

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Making preservice teachers better: Examining the impact of a practicum in a teacher preparation program

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Overwhelmingly, preservice teachers indicate a benefit of having a practicum in their teacher preparation program. Yet, with a shortage of highly effective special education teachers, there is limited research about the effectiveness of practicum experiences on preservice special education teacher's preparation. The purpose of this study was to examine preservice special education teacher's perception of acquiring a practicum experience in their master's program and determine if there was a gain in clinical expertise. Preservice teachers were evaluated using the clinical evaluation continuum (CEC) at the beginning and end of their practicum; reflections were gathered regarding their perception of the added experience. Results show gains in clinical expertise, knowledge, and approval for the practicum. Limitations and implications are discussed.

**Key words:** Special education practicum; practicum; clinical experience; teacher preparation; special education.

## INTRODUCTION

According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) teachers learn to teach by teaching. Following this philosophy, teacher preparation programs embed field experiences, practicum, and student teaching within their programs. These experiences have been credited for being an important bridge between theory and practice (Giebelhaus and Bowman, 2002); allowing teacher candidates the opportunity to develop and apply knowledge and to experiment with best-practice strategies (Noonis and Jernice, 2011); using the theoretical underpinnings learned in academic courses to become authentic experiences

(Whitney et al., 2002); and to develop a more genuine perception of pedagogy (Maslak and McLaughlin, 2003). Tarman (2012) found that field experiences gave perspective teachers the opportunity to reflect on their understanding of teaching as a profession and modify their self-perceptions about teaching careers. These experiences have also been associated with helping teachers remain in the field, develop skills and competencies in classroom management, and progress in the teaching profession (Heppner, 1994; Smith and Lev-Ari, 2005). Posner (2009) stated that student teaching is

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often the first real opportunity for students to think as teachers and inquire actively rather than passively. As Goodlad (1999) stated “a person planning to teach should be experienced in the classroom prior to assuming independent responsibility for one” (p. 263).

Teacher candidates also report the benefits of the practicum experience; preservice and in-service teachers expressed the benefits of field experiences in aiding professional growth and the valuable teacher training experience (Guyton and McIntyre, 1990). In one such study conducted in Singapore by Noonis and Jernice (2011) teacher candidates reported that their practicum experience provided them with the hands-on experience needed to develop an understanding of students’ needs within the classroom and other school related matters. Of those interviewed 91% reported that practicum experience helped them develop an improved comprehension of pupils’ social needs. Those who participated in the special education practicum experience reported that an essential link between the conceptual framework of theoretical underpinnings and ‘real world’ classroom practice was created through authentic situations and hands on experiences (91%, 88%, & 91% respectively).

Also noteworthy was their ability to try out new and different teaching strategies and to reflect on their lesson delivery. Similar findings were quantified by Bishop et al. (2010) who found that the most valuable experience was the opportunity for “applied practice” with six out of seven participants explicitly mentioning this specific to their practicum program (p. 85). Another study that examined data dating back to 1998 regarding teachers self-perception of their preparation for teaching consistently indicated that general educator graduates from traditional programs that provided extensive preparation and practicum experience reported being significantly better prepared to teach subject matter, develop curriculum, and handle classroom management than those graduates from non-traditional teacher education programs with alternative or no preparation of ‘real world’ application (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002).

Although the practicum experiences of general educators have been studied more extensively than with special educators, improvements with both groups of educators have been noted. In one such study, Leko and Brownell (2011) examined a reading methods course with a practicum component to determine the impact of the field experience on student learning. The study found that when preservice teachers had opportunities to apply instruction in a classroom environment, their quality of reading instruction improved. Conversely, without the benefit of ‘real world’ application, teacher candidates struggled to apply the concepts learned in coursework. Method courses in reading and math that were combined with field experiences, integrated theoretical content

delivery methodology with hands-on application, creating instructional delivery that improved academic achievement of students with disabilities (Leko, 2008). The finding from two separate studies demonstrated that coursework that included structured field experience provided preservice teachers opportunities to improve reading-based content knowledge, which improved their ability to promote student reading achievement (Spear-Swerling, 2009; Spear-Swerling and Brucker, 2004).

