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Fusing Theory and Practice: Contextualizing the Intern Experience

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Abstract

Supervision of student teachers necessitates bringing together two important entities, the university and the school district. One university, along with its local district, sought to change its old paradigm of supervision, formalizing an internal supervision model. Now in its fourth year, the model allows for each intern to have his or her own cooperating teacher and supervisor within the school district. To evaluate one aspect of the model, interns' feedback was sought in fall 2006. Changes were made to the program and feedback was sought from the spring interns, cooperating teachers, and supervisors. The fall interns identified frequent contact and critical feedback as important features. Fall interns reported on the practical and timely nature of the seminars and how the culminating mock interview seminar was intimidating but also well worth it. Improvement suggestions included giving it high praise and suggesting more time to talk to professionals and each other. As a result, an action plan was developed and implemented for the spring and is discussed. Spring interns perceived the internal supervision model as effective because of accessibility to their supervisors. The spring seminars were rated as effective because they more specifically met the interns' needs. Overall, the internal supervision model was highly rated by the spring interns, cooperating teachers, and supervisors.

Introduction

Supervision of student teachers necessitates bringing together two important entities, the university and the school district, as they prepare preservice teachers for their careers. One university ("Rolling Hills") and one large, Midwestern school district ("College View") sought to address their old paradigm of supervision, resulting in a formalized partnership beginning in 2001. In our old paradigm, supervision was often relegated to individuals who were retired either from the university or the public schools but did

not have connections with either entity, to make the student-teaching experience as meaningful as possible. The new paradigm was designed to move away from this idea. Because the district had hosted many methods students and student teachers, and the district's teachers were accepting of the related responsibilities, we selected an internal supervision model as the logical starting place for the partnership. Simultaneous renewal, a construct promoted by Goodlad and Sirotnik (1988), Sirotnik (1988) and Clark (1988), became the underlying purpose of the partnership. Educators in both settings decided that the time was right to re-examine the student teaching model and move toward an internal supervision model where both entities fine-tuned their capacity to prepare student teachers (Eagle, 2005).

The internal supervision model is now in its fourth year in College View district. Student teachers, referred to as interns, are supervised by teachers in each of the five schools. Each intern is assigned to both a cooperating teacher and a supervisor within the school district — two individuals who understand and provide the necessary connections to the school district. The district also employs a director of university partnerships, whose primary function is to coordinate school/university collaborative efforts throughout the district. One of her responsibilities is to place interns and oversee their experience. Additionally, during the third year, a university liaison was assigned to the district for the purpose of supporting the supervisors and assisting the interns as they move through their internship (the district had worked with adjuncts in this role in the past). Both the district's director of university partnerships and the university's liaison are former principals — individuals who bring a different perspective (from typical university supervisors) to the model.

As we completed our third year of the district/university internal supervision model, we were faced with the distinct impression that, although interns were having a successful student-teaching experience, internal supervision was not as productive and meaningful as we were convinced was possible. It seemed that teachers were supervising and interns were gaining experience, but the internal supervision model called for more than that. An important aspect of the program seemed to be missing — interns, it seemed, were only marginally synthesizing their upcoming professional obligations and often not more so than if the district had stayed with the old paradigm. Seminars were designed to help interns synthesize their understanding of teaching, but they were successful at varying degrees, often depending on the building. There was also no feedback mechanism in place so that interns' needs could continuously be met. The culminating activity in particular, where interns shared their portfolios, had proven to be more a rite of passage than a genuine synthesis of the interns' learning. It seemed we needed to re-examine the purposes behind the internal supervision model.

In order to help us evaluate the effectiveness of the model, we developed an open-ended questionnaire and distributed it to the fall 2006 interns, seeking their feedback. The key

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question we sought to answer was, “How do interns rate the effectiveness of the internal supervision model in preparing them for their teaching careers?” We also sought feedback from the interns in regard to the seminars, asking, “How do interns rate the effectiveness of the seminars in helping them become better prepared to teach?” As a result of the feedback from the fall interns, several changes were made in regard to communicating with supervisors and delivery of seminars. Feedback from the fall interns and subsequent feedback from spring interns, cooperating teachers, and supervisors after changes were made to the program will be discussed in the following pages, describing the essence of the interns’ experiences as we continuously renewed the program.

