

Cooperating Teachers' Perceptions of their Preservice Teacher's Impact on Student Learning

Sarah J. Kaka

Ohio Wesleyan University

Abstract: *This phenomenological study explored the research question: In what ways do cooperating teachers perceive that their preservice teachers impact student learning? The preservice teachers' ability to impact student learning was rooted in Shulman's pedagogical content knowledge framework and was defined as the ways in which preservice teachers use their pedagogical content knowledge to help students learn, understand, and improve. In depth interviews with eight K-12 cooperating teachers were conducted, and five major themes emerged when determining how preservice teachers impact student learning: creating relationships with students; providing feedback to students; being able to engage students; having good classroom management; and having a passion for teaching.*

Key Words: preservice teacher; cooperating teacher; student learning; pedagogical content knowledge

Cooperating teachers are the backbones of any teacher preparation program, since a preservice teacher cannot student teach without the open door of a cooperating teacher. Researchers have long agreed that the cooperating teacher is one of the main keys to a valuable student teaching experience (Funk, Hoffman, Keithley, & Long, 1982; McEntyre, Baxter, & Richards, 2018; Stewart, Lambert, Ulmer, Witt, & Carraway, 2017).

While it is well-documented that cooperating teachers are vital to the success of teacher preparation programs, those same programs are being challenged to meet new standards that prove they are creating high quality teachers that impact student academic growth and learning (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2013; Doherty & Jacobs, 2015). Research suggests that teacher quality is the largest school-based factor for improving student achievement (Canales & Maldonado, 2018; Goldhader, Brewer, & Anderson, 1999; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005) with the difference between having an effective and ineffective teacher equating to more than a year of student growth (Schafer et al., 2012).

As a result, teacher preparation programs have had to adjust requirements, curriculum, courses, and field experiences to meet these new expectations (Evans, 2017; Heafner, McIntyre, & Spooner, 2014). One major change that has been made is measuring preservice teachers' impact on student learning. It has become imperative to measure whether or not teacher preparation programs are creating teachers that not only help their students achieve academically, but that can also use content and pedagogical knowledge to help their students learn, understand, and improve.

One of the best ways to determine whether or not preservice teachers are able to impact student learning is to ask the people that spend the most time ‘in the trenches’ with them: their cooperating teachers (Alemdağ & Özdemir, 2017; Johnson, 2011; Malas & MCarty-Clair, 2006; McEntyre, Baxter, & Richards, 2018).

This phenomenological study explored the research question: In what ways do cooperating teachers perceive that their preservice teachers impact student learning? This question was addressed through the lens of the cooperating teacher. The preservice teachers’ ability to impact student learning was rooted in Shulman’s (1986) pedagogical content knowledge framework and was defined as the ways in which preservice teachers use their pedagogical content knowledge to help students learn, understand, and improve.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In 1986, Lee Shulman discussed the fact that misconceptions of teacher knowledge were the crux of the diminishing importance of the profession. Shulman argued that those misconceptions needed to be righted, so he dove into research on teacher knowledge. He discovered that teaching consists of two main factions of knowledge: content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1986). Content knowledge is what teachers know about their subject matter, and pedagogical knowledge is what they know about teaching (Cochran, King, & DeRuiter, 1992).

Shulman (1987) combined the two and coined the term Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), which is “that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding” (p. 8). PCK also includes “an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult: the conceptions and preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds bring with them to the learning of those most frequently taught topics and lessons” (p. 9). For example, PCK is not just knowledge of facts about the Civil War; rather, it is knowledge of how to teach the facts of the Civil War in a way that students will be able to understand. This knowledge involves knowing students, their backgrounds, and learning styles.

According to Hill, Ball, and Schilling (2008), the concept of PCK “not only exists but also contributes to effective teaching and student learning” (p. 372). This study examined the concept of student learning by questioning how preservice teachers use their pedagogical content knowledge to help students learn, understand, and improve. The two separate types of teacher knowledge, pedagogical and content, overlap to create PCK in the middle. Preservice teachers’ PCK will then impact the way in which students learn the content and skills being taught, understand and apply them, and then improve upon them.

