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## A Case for Student Teacher Placement as Preparation for Future Urban Educators

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### Abstract

Do schools of education effectively train young, white, and middle-class teacher candidates to work in urban classrooms? How can schools of education prepare teachers and future teachers for classrooms that are diverse in terms of race/ethnicity, nationality, social class, language and other differences (Nieto, 2004) Classrooms that used to be homogeneous are now diverse, yet the predominant face and gender of the teacher has remained the same. Dramatic inequalities exist in the access that students around the globe have to an excellent, high quality education; inequalities that are lamentably too frequently based on race, social class, language, and other differences (Orfield, 2001). Using data from a descriptive survey, this paper will draw from the experience of eleven teacher candidates in racially diverse urban elementary schools through their first year of teaching to provide recommendations for future program improvements to strengthen existing teacher education programs internationally. Using both qualitative surveys and descriptive statistics, this research strives to answer the question of how to educate the strongest teacher candidates for urban classrooms worldwide.

## **A Case for Student Teacher Placement as Preparation for Future Urban Educators**

Debra S. Espinor, George Fox University

### **Abstract**

Do schools of education effectively train young, white, and middle-class teacher candidates to work in urban classrooms? How can schools of education prepare teachers and future teachers for classrooms that are diverse in terms of race/ethnicity, nationality, social class, language and other differences (Nieto, 2004) Classrooms that used to be homogeneous are now diverse, yet the predominant face and gender of the teacher has remained the same. Dramatic inequalities exist in the access that students around the globe have to an excellent, high quality education; inequalities that are lamentably too frequently based on race, social class, language, and other differences (Orfield, 2001). Using data from a descriptive survey, this paper will draw from the experience of eleven teacher candidates in racially diverse urban elementary schools through their first year of teaching to provide recommendations for future program improvements to strengthen existing teacher education programs internationally. Using both qualitative surveys and descriptive statistics, this research strives to answer the question of how to educate the strongest teacher candidates for urban classrooms worldwide.

### **Introduction**

“And now, here I find myself, thirty minutes from the home where I grew up, in an all-African American school, asking myself the same questions that I asked when I was halfway across the world in Uganda. What does it mean to be a white middle class female in this school? What does my unbearable white skin say that I do not know? I find myself wishing I wasn’t white, just for a second, and then being angry at myself for being angry at myself. Can I be successful teaching in an inner city school with this white skin that does not seem to go away? And when did I start thinking of my skin as a condition? God made me with this skin and also created me with the desire to teach marginalized

children, regardless of their color. Somehow both of these truths must be able to coexist, right?” Anna (2008 Teacher Candidate)

How does one answer her? There are certainly great challenges involved in teaching in urban schools. One challenge is the preparation, recruitment, and retention of the strongest teacher candidates. According to Fuhrman (2002), there were over 16,000 school districts in the United States in 2002. Close to one third of all students attended schools in 1.5% of these school districts; in other words, 31% of elementary and secondary students were concentrated in 226 large urban school districts. It is no wonder that these urban schools face many staffing-related problems. Due to the lack of financial and other resources, these districts are hampered in their ability to offer higher salaries or better working conditions to attract the most highly qualified teachers. Often they hire uncertified teachers or have existing teachers instruct outside of their endorsements. Rates of teacher burnout and turnover are high in urban schools, compounding the problem (Kincheloe, 2004; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004). The most pressing question of all, then, is how to prepare the strongest teachers and keep them in the schools with the greatest need.

This study is qualitative in nature; focusing on how predominantly white, middle class teacher candidates experience their preparation to teach in highly diverse urban classroom settings. Information was collected from students about how their coursework at the university and their student teaching prepared them for their current teaching experience. Questions focused on three areas: lesson planning, classroom management, and multicultural preparation. In order to examine larger patterns, the data is also analyzed quantitatively, presenting descriptive statistics. This paper is organized as follows. The research context examines the literature regarding current issues surrounding urban schools in the United States,

followed by a presentation of research methods, data analysis and results, identification of future areas for research, and concluding statements.

### Research Context

Urban classrooms worldwide are rapidly becoming more diverse, necessitating the need for teachers and teacher candidates to have a strong sense of cultural awareness. Brown (2004) noted the strong correlation between teacher awareness of cultural diversity and teaching methods used. Banks (2003) and Yeung (2006) both recognized that a student's academic achievement is influenced by the classroom teacher's cultural awareness. In turn, preservice teachers who exhibit high levels of cultural sensitivity prove to be effective in culturally diverse settings (Larke, 1990). Intercultural competence entails the ability to encounter cultural differences in a positive way. In addition to knowing and using a language, they refer to an ability to interpret gestures, codes, and other non-verbal means of communication, as well as negotiation and conflict resolution skills (Lustig & Koester, 1996).

Steinberg and Kincheloe (2004) in the volume titled, *19 Urban Questions: Teaching in the City*, provided an idea of the scope of scholarship concerned with urban education issues. This book directly addresses the perceptions of some aspects of urban schools by preservice teachers (or teacher candidates). The literature related to urban school perceptions is concerned with three themes: (a) preservice teachers' initial views about teaching in urban schools; (b) urban placements and their effects on teacher candidates' attitudes towards teaching in urban schools; and (c) media representations of schools and their effects on those perceptions. According to Hynes and Socoski (1991), preservice teachers saw urban students as "less motivated," "having fewer academic skills," "needing more discipline," and believe their parents to be "less supportive." In contrast to this, they went on to report that preservice teachers' views about non-urban schools were highly idealized and "rose colored" (Hynes & Socoski, 1991). This research shows that most preservice teacher candidates are not favorably disposed either towards students of minority descent or towards teaching in urban schools.

While authors Payne (1996) and Kunjufu (2006) agreed that there is a need for more pre-service

teachers to develop the skills to work with children of all races, they disagreed on the best way to make this happen. Payne (1996) believed:

One of the reasons it is getting more and more difficult to conduct school as we have in the past is that the students who bring the middle-class culture with them are decreasing in numbers, and the students who bring the poverty culture with them are increasing in numbers. As in any demographic switch, the prevailing rules and policies eventually give way to the group with the largest numbers. (p. 61)

Payne (1996) suggested that for our students to be successful, teacher candidates must understand their hidden rules and teach them the rules that will make them successful at school and at work. Teachers can neither excuse them nor scold them for not knowing; as educators, they must teach them and provide support, assistance, and high expectations.

Kunjufu (2006) agreed that teachers need to understand and develop strong relationships with students but that many teachers refuse to take responsibility for their own bias and shortcomings, preferring to place the blame on the children, the parents, and the community. He went on to suggest that more teachers are needed who act as "coaches" for students:

Coaches understand subject matter and pedagogy, but what makes them so highly effective is that they respect their students, and this enables them to establish strong relationships and maintain high academic expectations. Trust is a key factor in this relationship, and students trust their coaches. Coaches understand and appreciate their student's culture. They visit the home and bond with parents. They motivate their students and encourage them to develop goals. (p. 5)

There is increased evidence demonstrating that urban placements can change the participants' attitudes towards urban schools for the better, whether they are short placements of one to two weeks of intense, supervised immersion in an urban school to extended multi-week or multi-month placements (Proctor et al., 2001). For instance, Mason (1997) compared the perceptions of preservice teachers placed in urban and suburban

schools, and found that 55% of teacher candidates with an urban placement were inclined to pursue inner-city teaching versus 20% of those placed in suburban settings. He also found that the participants placed in urban schools reported learning more about students of different cultural backgrounds than those receiving suburban placements and that the urban school experience did not diminish their inclinations towards urban schools and led to improved perceptions in such areas as K-12 student motivation, discipline, parental support, and language ability.