Review of the Literature

“Teaching, like any other craft practice, involves many complex activities that draw their reasons from the particulars of the situation rather than from some overarching theory that is consistent across contexts” (Roth, 2002). Learning through praxis predicates a certain familiarity with the educational setting. For many years, most universities have relied upon retired teachers and administrators to serve as supervisors for their preservice teachers (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). While this provided a convenient source of abundant educators, quality experiences were sometimes compromised. In addition, this triad model proved costly to the institutions that had to bear the expenses incurred with “road runners” — supervisors who were required to travel between buildings and in some cases districts in order to meet the observational needs of multiple interns. Seeking a paradigm shift, schools of education began to explore using local educators in these roles. These new triads would include interns, cooperating teachers, and supervisors all housed in the same building.

Clinical supervision and coaching models (Glickman, 1998, Costa & Garmston, 1994; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998) would replace the traditional constructs of supervision and promote deeper and more meaningful relationships between the preservice and in-service teachers. Supervision would now promote “face-to-face contact with teachers with the intent of improving instruction and increasing professional growth” (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998, p. 228). Interns would now be placed with pairs of professionals in long-term settings. The disconnections that often happened with supervisors who were less accessible would now be eliminated. In addition, this model increases the potential for coteaching experiences.

Roth (2002) defines coteaching as a practical situation in which two or more teachers work together in the same classroom at the same time, thereby changing the teacher-student ratios in significant ways. “Being with, and therefore experiencing classroom events from a similar physical and social vantage point, afforded implicit learning of how to ask particular questions at particular times” (p. 108). Coteaching, is not however,

strict imitation of a mentor, but rather, observation of techniques in an ongoing way. This leads to a gradual gain in self-confidence as the result of ongoing professional discourse throughout the school day. "...[T]here is a circular and reflexive relationship of embodied understanding and reflexive understanding" (p. 109).

Goodlad (1994) posits that practicing teachers, as well as interns, realize legitimate gains through these types of collaborative efforts. An enriched preservice experience and increased engagement in cooperative work will permit teachers to become more willing to take instructional risks, experimenting with new content and instructional approaches. These new ideas promote intellectual stimulation, which can energize pedagogy. Interacting with their colleagues in nontraditional roles can lead to less isolation on the part of the educator, empower the teacher, and result in a deeper sense of professionalism.

While coteaching would provide the model for the intern's work with his or her respective cooperating teacher, cognitive coaching would serve as the construct for the supervisors. Built around a framework that includes conferencing, observations, and reflection, cognitive coaching is meant to be a nonjudgmental process. Establishing and maintaining trust are essential components and a "prerequisite of success" (Costa & Garmston, 1994, p. 3) in the cognitive coaching experience. The resulting relationship is one of support for the novice educator, fostering the growth and development of resourceful, skilled, and informed professionals.

Although there is much research in clinical supervision and coteaching, looking closely at research conducted on the student-teaching experience provides us the opportunity to situate our research within a theoretical framework related to the individual learner. In a comprehensive review of the research on methods and student-teaching experiences for preservice teachers, Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) found that many studies that focus on student teaching are not grounded in a theoretical construct. In the studies grounded in theory, they identified a movement away from the behaviorist perspective where research looked only at preservice teachers' actions or measurable behaviors as they taught, toward cognitive theory or understanding how teachers' thoughts, beliefs, and practices align. Their review identifies a body of research that supports the notion that beginning teachers teach the way they were taught. Levine and Tractman (1997), however, found that "the apprenticeship approach, inherent in the traditional student-teaching experience, encourages the observation and imitation of practice rather than the thoughtful analysis of practice" (p. 16). The review also indicates that student teachers struggle with the discrepancy between how they were taught in university course work and how their cooperating teachers teach. Many preservice teachers wrestle with managing these conflicting viewpoints. Cochran-Smith's review identified that beliefs and practices can be influenced by prior beliefs, experiences, course work, and the current student-teaching situation.

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The study described herein is situated in constructivist theory based on the work on Vygotsky (Brooks & Brooks, 1999), wherein learning is socially defined, interpreted, and supported. In understanding the movement from a behaviorist to a cognitive perspective, researchers such as Brink, Laguardia, Grisham, Granby, and Peck (2001) have begun to apply a constructivist framework in explaining the thinking of their preservice teachers. They identified eight factors that make for a quality student-teaching experience, two of which were enhanced supervision and status as a “coteacher.” Stanulis (1994) used a constructivist framework to look closely at the social nature of cooperating teachers’ sources of knowledge, finding that teachers modeled reflection and encouraged preservice teachers to do the same. This study employs a constructivist framework to describe interns’ perceptions of the internal supervision model.