Research conducted by Cochran et al. (1992), found that novice teachers understood content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge but did not have a complete knowledge of what PCK was and how it could be utilized to enhance their instruction. This study uncovered that this is no longer the case, and that interviews with cooperating teachers shed light on new trends in PCK in the classroom.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The cooperating teacher is the classroom teacher with whom a preservice teacher completes his or her student teaching experience (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014). Depending on

the institution and program, preservice teachers can spend as little as 10 weeks or as long as an entire school year completing their student teaching experience alongside their cooperating teacher (Greenberg, Pomerance, & Walsh, 2011).

According to Greenberg, Pomerance, & Walsh (2011), institutions should attempt to meet five teacher preparation program evaluation standards. Of those five, three relate directly to the cooperating teacher: "The cooperating teacher candidate must have at least three years of teaching experience; they must have the capacity to have a positive impact on student learning; and they must have the capacity to mentor an adult, with skills in observation, providing feedback, holding professional conversations and working collaboratively" (Greenberg et al., 2011, p. 3). There are also certain personal attributes that one must have in order to be a successful cooperating teacher. Kahn (2001) found that cooperating teachers who are reflective, flexible, provide learning opportunities for the preservice teacher, and contribute frequent, constructive feedback, end up with the most successful preservice teachers.

The role and responsibilities of the cooperating teacher change from institution to institution and from year to year (McEntyre, Baxter, & Richards, 2018; Reinhardt, 2017; Young & MacPhail, 2015). Grimmatt and Ratzlaff (1986) surveyed preservice teachers, university personnel, and cooperating teachers asking them their thoughts about their expectations for those that fill the role of cooperating teacher. They found that a cooperating teacher was expected to orient the preservice teacher to the profession and associated responsibilities. The cooperating teacher should plan ahead for the preservice teacher with regard to the different phases of student teaching, develop criteria to evaluate the preservice teacher's success, and help the preservice teacher develop as a professional. Cooperating teachers are present in a "back-stage" role, where they assist in setting limits for students, provide assistance when needed, and advise, observe, give feedback, and step in as co-teacher when necessary (Caruso, 1998).

With regard to the support systems in place for preservice teachers during their student teaching experience, cooperating teachers were found to be the first person preservice teachers turned to when they needed assistance, and as a result, cooperating teachers had the largest influence on preservice teachers' development (Laker, Laker, & Lea, 2008). They were the ones that worked with them on a daily basis, guiding them through the maze that is the teaching profession. The cooperating teacher's practices and classroom behaviors were one of the most beneficial parts of a preservice teachers' student teaching experience as they learned firsthand the importance of witnessing good classroom management, lesson planning, rapport with students, content knowledge, and establishing policies and procedures (Glenn, 2006). In this sense, the cooperating teacher was the most important model for the preservice teachers.

The responsibilities of the cooperating teacher also vary from institution to institution, but Edwards & Briers (2001) found 34 important elements in five core areas of a student teaching experience that they were responsible for. These core areas consisted of supporting classroom instruction, supervising the field experience, leadership development, supporting school and community relationships, and creating positive cooperating teacher-preservice teacher relationships. The literature on cooperating teachers found that their roles and responsibilities were wide and varied, but one thing remained the same: they were the ones that spent the most time with the preservice teacher (Eriksson, 2013; Reinhardt, 2017; Young & MacPhail, 2015). Clarke et al. (2014) discovered that preservice teachers considered them to be one of the most important contributors to their education as a future teacher. As a result, cooperating teachers are the ones who are most likely to know whether or not the preservice teacher will impact student learning through use of content and pedagogical knowledge to help students learn, understand, and improve

since cooperating teachers are the ones who see the preservice teachers in action each day of their student teaching experience and can give the most valuable feedback.

