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## ABSTRACT

A content-area reading course for preservice teachers challenges them to engage in the kinds of activities that "real" teachers do or should be doing, demonstrating how teachers can work across disciplines and foster collaborative relationships, while at the same time assisting their students in making connections from one classroom to the next. The creation of content-area-of-the-day contributions allows these preservice teachers to see how their content area applies across the curriculum and results in a plethora of teaching ideas. Their ideas, presented in a format the preservice teachers are given to follow, could be an activity, a game, a resource, a guest speaker, or any other classroom-related teaching idea. Contributions are varied and among them are suggestions for a nutritionist guest speaker for the health/physical education/recreation class; field trips to museums, the National Weather Service, concerts, plays and art shows; games played in a foreign language being taught in the classroom; and the use of children's literature to represent different perspectives of familiar stories. (CR)

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CONTENT-AREA CONTRIBUTIONS

MANUSCRIPT COVER SHEET

Using Content-Area-of-the-Day Contributions  
To Help Preservice Teachers Make  
Connections Across the Curriculum

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## CONTENT-AREA CONTRIBUTIONS 1

In the content-area reading course I teach, students are challenged to engage in the kinds of activities that "real" teachers do or that "real" teachers should be doing. Because it has been my observation that secondary teachers tend to become isolated, both physically and "curricularly", from their colleagues, I, along with my students have been creating Content-Area-of-the-Day Contributions to demonstrate how teachers can work across disciplines and foster collaborative relationships, while at the same time assist their students in making connections from one classroom to the next.

This activity has helped my students see how their content area applies across the curriculum and has resulted in the creation of a plethora of teaching ideas. Often students express the fear that they won't have enough ideas or have the time to be creative once they are out in the "real" world of teaching. With the addition of this activity, every student's repertoire of teaching ideas is strengthened. Since I strongly believe that I must "walk my talk", I participate in this activity by sharing a contribution along with my students. My background in language arts means I

## CONTENT-AREA CONTRIBUTIONS 2

usually find myself sharing children's literature selections that other content areas could use as supplemental resources.

Throughout the course, one content area is randomly assigned to a class period once or twice a week. For every content area but their own, students submit a contribution. Their idea could be an activity, a game, a resource, a guest speaker, or any other classroom-related teaching idea. Students are provided with a format to follow when creating their contributions and are to include the following:

The Content Area of the Day;

Their Name and Content Area;

Contribution Type and Title.

This is followed by an explanation of the idea and concluded by a listing of three to five ideas for classroom use. I ask that students limit their contributions to one page.

At the beginning of the class period for the scheduled content area, students share their ideas and then I collect the copies. When explaining their contribution, students will often mention that they developed their idea after hearing another student's

### CONTENT-AREA CONTRIBUTIONS 3

idea. This convinced me that the time it took for students to verbalize their ideas was well worth it. Depending upon the size of my class, this sharing is done as a large group or in small groups. Students receive full credit for each completed contribution as long as it has been done according to the assignment guidelines.

Contributions are quite varied. Some are quite involved and unique. Others are simplistic, yet useful. While some of the contributions may seem obvious and unimaginative to veteran teachers, for preservice teachers, these suggestions are just as meaningful. Whatever contribution students make, one of the real payoffs is that students are engaging in collaboration with their future colleagues. If we expect teachers to work together once they are out in their own classrooms, those of us involved in teacher education programs must provide opportunities for positive collaborative experiences during their preparation.

