

Paired Peer Placement with Peer Coaching in Early Field Experiences: Results of a Four-Year Study

By Marjorie J. Wynn & Jeffrey Kromrey

Many practicum students who are effective in presenting simulated lessons on the college campus experience difficulty during their early field experiences when presenting lessons in the *real world*, a classroom full of students. This problem may be understood and steps taken to avoid or reduce its impact by reexamining the developmental sequence through which practicum students progress to successfully

implement instructional strategies in the classroom. One component of successful lesson presentations on the college campus is the immediate, ongoing feedback by professors and peers. Perhaps this feedback is also an essential component in facilitating planning, preparing, and presenting lessons in the real world classroom.

Marjorie J. Wynn is an associate professor in the College of Education, University of South Florida, Lakeland Campus, Lakeland, Florida; Jeffrey Kromrey is an associate professor in the College of Education, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.

Generally a directing teacher provides the majority of the feedback a practicum student receives. Professor observations are usually intermittent due to the number of students being supervised. Unfortunately, classroom teachers are often overburdened with a myriad of school obligations and are thus unable to closely observe and provide consistent

feedback for each and every lesson presentation. Under these circumstances many practicum students receive insufficient, immediate, ongoing feedback (Anderson & Radencich, in press; Hull, Baker, Kyle, & Goad, 1981). Studies of practicum students conducted by Nancy A. Anderson and Marguerite C. Radencich (in press), Stephanie Kurts (1997), Elizabeth A. McAllister and Gloria A. Neubert (1995), and Marjorie J. Wynn (1995) noted the value of peer coaching in early field experiences. Thus, a potential remedy for the dilemma of providing ongoing, immediate feedback is the implementation of an Instructional Strategies Model for practicum students in their early field experiences. An important component of this model is paired peer placement with peer coaching to provide immediate, on-site feedback.

This article summarizes the four-year findings for two different teams of practicum students each participating in the study during their two levels of early field experiences and prior to their final student teaching experience in an elementary education program.

Peer Coaching

Peer coaching is a training method in which pairs of practicum students, student teachers, or classroom teachers observe each other and provide consultative assistance in correctly applying teaching skills and proposing alternative solutions to recognized instructional needs. The practicum teacher, student teacher, or classroom teacher who is teaching identifies specific instructional objectives for the peer coach to observe. The coach focuses on these objectives giving feedback that includes positive comments on teaching strengths and constructive suggestions for instructional growth. A major advantage of peer coaching is that when observation and coaching are performed by peers, bonding and collegiality form as members of a peer coaching team provide support for each other. In contrast when feedback is provided by a directing teacher, professor, or administrator (thus someone in a supervisory position) the person being observed may be overly concerned that the feedback is evaluative rather than supportive.

Research with classroom teachers reveals the facilitation and fine tuning of teaching skills and the transfer of training from inservice courses to the classroom when teachers engage in peer coaching (Anderson & Snyder, 1984; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Rooney, 1993). Ingrid M. Chrisco (1984) found coaching provides an opportunity for rehearsal, discussing the lesson to be taught; communication, sharing with peers; and awareness, examining what, why, and how content is being taught. Coaching moves teachers from a stage of isolation to a stage of peer assistance. Collaborative peer coaching with teachers assisting each other is beneficial to the professional growth of both the coach and teacher. Beverly Showers and Bruce Joyce (1996) stressed the importance of weekly seminars for planning, practice, and reflection with an emphasis on "theory presentation, modeling or demonstration, practice, structured and open-ended feedback, and in-

class assistance with transfer" (p. 13). In an analysis of peer coaching studies in the 1980's, Robert Ackland (1991) determined that three essential characteristics of an effective peer coaching program with classroom teachers are non-evaluative observation, observation with constructive feedback, and a focus on improving instructional techniques.

Peer coaching also promotes effective strategy implementation for student teachers during their full-time internship in the final semester of teacher education (Neubert & McAllister, 1993). Wynn (1986) found greater instructional skill transfer and a significant improvement in teaching performance when peer coaching was implemented by student teachers in their final internship. Neubert and Lois Stover (1994) and McAllister and Neubert (1995) emphasized peer coaching contributions in teacher education as: recalling skills and strategies, fostering collegiality, and promoting reflection. Kate Hawkey (1995) noted the need for research with peers learning from peers in school-based teacher education.

