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ABSTRACT

Texas Southern University (TSU) is one of five institutions of higher learning involved in a collaborative partnership to redesign its teacher preparation program. Newly revised curriculum reflects best teaching practices supported by the use of technology. The Greater Houston Partnership is a 5-year project involving the five institutions, six urban school districts, and the Houston Annenberg Challenge. TSU redesigned its teacher preparation program by creating professional development hybrid courses online. The conceptual framework for the redesigned program is centered on pedagogy: teaching and learning with technology as an integral thread. This article outlines the overall process in redesigning the teacher preparation program and shares a student's perspective of the effectiveness of online courses. Beginning teachers who complete this redesigned teacher preparation program at TSU will experience: a broad repertoire of teaching styles, based on models of teaching, relative to specific contextual teaching-learning episodes; specific expertise relative to their certification areas; skill in fostering teaching-learning with the expanded use of technology; ongoing assessments, evaluation, and program revisions; collaborative assessment techniques with diverse groups; involvement in action research; effective/affective collaboration with other colleagues for self-evaluation and curriculum design; and assessment of teacher preparation experiences to improve programs for EC-12 student learning. (SM)

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**REDESIGNING TEACHER PREPARATION:
A COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE FOR QUALITY
EDUCATION**

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Redesigning Teacher Preparation: A Collaborative Initiative for Quality Education

Texas Southern University (TSU) is one of five institutions of higher learning involved in a collaborative partnership to redesign its teacher preparation program. Newly revised curriculum reflects best teaching practices supported by the use of technology. The Greater Houston Partnership is a five-year project of five institutions of higher learning, six local school districts and The Houston Annenberg Challenge supported by funds from the U.S. Office of Education. Texas Southern University redesigned its teacher preparation program by creating professional development hybrid courses online. The conceptual framework for the redesigned program is centered on pedagogy: teaching and learning with technology as an integral thread. This article will outline the overall process in redesigning its teacher preparation program along with sharing a student's perspective of the effectiveness of the online courses. Texas Southern University's revamped program completed its first semester of the pilot program in the Fall of 2001.

Introduction

The ultimate goal of The Houston Partnership for Quality Education, a collaborative endeavor of the Houston Annenberg Challenge, six local school districts and five public and private institutions of higher learning is to form a national exemplar for K-16 urban education reform. This collaborative consortium is supported by funds from the U.S. Office of Education. The Houston Annenberg Challenge is a public/private, not-for-profit intermediary dedicated to educational reform. The four urban universities are in the business of preparing effective and professional educators to teach in urban settings and the community college system shares the role of teacher preparation. The six school districts have been a part of The Houston Annenberg Challenge for six years. The partners of higher learning involved in the collaborative are Texas Southern University, the University of Houston (Central Campus), University of Houston (Downtown), St. Thomas University and the Houston Community College. The partner school districts that joined the consortium were Aldine, Alief, Houston, Humble, North Forest, and Spring Branch Independent School Districts. The purpose of the partnership is to combine the best thinking among all the

developers during the redesign and the revision process of the teacher preparation program.

The comprehensive K-16 initiatives of the greater Houston Partnership for Quality Education (PQE) make this collaborative partnership unique (Application for Partnership Grants, 2000). The following grant initiatives guided the construction of the redesigned teacher preparation at Texas Southern University:

- Redesign teacher preparation collaboratively with all the partners to build knowledge, pedagogy and technological skills.
- Integrate technology at all levels of the teacher preparation program.
- Incorporate the knowledge and skills of K-12 educators as partners and leaders in redesigning teacher preparation.

Texas Southern University, Aldine Independent School District and North Forest Independent School District made up the design team for restructuring Texas Southern University's Teacher Preparation Program. A series of meetings were held to brainstorm and formulate ideas on revising the Teacher Preparation Program at TSU.

The Curriculum Development Process

The reform and restructuring efforts at Texas Southern University included the new state standards for teacher certification. In the fall of 2002, the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) in Texas will implement a new teacher certification examination program. The new certification examination will be called the Texas Examinations of Educator Standards (TExES). Additionally, the state board will introduce a new generation of certificates for Texas teachers. The types of certificates have been reduced, but the new certificates will require a greater breadth and depth of knowledge on the part of the beginning teacher (SBEC, 2000). Furthermore, the new certificates bring a greater focus in preparing middle school teachers in addition to adding technology standards expected of all beginning teachers Texas. The standards for professional development and certification fields and levels are as follows:

- ✓ Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (Early Childhood-EC-Grade 4)
- ✓ Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (Grades 4-8)
- ✓ Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (Grades 8-12)
- ✓ Technology Applications (All Beginning Teachers).