Methodology

Background

College View school district, a large rural district, enrolls 3,100 students in three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Rolling Hills University, a 16,000-student, research-extensive liberal arts college, houses a large teacher education department with more than 230 preservice teachers prepared to student teach each semester. Despite sporadic efforts on the part of both the university and the district during the past 50 years to work together, a deep, long-standing mistrust prevailed between these institutions and many residents. This contentious history was a result of the district’s perception that the university used their schools as a necessity borne out of proximal convenience. Due in part to the challenge of finding local placements for their interns, the university has long sent observers and student teachers into the district to participate in a variety of classroom experiences. Traditional in nature, the program paid hosting teachers small stipends or fee certificates that can be used to offset the cost of university tuition.

Discussions had taken place over a period of several years regarding the supervision of student interns assigned to the district. Concerned with the fact that few student interns were opting to participate in experiences within the district, leadership was ready to reconceptualize the long-term student teaching practicum. Internal supervision models had been implemented in other districts with varying degrees of success. College View’s model would be based on these successes.

Participants

The district hosts 25 interns on average each semester, with more placed at the elementary level than at the middle or high school levels. Each intern teaches for 16 weeks; interns are generally in their last or second to last semester of their four-year

college experience and are generally typical college seniors. Twenty-two student teachers interned during the fall 2006, and only 14 students interned during the spring 2006.

Supervisors are district teachers who hold a master's degree, have three years of teaching experience, have had specific training in Pathwise, an Ohio model for entry-year teacher supervision, and have also completed a one-hour university course on coteaching, action research, and supervision. Supervisors are required to observe their intern four times throughout the semester, including pre- and post-observation conferences, write letters of recommendation, and develop building-level seminars to further prepare the interns. Supervisors work with a maximum of two interns each semester. Ideally, each supervisor also acts as a cooperating teacher to enable him/her to more easily leave his/her classroom to observe the interns. The capacity for internal supervision varies each semester and assignments are made on an as-needed basis. Supervisors receive a stipend of \$500 per intern each semester and are interviewed and hired for this assignment as university employees.

Cooperating teachers are district teachers who hold a master's degree, have three years of teaching experience, and have had specific training in Pathwise, an Ohio model for entry-year teacher supervision. Cooperating teachers are required to coteach with their intern for the majority of the semester, moving away from the district's old paradigm of the intern gradually taking on more responsibility and "solo teaching" for some period of time. Cooperating teachers receive university credit vouchers for hosting a student intern. The capacity for cooperating teachers varies each semester, as this is rotated through eligible staff to meet contractual obligations.

Participation

Interns student teach for 16 weeks and attend six seminars, two of which are sponsored at the building level and four of which are district-wide. In years past, seminars such as school orientation, classroom management, interviewing, and résumé building had been developed by the interns' supervisors. During fall and spring 2006, district-wide seminars were developed by the district director of partnerships and the university liaison. The building supervisors sponsored a school orientation seminar and one other based on intern needs, usually classroom management. Seminars on professional portfolios, résumé building, and interviewing and Project Learning Curve (see description below) were offered by the director of partnerships and the university liaison. The culminating seminar was created as a joint effort between the university and school district as a way to synthesis and showcase the interns' experience. Each intern prepared a professional portfolio and used this portfolio as he/she participated in mock interviews. Supervisors, cooperating teachers, and incoming interns participated as "interviewers."

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Data

An informal survey was developed and distributed via e-mail to fall 2006 intern participants. Interns received the e-mail from the university liaison with the acknowledgment that information would be shared, but interns would remain anonymous in the information-sharing process. The four-question survey was open ended, providing qualitative data that described each intern's experience. See Figure 1 below for the survey questions. Interns received the e-mail during the last week of student teaching and after the last seminar. Sixteen of the twenty-two interns replied to the survey. Several themes emerged as the data were analyzed in relation to the effectiveness supervision; the effectiveness of seminars, in particular the culminating seminar; and recommendations for improvement for the spring semester. These themes helped frame changes to the model. An action plan for the spring was developed and implemented, including changes to the survey itself, and additional data were collected in the spring.