Kurtts' study (1997) with preservice teachers (i.e., practicum students) in the first semester of field experiences found peer coaching effective in the development of reflective practice. Her findings also reveal a "transfer of skills from on-campus to the classroom and the encouragement of collegial support" (p. 15). McAllister and Neubert (1995) studied the effects of peer coaching on preservice teachers in their second placement in early field experiences. Their project was designed to use coaching as a vehicle for (1) moving preservice from a non-reflective to a reflective stance, (2) helping preservice teachers apply skills in the classroom that they are learning in on-campus methodology courses, and (3) encouraging positive collegial support and professional growth. From a phenomenological perspective, Wynn (1995) found peer coaching in early field experiences beneficial for the practicum student teaching as well as the peer coach.

The preceding studies support the use of peer coaching for experienced inservice teachers, student teachers in the final semester of their teacher training, and practicum students in early field experiences. Based on this research it appears reasonable that further study would provide additional insight into the value of peer coaching in early field experiences and the transfer of instructional strategies from the college academic environment to the real world of the classroom. Therefore, the twofold purpose of this descriptive study was to (a) implement an Instructional Strategies Model designed to enhance lesson planning, preparation, and presentation in early field experiences and (b) examine the perceptions of participants in a paired peer placement peer coaching program.

Method

Overview of the University Program

The University of South Florida (USF) elementary education program includes five semesters of course work during the junior and senior years including an

Paired Peer Placement with Peer Coaching

intervening summer semester. Teacher education program students participate in three levels of field experience: Level 1, the first semester of the junior year, is one day per week in a classroom; Level 2, the first semester of the senior year, is two days per week in the classroom; and Level 3 is a full-time internship. Weekly seminars are an integral component of each of these field experiences.

Participants

For the first year of the study, 40 first-semester juniors participated during their Level 1 field experience. There were 37 white females, one African-American female, and two white males. The average age was 28, with 17 participants over the age of 25. The grade point average of this group was 3.12. Thirty-eight of these students continued in the second year, during their Level 2 field experience. The two students who did not continue participating in this study chose to pursue their education degrees on a university campus closer to their homes.

The study was then replicated with 41 students participating during their Level 1 experiences. There were 39 white females, one African-American female, and one Hispanic-American female. The average age was 25.5, with 13 participants over the age of 25. The grade point average of this group was 3.4. Forty of these students continued in Level 2, and one student decided to change majors.

Procedures

Placement of Student Teachers: For the Level 1 experiences, practicum students were divided into two groups and placed in peer coaching pairs with directing teachers in two elementary schools. The initial pairing was random. In subsequent pairing, consideration was given to pairing a weaker student with a stronger student, pairing a strong student with another strong student, and pairing students with different teaching styles. There are advantages to each type of pairing, and research is needed to determine how best to pair practicum students.

Teachers who had participated in clinical supervision training were selected to provide exemplary models of effective teaching and guidance for the practicum students' professional growth. For the first half of the semester, seven weeks, each pair of practicum students worked with a directing teacher one six-hour day a week for a total of 42 hours. For the second half of the semester each practicum student was assigned to a different peer coach, teacher, and grade level for another 42 hours of teaching experience. One placement was in a primary grade; the other placement was in an intermediate grade.

For the Level 2 experiences, those practicum students who had been placed in School A during their Level 1 early field experience were placed in School B; those placed in School B for Level 1 were placed in School A. For the first half of the semester each pair of practicum students worked with a directing teacher two six-hour days a week for the seven-week period (a total of 84 hours). Finally, each practicum student was assigned to a different peer coach, teacher, and grade level

for another 84 hours of teaching experience. Again one placement was in a primary grade, the other placement was in an intermediate grade. Thus each practicum student had two experiences in the primary grades with two peer coaches and two directing teachers and two experiences in the intermediate grades with two different peer coaches and two directing teachers. A concerted effort was made for each student to have four different grade level placements.

Instructional Strategies Model: In Level 1 and later in Level 2 early field experiences, the Instructional Strategies Model was used to guide practicum students through the process of transferring instructional strategies from the college classroom to the elementary classroom (see Figure 1). This transfer sequence begins with practicum students discussing, observing, examining, and developing lesson plans for different types of instructional strategies. Following this, the practicum students implement personally developed lessons in the elementary classroom with the collaborative support of a peer coach before, during, and after teaching each lesson. Finally the practicum students respond to post-teaching questions and reflect on professional growth through peer feedback, viewing personal videotaped lessons, listening to audio tapes of lessons taught, conversing in weekly dialogue journals with the college instructor, participating in weekly seminars, and reflecting on feedback from coaches, colleagues, the directing teacher and university professor.