The new state standards fall into four domains with the technology standards as common threads. The four domains state that beginning teachers are responsible for:

- Designing instruction and assessment to promote student learning (Domain I).
- Creating a positive, productive classroom environment (Domain II).
- Implementing effective, responsive instruction and assessment (Domain III)
- Fulfilling professional roles and responsibilities (Domain IV).

The technology application standards for beginning teachers include (SBEC, 2000):

- Standard I.** All teachers use technology-related terms, concepts, data input strategies, and ethical practices to make informed decisions about current technologies and their application.
- Standard II.** All teachers identify task requirements, apply search strategies, and use current technology to efficiently acquire, analyze, and evaluate a variety of electronic information.
- Standard III.** All teachers use task-appropriate tools to synthesize knowledge, create and modify solutions, and evaluate results in a way that supports the work of individuals and groups in problem-solving situations.
- Standard IV.** All teachers communicate information in different formats and for diverse audiences.
- Standard V.** All teachers know how to plan, organize, deliver, and evaluate instruction for all

students that incorporates the effective use of current technology for teaching and integrating the Technology Applications Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) into the curriculum.

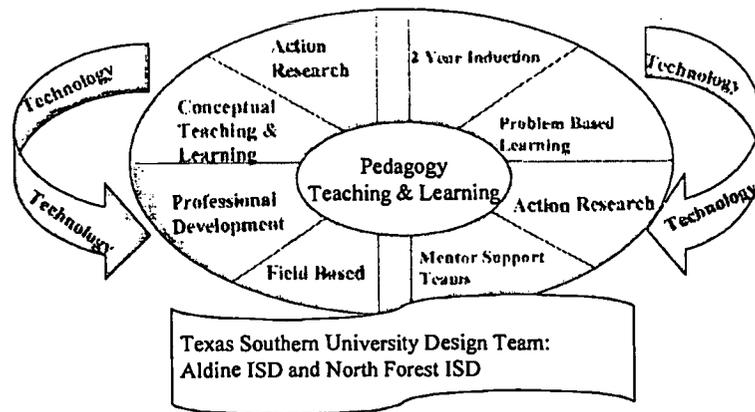
The redesign of the educator certification structure is an integral part of the K-16 initiative (SBEC, 2000). The state standards and new certification areas for new teachers, the partnership initiatives and best teaching practices were components the design team worked with as they began to develop the revision process of the teacher preparation program at TSU.

The design team at TSU began its planning meetings in the spring semester of 2001. Initial meetings were held with the faculties of partnership schools in the selected districts to get their approval for the partnership. Faculties at both schools were in favor of the partnership. Several other meetings were held where all the partners in the consortium were present. Other meetings took place at partnership universities to continue the development process. The design team conducted a (1) needs assessment that involved all the partnership entities, (2) formulated goals and objectives, (3) developed the Conceptual Model and (5) formulated student outcomes.

Figure 1 illustrates the Conceptual Model of the revised Teacher Preparation Program at Texas Southern University. The center of the Conceptual Model is pedagogy—teaching and learning, contextual teaching and learning in a learner-centered environment, extensive field-based experiences, action research, problem-based learning, mentor support and a two-year induction period, all of which are supported by the use of technology.

Figure 1
Redesign Model

Redesign Model



The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the redesigned teacher preparation program is centered on Pedagogy: teaching and learning using Joyce & Weil's *Models of Teaching*. It is important to prepare future teachers who can use a repertoire of teaching models that meet the needs of the diverse student population they will be teaching. These future educators for the 21st century will in turn change the way students learn and the way teachers teach. Our future teachers will bring about the kinds of learning to help students become effective, powerful, lifelong learners. According to Joyce and Weil:

How teaching is conducted has a large impact on students' abilities to educate themselves. Successful teachers are not simply charismatic, persuasive, and expert presenters. Rather, they present powerful cognitive and social tasks to their students and teach the students how to make productive use of them... Thus, a major role in teaching is to create powerful learners (Joyce & Weil, 1992).

