered nontraditional because of their age, marital and/or parental status, and/or financial independence. Their ages ranged from 22 to 47, with the average age being 31. Six of the teacher candidates were married, two were divorced and single, and eight had children. Prior to their student teaching semester, the teacher candidates were employed as paraeducators, substitute teachers, day care providers, school secretaries and/or family liaisons, county health department record-keepers, and retail salespersons (see Table 1).

Table 1. Demographics of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Participants

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Parental Status</i>	<i>Immigrant or Native Citizen</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
Gloria	35	Married	2 elem.	1st gen. native	Para
Juanita	24	Married	1 elem.	2nd gen. native	Para
Beatrice	22	Married	None	Immigrant	Para
Giselle	30	Married	3 elem. 1 toddler	Immigrant	Para
Sophia	47	Single	1 adult	Immigrant	School secretary
Alejandra	26	Single	None	1st gen. native	Retail salesperson
Juana	27	Married	2 elem.	1st gen. native	Home daycare
Vanessa	37	Married	2 elem. 1 teen	1st gen. native	Record keeper
Susana	35	Single	2 teen	1st gen. native	Substitute teacher
Yolanda	29	Single	1 elem. 1 toddler	1st gen. native	Para

Data Collection

To describe the effective teaching characteristics of nontraditional, CLD teacher candidates' student teaching in rural elementary settings, the researchers collected the participants' evidence/feedback forms for five formal observations and a midterm and final observation/evaluation form from each cooperating teacher and university supervisor, as well as 14 videotape analyses of the teacher candidates' teaching performances. Portfolios were also collected for each of the teacher candidates. To explain more about these specific artifacts, in the COE at MWSU, assessment tools for evaluating all student teachers include (1) an evidence and feedback form, (2) an observation progress/final evaluation form, and (3) a professional portfolio. Each tool is aligned to the MWSU COE's conceptual framework, which is an adaptation of Danielson's (2007) evaluative system, as well as state teacher preparation standards and national teacher education accreditation standards. The Equity & Access Partnership provided training to partnership school district administration/faculty and university supervising faculty regarding the conceptual framework in order to standardize the evaluations of teacher candidates' performances. Finally, videotapes of 14 formal observations were collected to "capture" the student interns' teaching effectiveness. Although the five formal observations reflected the candidates' content competencies across the curriculum (reading and language arts, social studies, math, and science), these tapes showed content competencies specifically related to math and science (11 of the 14 videotapes).

The evidences collected during the formal observations provided documentation and rationale for the cooperating teachers and university supervisors' ratings of the participants on their final teaching evaluations. At MWSU, the COE final evaluative form for a student teacher's internship is a measurement tool that uses a rubric rating scale from one to seven to reflect a teacher candidate's performance as unsatisfactory, basic, or proficient—with a stated expectation of basic for all teacher candidates' performances. A rating of one is unsatisfactory, ratings of two through four are basic, and ratings of five through seven are considered to be proficient.

Finally, additional evaluative evidence via a portfolio documents the teaching performances of candidates. This report reflects the teacher candidates' abilities to demonstrate in a written form their

effectiveness in planning, implementing, and assessing appropriate instruction for a given group of students. The teacher candidates' portfolios, with similar rating scales as above, require them to show written evidences of their professionalism, self-reflection, and commitment to the field of education. For this evaluative tool, a criterion rating of basic or 80% is the expectation.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations to this study included the small sample size of the 10, nontraditional, bilingual Latinas involved in the distance-delivered program. Additionally, the researchers acknowledge the limitations of using only "given-day" written and video evidence to determine effective or noneffective teaching characteristics. Many informal documents and dialogues of teaching effectiveness were observed; however, only those written evidences compiled during scheduled "formal" observations were collected as data in this study. Likewise, the data collected during video-tapings reflect only given-day teaching characteristics.