It is important to understand the role of feedback in the cooperating teacher-preservice teacher relationship. One of the most valuable responsibilities of the cooperating teacher is providing feedback about the preservice teacher's performance to both the institution and the preservice teacher. In a review of the literature compiled by Clarke et al. (2014), they found that one of the main categories of literature that exists about cooperating teachers examines them as providers of feedback. In fact, Tannehill and Zakrajsek (1988) found that preservice teachers wanted more feedback than they got from their cooperating teachers with regards to frequency and depth.

As Glenn (2006) noted, "constructive feedback must be honest feedback" (p. 91). Honest feedback is going to be the most helpful for preservice teachers because that is the primary way they are going to find out what they are doing well and what needs to be improved upon in order to be a more successful teacher. However, as Glenn found, preservice teachers had to be open to receiving feedback, even if it was not necessarily positive. If they were not open-minded, they perceived the cooperating teacher as being critical and harsh. Giving feedback does not have to be formal. It can be as simple as a quick "good job with differentiating for your gifted students, but make sure you watch your pacing" comment after a lesson, or as structured as a post-observation conference (Glenn, 2006).

The quality of the feedback should also be examined. Cooperating teachers do not always have the knowledge base to have deep, structured conversations with their preservice teachers (Richardson-Koehler, 1984). Feedback from cooperating teachers also tends to focus on the positive aspects of their preservice teacher's abilities and is not necessarily as critical as it needs to be (Kahan, Sinclair, Saucier, & Caiozzi, 2003). According to Grimmatt and Ratzlaff (1986), cooperating teachers' knowledge led them to view teaching as practical, providing thoughts on what went well and how to improve, rather than why something happened. This lack of depth is something to be cognizant of when conducting interviews with cooperating teachers because follow-up questions may need to be asked in order to probe and receive responses that are more reflective.

Because this study explored the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the preservice teachers' ability to impact student learning, it is important to understand what other researchers have found regarding student learning in terms of preservice teachers' abilities to help students learn, understand, and improve. Preservice teachers in one study defined student learning as academic, focusing on content knowledge in the form of data scores from assessments (Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Friedman, & Pine, 2009). Sandholtz (2011) measured preservice teachers' thoughts on their instruction and whether or not they felt that they were effective in helping the students learn. The most common way in which preservice teachers measured their students' learning was through how engaged they were and how much they participated in the lesson. They believed that facilitating student learning and helping their students understand was more than just getting them to answer questions, but it was engaging in student-centered activities. Re-engagement was also a key facet of helping them improve when students fell short the first time they were taught, but re-engagement also consisted of student-centered methods.

There has been little research done on the ways in which preservice teachers impact student learning, and none done through the perspective of the cooperating teacher. The literature that does exist tends to focus on the methods preservice teachers are using in the classroom and whether or not they are effective with regards to academic achievement, not on their impact on student

learning as defined in this study as the ways in which preservice teachers use their pedagogical content knowledge to help students learn, understand, and improve. Therefore, the study presented in this paper attempted to fill the gap that exists in the literature by exploring cooperating teacher perceptions of their preservice teachers' impact on student learning.

METHOD

DESIGN

Using a phenomenology methodology this study explored cooperating teachers' perceptions of the impact their preservice teachers have on their students' learning. The phenomenological approach of interviews was employed to gather these perceptions. Phenomenology has been used to assist the researcher in developing an understanding of complex issues that may not be immediately understood in surface responses (Goulding, 2005). Throughout the study, the preservice teachers' ability to impact student learning was defined as the ways in which they use their knowledge to help students learn, understand, and improve.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants selected for this study were those who were current cooperating teachers of preservice teachers in their student-teaching semester in the spring of 2016 who were completing their teacher education program at a university in the western United States at one of the university's Professional Partnership Schools (PPS). This PPS model is a collaborative partnership designed to transform the education of both students (K-12) and educational professionals, in-service and preservice. A PPS is based on mutual trust, respect, and parity and is seen as mutually beneficial to all partners (university, district, and school). The university's PPS schools sign 3-year agreements that often get renewed for additional terms, so many of the cooperating teachers involved in the study have a great deal of experience with a preservice teacher.