Figure 1
Instructional Strategies Model

1. College Classroom Instruction in Language Arts and Seminars:
 - Discussing instructional strategies;
 - Observing demonstration teaching by the instructor;
 - Examining sample lesson plans incorporating the instructional strategies;
 - Developing lessons incorporating the strategies in cooperative groups.
2. Elementary Classroom Implementation:
 - Discussing lesson with peer coach while planning and preparing the lesson;
 - Implementing the lesson;
 - Observing and data collecting by peer coach.
3. Reflection:
 - Responding to post-teaching question before post-observation conference
 - Reflecting on feedback from peer coach;
 - Viewing of personal videotaped lessons by self, peer coach and another colleague;
 - Listening to audio taped lessons by self and a colleague;
 - Conversing in weekly dialogue journals with the instructor;
 - Participating in weekly seminars;
 - Reflecting on feedback from the directing teacher and college supervisor.

Paired Peer Placement with Peer Coaching

Peer Coaching: Each peer coaching cycle included the following elements for the peer pair: first, a pre-observation conference in which the peer teaching the lesson identified specific instructional concerns for the peer coach to observe; next observation and data collection by the peer coach; and subsequently self-reflection on the lesson presentation by both the teacher and the coach. Finally during the post-observation conference, the coach gave written feedback based on the teacher's specific instructional concerns. As part of the feedback process, the coach listed two areas of strength and two suggestions for improvement. After the conference both the teacher and the coach wrote self-reflection comments. Thus each peer coaching cycle followed a discussion, implementation with observation, reflection, discussion, reflection sequence.

Practicum students were trained in peer coaching techniques in the college classroom through discussion of peer coaching research, viewing videotapes on peer coaching, and participation in peer coaching cycles using videotaped lessons as well as lessons taught by their university professor who was also their practicum supervisor. During the initial training sessions students discussed the components of an effective lesson. They viewed a videotaped lesson and then discussed how each of the components was incorporated in the lesson. They also met in cooperative groups to discuss two strengths of the lesson presentation and two suggestions they might make to the teacher presenting the lesson. Later the professor took on the role of a classroom teacher, provided the practicum students with a lesson plan, and participated in a peer coaching cycle with the practicum students coaching.

During their practicum placements, each student in the peer pair planned and presented one lesson per week in the elementary classroom during their Level 1 experience. During the Level 2 experience, each practicum student planned and presented two lessons per week. Paired peer placement provided the opportunity for ongoing collaboration and immediate feedback.

Professor Observation, Feedback, and Modeling

Observation: Weekly visits by the professor to both schools provided opportunities for many informal observations with written feedback. In addition to these observations, during Level 1 two formal lesson presentations were observed for each practicum student. Written feedback was given using the *sandwich approach*. The *sandwich approach* began with specific positive comments about the lesson, followed by suggestions and/or questions, and finally ended with a positive comment. In an orientation, as well as in individual conferences, directing teachers were encouraged to provide both oral and written feedback for lesson presentations. Finally a lesson presentation by each practicum student was videotaped by a member of the university support staff, and a lesson in each placement was audio taped. The peer coach as well as another colleague provided feedback on these lessons.

Again, during Level 2 in addition to informal, weekly observations with

written feedback, three or more formal lesson presentations by each practicum student were observed by the professor who again provided written feedback. Each practicum student was videotaped one or more times by university personnel and given feedback on these lessons by both a peer coach and another colleague. In Study 2, practicum students also audio taped the pre conference, lesson presentation, and post conference for a lesson in each placement. The Instructional Strategies Model implemented during Level 1 field experience was again followed during the Level 2 field experience.

Field Experience Weekly Seminars: The focus of the one-hour weekly seminar on the college campus was a celebration of teaching successes and challenges. The seminars provided an opportunity for colleagues to share strategies they found effective in lesson presentations, classroom management, and meeting the needs of individual students. Often the professor and/or practicum students modeled classroom strategies and instructional strategies. A lively discussion ensued about implementation at different grade levels, application for various content areas, and integration across content areas.

The professor made copious notes from weekly dialogue journals. Information from these notes was organized into areas of common concern and challenge thus providing the impetus for stimulating seminar discussions and debates.