Similar conclusions were discovered by McDonnough and Matkins (2010) who examined the documented reflections of preservice elementary teachers’ field experiences. The study revealed that preservice teachers had a better image of their duties as a science teacher through having this early practicum, elucidating the positive influence of practicum on teacher self-efficacy. Despite the efforts of teacher preparation programs to embed field experiences as a requirement for a teaching certificate, this practice has been criticized for not sufficiently preparing preservice teachers to cope with full time teaching. In one of such study, the teacher candidate reported that the practicum “did not adequately prepare them for the complexities and demands of full-time teaching, despite their consistently held beliefs that [it] was a key part of their preparation for teaching” (Grudnoff, 2011, p. 233). Feiman-Nemser (2001) stated that there is a disconnection between teacher preparation and professional practice, where preservice and in-service training is offered in “discrete and disconnected events” (p. 1049).

Without a cohesive preparation program to connect course content and practicum experiences, candidates fail to see the ‘full picture’ of the teaching profession. However, Grudnoff (2011) who qualitatively examined 12 first year primary teachers’ perceptions of how their practicum experiences prepared them to start teaching offers an alternative perspective. While most reported a mismatch at the beginning of their first year of teaching that resulted in a disruptive effect on their transition into teaching, this did not last throughout the year. These teachers had completed student teaching during the spring and therefore did not understand what teaching was like at the beginning of the year. Now, as new teachers, they were responsible for setting up everything in their rooms, establishing routines, developing behavior management strategies, and introducing curriculum.

Additionally, these teachers stated that while in practicum, they mainly focused on lesson planning and reflecting on lessons taught, but as a teacher they realized how much more they had to do. Although faulty, teacher preparation programs do have their merits in relation to teacher preparedness and retention (Boe et al., 2008; Feng (2009); Nougaret et al., 2005; Sindelar, et al, 2004). Using a large dataset, Feng (2009) determined

that greater academic achievement gains were made by students whose teachers completed preservice preparation programs; providing preliminary data demonstrating a link between student achievement and traditional teacher programs. Analogous conclusions were made by Bishop et al. (2010) in their exploration of personal attributes, preparation, and school environment among beginning special education teachers who vary in their classroom reading practice. Three of the least accomplished teachers had no previous experience teaching reading or students with a disability due to an unrelated internship from their current placement or no internship at all.

A review of school staff surveys and beginning teacher self-reports conducted by Boe et al. (2007) found that a combination of pedagogical foundations instruction and practicum experience helped to better prepare and secure beginning teachers in their professional teaching assignments than their professional peers who had minimal to no field experience. In a similar study conducted with two groups of teachers, 20 who earned a traditional license and 20 who held an emergency provisional license, Nougaret et al. (2005) found that the traditionally licensed teachers were rated statistically higher by an experienced supervisor across three ratings: planning and preparation, classroom environment, and instruction. However, according to their self-assessments, all of the teachers rated themselves similarly in teaching proficiency, which may possibly indicate a lack of self-awareness in weaker professional areas. Previous studies involving self-evaluations reveal that regardless of licensure track (traditional or nontraditional), teachers rate themselves equally in professional competency (Balfour, 2001; Houston, Marshall and McDavid, 1993; Martin, and Shoho, 1999; Nougaret, Scruggs and Mastropieri, 2005).

Sindelar and colleagues (2004) examined the practices of beginning special education teachers who participated in three preparation routes, finding that teachers graduates from campus-based, alternative programs, and a district-university collaborative program felt better prepared and more competent than district-only alternative program graduates. The authors concluded that novice special educators, who completed traditional preparation programs, outperformed those who completed alternative programs. In support of these findings, through qualitative interviews and observation, Leko (2008) found strong positive influencing factors for instruction quality flourished as special education teacher candidates had multiple opportunities to apply their theoretical knowledge of reading content and instructional delivery to students with disabilities, showing that variations in preparation experiences and individual qualities of beginning special education teachers blend to inform

teachers' practices.

In addition to evaluations that determine levels of professional mastery, data has also been gathered regarding the attitudes and beliefs of teaching proficiency by the candidates. Conderman et al. (2005) concluded through response analyses that preservice teachers liked having a year-long internship program because it made them feel confident and prepared for their own classrooms. They also expressed the benefits of the hands-on experience under guidance. Leko and colleague (2011) found that field experiences, which were designed to implement strategies acquired during coursework, had the most promise for increasing preservice teachers' sense of efficacy, perceptions of competence, and lesson planning abilities. For example, teachers candidates who implemented evidence-based strategies when creating lesson plans and delivering instruction during a four-hour practicum that lasted for eight weeks, "made a noticeable impact in over 60% of sampled lessons" with high levels of accuracy and fidelity (Maheady, Jabot, Rey, and Michielli-Pendl, 2007, p. 24).

