<u>**Abstract of Presentation**</u>
Title of Session: The Utilization of Student-Surveys in Teacher Candidate Classrooms to Promote Reflective Practice

Type of Session: Multiple Paper

Reference to ATE Standards: This presentation references Standards 3, 4 and 6. Specifically, it references **Standard 3: Scholarship** in its contribution of knowledge to address the current gap in academic literature around the use of student surveys in teacher candidate classrooms. The presentation further demonstrates how results of the student surveys can potentially inform future changes in our teacher preparation program such as differentiated learning modules tailored to the needs identified by students of the program's teacher candidates. This presentation also relates to **Standard 4: Professional Development**, as it surrounds the use of student surveys in teacher candidate classrooms in order to help teacher candidates reflect upon their current practice and proactively create a personalized professional development program. The work discussed in this presentation engages teacher candidates in the constant cycle of collecting data, reflecting upon it and actively seeking out professional development to improve practice. Lastly, this presentation relates to **Standard 6: Collaboration**, as the protocols and instruments were designed collaboratively and then piloted within the school districts where teacher candidates were placed, requiring the partnership and support of administrators at these partner schools.

Relationship to Conference Theme/Strands: This presentation is related to **Conference Strand 3, Meeting Standards in Our Ever-Changing Society**. The field of education and teacher preparation is in a state of change. Because the general public and policy makers are currently demanding proof of the preparation of "effective teachers," the myriad different evaluative tools (and their consequences and/or rewards) that have come to light in recent times have changed the field and expectations for new teachers entering the work force. Because of this, colleges of education have to respond, and this institution did so by creating their own low-cost and replicable student survey in order to prepare their teacher candidates for the reality they will experience once they start their careers.

Content of Presentation:
Issue Statement
      All children have the right to expect a highly prepared teacher and colleges of education have a responsibility to ensure our graduates meet such a bar by the time they leave our programs and begin leading in the classroom. While preparing excellent teachers has always been the mission of teacher preparation programs, the way in which we define and measure teacher effectiveness has changed thanks to the more recent expectation of outcomes defined in terms of performance and the wide availability of data from multiple sources.
      Traditionally, the effectiveness of teacher candidates within a program has been measured by their coursework as they advance through the program in addition to classroom observations during their student teaching. In addition to these two typical measures, this large Southwestern state university has begun using student surveys in the classrooms of its teacher candidates to offer another important, and often unrecognized, perspective on how effectiveness is evaluated. This is not only useful to teacher candidates and program administrators; it is a timely response to the move to

incorporate student surveys into the teacher preparation evaluation model. In fact, the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation approved new standards for accreditation in fall 2013. Among these is the requirement that teacher preparation programs measure the effectiveness of pre-service teachers through multiple methods *including student surveys*. Standard 4.2 states: "the provider demonstrates, through structured and validated observation instruments and student surveys, that completers effectively apply the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions that the preparation experiences were designed to achieve," (CAEP, 2013).

In addition to responding to new accrediting standards, student surveys offer a valuable and valid perspective; that of our children. Input from children is not always considered in teacher evaluations, yet children spend more time interacting with our teacher candidates than university supervisors who typically conduct performance reviews. In fact, students are the direct recipients of instruction and have more experience with their teachers than other evaluators (Follman, 1992). These surveys give children a way to make their voices heard. Research by Ferguson (2010) studied student surveys with in-service teachers and found "student responses are reliable, valid and stable over time at the classroom level" and "are a high-potential mechanism for incorporating students' voices in massive numbers into school, district, state and national efforts to improve teaching and learning in elementary, middle and high schools." While several states and districts have begun to use student surveys as one measure of evaluating the effectiveness of in-service teachers, their use is not yet the norm with pre-service teachers. Despite the new CAEP standard, institutions are currently on their own to figure out how to fulfill this requirement in ways that are both valid and efficient.

Because of this, a large southwest state university is taking the lead in using student surveys as one component of pre-service teacher evaluation. Researchers at this public university have designed a 3rd-8th grade student survey to be administered in the classrooms of the teacher preparation program's teacher candidate classrooms while they are completing their year-long student teaching residency. The survey provides teacher candidates with information about their practice and prepares them for the way they will be evaluated as in-service teachers once they enter the field.

The results of this student-facing survey provide valuable information to program leaders regarding overall program improvement needs and individual focus areas for differentiated teacher candidate support. We see the use of student surveys with pre-service teachers as an innovative practice with great potential value to the teacher candidates and ultimately, the students they serve. Thus, researchers developed this survey, its administration protocols, and individualized reporting system in order to address this issue in a way that is 1) free to low-cost, 2) utilizing current teachers college assets, 3) sustainable in its administration and distribution protocols, 4) practical in its time and effort investment, and 5) replicable in other institutions.

