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## A Collaborative, Cross-Disciplinary, Field-Based Project for Professionals in Training

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A stack of three books is shown on the left side of the image. The top book has a light-colored cover, the middle one has a blue cover, and the bottom one has a red cover. A red apple is placed on top of the stack, and a yellow pencil with a pink eraser is lying horizontally across the top book. The background is a solid teal color.

A Collaborative,  
Cross-Disciplinary, Field-Based  
Project for Professionals in  
Training

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# Overview

- Project Description
- Reflective writing in SoTL
- Preliminary results
- Application to your own work



# An Introduction to the Project

- Two classes
- CDFS 408
  - Undergraduate course
  - Early childhood education & Early intervention
- EDPS 611
  - Graduate course
  - School counseling

# Rationale

- Education professionals commonly work closely with professionals from a variety of disciplines.
- As students, though, they rarely do so.



# Project Description

- CDFS course included a practicum
  - ½ day/week in preschool setting
  - Students each worked with a “target child”
- Each ECE student matched with a SC student “consultant”
- Students worked together on a series of tasks
- Students individually completed reflective writing after each task



# Project Tasks

1. IEP lectures
2. School counseling lecture
3. Pre-visit conference
4. Classroom visit
5. Post-visit conference
6. Mock IEP meeting



# What is reflection?

- “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1960, p. 9).
- Deliberate exploration of a problem
- Requires application of prior knowledge and to new situations
- Conscious effort to explore an issue and see a conclusion



# Why use reflection for SoTL?

- Gives insight to student thought processes
- Captures thought in a way that we can go back to
- Lends itself to showing growth over time
- Allows the students to define and describe their responses
- Open to unexpected learning



# Example of a SC Reflection Prompt

- Reflect on your classroom visits:
  - What reactions, responses and thoughts did you have in response to your classroom observations?
  - How do you envision classroom visits being part of your future professional role?
  - What is one thing that you will take away from your classroom visits and what does it mean for your work as a counselor?



# Example of an ECE Reflection Prompt

- Answer the following questions by reflecting on your experience when your consultant visited your classroom:
  - What are your responses and reactions to the experience of the classroom visit?
  - In what circumstances would you seek consultation in your future professional life?
  - What is one thing you will take away from this experience and how does it impact your future work with children?



# Analysis

- Each investigator independently read all reflections, creating themes for each student group at each time point
- Investigators compared their themes and created a final list
- 2 graduate students independently coded all reflections





# New Understandings

- Reflection prompts asked specifically about “one thing you will take away...”

# General Conclusions

- Reflections demonstrated learning in areas we wanted to promote
- For ECE students:
  - How to consult with other professionals
  - Learning about school counselors
- For SC students:
  - Knowledge about special education
  - Knowledge about young children
  - Increased self-efficacy
  - Learning about teachers
  - Advocating for the profession



# Example Themes from Reflection #4

- ECE “New Understandings”
  - General importance/benefit of consultation  
(several sub-themes)
  - The process of classroom visits & consultation  
(several sub-themes)
  - Personal development  
(several sub-themes)
  - Good intentions/motivations of consulting professionals
  - School counselors’ usefulness with young children
- SC “New Understandings”
  - Respecting others’ domains/turf
  - Importance of observation
  - Classrooms as systems
  - Importance of classroom climate
  - Teacher behavior/actions
  - About special education





# Similarities

- Increased complexity of reflections over time
  - Based on the coding themes
- Certain insights are driven by field-based work
  - After the classroom visit, both groups of students had new understandings about classrooms as systems and the importance of classroom climate/context

“One thing I will take away from this experience is the importance of observing the target child in their natural environment and on their natural schedule. When the schedule or environment is changed, the child’s regular routines and behaviors are altered and we may not observe the necessary times and activities to make clear, informed decisions for the child individualized education plan.”  
(ECE Student B)

“One thing I will take away from my classroom visits is how much I liked the warm environment....Sometimes it may be easy to forget how much that helps with classroom learning and student willingness to cooperate.” (SC Student 6)



# Developmental Differences

- Undergraduate students tend to write reflections that are more concrete and narrow
- Graduate students' reflections tend to be more abstract and wide-ranging
- There were differences in the personal responsibility shown by the students



“Forgetting the minor detail of giving [SC student] my [target child summary] did affect the overall outcome of the process. I think this made me realize that it’s important to be prepared for all meetings with other teachers or professionals because one mistake could impact the entire process.”  
(ECE Student F)

“I felt like our conversations were not very helpful, because the students were not prepared to tell me important basic information about the students.” (SC Student 5)





# Disciplinary Differences

- Students connect their experiences in this project to previous/concurrent experiences
- SC students tend to have more experience with theory

“Completing my classroom observations at the same time as my course in systems thinking has helped me to conceptualize classrooms as systems instead of simply groups of people in the same rooms trying to obey the same rules and complete the same academic tasks.” (SC Student 5)



# Disciplinary Differences

- ECE students connect the experiences to their preferred career paths

“It is so helpful to consider the opinions and observations of other professionals when working with a child with special needs....Luckily I will always be working with more than one professional, whether it be the caregiver of the child, an occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech therapist or possibly other developmental therapist.” (ECE Student C)



# How Might This Apply to You?

- Cross-disciplinary teaching is a relatively new idea, but it is growing
- Bringing a SoTL perspective to this builds credibility, community, momentum, etc.
- What could you do?
  - Work in pairs or small groups
  - Identify the classes you teach
  - Identify opportunities for collaboration

# Tips and Tricks

- Know the goals of your course
- (Flexibly) parallel reflections
- Tie reflections to SLOs
- Have clear expectations
- Use reflections
  - Adjust project based on feedback
  - Provide context to students
  - Normalize feelings and responses
- Don't get discouraged by "negative" student reflections (e.g., I didn't know what I was supposed to do)





Questions?