Data Analysis

The research team utilized a thematic approach for analysis given the breath and variety of the qualitative data (observations) collected (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Using the theoretical perspective of teacher effectiveness via MWSU COE's conceptual framework to guide the analysis via the constant comparative method, the researchers read the range of data and made initial notes. Then, two individual researchers viewed, reread, and reanalyzed each artifact to identify those data specifically related to describing the effective teaching characteristics of CLD teacher candidates' performances in rural settings with high populations of CLD elementary children (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Each researcher coded and classified data according to emergent themes and subthemes reflective of and related to a teacher effectiveness framework (e.g., knowledge of subject matter and experience with communities of practice). Throughout this process, the two researchers used peer debriefing to maintain consistency of the coding and, thereby, established trustworthiness. Additionally, a third researcher was utilized as an outside expert to ensure that methods

for collection and interpretation were sound. This researcher also reconciled data coding when questions/issues of inconsistency evolved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results of the Findings

Five formal observation evidence/feedback forms from cooperating teachers and university supervisors reflected a total of 2,569 effective teaching evidences related to 74 indicators within the four categories of teaching in the COE conceptual framework (e.g., perspectives and planning, learning environment, instruction, and professionalism). More specifically, 994/1,406 evidences of effective teaching were reflected from the cooperating teachers' formal observations and 1,575/2,263 evidences of effective teaching were reflected from the university supervisors' formal observations. The data reflected 70% to 71% positive evidences for all indicators in all four categories, with similar percentage results reflected in the analyses of the 14 videotaped lessons. Overall, Category Two or the Learning Environment reflected the highest percentages and most consistent evidence of effective teaching in relationship to 14 identified teaching indicators. Category One or Perspectives and Planning reflected the greatest number of teaching indicator weaknesses (four), with these weaknesses related to the assessment benchmark.

Although the data reflected that the candidates did not consistently state assessment criteria to their elementary students, they were observed to consistently check for their students' understanding of content and then to respond with appropriate feedback. Interestingly, data collected from only the cooperating teachers forms regarding Category Four or Professionalism appeared to be more consistently descriptive of the teacher candidates' observed evidences because two university supervisors presented limited feedback (evidences) for this domain. As such, the particular data tools of the cooperating teachers reflected a higher percentage (75%) of effective professional teaching characteristics than what is currently reflected in the combined cooperating teacher and university supervisor evidence/feedback data forms.

Danielson (2007) asserted that beginning teachers gain experience and develop expertise, but she noted that "expertise is not the

same thing as experience” (p. 38). Expertise in teaching is related to a teacher’s level of automaticity and how he or she recognizes and reacts to meaningful patterns in a particular teaching domain (Berliner, 2004). In describing the teacher candidates’ teaching characteristics, their automaticity was reflected in how consistent they were in applying effective teaching procedures, routines, and strategies over time. To explain, consistently high percentages of particular indicator evidences for all five observations were reflected in the cooperating teachers’ and the university supervisors’ feedback forms over time. These evidences were related to all four categories of effective teaching characteristics or indicators, with the following indicators observed to be 90% (or above) consistently reflected (see Figure 1).

- Category One: Perspectives and Planning
 - Demonstrating knowledge of students’ developmental age groups
 - Designing coherent lessons with appropriate learning activities
- Category Two: Learning Environment
 - Creating an environment of respect and rapport for students through effective teacher and student interactions
 - Encouraging appropriate student behaviors by responding to students’ behaviors effectively
- Category Three: Instruction
 - Engaging students in learning with appropriately designed activities
 - Engaging students in learning with appropriate use of developmentally appropriate materials and resources
 - Using assessment in instruction by continually monitoring and checking by learning through effective responsivity to students
 - Demonstrating flexibility and responsivity to students
- Category Four: Professionalism
 - Reflecting continually and accurately on teaching effectiveness
 - Demonstrating positive personal habits

Figure 1. High percentages of consistently reflected evidences related to teaching indicators or characteristics for culturally and linguistically diverse participants’ five formal observations.

Other results included the participants' final evaluation forms and scores on their portfolios. The mean for the participants' final evaluations as rated by both the cooperating teachers and university supervisors was 4.1, a slightly higher rating than the COE criterion. The student interns' mean score on the portfolio was 90%, which is also considered at MWSU to be above the criterion and indicative of a proficient teaching performance.

