

TEACHING HOW TO ACHIEVE AN ACHIEVEMENT CULTURE IN A K-12 TEACHER EDUCATION UNIVERSITY PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This article examines effective instructional strategies for K-12 teacher education in an online university setting with a diverse, global student population enrolled in a K-12 teacher education program. Student learning can be constructed with three distinct design features that provide a framework for an instructional vision and direction for the university. The three factors of organizational culture relevant to student achievement include (1) learning engagement strategies, (2) learning experience strategies, and (3) the learning environment. In alignment with these three organizational factors are three cultural learning factors identified as (1) sociality, (2) communication, and (3) cultural heritage. Further three cultural leadership strategies are also discussed and include (1) the Participatory Leadership model, (2) continuously improve student outcomes with partnering, and (3) innovation practices. From this shared mission, vision, and values statements can be developed.

Keywords: diversity, K-12 teacher education, diverse learners, instructional vision, organizational culture, student achievement, learning engagement strategies, instructional strategies, learning experience strategies, learning environment, cultural strategy, cultural factors, academic achievement, measurable performance, cultural learning, cultural heritage, assessment, leadership, culture, diversity, communication strategies, mission statement, vision statement, values statement, K-12, organizational communication, teaching, learning, education, higher education.

INTRODUCTION

This article examines effective instructional strategies for K-12 teacher education in an online setting at a university in the United States with a diverse, global student population. These instructional strategies highlight (1) academic success, (2) academic rigor, (3) how rigor will be accomplished for all learners, (4) key instructional strategies, and (5) performance indicators to monitor, demonstrate, and refine a culture of achievement. A shared instructional vision statement is needed to direct and define the institutional culture and agenda (Gurley, Peters, Collins, & Fifolt, 2015).

The article identifies cultural leadership strategies, such as (1) the Participatory Leadership

model, (2) continuously improving student outcomes with partnering, and (3) innovation practices, that are used to develop shared mission, vision, and values statements. These leadership strategies are categorized with an emphasis on organizational communication strategies and techniques and how each strategy contributes to a culture of achievement is explained (DeMatthews, 2015; Gonzalez-Stokas, 2015; Lee & Li, 2015; Reno, Friend, Caruthers, & Smith, 2017)).

There are three factors of organizational culture that are relevant to student achievement that can be engineered and include the following categories: (1) learning engagement strategies, (2) learning experience strategies, and (3) the learning

environment (DeMatthews, 2015; Gonzalez-Stokas, 2015; Reno et al., 2017; Wall & Miller, 2015). For each factor there is a cultural strategy that promotes learning and academic success and is adapted as a measurable performance indicator to monitor, demonstrate, and refine a culture of achievement. The three cultural learning factors aligned with the three factors of organizational culture include the following: (1) sociality for learning engagement, (2) communication for learning experience, and (3) cultural heritage for the learning environment (Darby, 2015; Reno et al., 2017; Wall & Miller, 2015).

UNIVERSITY SETTING DESCRIPTION

The institution examined enrolls students throughout the United States and many nations globally in online bachelor's and master's K–12 teacher education degree tracks. The student population is multicultural and diverse with every category and type of learner listed in the Learning Culture Assessment Instrument (Figure 1 in the Appendix). For this examination, three categories of the instrument are particularly relevant. In the sociality context, learners range from individualistic to neutral to collectivistic. In the communication context, learners range from high context to neutral to low context. Finally, in the cultural heritage context, learners fall into every category: (1) European, (2) partial European, (3) neutral, (4) partial non-European, and (5) non-European (see Figure 1. Learning Culture Assessment Instrument in Appendix).

LEARNING ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Sociality

Cultural influences on learning can be addressed through learning engagement strategies to construct an instructional vision for a university setting that incorporates a sociality factor. When educating diverse learners in higher education, various research-based instructional strategies can be incorporated into lesson planning. For example, differentiating the instruction can help reach a variety of learning styles, ability levels, socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, and special needs learners (Darby, 2015; Reno et al., 2017; Wall & Miller, 2015). From a sociality perspective, it is important to offer a variety of deliverables that students can submit, and these can include a menu of options addressing

learners with individualistic, neutral, or collectivist natures. If learners prefer working alone in an individualist manner they can choose from a variety of learning engagement deliverables such as an independent project, an essay, a presentation (via PowerPoint, Prezi, YouTube, Web Quest, or any other presentation tool of choice), a learning log, a reflective journal, or a problem-based authentic activity (Darby, 2015; Reno et al., 2017; Wall & Miller, 2015). Alternatively, if learners prefer a collectivist activity, they can participate in groups or pairs and submit similar deliverables such as demonstrations, experiments, montages, collections, hands-on labs, or problem-solving group work (Darby, 2015; Reno et al., 2017; Wall & Miller, 2015).