According to Mason (1997), those field placements that resulted in improved perceptions generally have the following components: (a) the participants received extended exposure to urban schools; (b) the teacher candidates were supervised, providing them with opportunities to share, discuss, and reflect on the placement experience; and (c) the field placement experience was not a standalone requirement, but was structured around key education courses which provided them with the preparation needed to succeed in urban contexts.

Miller (2001) suggested that preservice teachers preparing for work in an urban environment already faced a lengthy and complex set of issues beginning with the understanding that good multicultural teacher had the bottom-line goal of helping every child be successful in their classrooms. Teacher candidates must address their own prejudices, beliefs, and values; work to become trusted by parents and the community; as well as make a genuine effort to seek out and incorporate materials that reflect the world's diversity. Curriculum must be developed that consistently incorporates and respects minority perspectives in ways that do not depict cultural minorities as either heroes or victims of discrimination.

Education has not become the "great equalizer" for most poor students. Many of these children arrive at school suffering from poor health and nutrition, inadequate housing, limited vocabulary, and poor language skills. One of the most disturbing things about these inequities is that they tend to break down along racial lines. Children of color are more likely to be poor (DeBlois, 2008). In spite of the many difficulties these children face, it is important to also recognize that many minority students have strong cultural and family support outside of school. Educators must work to better understand the

pervasive influences of poverty and address the specific challenges these families and students bring to school (Parrett, 2005).

In order to bring the most effective novice teachers into urban classrooms, current research suggests the following list of issues to be addressed in preservice teacher education programs and student teaching placements: issues of cultural value conflict and miscommunication, ineffective teaching methods which result in dismal academic achievement, lowered teacher expectations leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy of lowered student achievement, teacher's negative attitudes towards and beliefs about racially and socio-economically diverse students (Bennett, 1999; Hollins, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2000). White preservice students seem to use the idea of colorblindness as a way of coping with fear and ignorance (McIntyre, 1997; Valli, 1995). Colorblindness allows white preservice teachers to seem innocent or neutral since they claim not to consider race a current issue. Delpit (1995) cautioned, "If one does not see color, one does not really see children" (p. 24).

There is a need to explore, to a greater extent, the limitations and biases teacher candidates may bring to their student teaching placement. Coursework can broaden their view of future students until the teacher candidates are in an actual classroom setting. Placement in an urban setting may be the key to unlock bias and negative attitudes.

## **Research Methods**

### **Participants**

Eleven teacher candidates and former teacher candidates completed a mixed methods survey which was designed to gather information about their placement experience in urban schools, and whether that placement and training allowed them to be successful as they transitioned into the classroom as certified teachers. This study focused on schools in the greater Seattle area where 70% or more of the student population participates in free-and-reduced lunch programs.

The 11 participants consisted of ten females and one male and were between the ages of 21 and 29. Ten of the 11 participants were of Caucasian ethnicity and one was Hispanic. They were all enrolled or formerly enrolled in a preservice education program at Seattle Pacific University and will be licensed to

teach in elementary education. The participants were identified through the placement office.

The teacher education program is situated in an urban, mostly white (83%) university where the School of Education emphasizes teaching for cultural change and gears its teacher education program towards preparing students to teach in all settings, including urban schools. Although the students come into the School of Education as part of a privileged majority, the teacher candidates express concern and compassion for those less fortunate. From their very first education course, they are in schools as volunteers all the way through to their culminating experience as student teachers. Over the past five years, the placement department at this university has become more intentional about placing teacher candidates into urban schools in downtown Seattle or areas of the city with high instances of need. This has resulted in partnerships with schools that meet these criteria and joining in the goal of creating strong new teachers that are able to move directly into schools that have high needs.

### **Data Collection**

This mixed-methods study used the *Diverse Classroom Preparation Questionnaire (DCPQ)*, consisting of both open-ended and scaled responses. This survey instrument was constructed specifically for this project with IRB permission from Seattle Pacific University. It was a pilot study with the intention that the findings may broaden research possibilities in the future.

The self-report survey consisted of three parts. The first part consisted of a set of demographic items where respondents were asked to identify: age, gender, year of graduation, placement of student teaching experience, and present environment. In the second part of the survey, respondents were provided with nine sets of questions using a four-point Likert scale. The sets of questions were divided into three groups; preservice preparation,

student teaching experience, and teaching experience. The third part of the survey required respondents to provide responses to open-ended questions that provided qualitative data. The two open-ended research questions addressed were:

1. Did your student teaching experience provide you with enough skills and knowledge to transition to having your own classroom?
2. Did your student teaching experience provide you with the proper tools to teach students in urban and diverse environments?

This study involved both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the participants' responses. First, descriptive statistics were generated to determine teacher candidates' levels of satisfaction in their preparation, student teaching, and teaching experiences. In conducting the qualitative analysis, two readers read the responses and a preliminary list of coding categories were developed. These categories were supported by the data from the quantitative analysis. The following categories emerged from the narrative responses:

1. Classroom Management
2. Teacher as Minority
3. School and Community Collaboration

### **Findings**

The findings are reported first with the descriptive statistics, then the narrative. Because survey questions varied between preparation, student teaching, and present environment there is discussion within those three areas but not across those three areas. There are descriptive statistics for three areas within each group; lesson planning, classroom management, and multicultural issues.

### **Preparation**

The first set of survey questions asked student candidates about the preparation they received in their graduate education.