Dialogue Journals: The practicum students and professor conversed in weekly dialogue journals during the first study. However the inordinate amount of time for responding to 40 students forced a change to biweekly responses during the study replication. In the second study the professor dialogued with practicum students at School A and School B on alternate weeks. In their journals students were asked to follow this format for the first part of their entries:

- 1) Describe a classroom problem or "challenge."
- 2) How was the situation handled?
- 3) How did the student/students benefit?
- 4) What are some alternative solutions, suggestions, or sources of help for dealing with the problem?

They were also asked to include any other comments or concerns. Almost weekly most students included unsolicited comments about the positive impact of peer coaching on their teaching.

Language Arts Methods Course: Throughout the semester in the practicum students' language arts methods course, while focusing on the course content in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, the professor demonstrated lesson planning, preparation, and presentation using a variety of lesson plan formats and instructional strategies. Before, during, and after teaching these lessons the professor modeled thinking aloud and self-reflection by asking questions of herself such as: Why did I choose this strategy? What should I do now? Why is/isn't this strategy

Paired Peer Placement with Peer Coaching

working? Do my students understand the concept I am teaching? Should I sequence this lesson differently next time? Written lesson plans and videotapes of former student teachers' language arts lessons provided additional opportunities for lesson analysis.

One example of a lesson plan format used for demonstration was the Purdom-Wynn Lesson Plan (Wynn, 1986) which focuses on lesson introduction, content presentation, follow-up with feedback, and management of student conduct (see Purdom-Wynn Lesson Plan format in Figure 2). Within a lesson specific instructional strategies were modeled for active student involvement in lessons. Examples of specific strategies included opportunities for *Every Student Participation* in vocabulary development through a "Simile Search," visual organization of information using an "Attitude Adjustment Arranger," and oral language development through drama as in an "Under the Sea Safari" (for detailed information on these and other strategies see Wynn, 1996).

After observing the lesson, students met in cooperative groups and developed lessons using the demonstrated lesson plan format and incorporating the specific instructional strategy that had been modeled. Later, students developed lesson plans individually for implementation in their field experience classrooms. They often sought advice and suggestions from their peer coaches when developing these plans.

Instrumentation

In this descriptive study data were collected from two major sources: teacher's and coach's peer coaching forms and surveys from practicum students and directing teachers. Additional data were obtained using weekly dialogue journals, audio tapes and videotapes, and informal interviews with practicum students, directing teachers, and principals.

Teacher's and Coach's Peer Coaching Forms

Two of the forms developed for this study were a coach's form and a teacher's form (see Figures 2 & 3). The peer coach's form included a space for the coach to write what he/she had been asked to observe, an outline of the Purdom-Wynn Lesson Plan Format which served as a reminder of the lesson components that should be evident in most lessons, and a place to list two strengths and two suggestions for improvement. On the teacher's form the practicum student presenting the lesson wrote what he/she wanted the coach to observe. After teaching the lesson, the teacher reflected in writing on lesson implementation, how the coach provided help, and goals for future lessons. The preobservation response clarified the focus of the observation for both the practicum student and the peer coach. Post-observation written responses allowed the peer coach to note strengths and suggestions about the lesson presentation while the practicum student reflected in

Figure 2
Peer Coach's Form

Coach _____ Date _____
Teacher _____ School/Grade _____

I have been asked to observe _____

Purdum-Wynn Lesson Plan Format:

Introduction:

- Gets attention in a manner relevant to lesson.
- Reviews previously learned and related concepts when appropriate.
- Establishes purpose of lesson clearly.
- Communicates attitude of enthusiasm.

Presentation of Concept:

- Gives definition and diverse range of examples which focus on critical attributes.
- Shares non examples which are closely related to examples.
- Provides opportunities for students to example-test with examples and non examples.

Variety of Stimuli:

- Incorporates concrete, representational, and abstract stimuli.
- Provides for auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning styles.

Sequence and Transition:

- Presents content in a logical, step-by-step manner with increasing levels of difficulty.
- Uses academic transition statements to focus on new ideas or concepts.
- Reviews within presentation where appropriate.
- Has brisk pacing.

Follow-up with Feedback:

- Provides guided practice.
- Provides for immediate and precise feedback.
- Uses a variety of materials and types of practice.
- Provides extension activities for students who finish early.
- Provides remediation or reteaching of content when it is evident from student response or work that this is necessary.

Management of Student Conduct:

- Stops misconduct.
- Maintains instructional momentum.
- Prevents problems.