Convenience sampling methods (Creswell, 2013) were used to gather the list of potential interview participants, as they had to be current cooperating teachers. In order to be cooperating teachers at one of the PPS, they must have taught for a minimum of three years and come highly recommended by the principal of the school. An email was sent to all 60 current cooperating teachers asking for voluntary participation in the study. Ten cooperating teachers responded to the email, and eight were interviewed; four were elementary teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade. Table 1 details the demographics sample as well as their chosen or given pseudonym. Four were secondary teachers—two were social studies and two were English teachers. The use of pseudonyms was employed for deidentification purposes.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Cooperating teacher pseudonym	Preservice teacher pseudonym	Number of years teaching	Number of preservice teachers	Grade/content area
Eva	Katelyn	25	2	Gr 3
Charlotte	Emma	21	3	High school, Social studies
Mary	Lily	20	3	Kindergarten

Jane	Madeline	17	1	Gr 1
Andrew	Matthew	12	1	Middle school, Social studies
Jennifer	Julie	12	1	Middle school, English
Anne	Scott	9	3	Gr 4
Elizabeth	Samantha	9	5	High school, English

The cooperating teachers represented eight different schools in three different university-area urban and suburban school districts. Seven of the cooperating teachers were female; one was male. Six of their preservice teachers were female; two were male. Six of the preservice teachers were undergraduate teacher candidates; the other two were post-baccalaureate. Cooperating teachers had a range of experience and time in the classroom, from nine years as a teacher to 25 ($M=15.63$). There was also a range in the number of preservice teachers they had supervised; for three of them, this was their first preservice teacher experience. The other five cooperating teachers each had experience in supervising two to five preservice teachers in the past.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

IRB approval was granted from the research institution and semi-structured interviews were conducted in person with each participant during the day at their schools at a time that was convenient for them. Most of the interviews were held in a teacher's lounge or office. The length of time varied from 15 to 40 minutes. Each teacher was asked the same 11 questions regarding their thoughts on the topic, in addition to five demographic questions. This approach allowed for exploration of the cooperating teachers' thoughts of their preservice teacher and facilitated the ability to probe and ask follow-up questions during interviews as needed. Interviews were then transcribed and answers were coded. An inductive approach was used to review the interview data to ascertain themes and patterns that emerged.

In order to validate the study and build trustworthiness and credibility, triangulation was done by interviewing eight participants, and member checking (Creswell, 2013) was employed by soliciting participants' views of research findings and interpretations. Member checking validated the findings, as those that reviewed them all confirmed that the themes were correct.

LIMITATIONS

The most prominent limitation was the sample. Recruiting was only done within one year of cooperating teachers and was limited to the teachers who chose to respond to the initial recruiting email. The sample was not handpicked and as a result did not include enough cooperating teachers of post-baccalaureate students to answer one of the initial research questions.

The time of year in which the study was done also created certain limitations. Due to the timing of the state's standardized testing timeframe, recruiting was done at the height of testing. This limited some teachers' ability to be a part of the study as their time and energy was focused on preparing their students for testing or supporting the schools' schedule changes. This timing also limited many of the participants availability, and as such the participants were only interviewed once, and some of the interviews were substantially shorter than others. Ideally, interviews also would have been conducted at least one additional time at an earlier point in the semester to provide additional triangulation.

Another limitation was the fact that I was unable to triangulate with interviews with the teacher candidates. Due to my role as Director of Teacher Education at the university, I was not able to include them directly in the study. It would have been helpful to have their perspective as part of this study, and to include observations of them in the classroom. Along with that, the potential for bias existed in my role in the program. Since I oversaw the teacher education program, I had a vested interest in its success. That being said, however, I also had a vested interest in helping the program become the best it could be, so my goal was to take away information from this study to improve the program and takeaway additional information that could be generalized to assist with improving other teacher education programs.