A discussion board was created in the spring where interns replied to four different postings throughout their student-teaching semester. Each posting was developed to investigate the interns' comfort and knowledge level in relation to some aspect of their preparation as future teachers. The interns were required to rate their knowledge of and the comfort level for each seminar topic (using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 was low and 5 was high) and give an explanation of their rating. See Figure 2 below for the discussion board prompts. The responses were analyzed and shared, via e-mail, with the interns' supervisors as well as used to frame seminars. Average scores are reported for

Figure 1: Fall 2006 Online Survey Questions for Interns

1. Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of your supervision by your College View supervisors? What worked for you? What didn't?
2. Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of the seminars? What worked for you? What didn't?
3. Specifically, how would you rate the culminating experience — the portfolio/interviewing seminar? What worked for you? What didn't?
4. Please tell me anything else that would make the internship better for the next group.

Figure 2: Discussion Board Postings for Spring Interns

Posting #1 – What are your needs?

Hi Spring Interns!

Please let me know ideas/concepts you'd like to make sure you get out of your experience this year. I want the seminars and your student-teaching experience to be as relevant as possible! Please respond by Friday, Jan. 12th.

Posting #2 – Project Learning Curve

Hi Everyone,

The Project Learning Curve seminar is coming up on Feb. 5 at 4:15 at College View Professional Development Room (in the building behind the school). Before the seminar, I'd like your input on two items:

1. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low, 5 being high), rank your level of knowledge on how teachers pre-assess to determine what kids know so that that knowledge drives their instruction, then post-assess. In other words, the pre-assessment, teach, post-assessment cycle. Explain why you gave yourself this rating.
2. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low, 5 being high), rank yourself on how comfortable you feel in developing a lesson plan/unit where you pre-assess, teach, then post-assess using multiple methods to see if students learned what you taught. Explain why you gave yourself this score.

These answers will help us refine the information for the Project Learning Curve Seminar. PLC is due on March 5th. You might want to start thinking about what you'd like to pre-assess, teach, and post-assess. Please read the handout before the seminar and remember that you're supposed to reply to teach posting.

P.S. I'm pre-assessing by asking you this information.

Posting #3 Portfolio Development

Hi Interns,

Our next seminar is Monday, March 19, at 4:15. This seminar will address your portfolios for interviewing. It will be in the College View Professional Development room.

Before the seminar, please rate yourself on how knowledgeable you are with putting together a professional portfolio — on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low, 5 being high), how knowledgeable are you with putting together a professional portfolio?

Also, please rate yourself on how comfortable you are with putting together a portfolio (same rating as above). Explain why you give yourself those ratings. Please do by Sunday, March 18th.

Posting #4 Interviewing

Hi Everyone,

I hope this e-mail finds you well. Please remind your supervisors if they haven't done so already, that you have to have two more formal observations since the midterm. I know that most of you have had at least one. Also, I have a survey that you need to complete from the student teaching office — I'll give it to you at the next seminar.

The discussion board this time is about interviewing. As always, please respond to the two questions below.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how knowledgeable are you about interviewing? What else do you need to know? Be specific!

On a scale of 1 to 5, how comfortable are you with interviewing? Explain your answer.

Our next seminar is in the College View Professional Development room on Monday, April 2 at 4:15.

Please respond by Sunday, April 1 so my pre-assessment can inform my instruction!

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Likert scale ratings in both the discussion board postings and the final surveys.

A final survey was developed and distributed to spring interns, cooperating teachers, and supervisors. The survey gathered feedback as to the effectiveness of the program and the changes implemented as a result of the fall intern feedback. See Figure 3 for the interns'/cooperating teachers'/supervisors' survey questions. The surveys were color-coded so that interns received one color and supervisors/cooperating teachers received another. Data gathered from interns' discussion board postings, and interns' and supervisors' final evaluations were analyzed, exploring the interns' and supervisors' experiences in relation to the changes made.