In another study with similar findings, Gettinger et al. (2008) used a workshop approach that included weekly three-hour training sessions, field experiences, and coaching sessions for instruction on how to conduct and implement functional behavior assessments and positive behavioral supports. Those who participated using the collaborative consultation model of behavior intervention showed the significant professional gains for themselves and the targeted student population, surpassing the results from the control group participants.

The current literature base on teacher candidate preparation is "scattered in focus and uneven in quality, thus making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about how high-quality special education teacher training should be conceptualized and implemented" (Leko, 2008 p.126). Conderman et al. (2005) consider practicum experiences the most meaningful component of a teacher preparation program; however, there is little empirical evidence to support its paramount significance in the special education field. In their extensive literature review regarding teacher preparation programs and professional skillset et al. (2005) concluded that it is difficult to deduct from the research what impact a specific field experience may have on the preservice teacher. To ensure that preservice teachers have opportunities to apply their knowledge, access to high-quality field experiences is essential; research aimed at developing effective strategies for improving the quality of field experiences is imperative (Leko, 2008).

In this age of educational accountability where no child left behind (NCLB) requires that all teachers should be highly qualified and with the new rigors of the common core state standards, it is critical that we understand the

**Table 1.** CEC standards

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Example of Essential Clinical Skill</b>
Standard 1: Creating and maintaining a positive and safe learning environment	Establishes, monitors, and enforces expectations for student behavior.
Standard 2: Planning for instruction	Demonstrates knowledge of subject matter content and student development.
Standard 3: Engaging and supporting students in learning	Uses a variety of research-based educational practices that are responsive to students' diverse needs and experiences.
Standard 4: Assessing student learning	Creates and explains criteria for assessing student work.
Standard 5: Developing as a professional	Exhibits a commitment to professional standards associated with their areas of expertise.

Adapted from the Santa Cruz new teacher project continuum of the new teacher center, 2005

results of our efforts in preparing teacher candidates during their initial licensure programs (Carlson et al., 2004). Therefore, this study will explore the impact of embedding a practicum experience for preservice special education teachers in their master's program. More specifically, the aim is to determine if there was a gain in clinical expertise for preservice special education teachers' enrolled in the practicum, and to examine their perception of this experience in their master's program.

## METHODOLOGY

This descriptive survey study collected data to determine the impact of adding a practicum for preservice special education teachers, and to examine their perception on adding a practicum experience in their master's program. Descriptive survey studies are used to describe a one-time interaction with groups of people at one point in time, and are often described as the best method for collecting research data prior to performing an experimental study (Jackson, 2009). This study took place at a large university in the southeast region of the United States, in a master's level methods course for candidates studying to be special educators. The course was transformed from a 16-week face-to-face traditional instruction, to an eight-week, face-to-face instruction and an eight-week practicum experience. The study evaluated special education preservice teachers who were enrolled in a sixteen-week special education teacher methodology course that required eight-weeks of face-to-face instruction and a newly added 8 week practicum. The total participants in this study included: (N=10; all were between the ages of 24 and 45; 10% were African American, 80% were Caucasian, 10% were Hispanic; 90% were female and 10% were male).

## Instrumentation

For the purpose of this study, the clinical evaluation continuum (CEC) (Adapted from the Santa Cruz new teacher project continuum of the new teacher center, 2005) which included five standards, each with a series of essential clinical skills for special education teachers, was used to assess the teacher candidates' gain in

clinical expertise. The original Santa Cruz continuum contained six standards that focused on advancing the professional practice of beginning teachers. The CEC was adapted to focus beginning teacher practice and growth over time on the following five clinical expertise standards: (Standard 1) creating and maintaining a positive and safe learning environment (7 essential skills); (Standard 2) planning for instruction (7 essential skills); (Standard 3) engaging and supporting students in learning (7 essential skills); (Standard 4) assessing student learning (6 essential skills); and (Standard 5) developing as a professional (19 essential skills). Table 1 shows the five core standards and examples of essential clinical skills that guide activities for the practicum. The preservice teacher was assessed across each standard from unacceptable to target; each level presuming that the teacher has reached the previous level. During the practicum portion of the course, candidates were not expected to achieve target levels; rather, demonstration of progress across the standards was expected.