RESULTS

The eight interviews proved to be a goldmine of information, and five major themes emerged with regards to the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the ways in which preservice teachers impact student learning.

THEME 1: CREATING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

Cooperating teachers agreed unanimously that creating relationships and establishing rapport was the most important way to impact student learning. Unequivocally, getting to know the students and helping them learn to trust the preservice teacher and letting them know he or she cared was cited as the first step. Without the relationship piece, none of the other themes really matter because the students need to know they can trust their preservice teacher. Andrew, a cooperating teacher, explained that from the very first day, the preservice teacher Matthew's initial goal was building the relationships and getting to know the kids:

So he came in, and first day, right when he got here, he jumped in. Getting to know the kids, getting to know their names. These kids come up, and he knows, "Oh yeah, your birthday's next week!" He's been to sporting events; he's been to all kinds of stuff. His initial part was to build relationships. That was priority one.

When asked how those relationships were created and how rapport was established, the most common answer was just talking to students and asking them about themselves. Eva believed that Katelyn was "caring--if they have a problem she'll listen." This was a shared response throughout the interviews—a caring personality leads to a more trusting classroom. Jane said that Madeline got to know her students in the following way:

You know, I see her just having conversations with the kids. You know, whether it's on the playground or first thing in the morning. She'll ask questions like, "How was your weekend?" or "How is your day?" The kids are excited to come and speak to her and tell her things. In response she'll continue the conversation with open-ended questions so she can get to know them that way.

Scott, a preservice teacher, established rapport a bit differently according to Anne, his cooperating teacher. She said that "he models, you know, he gives them models of his expectations. He tells them, 'These are my expectations for you.' ... Ever since the first day of school they've just really taken to him. He's positive." His class thrived on structure, and by giving them what they needed he was able to establish an authoritative, yet respectful and friendly relationship with them.

Cooperating teachers also cited a sense of humor and an ability to not take themselves too seriously as important personality traits to have in order to create relationships and make the classroom a comfortable place to be. Once the students were comfortable in the classroom and

with the preservice teacher, they would then be more willing to approach the preservice teachers to ask for help or give suggestions on what they want to do in the classroom. Charlotte spoke of an example of students wanting to debate in Emma's class, and as the semester had gone on, they became more comfortable in asking her to teach them using specific methods. She said that the students commented, "We really think we did a good job with this jigsaw, can we do this again?" She went on to say, "They're always making their requests known [to Emma]." This shows a clear relationship that has been created over the course of the semester, and one that can be built upon and maintained in order to allow students to learn in the best environment possible.

THEME 2: PROVIDING FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS

Once the relationship was established, preservice teachers were able to use feedback as a tool to support student learning. Each cooperating teacher identified his or her preservice teacher as a provider of feedback to students. Feedback was given in many ways, from verbal to written, both formal and informal, and whole group and individual. Anne said that her preservice teacher "gives a lot of verbal feedback; he gives them written feedback. I would say definitely motivational feedback, constructive feedback, you know ways that they can improve and things that they're doing well on." Any time he could provide feedback to the students, he told them what was going well or what needed improvement.

Positive feedback and encouragement were used to support those students that may not have been as successful the first time around. Mary identified an example of her preservice teacher using verbal one-on-one feedback with an individual student who was struggling with kindergarten math work. She explained that Lily pulled the student aside and said, "Wow! You almost made it, you only have two left, keep up the great work!" to encourage the student.

However, feedback is all in the way it is presented to the student. Once, Lily said to a student, "Look! You got them all done and you didn't check the sign and you added the whole way through [instead of subtracting]!" and it was only then that the student realized the mistake. The fact that Lily was upbeat and positive about it, even though she was telling the student that she or he had done something wrong, allowed the student to be open enough to understand the problem and correct it. Anne said, "the feedback that [Scott] gives isn't meant to be negative and they don't take it that way." Cooperating teachers observed that students were receptive to the feedback being given to them by the preservice teacher, and that the students often took it and made corrections to work as needed. However, it often circles back to the rapport that the preservice teachers had built with their students—three of the cooperating teachers said that the students were open to feedback as a result of the positive relationship the preservice teachers had already built with the students early on.