Descriptive data that sought to answer the research questions were gathered from the above sources throughout the study, beginning in August and concluding in May. All data was analyzed by the researchers. Open coding was used to determine and triangulate emerging themes that focused on participants' perceptions of the interns' student-teaching experience (Patton, 1990; Berg, 1995). After themes were identified and triangulated across multiple data sources, they were closely examined to determine

Figure 3: Spring Survey Instrument for Interns, Supervisors, and Cooperating Teachers
Evaluation of the Colleger View/Rolling Hills Internal Supervision Model
Intern Teachers', Cooperating Teachers', and Supervisors' Evaluation Form (please circle)

In order to continually refine the internal supervision model, we would like your feedback on the following questions. Rate each question on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low and 5 being high. Written responses are critical.

School name _____

1. Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of the internal supervision model this semester? What worked for you? What didn't? Please be specific in relation to building needs/concerns and district needs/concerns.
Rating: (low) 1 2 3 4 5 (high)
2. Five seminars this semester were provided at the district level — the Opening Seminar, Project Learning Curve, Portfolios, Interviewing, and the Culminating Mock Interview Seminar. Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of the seminars? What worked? What didn't? Please be specific.
Rating: (low) 1 2 3 4 5 (high)
3. Specifically, how would you rate the culminating experience — the portfolio/interviewing seminar? What worked for you? What didn't?
Rating: (low) 1 2 3 4 5 (high)
4. Please tell us anything else that would make the internship/internal supervision model better next year.

categories within the themes (Peshkin, 2000).

Findings

Effectiveness of Fall Supervision

Two themes emerged as fall interns reflected on the effectiveness of the internal supervision model during their student-teaching experience. The interns identified the frequent contact between themselves and their supervisors as an important piece of the program and one of the major reasons they rated the model as they did. One intern reported that it was “amazing; (it was) so easy to contact my supervisor because she was always in the building and knew my kids.” Another reported that she “saw her (the supervisor) frequently and she became a resource for me along with my cooperating teacher.” Another reported, “I liked how she was in the building; easy to talk to her and arrange times for observations.” One intern who rated the supervision as average commented, “her disposition made it easy to talk (when she had the time).” (original quotes). Overall, the frequency of contact was an attribute identified as important to the effectiveness of the program.

Feedback surfaced as the second theme when interns reflected on what they considered the supervision model. One intern reported that, “she told me what she liked and specific ways to improve.” Another reported that, “I was never lost or confused about what was expected.” A third reported that, “she provided the scaffolding I needed as well as critical feedback.” A middle school intern reported that she received “responsive, critical feedback in a timely manner.” Both positive feedback and critical feedback were cited as important to the interns.

Effectiveness of Fall Seminars

The second survey question sought feedback in regard to the six scheduled seminars fall interns were required to attend during their 16-week student teaching experience. Two of the seminars were designed and provided by the individual schools, and four of the seminars were offered by the university liaison and district partnership director. This design was employed in part to convey to the interns that both the university and the district took responsibility for the interns’ learning during their student-teaching semester, modeling the partnership paradigm.

One critical theme emerged as the data were analyzed. Interns based their rating of the seminars on the practical and timely nature of the information presented. For example, one middle school intern found the district tour (a building-level seminar) arranged at the beginning of their experience beneficial, reporting, “most effective was the district tour — eye opening to see where some of the students were coming from.” Another reported that the seminars “prepared me so well that I was able to get a job at my first interview!” Another middle school intern stated, “some of the seminars were

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helpful but sometimes time was spent just chatting as opposed to discussing the topic.” One high school intern reflected that it was “discouraging to have meetings that didn’t really cover anything that I haven’t already heard.”

An interesting caveat was identified in relation to the practicality and timeliness of the seminar on interviewing. Two elementary interns reported, “information was very valuable especially the seminars on interviewing”; (the) “interviewing techniques seminar was very helpful in helping me prepare my résumé and helped clear up confusion I may have had about the job search process.” Another reported, “interviewing techniques would have been best BEFORE the job fair” (original capitalization). One middle school intern reflected specifically on the interviewing seminar, stating, (it) “seemed repetitive because we’d been given that same information on numerous other occasions,” but another reported that the “interview seminars were helpful.” One of the high school interns also reported that the interview seminar “was nothing new to me.” The data around interviewing show a difference in perception primarily based on license. Elementary interns found the interviewing seminars to be helpful, whereas middle and high school interns reported to have previously received this information.