Successes:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

Suggestions:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

Self-Reflection based on today's experience as a coach:

Paired Peer Placement with Peer Coaching

writing on strategy implementation, modification of strategies, and goals for future lessons. The post-observation conference provided opportunities for debriefing for both the practicum student and the peer coach. A set of forms was completed during the peer coaching cycle for each classroom lesson presentation. Paired peer placement assured immediate, ongoing feedback for each and every lesson presentation and opportunities for reflection.

Surveys

During the first semester of the study, surveys completed by Level 1 practicum students and directing teachers included open-ended questions that addressed the advantages and disadvantages of paired peer placement with peer coaching for the practicum students, the directing teacher, and the classroom students. Responses from these surveys were analyzed, organized, and categorized, thus providing the basis for subsequent surveys that included close-ended statements that were rated on a four-point scale and used in Study 1 Level 2 and Study 2 Levels 1 and 2. In addition, there was a comments section on the survey where participants could express their concerns and/or provide additional insight about peer coaching (see Figures 4 & 5).

Results

The results of the quantitative survey responses from the practicum students are presented in Table 1, and those of the directing teachers are presented in Table 2. These data were analyzed by computing the means and standard deviations of the

Figure 3
Teacher's Form

Teacher _____ Date _____

Coach _____ School/Grade _____

1. Self-Identified teaching concern for coach to observe:
2. How did your coach help you?
3. Reflections on your lesson:
4. Implementation of suggestions and goal achievement based on previous coaching sessions:
5. Goals for future lessons:

ratings from each data source. The consistency of the ratings across studies and across the two practicum levels within Study 2 was investigated by testing for differences in means using an analysis of variance (ANOVA). To conduct pairwise follow-up tests of statistically significant ANOVAs, Tukey's HSD procedure was used to maintain Type 1 error control at the .05 level. The qualitative data were used in conjunction with the quantitative data. These data were analyzed by identifying themes in the open-ended responses.

Participants' Perceptions

One set of data addresses the perceptions of the participants in the paired peer placement with peer coaching program about the effects of their peer coaching experiences. These fall under the categories of support, instructional skill transfer, and reflection.

Support: The practicum students ratings of the items representing support were high for both studies. The means exceeded 3.0 on the 4-point response scale for all items except the responses from the Level 2 practicum students in Study 2 for "Encourages Risk Taking" (for these practicum students, the mean response was 2.95). However, for three of the five items measuring support, statistically significant differences were observed among the three means. For "Developing and Maintaining Self-Esteem" the means ranged from 3.27 to 3.90. The tests of pairwise

Figure 4
Practicum Student Peer Coaching Survey

Please use the following code and circle the appropriate numbers:

- 1 - Not beneficial
- 2 - Slightly beneficial
- 3 - Moderately beneficial
- 4 - Very beneficial

Peer coaching affects my teaching in the following areas:

1. Lesson Planning and Preparation	1	2	3	4
2. Presenting Lessons	1	2	3	4
3. Receiving Feedback	1	2	3	4
4. Reflecting and Thinking About My Own Teaching	1	2	3	4
5. Implementing Strategies from College	1	2	3	4
6. Receiving Support and Encouragement	1	2	3	4
7. Developing and Maintaining Self-Esteem	1	2	3	4
8. Sharing and Bonding	1	2	3	4
9. Encourages Risk-Taking	1	2	3	4
10. Helps with Classroom Management	1	2	3	4

Comments:

Paired Peer Placement with Peer Coaching

differences revealed that the mean response from Level 1 practicum students in Study 2 was significantly higher than that of the Level 2 practicum students in the same study, but that the Study 1 mean differed from neither of these. For the two other items that showed statistical significance in the ANOVA ("Sharing and Bonding" and "Encourages Risk Taking"), the Tukey test revealed that the Level 2 practicum students in Study 2 responded significantly lower than either of the other groups of practicum students, but that the two remaining groups were not significantly different from each other.

The directing teacher responses (Table 2) to the two items measuring support were consistently high across the three groups (for each item, the ANOVA suggested no significant difference among the three group means). On the 4-point response scale, the means ranged from 3.84 to 3.90 for "Receiving Support and Encouragement," and from 3.55 to 3.78 for "Help with Classroom Management."

