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## Can Effective Urban Teachers Be Developed in an Online Environment?

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## **Can Effective Urban Teachers Be Developed in an Online Environment?**

Sueanne McKinney

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this investigation was to determine if an online Teacher Education Program course could assist in the development of effective urban teacher characteristics of preservice teachers. The Urban Teacher Selection Interview was used to assess seven midrange functions that determine the dimensions of effective urban teaching. Results communicated that although the preservice teachers gained essential knowledge and skills in regards to urban teaching, a link could not be established between specific urban online course activities and the development of effective urban teacher characteristics.

Teaching in an urban school can be an "...extraordinary life experience – a volatile, highly charged, emotionally draining, physically exhausting experience for even the most competent, experienced teacher (Haberman, 1995, p. 1). The emotional strength and demand required for such teaching can be overwhelming and extremely intense. Often characterized by poor working conditions and under resourced classrooms, the depressing landscape of urban schools continue despite national efforts for reform and improvement (Carter & Welner, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Feng, 2010; Hill-Jackson & Stafford, 2017; Haberman, 2017, 2005; Howard, 2015; Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobald, 2015). As a result, Teacher Preparation Programs have given increased attention to the development of urban educators (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2016; Haberman, 2017, 2004; 1995; Weiner & Jerome, 2016).

Many educators believe that traditional teacher education programs do not prepare teacher candidates for the ideology needed to be successful in urban schools (Dill & Stafford-Johnson, 2003; Haberman, 2017, 2005, 1995; McKinney, Haberman, Stafford-Johnson, & Robinson, 2008). Yet, many universities have moved their teacher education programs to an online learning environment. Our investigation sought to determine if short term, online activities and tasks specific to effective urban teacher characteristics, as identified by Haberman (2006; 1995) could contribute to the ideology needed for successful urban teaching of preservice teachers.

### **Methodology**

This study examined if structured, on-line tasks and activities impacted the development of seven urban teacher behavioral attributes as defined by Haberman (2006). These attributes include Persistence, Response to Authority, Application of Generalization, Approach to At-risk Youth, Professional vs. Personal Orientation, Burnout, and

Fallibility (2017, 2005, 1995). Using the Star Teaching Selection Interview, a member of the research team asked participants to respond to questions that probed their behavioral responses to particular teaching situations or scenarios.

### *Participants*

Data for this investigation was collected from 21 preservice teacher candidates enrolled in an urban, metropolitan university. All subjects were accepted into the College of Education's Interdisciplinary Studies Teacher Preparation Program which is designed for prospective teachers who have earned the Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies Teacher Preparation with a concentration in primary or elementary education. Participants were registered for a Classroom Management – Practicum course that is taken near the conclusion of their undergraduate course work, but before their student teaching experience. In regards to demographics of the preservice teachers, 20 were Caucasian and 2 were African-American. Females made up the majority of the participant population; 21 subjects were females, while 1 was male. Ages of the participants ranged from 20-26.

### *Procedures*

The subjects were administered the Star Teacher Selection Interview both prior to and at the conclusion of their participation in an on-line module that focused on the attributes of effective urban educators. The on-line module introduced the subjects to the effective urban teacher attributes through readings, video-clips, self-reflection and discussion opportunities. A total score was then generated for a pre- post test design.

## **Results**

An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the total scores of the Star Teacher Selection Interview (Table 1). The results reveal that there was not a significant difference between the pre and post test scores at the .05 level of significance. This may be due to the fact that a short-term, on-line module does not adequately address the behavioral attributes needed for effective urban teaching.

Table 4 Analysis of Variance Between Pre and Post Test Scores on the Star Teacher Selection Interview

Source	SS	df	MS	
Between Treatments	3.5511	1	3.5511	F=0.29438

Within Treatments	506.6477	42	12.063	
Total	510.1989	43		

Note: Not significant at the  $p < .05$

### Discussion

Our findings suggest that a link could not be established between an on-line learning module and the development of the seven behavioral attributes needed for urban teaching. Although the post test scores slightly increased for the majority of the subjects, there was not a significant difference. However, this finding needs to be tempered by the number of subjects involved, the module tasks and activities, and the assessment instrument utilized.

The research team has conducted several investigations to determine if different practices, initiatives, and experiences can lead to the development of the behavioral attributes needed for effective urban teaching. We have yet to find a practice, initiative, or experience that leads to the development of these attributes, which supports Haberman's thesis (1995, 2006). According to Haberman, only some teacher candidates are inclined to have, or not, these critical attributes. Nonetheless, Haberman and the investigators of this study believe that if a student is predisposed to these attributes, that there are practices, initiatives, and experiences that could serve to enhance their expression; thus, we will continue to conduct our investigations.

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