Learners who are neutral can work with others or independently and choose from a menu of deliverables as well (Darby, 2015). The main point is that learners will be assessed on the same curriculum topics, but they will have the option of choosing how they might prefer to engage and deliver their work. Research-based differentiated instructional strategies address a variety of challenges that educators face when working with diverse populations with many cultural backgrounds and sensibilities (DeMatthews, 2015; Gonzalez-Stokas, 2015; Reno et al., 2017; Wall & Miller, 2015). Further, research-based learning engagement strategies can assist universities in building comprehensive, analytics-based programs to address all learners. Figure 2 in the Appendix contains a useful chart that educators can use when creating and designing lesson plans and curriculum that incorporates key differentiated instructional strategies for all age groups.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE STRATEGIES

Communication

Cultural influences on learning can be addressed through learning experience strategies to construct an instructional vision for a university setting with a communication factor. In this category, the university can offer information through multiple formats and channels to accommodate various learning and communication preferences. For example, learners can access materials, information, updates, and curriculum via a multitude of technology tools such as online videos, online modules, workshops, newsletters;

alumni web sharing, email, chat rooms, messenger services, websites, and created and facilitated local, community, and global groups (Darby, 2015; Reno et al., 2017; Wall & Miller, 2015). The institution should strive for multiple channels and avenues of communication by using a variety of technology tools to serve all ability levels, learning styles, communication preferences, and special needs (DeMatthews, 2015; Gonzalez-Stokas, 2015; Reno et al., 2017; Wall & Miller, 2015). Research-based learning experience strategies and instructional technology tools can assist universities in building comprehensive analytics-based programs to address learners with high context, low context, and neutral needs (see Figure 1 in the Appendix).

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Cultural Heritage

Cultural influences on learning can be addressed through the learning environment to construct an instructional vision for a university setting with a cultural heritage factor. Strategies, assignments, and activities can include a cultural heritage component in key courses throughout the K–12 teacher education program. For example, learners can research alternative and authentic-based instructional strategies to address multicultural learners they will be teaching in their own classrooms as K–12 instructors. Teacher candidates should provide evidence of content knowledge and differentiated instructional strategies they might use when designing lesson plans for diverse, multicultural learners (Darby, 2015; Reno et al., 2017; Wall & Miller, 2015). Standards-based lesson plans should be developed with a cultural heritage component regardless of the discipline or the content that K–12 teacher candidates will be teaching in the field. Rubrics throughout the program to assess K–12 teacher candidates' deliverables should include the following components: (1) technology; (2) multicultural, diversity, or cultural heritage; (3) special needs; (4) ability levels; (5) learning styles; (6) authentic-based; and (7) problem-based (Darby, 2015; Reno et al., 2017; Wall & Miller, 2015). Research-based learning environment instructional strategies can assist universities in building comprehensive analytics-based programs to address European, partial European, neutral, partial non-European, and non-European learners.

CULTURAL LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

The cultural leadership strategies discussed in this section include (1) the Participatory Leadership model, (2) how to continuously improve student outcomes with partnering; and (3) innovation practices (DeMatthews, 2015; Gonzalez-Stokas, 2015; Lee & Li, 2015; Reno et al., 2017).