Discussion of the Results and Implications for Teacher Education

In answering the study's question, "What are the effective teaching characteristics of nontraditional, CLD student teachers placed in rural, elementary schools with high populations of Latino students?" the researchers identified various effective teaching characteristics related to multiple teaching domains. Moreover, because the effectiveness of a novice teacher is determined by his or her level of automaticity or the manner in which he or she consistently demonstrates effective teaching characteristics, the researchers examined more closely the teacher candidates' highly consistent behaviors (90%) over time. Descriptions of effective teaching characteristics were presented.

Interestingly enough, although not collected as data, in this study, these CLD teacher candidates' performances yielded other evidences reflective of effective teaching characteristics. For example, their formal observations of the previous semester's clinical experiences involving reading/language arts and social studies methods reflected more than 80% of the evidences as positive indications of effective teaching. Additionally, they demonstrated content and pedagogical knowledge throughout their programs of study by successfully maintaining cumulative grade point averages of 3.6 and by passing the state licensure examinations. (Nine of the 10 participants passed the state assessments, with the one participant who did not pass currently receiving tutorial support to retake the examinations. Interestingly, the two bilingual Latinas who delayed their student teaching internship also satisfactorily passed the state examinations.)

Given that the participants were nontraditional, CLD student teaching interns in a distance-delivered teacher preparation program, many, many miles from the main campus, the researchers considered what

specific aspects of the (1) teacher candidates and the (2) distance-delivered program may have contributed to these candidates' exhibited effective teaching characteristics. Because of impending research reflecting the backgrounds and resilient attributes of the CLD participants in the study, this report only focuses on contributive factors inherent to the distance-delivered teacher preparation model. Thus, discussion of the following contributing factors is presented: (1) consistent leadership of the distance-delivered teacher preparation model, (2) explicit teacher instruction designed to facilitate deliberate practice within CLD contextual school settings, and (3) the strong cohesive nature of the CLD participants' cohort throughout the distance-delivered teacher preparation program.

Consistent Leadership of the Distance-Delivered Teacher Preparation Model

From the onset of the nontraditional, distance-delivered program, the Equity & Access Partnership leadership, faculty, and staff have remained constant. Bernal and Aragon (2004) asserted that such stability is crucial for supporting paraprofessionals' social, academic, and financial career ladder climbs in a teacher preparation program. Sustained leadership is additionally critical in maintaining and continually fostering the collaborative partnerships between the university and local school districts, as changes within administration require various transitions and time that may diminish the quality of the program (Heimbecker, Medina, Peterson, Redsteer, & Prater, 2002). As identified by other researchers as necessary program supports, the grant leaders and project staff likewise consistently provided social, academic, and financial support throughout the CLD candidates' teacher preparation program (Valenciana et al., 2006).

To illustrate such an example, after the CLD teacher candidates' first semester of coursework within the program, the grant leaders began collaborations and planning with the content teams in the Equity & Access Partnership for the CLD participants' registering and passing of required admittance tests for teacher education in the COE. Community college courses were developed for the participants to successfully prepare for specific test content, along with several other practice test-taking workshops and seminars. Through this process and through individual advising, the grant leaders were able to determine

the specific academic needs of each CLD teacher candidate. Those needs were met through the grant leaders and project staff members' consistent searches for effective and responsive tutors, and then monitors were established to check (and intervene, if needed) on the CLD candidates' progress. Throughout the delivery of the teacher preparation program, the leaders held very high expectations for the CLD teacher candidates— exhibited by their constant monitoring, pressure, and responsive feedback. Characteristically, though, the CLD participants acknowledged and valued the support of such rigorous grant leadership, as Vanessa offered, “I believe that we got the best team of supporters at MWSU. . . . [They] inspired me to believe in myself!” (June 12, 2010).