The Information Processing Model

The Information Processing Model in *Models of Teaching* introduces skills of learning through thinking. Students can process information by attacking problems inductively. Students are

involved in solving problems by collecting, organizing and analyzing data. Students become scientists as they collect data in their field-site classes and analyze the data as to its significance to the teaching field. Students work cooperatively to investigate classroom problems by testing hypotheses and approaching certain problems by exploring one another's perspective in solving the problems. The varied models of processing information involve students in learning and applying the models by: developing reasoning skills, concept attainment, inquiry skills, organizing information, making connections, enhancing creative thinking and teaching them how to learn.

TSU's conceptual model integrates some of the models of teaching and learning by Joyce and Weil (e.g., information processing model) as well as the following supporting components:

- Effective integration of instructional technology
- Contextual teaching and learning
- Extensive field-based experiences
- Action research
- Mentor and Critical Friends Group support teams
- Problem-based teaching/learning
- Maximum collaboration with officials from partnership institutions
- A two-year induction period with university support

- On-going professional development for partnership professionals

The supporting components are discussed below.

Effective Integration of Technology

In a 1999 study conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education found that only one of every three teachers felt “well prepared or very well prepared to use computers and the Internet.” Teachers need to be immersed in using technology and learning with technology in order to keep up with a fast changing technological world. Teaching and modeling effectively using computers in the classroom will prepare students for the demands of a computer driven world.

Preservice teachers enrolled in the teacher preparation program who experience the online coursework will have the opportunity to learn with and use technology in their university courses and their classrooms. Advanced technology will be infused into all aspects of the preservice and induction program. Technology is an integral part of the teacher preparation program at Texas Southern University. The ultimate goal is for teachers to

further their technology skills and be able to model technology-infused teaching and learning in their classrooms.

Contextual Teaching and Learning

Contextual teaching and learning is not a new concept. John Dewey (1910) advocated a curriculum and teaching methodology tied to the student's experiences and interests. Dewey's philosophical principles of learning emphasized "experiential" learning, which is learning that occurs in close relationship with actual experience. Educators and researchers have used other terms that are synonymous with experiential learning. For example, learner-centered instruction, active learning, hands-on-experiences, situated learning, real-world education, community-based learning and social learning all advocate learning in a context that is meaningful to the student's learning.

The student's learning experiences are contextualized in real-world settings. Cognitive research clearly demonstrates that traditional methods of teaching and learning violate all that we understand about how people learn and apply what they learn to new situations. Content must be taught in meaningful contexts with the teacher as a facilitator of knowledge and new authentic

measures of assessment must be in place. Rote learning and textbook mastery have no place in contextual teaching and learning.

Successful contextual learning requires ongoing communication among all the players, including teachers, employers, supervisors, mentors, students and parents. Student feedback is imperative on the effectiveness of a program set up with contextual teaching and learning framework. The teacher redesigned teacher preparation program at Texas Southern University has involved all of the players in redesigning the new curriculum. Feedback from preservice teachers and the design team have provided invaluable input in redesigning and revising the curriculum. The learning experiences of students in the field-based program are contextualized in that their field placement occurs in a learner-centered school that facilitates the theory to practice connection.

Extensive Field-Based Experiences

The instructional experiences of preservice teachers are conducted at a PK-12 school site under the supervision of a professional support team consisting of a mentor teacher, a support

teacher, a College of Education methods specialist, a College of Arts and Sciences content specialist, and a Critical Friends Group specialist. Field experiences for students will start at the beginning of their junior year and continue through certification and/or graduation.

With extensive field-experience, preservice teachers will inherently know if teaching is for them. They will have hands-on experiences that will connect the theoretical concepts they are exploring in the classroom to the practical real-life applications of teaching and learning.

Action research

Preservice teachers will have many opportunities to get involved in action research during their field experiences. Students will engage in observing, collecting and analyzing data using case studies, problem-solving scenarios and interactions with students, teachers and staff at the school-based site. This type of research will have practical value in the classroom. Action research can be a viable tool in providing valuable data that can be used to improve teaching and learning. Compiling data on what works will allow students to test ideas and procedures in action.

Mentor and Critical Friends Group support teams

The design team is still in the process of receiving training in Critical Friends Group (GRG). Critical Friends Groups will provide the design team with collaborative structures and protocols that are researched based. These protocols will engage the design team members and students in problem solving and critical thinking. Additionally, CFG will act as a true support system for all the partners. CFG will provide a framework for shared reflection. “CFGs can challenge cultural mindsets and help teachers learn to discuss and improve their work in the specific and personal realities of their classrooms” (Greater Houston Partnership for Quality Education, p.19).