## Lesson Planning Preparation

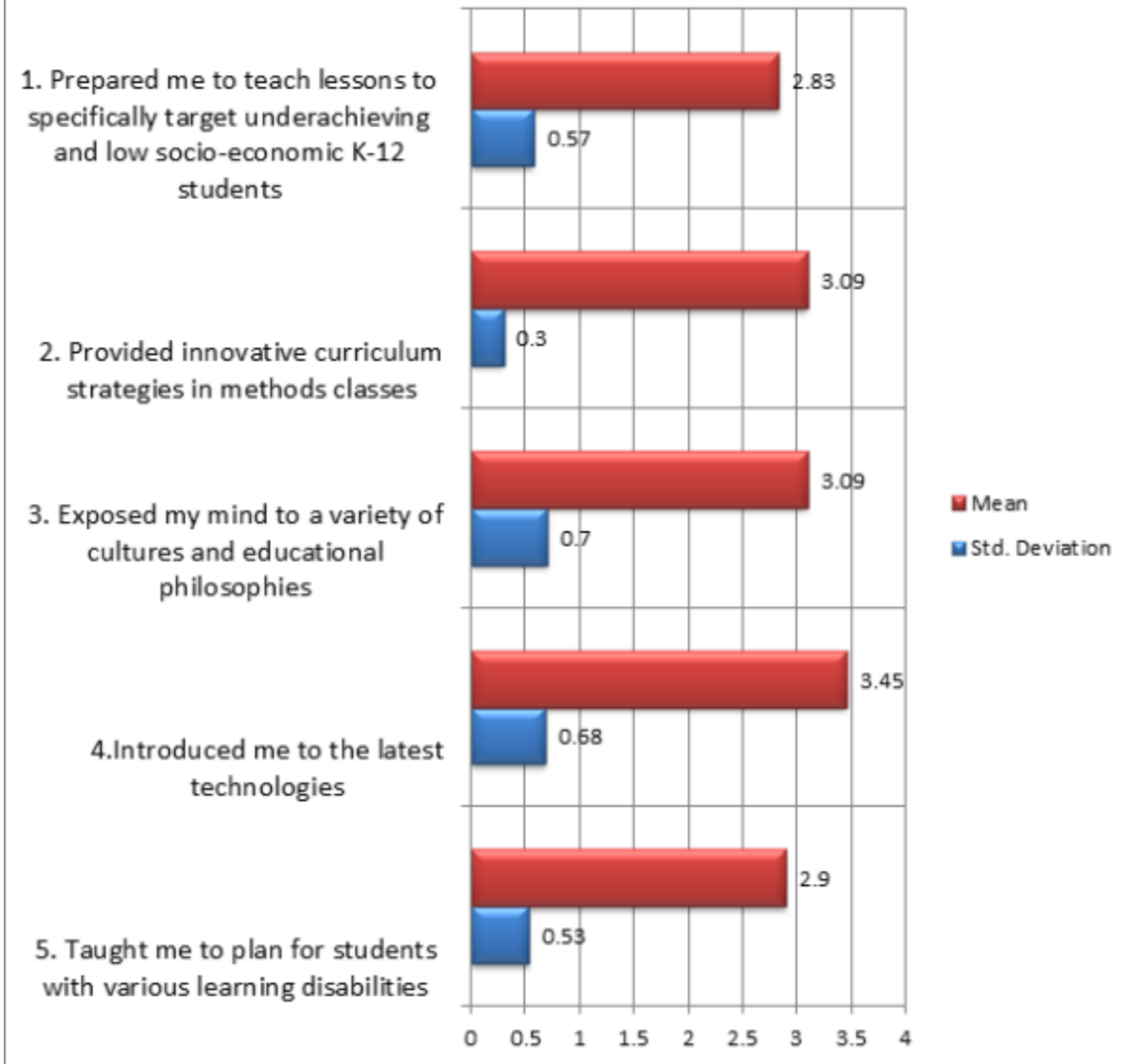


Table 1: *Lesson Planning Preparation*

Although the N is small, there are a few notations to be made when analyzing the data in Table 1. Given the strong curricular focus in foundational classes, it could be easy to assume that teacher candidates feel prepared to teach in urban schools. Much of the focus in methods courses and lesson planning is on teaching to all students. Given the means on questions 1 and 5, there appears to be a division between what professors are teaching and how teacher candidates perceive their learning, especially in the areas of teaching more marginalized students. As the teacher candidates progress through the program, it is apparent that student teaching allows teacher candidates to gain confidence heading into their first jobs.

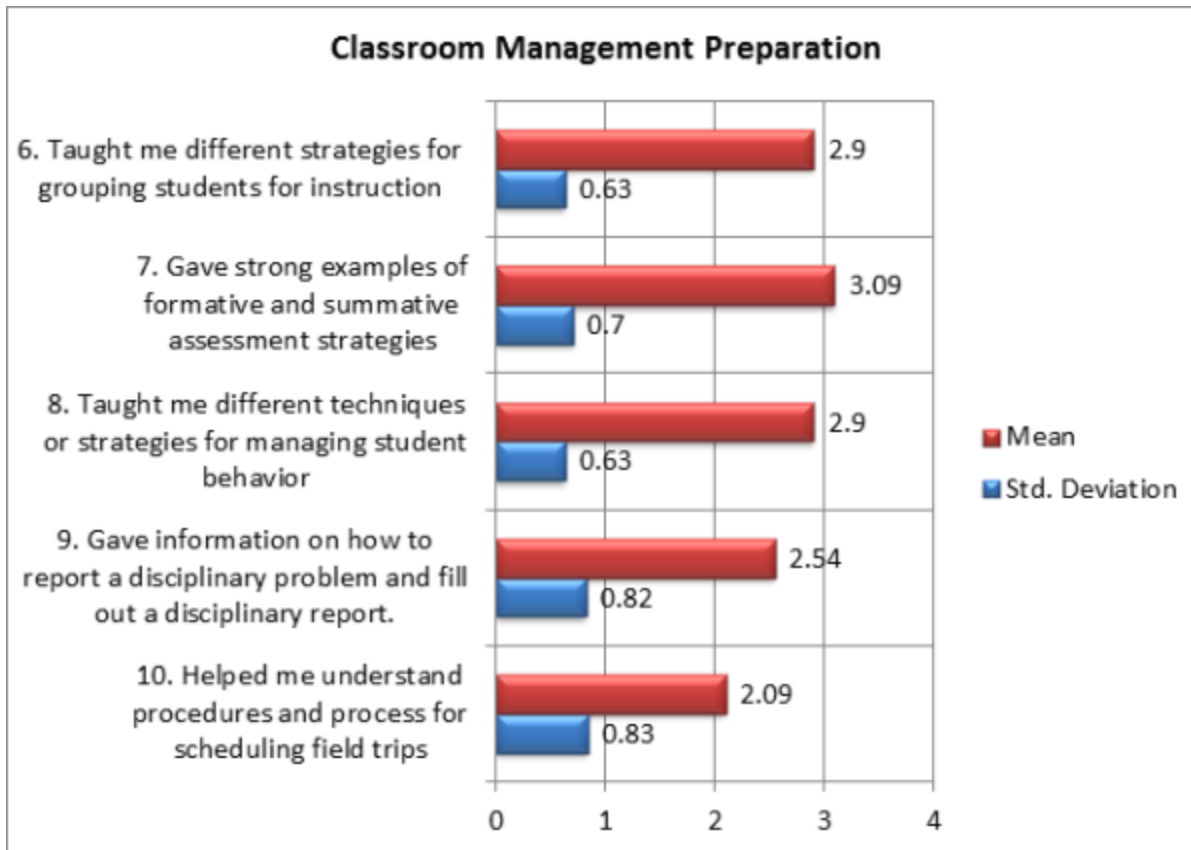


Table 2: *Classroom Management Preparation*

There is wide variance in the frequency of responses to questions 7-10 that leads toward the conclusion that differences in programs between undergraduate and graduate instructors could have influenced the data. In general, teacher candidates vary widely on their perception of readiness to manage a classroom.