Explicit Teacher Instruction Designed to Facilitate Deliberate Practice within CLD Contextual Settings

In documenting propositions for developing expertise in teaching, Berliner (2004) asserted that “good coaching” is important (p. 202). Direction from a mentor in terms of deliberate practice facilitates a novice's growth of effective teaching characteristics. Researchers, like Bernal and Aragon (2004), concluded that a strong mentoring program in which experienced teachers connect with paraprofessionals in authentic school settings to deliver content and pedagogy impacts the successfulness of the teacher preparation program. In this study, the grant leaders and project staff reflected upon lessons learned in earlier research (Lohfink, Morales, Shroyer, Yahnke, & Hernandez, 2011) and implemented timely on-site, explicit instructor support via small groupings. Using university and school district faculty, the CLD teacher candidates participated in courses with a mentor/coach explaining, clarifying, and modeling content explicitly and purposefully as it related to the contexts of specific diverse classrooms. To illustrate an example of this deliberate support, during the CLD candidates' first methods courses (math and science) and concurrent clinical experience, small groups of two or three teacher trainees were mentored by a master teacher who (1) attended class meetings and provoked small group discussions regarding content and pedagogy, (2) collaborated with group members as they planned and prepared six math and science lessons, and (3) facilitated feedback of each implemented lesson with deliberate and explicit instruction regarding

pedagogy. By implementing the element of coaching during the onset of the CLD teacher candidates' immersion into the professional coursework, the teacher candidates consistently received intentional instruction, whereby the mentor teacher connected the content to the contexts of the teacher candidates' diverse student settings.

Strong Cohort Cohesiveness of the CLD Teacher Candidates

Not surprisingly, the existing research regarding the value of strong social supports (Bernal & Araron, 2004; Valenciana et al., 2006; Villegas & Clewell, 1998) also transpired in this study, as these CLD teacher candidates' talked to each other about course assignments, studied and planned lessons together, and asked one another for assistance. These activities, as well as personal "nights-out with the girls," helped the teacher candidates establish strong emotional, cultural, and professional bonds with each other. Such bonds facilitated their resiliency, for if a candidate wavered and considered withdrawing, as Juana exclaimed, "If I quit MATH 320, then I will be left behind, and they will go on without me!" (personal communication, June 28, 2008), this candidate often reconsidered; belonging to the group or cohort was important. Furthermore, their connectiveness fostered individual self-improvement in order to "not let the team down," and it also fostered self-efficacy, as the candidates began to believe in themselves because of one another's continual (almost daily) academic, social, and emotional support.

Conclusion

The reality of today's elementary classroom is that of diversity. Recruitment of minority teacher candidates into teacher preparation programs who share similar social, cultural, and historical backgrounds with their students is therefore imperative. Findings from this study reflected highly consistent and effective teaching characteristics of the CLD teacher candidates—candidates who were nontraditional, Latina participants—not on scholarship—completing a distance-delivered teacher preparation program in remote, rural areas! Discussion as to what teacher education program attributes contributed to their development of effective teaching attributes was offered, with culturally

responsive supports, like instructional mediators, personal instructor/leadership caring, and a sense of community among students and teachers, noted. However, additional research is needed to examine why weaknesses in assessment were reflected in the CLD participants' teaching performances, particularly in terms of components within the teacher education program.

Clearly, institutions of higher education must continue to search for more effective strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers of color, for their value in educating American children is vital. This is poignantly articulated in Vanessa's comment after a particular social studies (Pilgrims compare/contrast to Native Americans) lesson:

Miguel came up to me and told me he did not understand the term, *wetus*. So I explained it again in English, and Miguel was still confused. So I described the term in Spanish, and then he smiled and said, "Oh, I get it!" and then he explained it back to me in Spanish. I knew then why I needed to be in the classroom—CLD children needed me, just like Miguel did. ... This was important. (personal communication, November 19, 2009)

A focus on the needs of CLD elementary children necessitates institutions of higher education's figuring out how to recruit and retain more CLD teachers into the field of education, for like the teacher candidates in this study, their demonstrated effectiveness and cultural competence as educators is critical for today's diverse classrooms.

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