Fall Culminating Seminar

At the end of their student-teaching experience a culminating portfolio/interviewing seminar was designed so that interns would have the opportunity to take part in mock interviews, using their portfolios. As former building principals, we recognized the need for preservice teachers to hone their interview skills prior to beginning their job search. With that in mind, we developed four key interview questions that focused on broad educational topics in classroom management, content literacy, differentiated instruction, and cooperative practice. See Figure 4 below for the interview questions. Each intern was interviewed four times during the seminar; interview questions were prepared and

Figure 4: Interview Questions

1. It is November of your first year of teaching. You’ve been able to establish routines and rapport with your students. Please tell us specifically how you will teach _____ (insert specific content area here — for example, if the intern is an early childhood intern, the content should be reading, if the intern is a high school science intern, the content should be high school science).
2. How will you differentiate instruction?
3. Tell us about your classroom management. What components are necessary for a classroom to run smoothly?
4. Each school looks for teachers who work well together. Tell me what this looks like. How should teachers work together? How have you worked with others in your teaching experience?

given to interns beforehand. In each interview, the intern's goal was to answer interview questions using his/her portfolio as an aid. Interns were asked to rate the effectiveness of the culminating seminar separately.

One theme that emerged from interns' comments was that they felt the culminating seminar was stressful or intimidating but well worth it. Some interns reported that part of their stress was a direct result of just interviewing, while others reported that being interviewed by unknown people, because they rotated to different interview groups, was awkward or stressful. Several commented that they appreciated being able to use their portfolios to help them answer interview questions. Interns commented that the culminating seminar was "stressful," "awkward," "made me a little nervous" or "more nervous," or "was intimidating." One intern reported, "Although it was a little stressful, the culminating experience went well; it was a good learning experience for me, and I was able to identify areas that I needed to work on." Another reported, "I was very nervous and not able to speak the way I wanted to, so now I know I really need to practice." And one high school intern said that the culminating seminar "was pretty helpful; it really helped me to see how effective a portfolio could be in an interview; I know I have to use it to help answer tough questions." Overall, interns found the culminating seminar somewhat stressful but also valuable because it allowed them to practice interviewing with their portfolios.

Toward Improvement — Fall Input

The final informal survey question was asked to gather any additional information that interns may want to convey. "Please tell me anything that would make the internship better for the next group," sought to give the interns an opportunity to express areas of concern to the university liaison that could not be tied to their student-teaching evaluation from their supervisor.

Two themes emerged as interns provided their perspectives on how to improve the internship. First, interns provided high praise for the program. One elementary intern stated, "I had an amazing experience that I will never forget. I don't think I could have asked for a better cooperating teacher or supervisor"; a middle school intern reported, "Honestly, I can't think of any way to improve this experience." And one high school intern commented, "I think this is one of the few times that I've seen (the university) and a cooperative school communicate effectively."

Second, interns provided ideas to improve the program that centered on more time to talk to professionals and each other about their experiences. One intern suggested, "Build in a day mid-semester when interns can take the opportunity to travel and observe peers teaching. This would shed light on how planning, management, and teaching is done by others." A high school intern recommended, "There should be more focus on

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job searching, job applying, and interviewing aspect.”

Our Action Plan — Spring Discussion Board

Our informal survey of fall interns shed light on how we could improve the internal supervision model as both institutions sought to provide the best experience possible for student-teaching interns. First, we realized that we needed to be more responsive to interns’ perceived needs. For example, it was obvious that the middle school and high school interns had had much more exposure to interviewing techniques and résumé building, whereas the elementary interns had not. As a result of this, the spring interns were required to provide beginning-of-the-semester input, through a discussion board, as to what their perceived needs were during their internship. This information was then used to design seminars. It was also shared with all supervisors through e-mail. The interns’ needs were grouped together; two needs were addressed in building-level seminars, one on classroom management and one on organizing time and planning. Two interns cited “building confidence” as a need; this information was shared generally with all supervisors through e-mail. The district-led seminars addressed the other perceived needs of the interns: interviewing, developing a professional portfolio to use when interviewing (this was also a course requirement), and information on licensure/pursuing a master’s degree. The interviewing seminar was divided by early childhood and middle school/high school interviewing because the interns who expressed interest in knowing more about licensure/getting a master’s degree were in the middle school/high school group. This information was incorporated into their interviewing seminar.

