



Questions in Education Conference  
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# Teacher Candidate Professional Learning: Impact on Novice Teachers



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# Introductions

Who we are:

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Who are you?

# Session Objectives

- Learn about the qualitative research conducted with graduate student, 1<sup>st</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> year teachers about how professional learning experiences impacted their perceptions of themselves as a student and teacher.
- Discuss the research questions and responses to surveys and focus group interviews of the pre-service and novice teachers.
- Explore how early experiences impacted the pre-service and novice teachers' perceptions of professional learning.
- Learn how early professional learning influenced novice teachers' practice once they were in the field of teaching.
- Interact with one of the research participants, now a 3<sup>rd</sup> year elementary school teacher and school leader.

# Defining Professional Learning

Learning Forward, in an introduction to their standards, describes the purpose of professional learning as being “...for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels.” The definition continues, “...professional learning is the singular most accessible means [teachers] have to develop the new knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to better meet students' learning needs.”

Source: <https://learningforward.org/standards>

# Professional Learning Defined for the Research

For the purpose of the research conducted with undergraduates still completing coursework in teacher preparation, professional learning was defined as:

- an opportunity to engage in learning outside of class with instructors
- not tied to assignments or assessments
- not required for completion of any course

# Professional Learning Defined for the Research

- participate in sessions to plan for presentations
- willingness to make presentation(s) with instructors
- attend conferences with instructors while still completing coursework
- present in courses following attendance at conferences

# Research Participants

- 15 teacher candidates
- Engaged in literacy, social studies, or special education methods coursework
- At the time of the surveys and focus groups, some participants were student teaching, some were in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> years of teaching
- All candidates obtained teaching positions and all are now in their 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> year of teaching

# Methodology

- Qualitative case study with purposeful sample
- Initial data collection utilized an email survey
- Surveys were analyzed for themes
- Focus groups were conducted with initial questions related to themes
- Focus groups were videotaped and transcribed



# Research Questions

- How do pre-service professional learning experiences impact continued undergraduate learning?
- How might perceptions of self as a future educator change as a result of attending professional learning opportunities prior to become a teacher?
- What are novice teachers' perceptions of pre-service professional learning experiences?

# Professional Learning Experiences

Attended and presented at a conference with faculty at Missouri Council on Exceptional Children Conference, *A Collaborative Environment: Views from Faculty and Pre-service Teachers*

Attended and presented at a conference with faculty at Critical Questions in Education Annual Conference. *Collaboration Between Pre-service Teachers: Faculty Research and Student Views*

Presented with faculty at Tango Education Conference, *Collaboration*

Attended conference with faculty at the Iowa ASCD Fall Academy: *Implementing the Core with Understanding by Design Planning Units with the End in Mind*

Presented with faculty at Creating Connections: Teaching for Learning Conference, *Understanding by Design*

Co-taught with faculty

Contributed to an article; co-authored with faculty

## Findings: Understanding of Professional Learning

- Increased desire to learn outside of coursework
- Understand the value of professional learning
- Understand there are discrepancies in the ways that districts support professional learning
- Used the experience in other courses

## Participant Quote

“Why would you want to work for a district that doesn’t want you to be improving your teaching abilities?”

## Findings: Increased Confidence

- Applied the skills learned, especially during student teaching
- Unafraid to ask questions
- Felt a part of the professional teaching community
- Could discuss the professional learning experiences with an administrator to ask for funding to go to conferences
- Felt valued by professors and then colleagues

## Participant Quote

“I can explain why it’s [professional learning] important, what it will do for the district, what it will do for, not just me, but our students and the other colleagues I can share this information with.”

## Findings: Collaboration Skills

- Comfort collaborating with cooperating teacher and special education teachers
- Discussed vertical, horizontal teaming, professional learning communities
- Able to apply the skills in different settings
- Uses essential questions in daily lesson planning; uses the terminology with students
- Can offer more
- Know what it is like to be a professional teacher

## Participant Quote

“Students won’t get what they need. I will feel alone in my teaching. I can’t teach behind a closed door.”



# Findings: Communication Skills

- Helped with daily interactions
- Promoted professional conversations
- Taught me to talk about facts, not opinions
- Learned to listen to parents' observations at home
- Know how to advocate
- Embrace ability to ask questions of colleagues

## Participant Quote

*“I know when to stand up for what I believe in.”*

*Interview question: “What is one thing that is going to surprise us if we were to hire you?” I said, “The amount of questions I will ask.”*

# Findings: Asking for Resources

- Alternative seating
- Developmentally appropriate classroom environment
- Sought out grants for technology
- Asked for guided reading materials
- New science curriculum

## Participant Quote:

When presenting the idea of open concept classroom, the administrator asked, “Are you sure you want to do this?” “Yeah, I told you in my interview, I wanted to do this. I don’t think they thought I would.”

# Findings: Interview Skills and Accepting Positions

- Influenced each participant to ask about professional learning in interview process
- Professional learning opportunities played a role in decision-making to accept a position
- Have already attended other professional learning and see benefit from it
- Understand the connection between success in the classroom and valuing professional learning

## Participant Quote

“And I think the more I do it [attend professional learning opportunities], the more I see the value to it and the more I’ve noticed a difference in the way I think about education and the way I can implement it in my classroom.”

# Alexis Boyles on Professional Learning

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3DoQ87FPXORc0dxN0FBa3ppZEU/view>



# The Importance of Professional Learning

“If this type of learning became more prevalent in preservice teacher education, it would change the way first year teachers approached teaching and how veteran teachers approached receiving new teachers.”



# Continued Professional Learning

- Education Tango Conference
- Book studies with faculty
- Lunch and Learn sessions with faculty
- School of Education Advisory Council