The CEC scoring rubric evaluates preservice teachers on a scale of 0 (unacceptable) to six (target). Scores of 1 to 2 may be given for candidates at the beginning level, 3 to 4 for those at the acceptable level, and 5 to 6 for those at the target level. For each level, except unacceptable (where the rating is 0), there is a high end (2, 4, 6) and a low end (1, 3, 5). A rating of "no opportunity to observe" is permissible for skills that instructors and cooperating teachers are not able to observe during the evaluation period. Each of the five standards also contains a narrative section. To understand the preservice teachers' perceptions of the practicum to the master's program, they were asked to reflect on three open-ended questions: "What were the impacts of embedding the practicum into this master's program?"; "What would you like to see more or less of during this practicum experience?"; and "What are further recommendations for improving the practicum?"

Cooperating teachers and preservice teachers were all trained to use the CEC on the first day of the eight-week face-to-face section of the course. During the training, the instructor, who is also one of the authors, engaged in a group discussion, deliberating on potential problems that may occur during practicum placements. For example, cooperating teachers are encouraged to provide preservice teachers the opportunity to perform each standard and essential skill in the CEC rubric; however, the design of the instrument allows for a rating of "no opportunity to observe," indicating that preservice teachers may be unable to perform standards and skills. The cooperating Teachers and preservice teachers were encouraged to bring potential issues that occur during the practicum placement to the Instructor for any clarification.

**Table 2.** Practicum candidate's pretest-posttest rating (N=10)

CEC Standard	Pretest		Posttest	
	(M)	(SD)	(M)	(SD)
Standard 1: Creating and maintaining a positive and safe learning environment	2.20	(.92)	3.30	(.48)
Standard 2: Planning for instruction	1.70	(.48)	3.30	(.48)
Standard 3: Engaging and supporting students in learning	1.90	(.32)	3.20	(.42)
Standard 4: Assessing student learning	1.90	(.57)	2.70	(.67)
Standard 5: Developing as a professional	2.00	(.47)	3.20	(1.03)

### Procedures

The methods course began the week of 21 January, 2013 and ended 3 May, 2013, with the first eight-weeks providing intensive face-to-face instruction on teaching strategies and the implementation of assignments targeting elementary and secondary students with a high incidence disability. The course assignments addressed assessing and monitoring student performance; adapting instructional interventions based on students' response to intervention; and selecting evidence-based, best-teaching practices that have the greatest likelihood of success. Following the eight-week face-to-face instruction, candidates advanced to the practicum experience. During the eight-week practicum, preservice teachers would receive mentoring from the instructor and cooperating teacher. Candidates were paired with the cooperating teacher for the eight-week practicum, where they worked side-by-side, based on common interests including the elementary or secondary setting. Cooperating teacher's role was to provide the preservice teachers with immediate feedback, supervision, and mentoring support during the practicum.

### Major assignment

During the eight-week face-to-face instruction period, the preservice teachers developed a unit plan, guided by the course instructor that consisted of 10 evidence-based lesson plans and assessment material that support students with a high incident disability during classroom instruction. The lesson plans included assessment material to inform student achievement and reflection on instruction. Throughout the practicum, the preservice teachers implemented their unit plan under the supervision of the course instructor and cooperating teacher, who both provided formative and summative feedback.

### Administration of the survey instrument/data analysis

During the eight-week face-to-face section of the course, preservice teachers completed a self-evaluation using the clinical evaluation continuum (CEC) survey, which took approximately 30 minutes to complete. The self-evaluation was then repeated after completing the 8-week practicum. The course instructor also rated each candidate using the CEC at the end of their experience based on two practicum observations. Additionally, after 40-hours of support, guidance and mentoring, the cooperating teacher provided a CEC rating. Statistical analyses were performed on the pre/posttest survey and then compared. Descriptive statistics (that is, mean, standard deviation) were reported in Table 2 seen below. The quantitative results were calculated and reported alongside the