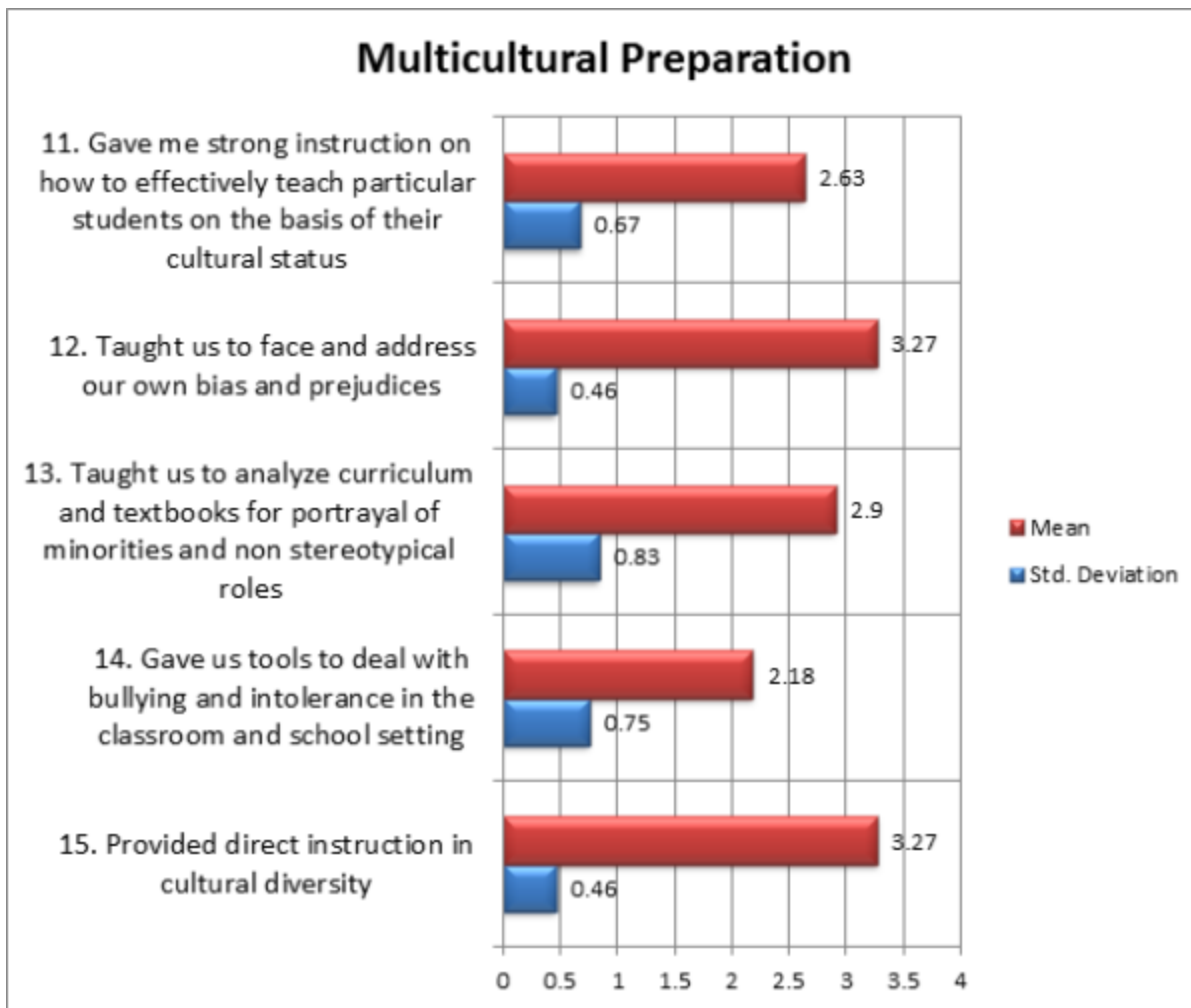


Table 3: *Multicultural Preparation*

Table 3 identifies one area of weakness in the preparation program. According to Salmavalli, Hutmnen, and Lagerspetz (1997), prevention as well as intervention strategies against bullying should focus not only on individual children, but also on the wider social context of the class. Furthermore the social context of the school could be addressed in the same fashion. The preparation of highly effective new teachers must include interventions for students, classrooms, and schools, as bullying can have such negative consequences in all settings. Throughout the survey, bullying (questions 14 and 38) is viewed as an area of concern. The safety of students in classrooms and schools is a large concern in all regions but certainly a large concern in large urban centers. Teacher candidates and new teachers both express need for more training in how to deal with bullies inside their school classrooms.

### Student Teaching

Student teaching is a time of rapid change for teacher candidates. They are balancing teaching with preparation and management, often with varying degrees of success in the beginning stages. The following data gives insight into growth areas for teacher candidates. The mean scores tend to be higher, especially in classroom management, than in the preparation part of their teacher education