THEME 3: ABILITY TO ACADEMICALLY ENGAGE STUDENTS

Five of the cooperating teachers also mentioned academic engagement as a mark of how the preservice teachers impacted student learning. They said that without engagement in the lesson, the students would clearly not learn. They wouldn't meet objectives or hit learning targets. When asked how preservice teachers engaged the students, cooperating teachers gave a variety of answers, but mainly, engagement was done by using active, student-centered teaching methods. Only one cooperating teacher cited direct-instruction as the primary means for teaching new content, while the rest discussed the ways their preservice teachers would go research and be a "thief" as Charlotte said, and bring back activities that would appeal to the students.

Preservice teachers also engaged students by getting input from them with regards to content they were interested in and the way in which they wanted to be taught. Once the preservice teacher created a relationship with the students, they were more able to pull in things to support engagement. Jennifer discussed the classroom library that Julie had created for students, and once she knew them, she brought in books in to engage them in reading. Madeline created Personal Learning Time for her first graders, that consisted of content that personally engaged each student.

While four of the cooperating teachers explained that there was a distinct lack of ability for students to choose the content that was being taught due to standards, testing, and district accountability, students often had a say in the way in which it is being taught, and that in itself allowed students to engage more in the lesson. Andrew pointed out that Matthew “gives them options. Partners, groups, just work individually... he gives them choices.” Also, while preservice teachers may be limited in picking content based on student interest, they could choose the methods in which it was taught. Whether it was a jigsaw, a debate, direct instruction, small group, whole group, or music, preservice teachers were identified as having the ability to engage their students in the lesson. Anne gave an example:

Scott does partner work, um, collaboration. One of the things that I love that he does in math is he comes up with songs, and he puts action to the songs, so the kids, so if you ask them “what's the area song” they remember these things because he gives them a song or something to remember them by ... they seem to enjoy math from him when he makes it enjoyable. I think he tries to include real life application to things that they're learning, too. So I think that helps with the engagement, if they know the purpose and why they're learning it.

Making the content and skills relevant by allowing students to apply what they had learned was another method by which preservice teachers engaged students. Preservice teachers found ways to teach the content in a way that allowed the students to see why it was important to learn the content. For example, Scott explained why the students needed to learn fractions and when they would use them in their life. Matthew showed them how to apply geography to real-life examples, and Emma found current examples of what was happening in the world at that time in order to relate to what they were learning in the classroom.

THEME 4: HAVING GOOD CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Having the ability to manage a classroom is something that many preservice and novice teachers struggle with. If it is done effectively, teachers reap the benefits of a structured, well-run classroom, which leads to positive impact on student learning. Of the five themes found in the interviews, this theme was the one that was identified by four cooperating teachers as necessary to have but sometimes lacking in preservice teachers. Both Matthew and Katelyn's cooperating teachers identified this as an area of weakness. While both these preservice teachers worked on it over the course of the semester, this was still an area in which they both needed to continue to improve. Matthew needed to establish and enforce rules. As he progressed through lessons, “the kids started to get a little more loose.” Katelyn's issue was a lack of awareness—she tended to not see students disengaging and misbehaving as a result. Eva said that she was observing Katelyn teach one day, and the students were “rolling on the floor, or they're picking at each other, or they're napping--I mean it's very obvious when I watch, and I do a fraction of how many kids are watching versus not.” Katelyn was so concerned about teaching the lesson that she failed to see how her poor management skills were impacting the students' learning.

On the other hand, Madeline and Julie were recognized as being strong in this area. Jane expressed her thoughts about Madeline's classroom management skills; she said that they were:

Amazing and being able to, and we have a lot of challenging kids in our classroom, but being able to keep the rest of the class engaged while she's doing a small group.

Being able to show that I care, but we're serious about learning.