Before each seminar, interns responded to discussion board postings regarding their knowledge and comfort level for each district-led seminar (see Figure 2 for the first discussion-board posting). A Likert scale was used to more quantitatively ascertain interns’ knowledge and comfort level related to each seminar topic, along with requiring the interns to explain their ratings (average scores are reported). Interns were asked to rate their knowledge of the upcoming topic and their comfort level in using/preparing for that topic.

The first seminar focused on preparing the interns for Project Learning Curve (PLC), the one university-based assignment they needed to complete during student teaching (see Figure 2 for the second discussion-board posting). This assignment is designed so that interns can demonstrate their understanding of pre-assessing, teaching, and post-assessing in their classrooms. The average rating (on a five-point Likert scale) for knowledge in developing their PLC project was a 3.2. The average rating for feeling comfortable in being able to successfully complete their PLC was a 3.5. The one theme that emerged was that students were confused as to how to effectively pre-assess using two instruments and then use this information to plan their lesson(s). They reported a firm grasp on post-assessment. The seminar was then designed to more specifically focus

on pre-assessment and analysis of data to inform instruction.

The second seminar focused on interviewing. The average rating for knowledge on interviewing was 3.1. The average rating for comfort level in being able to successfully interview was 3.3. Common themes included understanding the interviewing process, including screening interviews and building/second-round interviews, and major points or ideas employers are looking for. In general, interns believed they knew the questions they would be asked in interviews. This seminar, in particular, was adjusted to meet the needs of the spring interns. In past interview seminars more emphasis was placed on the types of questions asked in interviews; in the spring seminar, we focused much more on the process and general ideas regarding what employers are looking for.

The third seminar focused on developing a professional portfolio (a requirement for interns in College View school district). The average rating for knowledge on how to develop and use a professional portfolio was 3.3. The average rating for comfort level in being able to develop and use a professional portfolio was 3.1. Common themes include understanding what goes into a portfolio, including several statements about receiving mixed messages regarding what to include, and the length and detail needed. These ideas were addressed in the seminar by asking interns to bring their current portfolio (they had created and adapted their portfolios throughout their teacher-education course work) and work with the liaison and each other to come to a better understanding of how to develop and use the portfolio.

After each discussion-board posting, the interns' feedback was collated and shared with the supervisors via e-mail in an effort to better communicate interns' perceptions and reinforce concepts discussed during the seminars. This information sharing took place as a means to continually improve the program and as a way to keep the lines of communication open between the interns, supervisors, university liaison, and partnership director.

Spring Final Evaluation

The final evaluation, given to interns, cooperating teachers, and supervisors included open-ended responses but also used a Likert scale for each item so that we could ascertain degrees of perceptions more so than relying solely on open-ended responses. See Figure 3 for final evaluation questions for interns and cooperating teachers/supervisors. Several themes emerged that typified participants' perceptions of the internal supervision model.

As with the fall interns, the spring interns identified the frequent contact between themselves and their supervisors as an important piece of the program; this was the most salient theme given to explain the rating of 4.7 when interns rated the effectiveness of the internal supervision model. They described this as accessibility, making comments such as, "she was right there in the building" and "the day-to-day contact kept the lines of communication open." One intern said it succinctly when she described her perception,

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“It was convenient having my supervisor one classroom away.”

The data from the spring supervisors and cooperating teachers substantiates that frequent contact is critical to the success of the internal supervision model. Supervisors and cooperating teachers rated the internal supervision model a 4.4, making statements such as, “a lot of time to collaborate,” “frequent opportunities to interact,” and “interns are better followed and monitored using this model, and we’re able to help the intern at a moment’s notice.”

As interns reflected on the effectiveness of the spring seminars, they rated the seminars a 4.4. The theme that emerged in the spring was slightly different than identified by the fall interns, who thought the seminars were of a “practical and timely nature.” Spring interns thought the seminars were “beneficial and informative,” but spoke more specifically about how the seminars met their needs. One intern stated, “I like how the discussion board was used before the seminars because it allowed us to focus in on what we really wanted to learn. At each and every seminar I learned something valuable.” Another intern explained, “It was great to have them so specific. I feel like College View really did me justice in the area of personal, small group professional development.” There were clear differences in the ways the interns described the seminars; fall interns saw them as practical and timely, whereas after the changes were implemented, the spring interns saw the seminars as more specific and more able to meet their needs.