Participatory Leadership

A first objective of the institution is to foster and implement a Participatory Leadership model within the institution to motivate all stakeholders at various engagement levels. Participatory Leadership can contribute to a culture of achievement by involving stakeholders across all departments within the institution (DeMatthews, 2015; Gonzalez-Stokas, 2015; Lee & Li, 2015; Reno et al., 2017). Furthermore, fostering a collaborative environment can model leadership for the institution's students, the employers who hire its teacher candidates, and the global community. A Participatory Leadership approach can be evaluated for improved effectiveness using the Cultural Leadership Assessment Instrument (Figure 4 in the Appendix) via routine surveys to stakeholders regarding their perceptions. In addition, key performance indicators can be monitored and demonstrated using this tool on a consistent basis. Data can be collected over time and coded and themed for improved effectiveness in various categories. A Participatory Leadership model will assist in engaging and motivating stakeholders from every department within the institution to drive strategic goals (DeMatthews, 2015; Gonzalez-Stokas, 2015; Lee & Li, 2015).

Partnering

A second objective of the institution is to continually improve students' academic outcomes and the student experience. By partnering with other organizations and institutions, the university can continuously improve student outcomes and partnering can contribute to a culture of achievement (Darby, 2015; Gonzalez-Stokas, 2015; Woodland, Barry, & Roohr, 2014). This works by having the university promote the idea that growth and innovation can only occur when one ventures beyond institutional walls to learn and share with others. The overall strategy to accomplish this is to align teacher education programs with actions and policies that support the needs of

teacher candidates. In addition, the institution can align program outcomes with national and state exams and continue to develop and build strong student and employer satisfaction (Ramsey & Lorenz, 2016). Key performance indicators can be monitored and demonstrated via student satisfaction surveys with a minimum goal of a 90% student satisfaction rate. Key performance indicators can be monitored and demonstrated via employer satisfaction surveys with a minimum goal of an annual employer satisfaction rate of 85%. Data can be collected over time and coded and themed for improved effectiveness in various categories. Finally, the university can benchmark teacher education programs and progress with other organizations and institutions to monitor and evaluate its outcomes and innovative initiatives that are important to student and employer satisfaction.

Innovate

A third objective of the institution is for it to be identified as an institution that fosters innovation in teacher education and teacher leadership best practices. Innovation can contribute to a culture of achievement by cultivating and securing partnerships to improve innovation and growth (DeMatthews, 2015; Gonzalez-Stokas, 2015; Lee & Li, 2015; Reno et al., 2017). The overall strategy to accomplish this is to innovate by allocating resources to the reformation of performance and processes. In addition, the institution can leverage strong partnerships to model a leadership best practices agenda. Key performance indicators can be monitored and demonstrated by enrolling 20% of the students through partnerships (corporations, education organizations, community colleges, school districts, etc.). Data can be collected over time and coded and themed for improved effectiveness in various categories. Finally, the university can leverage existing or emerging technologies for innovative teacher program delivery by benchmarking best in-class innovations and how the institution compares with others in the marketplace (Darby, 2015; Gonzalez-Stokas, 2015; Woodland et al., 2014).

SHARED MISSION STATEMENT

The university will deliver affordable, high-quality, accessible teacher education programming constructed in evidence-based curriculum and meaningful application that prepares teacher

candidates to lead and serve in evolving, diverse communities. Teacher candidates will be trained to achieve both professional and personal goals.

SHARED VISION STATEMENT

The university will be a distinguishable innovator in teacher education leadership by creating impactful, innovative, valuable programs for its identified markets. The perceived links between quality programming and tuition expenses will be removed so that the university can affordably prepare educators to be change agents and teacher-leaders.

SHARED VALUES STATEMENT

The institution's shared values include: (1) integrity, (2) innovation, (3) social responsibility, and (4) passion. These concepts are categorized and listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Shared Institutional Values and Related Concepts

Integrity	Innovation	Social Responsibility	Passion
Authentic	Democratizing education	Embracing diversity	Networking and collaboration
Trustworthy	Uncomplicating the process	Affordable	Impacting journeys
Respectful	Responding in real-time	Accountable	Strengthening connections
Ethical	Setting the pace.	Accessible	Dedication to our students.

INSTRUCTIONAL VISION STATEMENT

The university will be a distinguishable innovator in teacher education leadership by creating impactful, innovative, and valuable programs for its identified markets. The perceived links between quality programming and tuition expenses will be removed so that the university can affordably prepare educators to be change agents and teacher-leaders.

Academic Success

The institution will create inclusive classrooms using effective, differentiated, and reflective practices. Creating effective inclusive classrooms means the following:

- Understanding federal legislation and the role of education in a democratic society (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2014).