As a result, Madeline and Jane's cooperating teachers felt confident enough in their abilities to manage the classroom that they would often turn the class over to these preservice teachers with the expectation that they would positively impact student learning.

THEME 5: HAVING A PASSION FOR TEACHING

The final theme is one that three of the cooperating teachers connected to successfully impacting student learning, and that is being passionate about teaching. Preservice teachers' passion for the content they're teaching as well as their passion for being in the classroom was evident in so much of what they were seen doing on a day-to-day basis. Charlotte kept coming back to Emma's passion, as that was what she saw as one of her greatest instructional strengths. She said that Emma has "definitely got the passion and the energy to put the time in... and then the way she presents it is very enthusiastic. There's rarely a blah day." The excitement that all of the cooperating teachers discussed was uplifting, as the preservice teachers showed that they really wanted to make learning fun, interesting, and relevant. Lily was so excited after a PLC on writing that she made a poster and planned her entire solo teaching around this new writing technique. Elizabeth commented on Samantha's high energy levels, and the fact that she saw a great deal of enthusiasm in everything she did; she's consistently presented without complaining about anything, and that attitude followed her into the classroom and allowed her to be more successful as a teacher.

Another way preservice teachers showed their passion for teaching was their desire to make their students excited about what they were doing in the classroom, too. When asked the same question about Scott's greatest strength, Anne said:

I would have to say his own enthusiasm. I think he, you know, even if it's something that he and I have talked about that isn't necessarily interesting when we talk about it, he always makes sure he portrays things to his students, that he's enthusiastic and positive about things.

Eva cited a lack of passion in Katelyn as being one of the things that has led to an unsuccessful student teaching experience. While Katelyn would plan a lesson and be excited about it, but she did not have the same excitement when it came to building relationships with the students, providing feedback, engaging students, or having any sense of how to manage a classroom.

DISCUSSION

This study yielded noteworthy results with regards to the research question: In what ways do cooperating teachers perceive that their preservice teachers impact student learning? The preservice teachers' ability to impact student learning was rooted in Shulman's (1986) pedagogical content knowledge framework and was defined as the ways in which preservice teachers use their pedagogical content knowledge to help students learn, understand, and improve. The study found that preservice teachers impact student learning by creating relationships with students, providing feedback to them, engaging them, having good classroom management, and having a passion for

teaching. However, the findings could not support that the preservice teachers used their pedagogical content knowledge to help them understand and improve.

When considering the PCK framework, only one side of the diagram was actually discussed by the cooperating teachers and supported by the survey results: the Pedagogical Knowledge piece. Each of the five themes that emerged fell more in to the pedagogical side of teaching. While two of the cooperating teachers discussed their preservice teacher's knowledge with regards to content, it was purely an aside, and nothing that featured as central to what a preservice teacher needed in order to impact student learning. In fact, one cooperating teacher commented that content could always be learned.

However, what was interesting was that the preservice teachers did tend to have that middle knowledge—the Pedagogical Content Knowledge; they might not have been recognized as having content knowledge as their strength but it was pointed out consistently that they knew *how* to teach the content they were planning for. In Shulman's (1987) description of PCK, he wrote that “it represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (p. 8). What this study found is that the preservice teachers were successful in doing just that—they got to know their learners and established rapport and relationships with them, and then created lessons that engaged their students' based on student interests and abilities. It is clear that they were using PCK to impact student learning.

Research supports many of the conclusions drawn from the study. Of the small amount of literature that exists on creating relationships in schools, building rapport with students was found when a teacher was respectful of their students, students asked questions in class, and the teacher showed students they cared (Jackson et al., 1999). One study found that students perceived “good teachers” to be those that have a good attitude toward their students (Burdal & Bardo, 1986). As all of the cooperating teachers discussed, simply asking the students questions to find out how they were was the first step towards building a positive classroom relationship and helping them to see that the preservice teacher was caring and trustworthy. Cooperating teachers cited building classroom community as the preservice teachers' biggest strength.