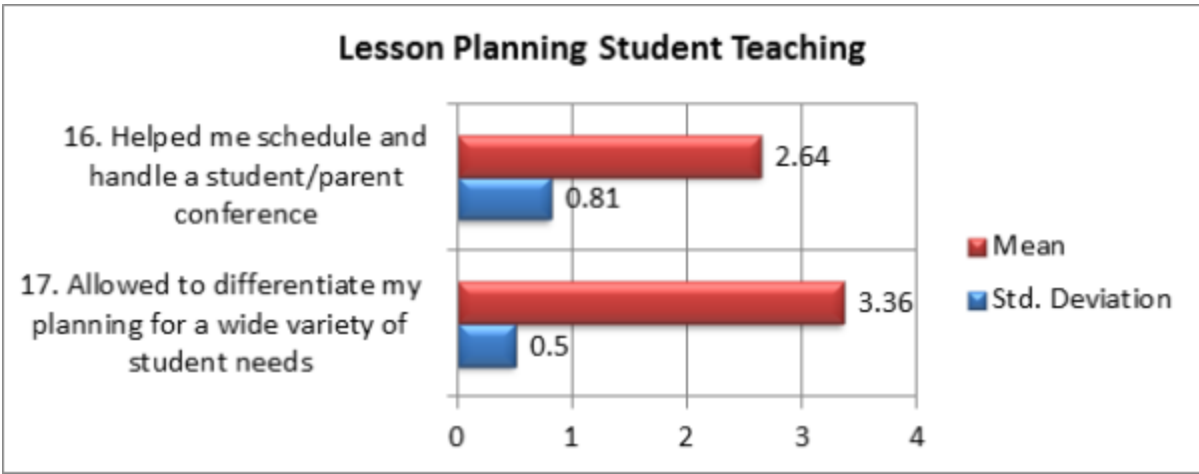


Table 4: Lesson Planning Student Teaching

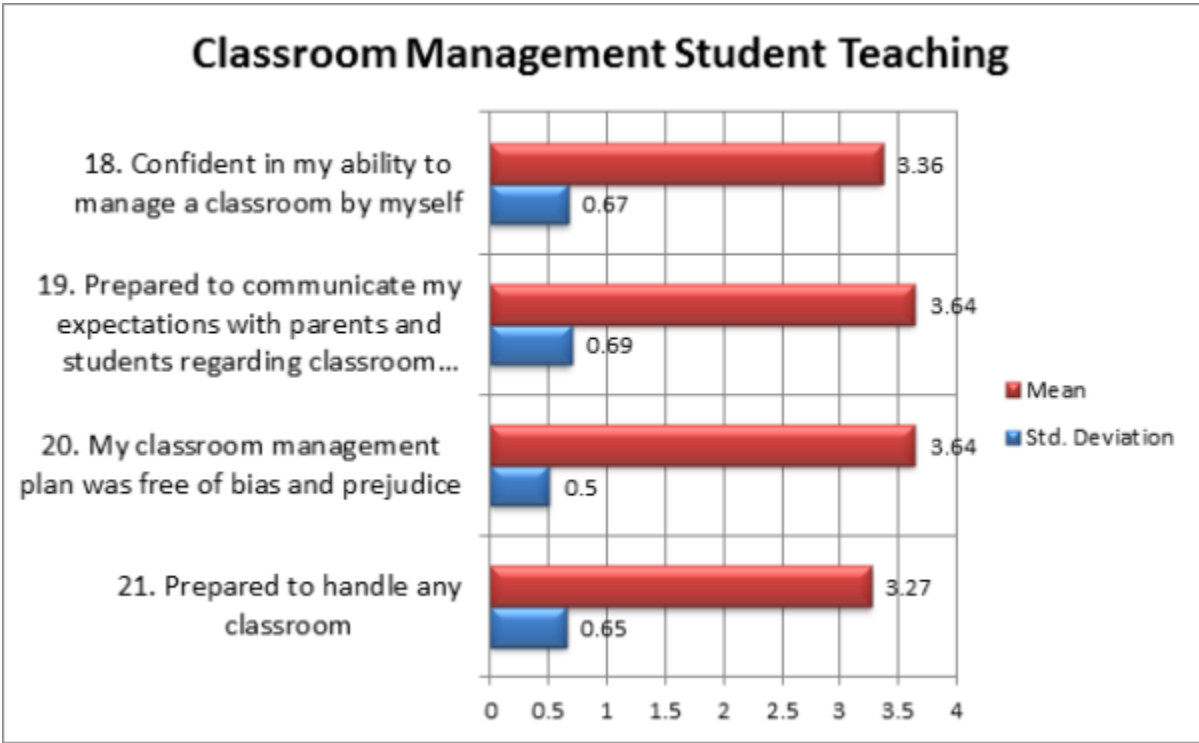


Table 5: Classroom Management in Student Teaching

Classroom management is an area that was discussed in the narrative portion of the survey and will be further discussed in this paper. The average mean for classroom management of 3.48 is significantly higher than the mean from the preparation mean of 2.73. This improvement may be attributed to different questions or the reality of being in a classroom setting rather than a hypothetical internship.

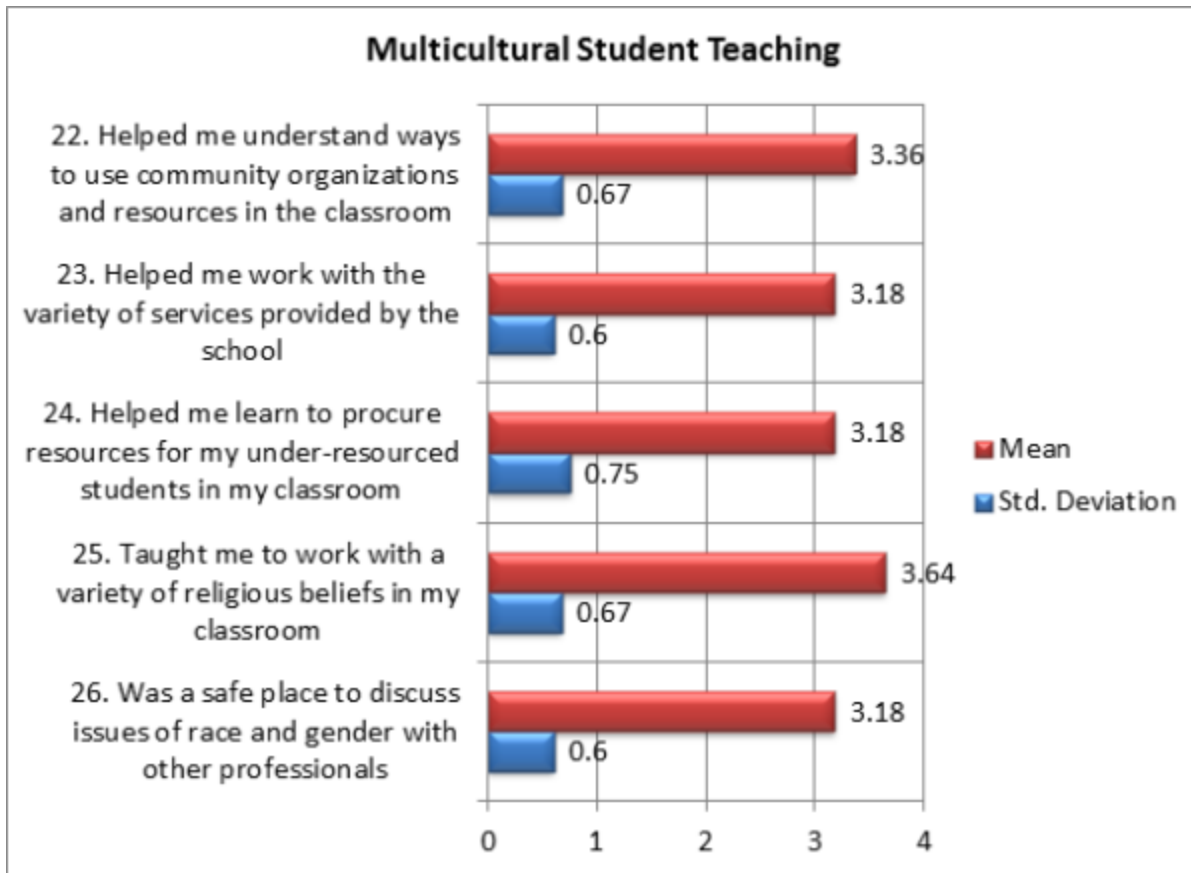


Table 6: *Multicultural Student Teaching*

There is beginning evidence to support placement as a learning tool in urban schools in the relatively high means throughout Table 6. School services and community services provide much needed support within and without the classroom setting, equipping teacher candidates with the necessary skills to bring resources into the classroom.

**Present Setting**

Growing evidence of confidence in ability to work with marginalized children is shown throughout the respondents’ present setting. From lesson planning through multicultural issues, novice teachers who have done their student teaching in urban schools are showing confidence in their ability to plan lessons, manage classrooms, and handle the various multicultural issues that surround urban schools.