Literature Review

In response to the demand for highly-effective teachers, multiple methods of teacher evaluation have gained popularity over time and have sparked much heated national, state and even local debates. When it comes to considering which method is best, many have opted for a multiple measures option, which may encompass principal, parent, peer, and student surveys in addition to direct observations and student growth measures. The benefit and main reason for the current trend to utilize student survey data is that students can easily be considered the main consumer of teacher service and without a doubt have the most contact with them (Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008). Student surveys are also gaining momentum in use due to the simple fact that a large

percentage of teachers are excluded from using other forms of evaluation (such as VAMs or growth percentages) because they teach either subjects or grades that are excluded from standardized tests from which both measures are calculated. Additionally, many other forms of evaluation do not offer the ability to bring about the kind of immediate change student surveys can stimulate. The results of student surveys can be used to offer individualized professional development plans for improving teacher practice, and if offered early enough in the year, can respond to the immediate needs of the students in the classroom.

Of the literature that exists on student surveys and their validity in predicting teacher effectiveness, the most comprehensive studies have been on student ratings of college professors. These studies suggest that student ratings are both stable and reliable measures of instructional quality of professors (Aleamoni, 1999). However, the research on the use of student surveys in the PK-12 education system is still growing. As far back as 1976 a study of K-12 students in Wyoming showed that student ratings of teachers were significant predictors of student achievement in reading while self-ratings, principal ratings, and principal evaluations were not (Wilkerson, Manatt, Rogers & Maughan, 2000). Recently, research funded by the Gates Foundation has shown 1) significant correlation between teachers' total scores from students on the survey and their value-added achievement on standardized tests and 2) reliability between different sections of a class taught by the same teacher (Balch, 2012).

Currently, only a handful of states utilize student surveys in teacher evaluation and although the majority of these are still in piloting stages (Burniske & Meibaum, 2012, p.3) they are drawing national attention (Balch, 2012). Moving to the pre-service setting, even fewer teacher preparation programs are utilizing student surveys. In fact, the survey and its protocols developed by researchers here were aided by the pioneering work of another large Southwestern University's College of Education survey administration process. While the number of institutions using student surveys may currently be low, there is clear potential in using them to 1) prepare teacher candidates for the realities of how they will be evaluated, 2) help them reflect and improve upon their own practice, and 3) help teacher preparation programs reflect and improve upon their own preparation practices.

Methods

The survey is aligned with a framework that incorporates content from four major teaching frameworks (TAP, TAL, Danielson, and Marzano). The framework is organized into 5 domains (Learning Environment, Planning & Delivery, Motivation, Student Growth & Achievement, and Professional Practices). The five domains contain 21 topics which can be broken down further into 60+ sub-topics. The survey contains 57 items measuring the breadth of the framework, and yields reports of both an overall domain score as well as scores for each topic, so teacher candidates can more precisely reflect upon specific areas of their practice. A survey protocol was created to assure reliable data-collection. It includes sections on why student surveys are a valuable source of data and specific guidelines for survey administration. Teacher candidates receive individual results reports within 2-4 weeks of survey administration.

The presentation will include example reports and explain how these are generated automatically and distributed electronically with minimum effort. Researchers will also discuss how the results are being used by teacher candidates to identify areas of refinement in their own practice and how the results will be used by the teacher preparation program to identify areas that may need further development within the program itself to better meet the needs of the future educators it is producing.

Results

Results of 3 pilot tests have refined the protocols in every section and have helped improve the look and feel of the survey for students. In the initial pilot, researchers identified the need to make the survey more "kid-friendly" and highlighted the need for a simpler way to get students to the online survey than typing a web address. It also highlighted the need for a different way to identify the student survey responses by teacher. After pilot number 2, researchers tested having mentor teachers administer the survey and learned additional support staff may be required in order to help student who struggle to read and/or need assistance in testing. Researchers also refined the survey wording slightly and learned the true importance of individualizing the survey with the teacher candidate's name. Pilot number 3 allowed researchers to test the insertion of the name into the survey and a new method of getting students to the online survey. Researchers learned from this a few more wording changes and the scheduling issues not previously taken into account for classrooms that split time between several teachers.

Participant Outcomes (Presentation Outcomes & Audience Participation):
- Learn importance of this gap in literature
- Better understand the processes of instituting student surveys
- Gain the knowledge of how to avoid our initial pitfalls
- Discover how to implement student surveys in their own institution
- Brainstorm/discuss/troubleshoot continued barriers to utilizing student surveys

This session will be discussion based and open to participant engagement throughout. Questions will be posed to engage participants in conversation during the session with a goal of refining our own current thinking and supporting new understanding among attendees of the issues surrounding the use of student surveys in a teacher preparation program.

References

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