IMPLICATIONS

Academic engagement is a vital part of any lesson because it “functions as a behavioral pathway by which students' motivational processes contribute to their subsequent learning and development” (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, & Barch, 2004, p. 146). Engagement in a lesson can predict success, and it can be relied on as an observational tool to indicate whether or not students are tuned in to what is happening during instruction (Wiggins, 2011). As the cooperating teachers discussed, engagement was seen throughout their classrooms when their preservice teachers were instructing. Student-centered instruction is one pedagogical way to ensure academic engagement from students but has little to do with content knowledge (Coats et al., 1972).

Classroom management is another key to supporting students in the classroom. Stoughton (2007) found that novice teachers tend to consider their ability to control disruptive students as one of the biggest measures of effectiveness in their classroom. A well-managed classroom leads to a more positive environment for students, and the teacher can therefore positively impact student learning. A lack of a plan or the lack of ability to handle disruptions leads to a lack of engagement. Both teacher preparation programs and district programs for new teachers should integrate hands-on classroom management support to assist these new teachers in creating a supportive classroom where students feel safe to engage.

Additionally, research has shown that students will engage more if a teacher cares about them (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010; Ferguson, 2012; Noddings, 1988; Noddings, 2013). Teacher preparation programs and school administrators need to continue to incorporate research and best practices of relationship building in their methods classes and field experiences, including Nodding's (1988) research on establishing an ethic of care in the classroom.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Further research should be done looking specifically at content knowledge and subject matter knowledge and how and where that fits in to teacher preparation programs. Approximately 40 states and territories require teachers to pass the Praxis content knowledge test in order to be highly qualified teachers in their content area and receive their teaching licenses (ETS, 2015). It is a worthwhile path to dig deeper into content knowledge or pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge. Of the two, which will lead a preservice teacher to be more effective in the classroom? Or, to go a slightly different direction, what evidence might exist to support an equal need for all three types of knowledge? It is often assumed that content knowledge and PCK are interrelated, but is that truly the case (Even, 1993)?

Additional research also needs to be done on establishing relationships with students, and the impact that teacher-student relationship has on student learning and educator effectiveness, as much of the literature found on this topic has to do with inappropriate and unethical relationships with students. There is a wealth of information just waiting to be uncovered in schools today regarding the need for building rapport and establishing teacher-student relationships.

CONCLUSION

While content knowledge is an important part of becoming a teacher, this study found that pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge were the characteristics that cooperating teachers focused on when considering the ways in which their preservice teachers impacted student learning.

This study also confirmed that cooperating teachers believed that in order to impact student learning, preservice teachers need to be present and make connections with their students. This connection undoubtedly needs to be part of what they are taught in their educator preparation program. That much has been made clear through conversations with experienced educators who are now supervising and providing feedback to their preservice teachers. Without these relationships, preservice teachers may not be able to engage them or provide feedback to them, and preservice teachers will find that it is more difficult to successfully impact their students' learning.

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APPENDIX A**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. How do you define student learning?
2. What type of activities does your preservice teacher do in class?
3. In what ways do you see your preservice teacher making learning enjoyable?
4. What example can you give of how the preservice teacher makes the class useful for their students' lives?
5. How much input do the students get with regards to what content the preservice teacher teaches?
6. How do you see the preservice teacher differentiating for their students in ways OTHER THAN ability? (i.e. interest, gender, SES, CRT, etc.)
7. How have you seen your preservice teacher supports critical thinking skills?
8. When the preservice teacher has to reteach something, what does he/she do differently than they did the first time?
9. In what ways does the preservice teacher give feedback to his/her students?
10. What do you see as the preservice teacher's greatest instructional strength?
11. What do you see as the preservice teacher's greatest instructional weakness?
12. What subject/grade do you teach?
13. How long have you taught?
14. Is your preservice teacher an Undergraduate or Post-Baccalaureate student?
15. How many preservice teachers have you had?
Gender (both you and TC)