- Aligning instruction with national and state standards (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2014).
- Using current research related to effective practices in curriculum, instruction, technology, assessment, classroom management, collaboration, and family involvement to foster the learning of all of students.
- Being an evidence-based and reflective educator who continually collects and analyzes evidence to document and enhance the effectiveness of one's professional practices.
- Thinking critically about one's own values and beliefs so one can better differentiate instruction and promote the learning of all of students.
- Being sensitive and responsive to diversity and individual differences.
- Collaborating with students, families, and educators to create the most successful educational experience for all students.
- Considering the unique strengths and challenges of all students in today's diverse, inclusive classroom.
- Using research-based, universally designed, and culturally responsive practices learning.
- Using assistive and instructional technologies that enhance learning.
- Considering issues of gender, race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, and family structure (Roberts, Rupp, & Olson, 2018; York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2015).

Academic Rigor

Educators should translate the latest theories and research into practices, technologies, and information one can use to address the challenges of implementing inclusion in today's schools (Maye, 2013). By incorporating research-based, differentiated, universally designed, and culturally responsive reflective classroom practices with technology, collaboration, and diversity, educators can be aligned with professional standards to work in diverse classrooms (Baecher, Artiglieri, Patterson, & Spatzer, 2012; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2014).

How Rigor will be Accomplished for All Learners

- For learners from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, use a range of culturally responsive, universally designed, and research-based practices to differentiate instruction.
- For learners with difficulty gaining information from text-based material and with reading challenges, use a range of culturally responsive, universally designed, and research-based practices to differentiate instruction.
- Identify the principles of differentiated instruction.
- Use a range of assistive devices and instructional technology to differentiate instruction for learners (Baecher et al., 2012; Maye, 2013; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2014).

Key Instructional Strategies

Accommodating diverse learners can include differentiated instructional strategies with the following format and process in curriculum design:

- Content (what is taught).
- Process (how it is taught).
- Product (how learners demonstrate mastery of content).
- Affect (how learners connect feelings and thinking).
- Learning environment (what instructional groupings are used and how the classroom is designed) (Baecher et al., 2012; Maye, 2013; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2014).

Materials and curriculum that are universally designed with instructional accommodations can serve as solutions to barriers faced by some students in learning new content. They include the following:

- Providing a variety of methods for student response.
- Helping students make or set their own learning goals—the ownership, authorship concept.
- Increasing the amount of specific feedback a student receives on their progress.
- Enabling a student to monitor progress toward their goals.

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- Modifying a student's requirements and assessments.
 - Allowing a student to make choices about what they will learn and how they will learn it.
 - Providing a variety of instructional materials (videos, digital text, audio, and so on).
 - Providing assistive technologies to increase access to the curriculum.
 - Providing opportunities to use multiple types of media for expression of knowledge.
 - Altering the instructional content, tasks, and pace.
 - Providing access to varied supports.
 - Providing a variety of learning arrangements (cooperative learning, independent study, and so on).
 - Enhancing the multicultural aspects of the content (Maye, 2013; Rupp, 2013).

CONCLUSION

This article examined effective instructional strategies for a K–12 teacher education program at a university with a diverse, global student body. It highlighted three factors of organizational culture relevant to student achievement that could be engineered and identified cultural leadership strategies to develop shared mission, vision, and values statements. Leadership strategies were categorized with an emphasis on organizational communication strategies and techniques. Finally, the discussion examined effective instructional strategies as part of an instructional vision statement that would make any university a distinguishable innovator in teacher education leadership.

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Appendix A

Figure 1. Learning culture assessment instrument

Sociality	Individualistic	Somewhat Individualistic	Neutral	Somewhat Collective	Collectivistic
Tally					
Uncertainty	Accepting	Somewhat Accepting	Neutral	Somewhat Avoiding	Avoiding
Tally					
Power distance	Empowered	Somewhat Empowered	Neutral	Somewhat Powerless	Powerless
Tally					
Time	Long-term oriented	Somewhat Long-term oriented	Neutral	Somewhat Short-term oriented	Short-term oriented
Tally					
Needs Fulfillment	Indulgent	Somewhat Indulgent	Neutral	Somewhat Restrained	Restrained
Tally					
Gender	Masculine	Somewhat Masculine	Neutral	Somewhat Feminine	Feminine
Tally					
Communication	High-Context	Somewhat High-Context	Neutral	Somewhat Low-Context	Low-Context
Tally					
Formality	Structured	Somewhat Structured	Neutral	Somewhat Unstructured	Unstructured
Tally					
Cultural Heritage	European	Partial European	Neutral	Partial Non-European Cultures	Non-European Cultures
Tally					
Social Order	Ritualistic	Somewhat Ritualistic	Neutral	Somewhat Routine	Routine
Tally					

Adapted from American College of Education. (n.d.). Learning Culture Assessment Instrument.

