

COURSE PROPOSAL FOR EDUCATION 217: PHILADELPHIA URBAN SCHOOLS SEMINAR

The Need

Since the Education Department is the Center of Excellence in Education and Urban Pedagogy, the Philadelphia Urban School Seminar speaks to the Center's urban pedagogy component. This program will help to develop and build strong urban pedagogical roots for Lincoln's pre-service teachers.

Specifically, the United States faces a critical task in the effective and equitable education of its ethnically and linguistically diverse school-aged learners (Leavell, Cowart, & Wilhelm, 1999; Zeichner, 2003). Many urban school districts—those with high rates of poverty and, all too often, large minority populations—suffer most from shortages of qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond & Green, 1990; Ingersoll, 2001; Riley, 1998; Zeichner, 2003).

One method advocated by teacher educators to reduce the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic mismatch between teachers and students is to recruit more minority group teachers (Price & Valli, 1998; Quiocho & Rios, 2000; Riley 1998). Most of the students at Lincoln University come from urban areas and return to those areas upon graduation. Thus, our pre-service teachers are trained in rural and suburban areas, but are starting their careers in urban settings. In order to do our part to ensure that our pre-service teachers are successful, the institution of an urban school experience is essential. The Philadelphia Urban School Seminar will diversify their field experiences by officially giving them opportunities in all three fundamentally different educational spaces (rural, suburban, and urban).

On the other hand, two factors are identified by many researchers as obstacles which hinder the pre-service teachers from considering and, for Lincoln's students, retaining teachers in inner-city urban schools: misconceptions and the feelings of unpreparedness (Cross, 2003; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Leavell et al., 1999; Melnick & Zeichner, 1998; Pattnaik, 1997; Sleeter, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2001; Weisman & Garza, 2002; Xu, 2000; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). In order to minimize these pre-conceived notions, pre-service teachers need to enter these schools to gain more experience. Thus, various teacher educators and teacher education programs are paying growing attention to varied cultural field experience programs (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Boyle-Baise, 1998; Grinberg & Goldfarb, 1998; Haberman, 1998; Leavell et al., 1999; Melnick & Zeichner, et al., 1998). These programs and advocates believe that carefully planned cultural field experience in a variety of cultural settings can provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to develop greater intercultural teaching competence (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cross, 2003; Melnick & Zeichner, 1998; Paccione, 2000; Sleeter 2001; Zeichner et al., 1998). The cultural field experience has taken on particular importance in recent years as teacher educators have attempted to respond to the large need for well-prepared teachers for urban schools (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cross, 2003; Nieto, 2000; Paccione, 2000; Price & Balli, 1998; Sleeter, 2001;2003; Zeichner et al., 1998). Based on 40 years of continuing study on urban teachers, Haberman (1998) believes that the best way to prepare pre-service teachers for urban schools is the authentic experience. Thus, the Philadelphia Urban School Seminar is structured to provide our pre-service teachers with the authentic experience of urban schools.

Aside from providing hands-on experience for the pre-service teachers, the Pennsylvania Department of Education has mandated that pre-service teachers conduct 80 hours of observation in order to graduate and gain certification. This course will provide an additional opportunity for students to earn the mandated hours.

(“The Need” section is adapted from Philadelphia Urban School Seminar’s Program Coordinator, Dr. Larry Vold’s, report on the program. The School District of Philadelphia is the eighth largest district in the country. Due to its size, the district is broken into 12 regional districts.)

Course/Program Description

The program is a partnership between the School District of Philadelphia and The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. The course is structured as a two-week field experience within the School District of Philadelphia for pre-service teachers at the end of their sophomore year. The students are actively working within their assigned classroom. Additionally, the students will be conducting a service-learning project within the community during the weekend. (See Appendix A for last year’s itinerary). The two-week course is held in May.

The students are housed in the La Salle University’s dormitories for the two-weeks. They will be housed with the other students from various partnership colleges and universities that participate in the program. This gives students a chance to interact with other future teachers from across the state. The following are the current partners involved in the program.

Current 21 Partners in the Philadelphia Urban School Seminar:

- Bloomsburg University
- Cabrini College
- California University
- CCAC
- Cheyney University
- East Stroudsburg University
- Edinboro University
- Indiana Univeristy
- Juniata College
- Kutztown University
- Lock Haven University
- Mansfield University
- Millersville University
- Penn State University, University Park
- Philadelphia Biblical
- Robert Morris University
- Shippensburg University
- Slippery Rock University
- The Hague University
- Rotterdam University
- West Chester University

School Experiences:

Currently, 437 pre-service teachers are placed within 58 schools across the Central, Central East, North, and Northwest regional districts within the School District of Philadelphia. The students will observe, assist the teacher, and teach mini-lessons within their assigned classrooms. In total, students will spend eight hours each day in the classroom. The evening hours consist of professional development activities and forums back at La Salle University. This time also provides an opportunity for students to analyze and discuss their experiences within the classroom. Additionally, the seminar provides opportunities for students experience cultural and historical trips throughout the city.

Community Projects:

The students will be participating in a community day project called the Morton Common Unity Day presented by Americorps, The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, City Year, and EducationWorks. The Unity Day plans to “Weed, Seed, and Feed the Need.” Students will be stationed at various schools and community centers throughout the day volunteering their services, as they are needed. (See Appendix B for last year’s Unity Day flyer).

Other Benefits to Students

Through a grant, students receive free housing at LaSalle University and six meals for the duration of the course. Moreover, the School District of Philadelphia is in great need for student teachers. From the year 2007 to 2008, the district saw a decrease in student teachers by 13% (Pavlak, 2008). If the students complete the Philadelphia Urban School Seminar and choose to come back to the district to complete their student teaching, currently that student would receive a \$1200 stipend for student teaching in the School District of Philadelphia.

Contribution to General Course Offerings

This course is intended to be an elective course for education majors. It is situated as a 200-level course. At a university level, the course will not be offered to other majors at this time.

Pre-Requisites for the Course

Prior to taking this course, students must:

- Be a sophomore or higher
- Complete application for admission to the Philadelphia Urban School Seminar
- Completed Education 201: Introduction to Education and passed with a B- or higher
- Completed Education 202: Educational Psychology with a C or higher
- Has to have a good academic standing

Course Supplementation

The course will be an elective. If students choose to take this course, they are then not required to complete at Junior Internship Program (JIP). Currently, students need to complete a JIP that requires 20 hours of observation and participation with a Lincoln University education faculty member for zero credits. The Philadelphia Urban School Seminar can replace this requirement.

Funding

Students will pay the regular six-credit fee to Lincoln University. The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education has provided a grant for the program that supports additional expenses to run the program. Specifically, the grant covers students housing costs at La Salle University and 6 meals.

University Responsibilities

1. Coordinator

Lincoln University is responsible for designating a Coordinator for the program. The Coordinator is required to attend four planning meetings throughout the school year in Harrisburg. The Coordinator will also be with the students for the two weeks in Philadelphia. This person will be responsible for transporting the students to their perspective field placements.

2. Transportation

The university is responsible for providing a mode of transportation for the students. Most partners rent a van to transport students.

3. Credits

The university needs to provide six credits for the course.

Economic Impact

This class will be an elective in the spring semester. Thus, there is no additional impact on the students for completing the course, as it is their choice.