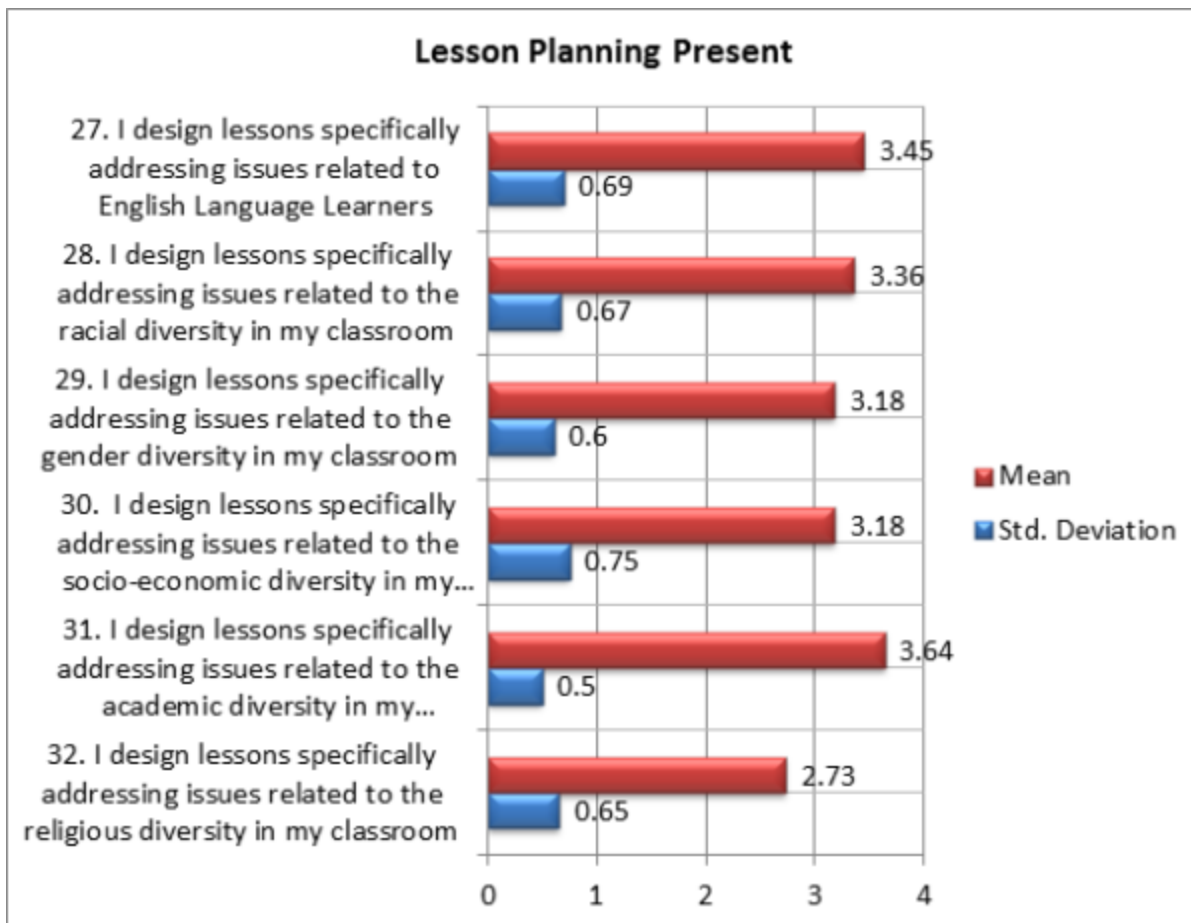


Table 7: *Present Environment Lesson Planning*

Table 7 specifically addresses the need for lesson planning in areas of English Language Learners (ELL) or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in the classroom. The demographics of many of the respondent's K-6 classes show high degrees of non-English speakers. In just one school alone, there were 40 different languages spoken in student homes. New teachers know how to plan lessons incorporating a variety of strategies related to diversity, yet the transfer into the actual classroom is more difficult. Question 28 specifically addresses ELL or ESOL students and the need to plan lessons with those students in mind.

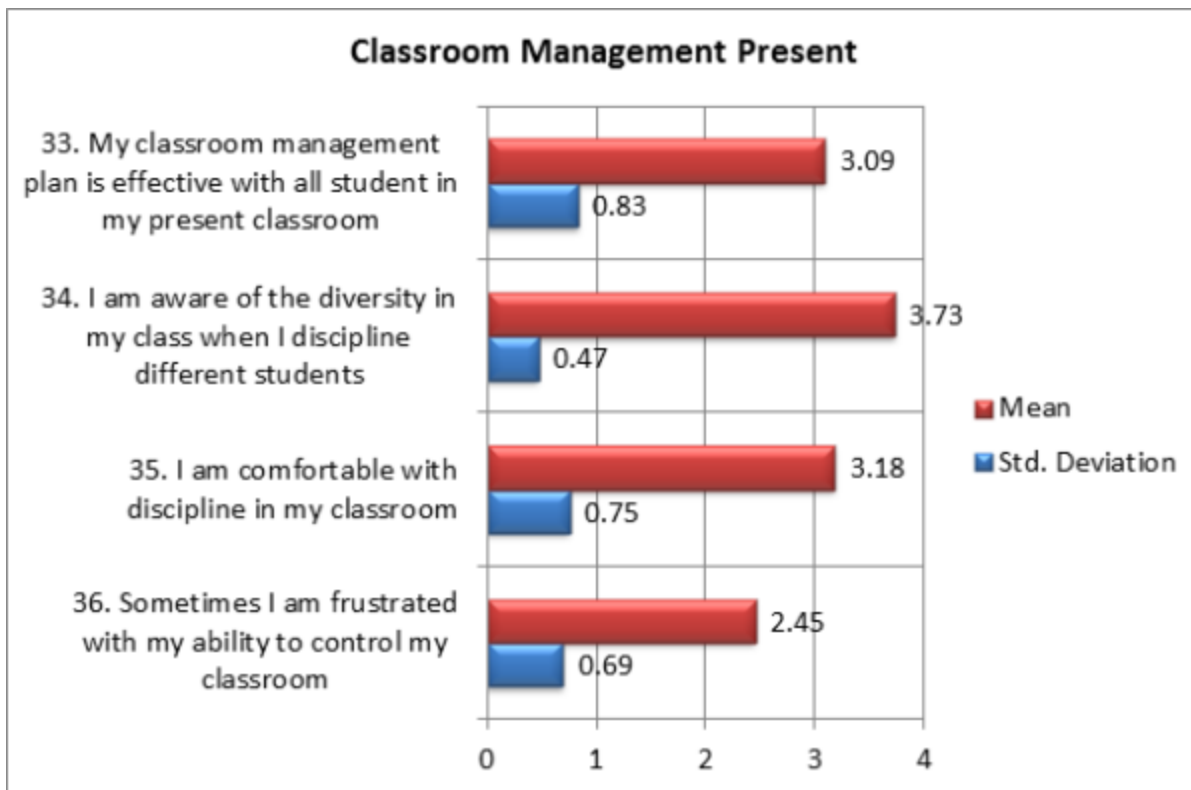


Table 8: *Present Environment: Classroom Management*

Table 8 provides some insight into the frustrations of working as a new teacher in an urban classroom. New teachers are strongly aware of the diverse needs in their classrooms and vary widely in their comfort level while disciplining students. The nature of the classroom management plan may account for the broad range in question 33; a more thorough well-implemented plan may influence effectiveness. Question 36 could be re-written to be stated in a positive tone. It would make sense that every classroom teacher would be frustrated at some time controlling even the best of classrooms.