Figure 2. Differentiated instructional strategies chart

Writer's workshop	Field trips	Peer critiquing
Web Quest	Exploration	Outlines
Video clips	Experiments	Outdoor education
Use of primary sources	Exit slips	Note taking
Timelines	Editorials/letters	Newspapers
Time machines	Duplicate patterns	Music mnemonics
Tiered homework	Dramatic reading	Motivational props
Think-pair-share	Discussion	Montages
Team activities	Diaries	Modeling
Summarizing	Demonstrations	Mnemonics
Study buddies	Cut aparts	Mapping
Student choice	Curriculum songs	Manipulatives
Story frames	Cues	Make/test predictions
Simulations	Creative movement	Literature circles
Share outs	Creating metaphors	Make models
Self-assessment	Creating analogies	Listen for patterns
Scavenger hunts	Create new products	Learning organizers
Relationships/patterns	Cooperative learning	Learning logs
Role play/mime	Content integration	KWL Charts
Relationships	Conferencing	Journals
Reflections	Compare/contrast	Jigsaw
Reciprocal teaching	Color coding systems	Interviews
Reading workshop	Collections	Internet search
Read alouds	Collages	Interest groups
Rank order	Classifying	Integration of technology
Questioning	Choral readings	Inquiry
QAR/reading	Charting main ideas	Independent assignments
Puzzles	Categorizing	Illustrations
Puppetry	Cartoons	Imagery
Props	Buddy reading	Hands-on labs
Projects	Brainstorming	Guest speakers
Problem solving	Bingo games	Graphic organizers
Pretending	Ball toss review	Games
Prediction lessons	Art activities	File folder activities
Peer teaching	Application	Field trips

Adapted from Darby, R. (2015, September 21). Universal design for learning and differentiated instruction: Teaching practices for diverse learners. Perspectives on Race Relations, Equity in Education & Social Justice. Retrieved from <https://binarydualism.blogspot.com/2015/09/universal-design-for-learning-and.html>

Figure 3. Instructional vision assessment instrument

Instructional Vision Questionnaire				
Learning Engagement				
1. Did you understand the course directions?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
2. Did you understand course expectations?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
3. Did the activities in the course help you learn?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
4. Were you able to collaborate with your friends to learn course content?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
5. Were you able to collaborate with faculty to learn course content?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
6. Did the readings help you learn course content?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
Learning Experience				
7. Did your discussions with the instructor help you learn course content?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
8. Did your discussions with other students help you learn course content?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
9. Did the media (presentations, graphics, video, audio, animation) help you learn the course content.	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
10. Were you able to experiment with different ways to problem solving?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
11. Did the course allow you to use your specific interests to learn?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
12. Was there sufficient time during this course to complete the activities?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
Learning Environment				
13. Did the assignments allow you to demonstrate the learning in ways that were meaningful to you?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
14. Did you understand the evaluation criteria?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
15. Did the evaluation criteria help you learn?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
16. Did you receive sufficient feedback from the instructor?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
17. Did the feedback from the instructor help you learn?	Never	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always

Adapted from American College of Education, (n.d.). Instructional Vision Assessment Instrument: Instructional Vision Questionnaire.

Figure 4. Cultural leadership assessment instrument

In the last three months, how often have you been asked to ... ?					
Receive Information:	Provide information about organizational performance problems?	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
Respond to Information:	Provide feedback about organizational performance problems?	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
Translate into Values:	Translate individual ideas into observable values?	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
Organize Values:	Organize values into priorities and initiatives?	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always
Internalize Values:	Take ownership of and monitor the demonstration of those values in daily operations	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Always

Adapted from American College of Education, (n.d.). Cultural Leadership Assessment Instrument.