respondents' qualitative narrative. The comments on the three open-ended questions were examined using recognized qualitative analysis techniques whereby data were broken down for distinct trends and patterns and reorganized into theme (Creswell, 2003). While the quantitative data produced some useful feedback about the impact of the practicum, the qualitative data also generated some useful information.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The overall findings from the study indicate that the preservice teachers made gains to their CEC clinical skills during the practicum experience. Preservice teachers showed significant gains with each standard. The highest-rated scores were: "creating and maintaining a positive and safe learning environment" and "planning for instruction" in which the average score was 3.30 (.48). Table 2 displays the means of the pre-posttest of students clinical skills related to each of the CEC standards. Table 3 depicts the means scores provided by both the instructor and cooperating teacher who rated preservice teachers on the CEC scale. Overall, the instructor and cooperating teachers' scores indicated that the preservice teachers made gains. The instructor rated "planning for instruction" with an average score of 3.60 (.52), "developing as a professional" with an average score of 3.30 (1.06), as the highest skills; while "engaging and supporting students in learning" with an average score of 3.20 (.52), and the other standards were aligned with student ratings. For the cooperating teacher, "developing as a professional" with an average score of 3.60 (1.07), and "planning for instruction" with an average score of 3.40 (.52) were highly rated; as well the other standards were aligned with the ratings of the preservice teachers. Despite showing gains, practicum teachers 2.70 (.67), instructor 2.60 (.52), and cooperating teacher 2.70 (.48) rated "assessing student learning" below that of the other standards.

## DISCUSSION

As previously indicated, the significance of teacher

**Table 3.** Post clinical practicum rating (N=10)

CEC Standard	Instructor		Cooperating Teacher	
	(M)	(SD)	(M)	(SD)
Standard 1: Creating and maintaining a positive and safe learning environment	3.10	(.32)	3.20	(.42)
Standard 2: Planning for instruction	3.60	(.52)	3.40	(.52)
Standard 3: Engaging and supporting students in learning	3.20	(.42)	3.10	(.32)
Standard 4: Assessing student learning	2.60	(.52)	2.70	(.48)
Standard 5: Developing as a professional	3.30	(1.06)	3.60	(1.07)

preparation programs embedding field experiences—particularly practicums—are essential to developing professional teaching skills and competencies (Heppner, 1994; Macy et al., 2009; Noonis and Jernice, 2011; Smith and Lev-Ari, 2005). The struggle to link theory and classroom practice without the benefit of a practicum experience has also been documented (Leko and Brownell, 2011). To that point, practicum experiences offer preservice teachers the ability to develop and actively engage in critical skills, which may positively impact their teaching quality and performance with students in the classroom.

While the relationship between practicum and training in an authentic setting, to develop and apply new or different strategies that improve preservice teachers retention is acknowledge within the general environment (Cameron et al., 2007; Smith and Lev-Ari, 2005), there is limited research on this practice specifically in the special education field (Conderman et al., 2005). The current study sought to determine whether a practicum experience for preservice special education teachers would be effective and to examine the preservice teachers' perception on this addition to their program. This study was conducted with 10 preservice teachers enrolled in a master of special education program aimed at teaching students with a high incidence disability. The participants were asked to evaluate (pretest) their knowledge and skills on 5 standards (46 essential skills), and again (posttest) at the conclusion of the practicum.

Overall, the findings revealed that candidates made gains across the clinical standards. The most significant gains were made in "creating and maintaining a positive and safe learning environment," and "planning for instruction." This is not unexpected, as issues related to the safety were comprehensively reviewed in the eight-week of intensive in-class classroom time to prepare students for the practicum. Additionally, preservice teachers spent a considerable portion of their practicum experience working with the instructor and cooperating teacher in planning for the unit activity. Although the clinical standards, "engaging and supporting students in learning," "assessing student learning," and "developing

as a professional" made gains, it is suggested that consideration be made on increasing the potential for candidates to have more instruction and opportunities for practice with these standards as the gains were not as significant.