Problem-based teaching/learning

Problem based learning is an instructional approach that prepares students to think critically and analytically. Collaboratively, students find solutions to real problems. This approach to teaching engages students’ curiosity as they read problems as well as learning subject matter. Problem based learning is an integral part of the information-processing model.

The problems students solve are contextualized in real classroom settings.

Maximum collaboration with officials from partnership institutions

The collaboration of the design team along with officials from partnership institutions creates a true collaborative in redesigning teacher preparation. The partnership has become a unique community of learners whereby all members share ideas and are working toward a common goal.

A Two-year Induction Period with University and Public School Mentor Support

Mentor support teams from the schools and the university can offer invaluable assistance in helping new teachers get immersed into the social, political and everyday routines and procedures of the operation of a school. The mentor support teams can help students reflect on their performance and the management of the classroom as well as the day-to-day demands of teaching. The professionals involved in meeting the needs of preservice teachers and the two-year inductees consist of mentor, master, and

support teachers from school districts, professional methods experts from the College of Education, professional content experts from the College of Humanities and Sciences, and professionals from the Critical Friends Group.

On-going Professional Development

Professional development activities are designed to help teachers develop essential knowledge and skills. These activities include workshops and seminars, college classes, on-line courses, membership in professional organizations, subscriptions to professional journals, conferences, panel discussions, action research, peer collaboration and publishing articles in referred journals. Professional development activities allow students, teachers and the design team to stay abreast of current trends, methods and research in education.

In redesigning the teacher preparation program, all of the models of teaching and supporting components were integrated in the course content and sequenced accordingly. Blackboard was selected as the software for creating the online courses. The technical prerequisites for building the online courses included: an Internet connection, a web browser and an email account. The

following table will describe the course content and sequence for the hybrid-online courses.

Course Content/Sequence

After having been admitted to the Teacher Preparation Program, prospective teachers will engage in the following experiences.

Figure 2
Course Content/Sequence

Semester	Description
1st Semester Junior Year University-based courses: 15-18 semester hours.	Students take two reading courses in addition to 9-12 semester hours in endorsement and/or certification courses. Six hours of coursework are currently being redesigned as hybrid-online pilot courses: spring semester of 2002.
2nd semester Junior Year Six semester hours of professional development courses. Field-Based	EDCI 310 (Foundations of Education) and EDCI 328 (Psychology of Learning, Growth and Development): Hybrid-online courses using Blackboard, aligned with state standards, components of conceptual model into curricula for the various certification areas (EC-4, 4-8-8-12). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Field experience in partnership schools: Aldine ISD and North Forest ISD, one day a week. ◆ Group seminars once a week.

	<p>Preservice teachers will engage in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Online experiences and assessments ◆ Group projects (problem based) ◆ Collaborative encounters with mentors, master teachers and Critical Friends Group coaches ◆ Technology generated logs
<p><u>1st semester Senior Year</u> Field-Based Courses, 6 semester hours.</p>	<p>EDCI 350 (Instructional Strategies) and EDCI 339 (Classroom Management): Hybrid-online courses aligned with state standards, integrating the components of conceptual model into curricula for various certification areas (EC-4, 4-8, 8-12). Field experience in partnership schools: Aldine ISD and North Forest, ISD, once a week.</p> <p>Interdisciplinary units (based on state standards, teaching models, activities, assessments, and technology integration</p> <p>Active participation in field-based partnership schools and communities Looking at students' work protocols and examining student work based on state standards.</p>
<p><u>2nd Semester Senior Year</u> <u>Student Teaching, 6 semester hours</u></p>	<p>Six semester hours of Student Teaching based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Placement based on certification areas and partnership schools

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Learner-centered mentors and master teachers at partnership schools ◆ Certification preparation ◆ Employment opportunities
<u>Induction to Teaching</u>	Mentor team and professional development support for beginning teachers for at least 2 years.

The hybrid-online courses were pilot tested in the Fall of 2001. Revisions for the newly developed courses will continue in the spring of 2002. Below is a student's perspective of the online courses.

A Student's Perspective

When I first learned that the Professional Development courses (EDCI 339 & EDCI 350) were going to be administered online, I was delighted. I welcomed such a new and an innovative experience. The idea of learning and discovering via modern technology absolutely fascinated me. Since I was unfamiliar with online education, I anticipated several challenges; yet, I maintained a positive outlook because I knew that these courses would serve as rare and crucial learning opportunities.