The following is a small sampling of student ideas submitted for their Content-Area-of-the-Day Contributions:

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GUEST SPEAKERS--a government major suggested that the HPER--health/physical education/recreation--teacher invite a dietitian or nutritionist from a government program like WIC to talk about the program and its nutritional guidelines; foreign language teachers were encouraged to invite a person from the Immigration and Naturalization Service to speak about the naturalization process and to also have students fill out required application forms and have students conduct a mock court hearing to learn about the process of naturalization; students have suggested various college professors as guest speakers for high school classes;

FIELD TRIPS--students have suggested taking field trips to museums, to the National Weather Service office, to sporting events, concerts, plays and art shows;

GAMES--familiar games like hopscotch were varied by having the MDFL--Modern Foreign Language--teacher use words in the language being taught to represent the numbers rather than numerical symbols; a history major suggested researching historical sporting events/games and then playing the games as they were originally played; a HPER major described a version of conducting

## CONTENT-AREA CONTRIBUTIONS 5

a scavenger hunt for the social studies teacher utilizing geographical clues; many versions of games like scrabble, jeopardy, crossword puzzles, Simon Says, and Family Feud were contributed;

MUSICAL SELECTIONS--a government major recommended that the music teacher have students imagine that they have been put in charge of planning an upcoming political event like a rally or fundraising dinner and choose music for the event and provide a rationale for its selection; the HPER teacher gave the language arts teacher ideas for having students create poems and raps related to topics being studied in health class but being written about in language arts;

ACTIVITIES--a HPER major suggested that the art teacher have students combine fitness topics with drawing by having students sketch a picture dealing with the information being studied and using pertinent information, write a story along the outline of the drawing that describes the picture; a math major described an activity for the art teacher dealing with the concept of perspective and created a measuring activity for drawing objects that are in a natural setting; a history major suggested that the art teacher

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could have students create collages or design bulletin boards related to what they were studying;

RESEARCH TOPICS--students have suggested that students research historical mathematicians, artists, musicians, and writers;

RESOURCES--a music major suggested that the HPER teacher use A History of Western Music as a resource when planning a dance unit; a HPER major suggested that the social studies teacher consult International Playtime, a book containing a variety of games and dances from around the world that could be used when studying different countries in the social studies classroom;

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE--children's literature for each content area is recommended, for example, the social studies teacher could use selections that present familiar stories from a different perspective such as The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig by Eugene Trivizas and Helen Oxenbury or The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs by A. Wolf by Jon Scieszka to provide a springboard into a discussion about how perspective influences our understanding of an event or the social studies teacher could utilize books to introduce



## CONTENT-AREA CONTRIBUTIONS 7

historical events like The Lily Cupboard A Story of the Holocaust by Shulamith Levey Oppenheim; the MDFL teacher could use children's books tell stories about cultural traditions such as Too Many Tamales by Gary Soto and Ed Martinez; the language arts teacher could use the books by Ruth Heller, such as Kites Sail High A Book About Verbs, as a unique introduction to grammar and have students create their own books about grammatical concepts patterned after Heller's format; Ruth Heller also writes children's books that deal with scientific concepts with titles like The Reason for a Flower, Chickens Aren't the Only Ones, and Animals Born Alive and Well that the science teacher could make use of; wordless picture books like Truck by Donald Crews, Tuesday by David Wiesner, or Time Flies by Eric Rohmann can be used to have music students select background music to accompany the pictures or language arts students could write text for these books or the art students could create their own wordless picture books; finally, there are children's books that tell stories about historical figures like William Shakespeare in A Child's Portrait of Shakespeare by Lois Burdett and Beethoven Lives Upstairs by Barbara Nichol; children's

## CONTENT-AREA CONTRIBUTIONS 8

literature is an untapped resource that I try to, through this activity, encourage secondary teachers to consider using in their content-area classroom.

After we have completed the last content area, students' ideas, along with mine, are compiled into a teaching resource that each receives. One of my most rewarding days is when I bring the completed Content-Area-of-the-Day Contribution teaching resource to distribute to the class. Students take great pride as they look through the resource, find their own ideas and marvel at the finished product the class has created. Often students consult this resource as they plan teaching units for this and other methods courses. Many have commented that this activity was one of the best parts of the course. Additionally, as we move into planning thematic and interdisciplinary units, students often consult our class-created resource for lesson ideas.

The Content-Area-of-the-Day Contribution activity has engaged preservice teachers in collaborative networking, a vital component for our profession.



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