Aside from question 39 that addresses bullying, the scores for multicultural present (Table 9) are on the high end of this survey. These novice teachers are conveying confidence in teaching all students in their urban classrooms. There is agreement across the board for questions 37, 38, and 40-42 that their schools and classrooms are safe, respectful learning environments where teachers and administrators work together to provide high standards of academic learning to all students.

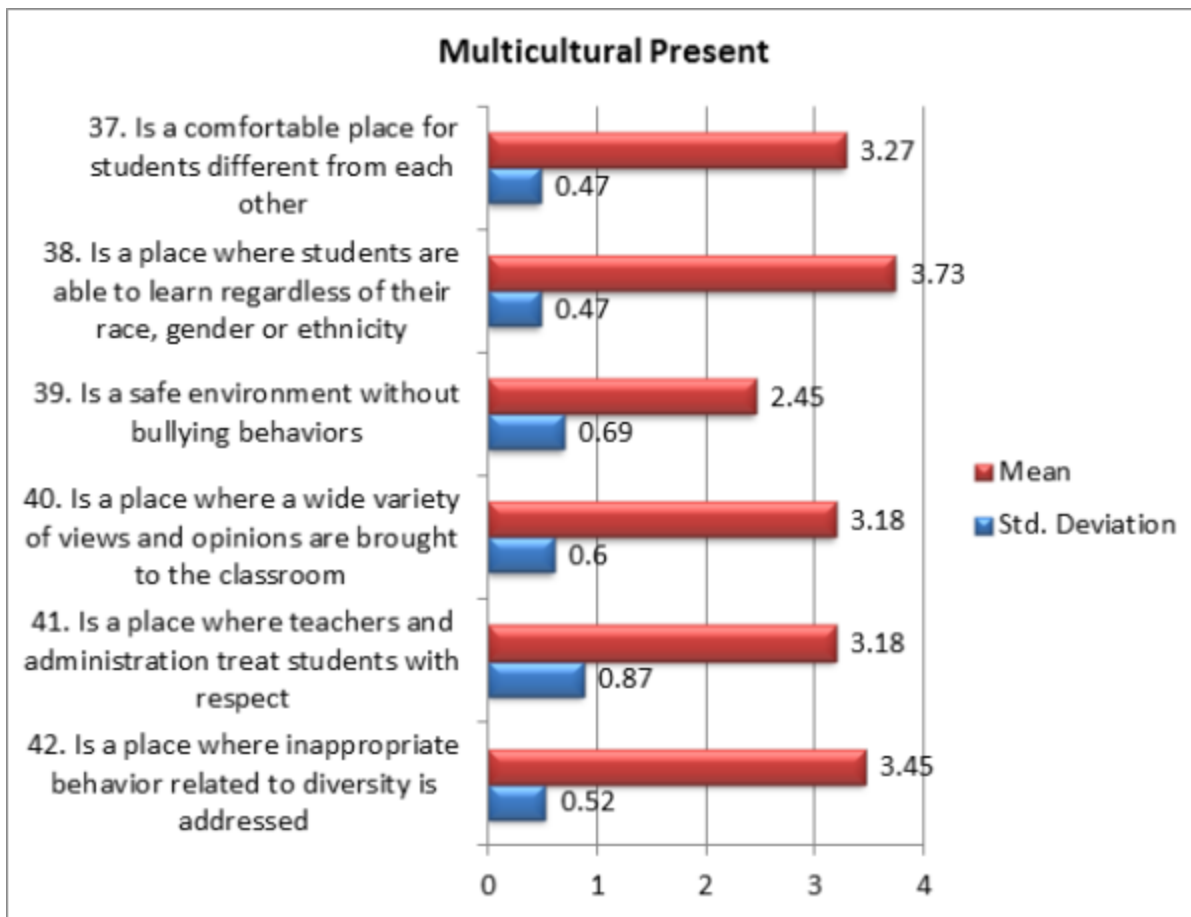


Table 9: *Present Environment: Multicultural Issues*

There is a distinct progression from student teaching to a first classroom. Although the questions varied, it is safe to draw a cautious sense of encouragement toward the placement of teacher candidates in urban settings. Although the limitations of this research do not allow broad conclusions, within the scope of a small group of teacher candidates from one university, there is evidence that teacher candidates have confidence and ability to manage classrooms with lessons that meet the needs of a broad range of students.

### Narrative

One of the limitations of this research was the difficulty of locating former teacher candidates who met the specific criteria needed for this study. There were two criteria that had to be met. Teacher candidates (1) must have done their student teaching in an urban school setting and (2) then gone on to teach in an urban setting. The placement process is flexible for teacher candidates and so they choose environment to student teach other than the urban areas. They were all white, middle-class

teacher candidates, nine female and one male. Fifty percent came from a traditional two-quarter undergraduate internship program and the other fifty percent were part of the Alternative Routes to Certification (ARC) program. Those in the ARC program were in a yearlong internship setting. Analysis of the narrative focused on two main research questions: (1) Did your student teaching experience provide you with enough skills and knowledge to transition to having your own classroom and (2) did your student teaching experience provide you with the proper tools to teach students in urban and diverse environments?

Three themes emerged from the narrative. There was a focus on the role of classroom management, the role of teacher as a minority, and the collaboration of the school and the community. The text responses were read and classified first with a theme, then read again and classified into simple categories. The top three themes are addressed in this paper.

### Classroom Management

Rachel wrote, “My student teaching experience taught me many lessons about the importance of managing the classroom well. Teaching cannot happen without this foundation of well-established expectations and procedures.” Her experience in an urban school reinforced what she had been taught in her preparation program but the realization that no learning can take place without strong classroom management was a surprise for her. Both the undergraduate and ARC preparation programs have a classroom management course built into the class sequence.

My experience as an educator has given me insight into the fears of novice teachers. In many casual conversations over eight years at the university, there is expressed fear about the ability to manage a classroom. Ron commented, “For the most part, I felt prepared for my own classroom. I felt fairly comfortable with classroom management, which had been my biggest concern prior to student teaching.” He is not unusual in his concern but was able to allay his concern after time in his urban classroom environment.

“I feel very prepared to transition to having my own classroom. One reason is that I am currently student teaching in a double classroom to about 60 students, so transitioning to have 30 or fewer will be a relief. I am learning excellent classroom management skills, and am learning how important flexibility is,” writes Jennifer, who, as a teacher candidate, worked with two fifth grade teachers who combined classes for most of the day. Jennifer’s experience has left her with the belief that 30 students will be a small classroom and easy to manage. She adds that the trait of flexibility is another important component of classroom management.