Despite the gains marked by the pretest and posttest results for many of the CEC standards, ratings for Standard 4, "assessing student learning" that included self-assessment posttest ratings, 2.70 (.67), instructor 2.60 (.52), and cooperating teacher 2.70 (.48), suggest that preservice teachers remained at the beginning level according to the scale. Freiberg (2002) discussed the struggles faced by new teachers with student assessment and self-assessment; organization time management and lesson planning; and differentiated instructional practices. In order to improve teacher preparedness for beginning educators, he recommends more focus on instruction on multiple methods of assessing student progress. In their research pertaining to novice teachers' attention to student-centered instruction, Levin et al. (2009) explained that "teacher preparation, however, remains largely teacher centered," and that "method courses focus on the things teachers do, from instructional methods to management strategies and programs emphasize self-reflecting and identify information" (p.144). The researchers argued that there must be more attention placed on novice teacher assessment preparation. Therefore, as it relates to this present study, we also suggest that teacher preparation programs pay close attention to preservice training relating to assessing student learning formatively and summatively. Because we did not ask preservice teachers their perception on their preparation for each standard; we do not know with confidence their struggle with assessing student learning.

### Candidates' perception of the practicum

As a mean to gain more insight into their perception of adding the practicum, candidates were asked to reflect on three questions following the completion of the survey, as stated in the instrumentation section. At large,

preservice teachers' appreciated the opportunity to have a practicum experience that provided access to authentic classroom experience with students. There were three themes which emerged from the response. Preservice teachers' responses indicated a desire for more practicum experiences to be embedded into the master's program. For example, one response suggested that working hands-on with cooperating teachers and students should be a requirement for each major assignment in their program.

This finding is validated by research indicating preservice teachers' perception of the benefit and value of practicums (Guyton and McIntyre, 1990; Noonis and Jernice, 2011). In one of such study, authors Noonis and Jernice (2011) recommended continuous practicum experiences to help reduce stress related to transitioning into the teaching profession and to better understand students' social and academic needs. It is suggested for this study and for other special education teacher preparation programs that practicums be built and sustained across the program.

Preservice teachers also identified that having cooperating teachers correct instructional challenges and available for assignment and classroom management feedback was crucial to their success. For example, one preservice teacher indicated that the cooperating teacher helped her to understand school culture and other teaching experiences that can only be gained from field experience. Additionally, the supervising or mentor teacher's compatibility is critically important to the success of the preservice teacher. Boz and Boz (2006) indicated the importance of the student teacher and cooperating teacher relationship; indicating that student teacher's outcomes were affected by the relationship they held with their cooperating teacher regarding the teaching experience. Other studies support the positive practicum learning experience influenced by a compatible relationship between preservice teachers and their mentors and supervisors (Boz and Boz, 2006; Caires and Almeida, 2007; Conderman et al, 2005). Therefore, another area for future study may consider the pairing of the instructor, mentor teacher, and student or practicum teacher to create the most suitable relationships. Few teacher preparation programs assess the quality of the university supervisor's supervision (Conderman et al., 2001).

For final emergent pattern, preservice teachers' noted a frustration in having to purchase their own resources and supplies, and having to reconsider technology-based instructional ideas due to limited university and school funding options. One study on new teacher retention revealed that novice teachers leave the field after using rations of their salary to purchase materials due to their school's limited funding scheduled for teaching supplies (McCoy, 2003). The researcher discussed the difficulties

for teachers to perform the latest teaching strategies, to include technology related advances; all due to limited resources. A point that needs to be emphasized is that experiences and evidence-based practices embedded in teacher preparation programs through practicum experiences may have limited worth when it cannot be translated into authentic classroom practice in the classroom. Therefore, teacher preparation programs must understand the needs of partnering community schools and pool resources to develop effective practicum experiences that will translate to real-world experiences for preservice teachers.

## LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

With the practicum's success, we are dedicated to supporting its adoption into the master's program. Expansion of the practicum into multiple courses across the program will be reviewed once improvements are sought based on this study's findings. However, interpretations of these data should be viewed with restraint due to the following limitations. First, this study was restricted to a limited number of participants ( $n=10$ ). Therefore, it is recommended that future research be conducted on a larger scale. Perhaps an investigation on the clinical expertise of special education novice teachers not enrolled in a practicum course would provide further confidence on the effectiveness of the practicum. Further research is also needed to understand the relationships between teacher preparation and quality (Instruction? Programming? Practicum experience?). We know very little about how field experiences are evaluated. We also know little about how the characteristics of the school placement, supervisor, and how the classroom environment affect the experiences. Addressing these limitations may offer one step towards improving novice teacher quality and the overall impact of practicum programs.

## Conflict of Interests

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests.

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