Spring supervisors and cooperating teachers rated the seminars a 4.5 and spoke specifically about how much better prepared interns were after the seminars. One cooperating teacher commented that she “had a new respect for PLC, and her intern did a great job of teaching (the concept of) money because of it.” Another teacher explained, “There were very few misconceptions about PLC, and interns were comfortable and confident.” A supervisor described them as “thought provoking, different, and interesting,” and another thought they were “effective — interns had lots of questions and shared lots with each other.” Overall, participants perceived that the seminars were “specific to the interns’ needs,” better preparing them for the work to be done.

The culminating spring seminar was rated a 4.3 by interns and rated a 4.7 by supervisors and cooperating teachers. Spring interns didn’t express the same “stressful and intimidating, but worth it” concerns that fall interns had. They spoke more to the idea that the activity had given them much-needed practice and immediate feedback. One intern appreciated the “diverse feedback” from interviewing with four different groups of teachers. Another expressed that it was a “great chance to practice and (I) received valuable feedback.” Interns saw it as a “constructive way to get feedback and suggestions.” Only one intern spoke to enjoying the “experience of using a portfolio in an interview setting.” None of the spring interns stated that the culminating seminar was “stressful

and intimidating”; one intern did report that the seminar helped “settle her nerves.”

Cooperating teachers and supervisors saw the culminating activity as a good use of time for the interns. One teacher reported that “it was neat to see the interns share, they answered questions like a pro,” and another commented that “interns got helpful feedback, and it gives us the opportunity to give positive suggestions.” Some cooperating teachers and supervisors compared it to previous years’ culminating activities, stating that the culminating activity now was “much more valuable than watching interns flip through their portfolios.” Overall, supervisors and cooperating teachers thought the culminating activity helped the interns synthesize their learning.

Finally, spring interns, cooperating teachers, and supervisors were asked to suggest areas of improvement. Interestingly, interns had few comments to make here. The one they identified, like fall interns, was, “I have a very positive experience,” or “I don’t have any complaints.” They didn’t take the opportunity to provide constructive feedback. One summed it up, reporting that, “I honestly can’t think of anything to change; I had a wonderful experience.”

Cooperating teachers and supervisors provided several comments that could be characterized as comments that reinforced some aspect of the program that was already in place. One teacher stated that it was “valuable to keep interns close by (in proximity),” which is one of the underlying aspects in place. Another stated that she “liked the informal opportunity to meet before interns begin and summarizing at the end — both of these aspects have been in place for several years. One cooperating teacher summed it up, “I really like this model. I hope the interns appreciate how much more mentor support they get with this model than with the traditional circuit-rider model,” as she described her desire to maintain the design of the program.

Discussion

As we closely examined the internal supervision model over two semesters, several important ideas became clear to us. First, we realized that it was relatively easy to meet the needs of the interns by opening up lines of communication. Spring interns provided us information as to their perceived needs before they began their student teaching. This information was then shared with supervisors and used to fine-tune seminars so that interns felt better prepared. Interns also provided us their perceived needs before each seminar, affording us the opportunity to adjust each seminar so that interns could easily synthesize the information. Supervisors were made aware, via e-mail, of interns’ perceived needs throughout the semester, creating a feedback mechanism that aided in meeting interns’ needs. Supervisors were more satisfied with the experience because they knew more about what their interns needed yet didn’t necessarily have more work to do. The culminating activity in particular, where interns used their portfolios in mock interviews,

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proved to be a genuine synthesis of the interns' learning.

The discussion-board postings became an especially effective way to gauge interns' understandings and comfort level in regard to particular concepts critical to them during the student-teaching experience. The first posting set the stage for the entire semester. Additionally, it was easy for supervisors to respond to their interns' needs once this information was shared with them. Adjusting seminar topics, specifically nuances within each seminar, was also easy because we had specific information from interns.

This partnership work has afforded us the opportunity to provide an intern experience perceived to be effective by interns, cooperating teachers, and supervisors who are involved. Where old supervision paradigms failed to provide the needed support and connection to the university, the internal supervision model provides a more productive and meaningful experience for interns as they move through their student-teaching experience. It seems that re-examining the purposes behind the internal supervision model has helped us push the model to the next level. Continued examination will be critical.

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