### **Teacher as Minority**

One teacher candidate, Annie, was describing her feelings after her class participated in a march to celebrate Martin Luther King Day. She writes, “While one march on one day will undoubtedly not put an end to my grappling with race, it gave me peace of mind that my “whiteness” is not a deal breaker. It is not a challenge that cannot be overcome.” The idea of “whiteness” is a foreign thought for most of the teacher candidates who get their certificates from this small urban university. Although the ideas of diversity have been spoken about often in their coursework, it is not until they

actually become the minority that their thinking changes. The struggle leads to a much deeper realization and empathy for their students.

“As a member of the middle class, the thought of dealing with students coming from either extreme wealth or poverty is intimidating. Though I may understand the unwritten rules or social cues associated with what I am comfortable and used to – the middle class – I am at a loss of understanding when it comes to the backgrounds my students may be coming from. This does make me worry about how I will interact with them.” – Jessie

Jessie has concerns about her ability to interact with the students in her classroom. The responses from this survey show how teacher candidates move from fear toward ability throughout their experience in the classroom. The internship provides a secure environment for their questions and concerns as well as a safe place to increase their confidence in the teacher candidates’ ability to reach all students.

Another candidate, Jane, reflects, “I’ve seen how much of the language that college-educated native speakers of English use may be unfamiliar to students from the demographic I’ve taught. I’ve found that one needs to make the material as accessible as it can be, even translations, while still keeping expectations high.” As teacher candidates become comfortable in their urban classrooms, there is the recognition that the resources needed to educate their population include ELL support and community resource support. The focus on them as a teacher begins to shift to a student centered focus.

The placement office in many universities is a place where many dreams hit reality. Teacher candidates are ready to teach, but many would not choose urban environments as their first choice. As more teacher candidates are placed outside their comfort zones, the conversations change and their reflections become more like the words of Michelle who states, “I feel like it is extremely worth it to have a very challenging student teaching experience because everything else you see after seems much easier, and you’re prepared to handle it.”

How can we define urban? Michelle states, “Approximately 85% of the student in our school receives free and reduced lunch. This equally mirrors the socio economic background of my

classroom.” When looking for schools to place teacher candidates like Michelle, the placement office checks the statistics for free and reduced lunch, the higher the better for potential partners.

### **School and Community Collaboration**

Washington State Standard L3 states, “All students are prepared to be responsible citizens for an environmentally sustainable, globally interconnected, and diverse society.” In preparing teacher candidates to meet that standard, there are opportunities within urban schools for application directly into the classroom. Ashley replies,

“Our school has tremendous resources available. Last week one student told me that she wouldn’t be able to go on our field trip because her family couldn’t afford the \$3.50 and that some nights they had to go to their Aunt’s house to eat because they didn’t have enough food. I immediately took her to register with our Community Schools office where she now receives weekly donations of food and is registered to have all field trips paid for. It is important to locate and understand what resources are available so that we can get students help right away when we find out about an issue.”

Annie goes on to say,

“Many of the students come from rough backgrounds and unsteady home life. The constant thing in their life is coming to school each day. This means little support from home so most everything is up to the teacher and little classroom support by the families is offered. It is because of these challenges and the challenge during my student teaching that makes me a more prepared teacher. I experienced classroom diversity at its fullest and now that I teach in very diverse schools I feel extremely prepared.”

The role of the mentor teacher influences the success of the teacher candidate in any environment but the challenges that come from an urban setting necessitate and even stronger bond between the teacher candidate and mentor. Jane writes, “Working in an urban school with a diverse class is challenging; teacher candidates should have a solid support system and great mentor teacher.”

In addition, the administration and school counselors provide a wealth of support for novice teachers and teacher candidates.

“My student teaching was in an urban and diverse environment: thus, it certainly equipped me with proper tools for teaching similar students. After this experience, I will be capable of handling any classroom of students that comes my way! The Wellness Coordinator and my mentor teacher have done a great job of helping me see poverty and diversity in a whole new light. These kids are just as capable as kids from an upper class community. They just need to be given the proper encouragement and opportunities.” – Michelle

This work comes at a time when national standards are in the news. President Obama’s Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) states that it would seek to strengthen provisions in current law that requires states to make sure their most effective teachers are distributed equitably among high- and low-poverty schools, such as by providing more reporting and transparency. Schools would be required to report on factors such as teacher turnover, teacher absenteeism, and the number of novice teachers working in a school (Klein, 2010). The role of the university is to provide novice teachers who are effective very early in their teaching career.

### **Future Research and Program Improvement**

There exists a need for training preservice and new teachers in two areas, based on the descriptive statistics and narrative. Preservice teachers are taught classroom management procedures and rules but there is a lack of training in the area of bullying. Often schools will implement programs, and counselors can provide resources, yet the earlier teachers are aware of strategies and effective ways to work with children who bully in the classroom, the greater the academic improvement will be. For the sake of this research project, that is as far as the analysis will go. Amanda writes, “It would be in the best interest of the university to provide teacher candidates with ELL training.” Although preservice and new teachers can get endorsed in ELL (English Language Learners) after completing a teacher education program, there is a greater need in urban classrooms for earlier training and intervention strategies. In urban schools with 40 different



languages, a preservice teacher candidate can become overwhelmed by the daily communication needs between students and their families.

Although this research has confirmed much of what may have been known, there is a great need for further research on urban placement. Future research on placement in urban schools will allow for a revision of the instrument and a larger sample size. The DCPQ Survey needs to be reworked to include similar questions across the preparation, student teaching, and present teaching categories allowing for quantitative research methods such as an ANOVA or MANOVA. Follow up interviews to fill out the narrative questions would allow the researcher opportunity to delve deeper into the needs of former teacher candidates as they move into the role of a teacher.

### Conclusion

The question “how I can teach in an urban school with this white skin that won’t go away?” motivated this researcher to ask the questions about placement of teacher candidates in urban settings. Although this may not be convenient in many places across the globe, there is need for a more focused placement process for future teachers. A focused placement intentionally puts teacher candidates in high-risk urban schools. From the descriptive data to the narrative, former university students echo that they are able to work and be successful in urban teaching environments based on their student teaching experience, even if they come from a white, middle-class background.

It would be of great worth to rework the survey and send it out to a larger population and include a personal phone interview to gain further data. Finally, there is much work for teacher educators to train the most effective teacher candidates for urban education. One of the top ten percent teacher candidates graduated and applied to Teach for America where she currently teaches in the Recover School District at a 4th grade teacher. I conclude with an excerpt from her application.

“I want to teach in the New Orleans Recovery School District because I value the work that is being done to narrow the achievement gap in schools. **I believe that my student teaching experience in an inner city environment has prepared me to thrive in an urban school setting in a**

**number of ways.** I have learned (and am still learning) the skill of cultural sensitivity paired with teaching essential concepts with a sense of urgency. I thrive in situations that present ambiguity and offer the opportunity to understand new cultures and people. **Student teaching in an urban setting has already shown me how to be adaptable while still holding on to who I am.** I have loved the energy and personality of my students. Most of all, I am constantly empowered and amazed by their resilience and am humbled by their vulnerability.” – Anna

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