Once I successfully logged on to Blackboard, my initial impressions about the online courses were positive. I was intrigued by the versatile components and options that Blackboard provided. After exploring each component of the Blackboard course sites, I was pleased. In fact, the content of the course sites exceeded my expectations. I did not expect to have access to the various communications tools and external links.

After I initially explored the Blackboard site, I discovered that it was actually very easy to maneuver. The user was able to access each component by simply clicking on the designated icon with the touch of a mouse. In addition, if a user wanted to retrieve a previous page or advance to a subsequent page, he/she was able to maneuver by selecting the “back” or “forward” icons that were provided at the top of each page. Such features eliminated difficulty and provided much convenience.

Furthermore, the components of Blackboard were fairly simple to access and to operate. Each component was accessible by the mere click of the mouse. The “Announcements” section presented all announcements and/or messages that the instructor posted. This section was actually the first page that appeared once

the user logged on to Blackboard. All important dates, reminders, and other messages were visible.

The “Course Information” section contained relevant and descriptive information regarding the course, including the official course syllabus. By clicking on this labeled icon, the user was able to view the course objectives and requirements as well as the instructor’s contact information.

The “Course Documents” section was comprised of numerous online documents that were posted by the instructor. The course document(s) immediately appeared once the user made a selection. The course documents consisted of online articles that related to the field of education and more importantly, supported the concepts and skills discussed during the seminars. Students were expected to view all course documents since each related to the course content and assignments.

The “Course Assignment” section presented all assignments and/or special projects that the instructor assigned. When the user clicked on the titled icon, he/she accessed the posted assignments and/or tasks. He/she was also received specific completion dates as well as detailed instructions.

The “Communication” section offered several tools that provided diverse interaction among users. Once the user selected the “Communication” icon, he/she was presented with opportunities to e-mail classmates and instructors, post comments on the discussion board and participate in the online chat room,

The exams posted online were favorable. Just like traditional in-class exams, each online exam was designed in a multiple-choice format. Questions and answer choices related to an instructional scenario. Yet, the most important benefit of the online exams is that the system graded the exams and the user received an instant grade or score once he/she submitted them. The user was also given his/her exam average for the course.

I believe the online course had numerous strengths. The actual design of the Blackboard site gave the users countless options and resources. Components such as Course Assignments, Course Documents, Communication, Student Tools, and External Links allowed users many opportunities to research and retrieve information, create personal homepages, and communicate at anytime. This online course was extremely beneficial because it allowed users to become more familiar with computer technology; hence, users developed their computer skills.

In regard to the design and use of the Blackboard site, there are no weaknesses; yet, I do believe the course could have been more effective if more users had taken advantage of it more often. In addition, if a student appeared to be intimidated by the online course, I would inform him/her that the experience is neither difficult nor overwhelming. It was actually extremely easy to maneuver and the content was interesting and relevant to the new state standards. Overall, the online course proved to be effective and successful.

Summary and Conclusion

The beginning teacher who completes this redesigned teacher preparation program at Texas Southern University will experience the following:

- A broad repertoire of teaching styles, based on models of teaching, relative to specific contextual teaching/learning episodes
- Specific expertise relative to their certification areas (EC-Grade 4, Grades 4-8, Grades 8-12)
- Skill in fostering teaching/learning with the expanded use of technology
- On-going assessments, evaluation, and program revisions to improve teaching and learning effectiveness that impact student performance

- Collaborative assessment techniques (EC-12) with diverse groups, Critical Friends Group coaches, community leaders, and others
- Involvement in action research in the university and public school classrooms
- Effective/affective collaboration with other colleagues for self-evaluation and for curriculum design
- Assessment of teacher preparation experiences to improve programs for EC-12 student learning.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of the redesigned model will address progress toward improving teacher preparation as measured by (1) educator performance targets, (2) productivity targets, and (3) resource targets (Greater Houston Partnership for Quality Education, 2000). Additionally, the program design will yield information related to: (1) to what extent did program participants feel their expectations were met by the various components of the program? (2) How successful was the restructured teacher preparation program in successfully completing the program and passing the state licenser examinations? (3) How successful were program graduates in securing employment right after completion of the program? (4) How successful was the induction component in helping graduates stay on the job for more than two years? (5) How satisfied were employers (school districts, principals, and parents)

with the performance of these teachers after the first six months of employment? (6) How well did graduates perform on state-required independent observations during their first year of teaching?

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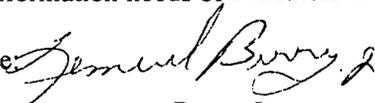
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