The qualitative data from the practicum students supported the overall recognition of the importance of the support received through the peer coaching. The reasons provided by the practicum students for the positive ratings included:

The stress level would be much higher without the support and understanding that a peer coach provides. Peer coaches provide a degree of comfort that enables the

Figure 5
Directing Teacher Peer Coaching Survey

Please use the following code and circle the appropriate numbers:

- 1 - Not beneficial
- 2 - Slightly beneficial
- 3 - Moderately beneficial
- 4 - Very beneficial

I observed the value to practicum students of being placed in peer pairs includes the following:

1. Lesson Planning and Preparation	1	2	3	4
2. Presenting Lessons	1	2	3	4
3. Implementing Strategies from College	1	2	3	4
4. Receiving Support and Encouragement	1	2	3	4
5. Help with Classroom Management	1	2	3	4

Pairs of practicum students in my classroom help my students and me in the following areas:

6. Students Receive Individual Instruction	1	2	3	4
7. Small Group Instruction	1	2	3	4
8. Involved Projects Are Implemented	1	2	3	4
9. Free to Help Students Individually/Small Groups	1	2	3	4
10. I Learn a Lot From Both Teachers	1	2	3	4

Comments:

intern (practicum students) to feel not so isolated and alone. (Study 2, Level 1, Student 22)

To know that while you are up in front of the class, there is someone who will be there to support, understand, and encourage you makes all the difference in the world. (Study 1, Level 2, Student 15)

Table 1
Student Teacher Responses

Item		Study 1 Level 2 (n = 37)	Study 2 Level 1 (n = 41)	Level 2 (n = 40)	F
Support:					
Receiving Support and Encouragement	M	3.78	3.95	3.75	2.27
	SD	0.42	0.22	0.63	
Developing and Maintaining Self-Esteem	M	3.59	3.90	3.27	9.45 *
	SD	0.64	0.30	0.88	
Sharing and Bonding	M	3.72	3.92	3.37	7.98 *
	SD	0.56	0.26	0.90	
Encourages Risk Taking	M	3.48	3.51	2.95	7.50 *
	SD	0.69	0.60	0.88	
Helps with Classroom Management	M	3.48	3.80	3.45	3.06
	SD	0.69	0.60	0.78	
Instructional Skill Transfer:					
Lesson Planning and Preparation	M	3.43	3.04	2.95	3.27
	SD	0.73	0.97	0.88	
Presenting Lessons	M	3.45	3.36	2.92	5.79 *
	SD	0.65	0.73	0.83	
Receiving Feedback	M	3.59	3.82	3.47	3.11
	SD	0.72	0.44	0.75	
Implementing Strategies and Techniques from College	M	3.27	3.34	2.85	5.09 *
	SD	0.65	0.73	0.83	
Reflection:					
Reflecting and Thinking about My Own Teaching	M	3.37	3.53	3.30	1.10
	SD	0.76	0.59	0.82	

Note. Responses are based on 4-point Likert ratings, in which 1 = Not Beneficial and 4 = Very Beneficial.

* $p < .05$

Paired Peer Placement with Peer Coaching

Similarly, the qualitative data from the directing teachers reinforced the importance of support. For example:

[Peer pairing] is definitely beneficial to the practicum students by giving them instant peer feedback. The extra hands for all of our projects was wonderful. (Study 2, Level 1, Teacher 3)

Table 2
Directing Teacher Responses

Item		Study 1 Level 2 (n = 37)	Study 2 Level 1 (n = 41)	Level 2 (n = 40)	F
Support:					
Receiving Support and Encouragement	M	3.89	3.90	3.84	0.08
	SD	0.32	0.31	0.69	
Help with Classroom Management	M	3.78	3.55	3.63	0.55
	SD	0.55	0.76	0.69	
Instructional Skill Transfer:					
Lesson Planning and Preparation *	M	3.77	3.45	3.57	1.04
	SD	0.43	0.82	0.77	
Presenting Lessons	M	3.77	3.45	3.47	1.08
	SD	0.43	0.76	0.96	
Implementing Strategies and Techniques from College	M	3.72	3.50	3.52	0.85
	SD	0.46	0.61	0.62	
Other Items:					
Students Receive Individual Instruction	M	3.77	3.75	3.73	0.03
	SD	0.43	0.44	0.65	
Small Group Instruction	M	3.77	3.70	3.68	0.12
	SD	0.55	0.57	0.75	
Involved Projects are Implemented	M	3.83	3.80	3.36	2.63
	SD	0.38	0.52	1.01	
I am Freed to Help Students Individually/Small Groups	M	3.83	3.60	3.36	1.95
	SD	0.38	0.68	0.96	
I Learn A lot From Both Teachers	M	3.55	3.45	3.57	0.21
	SD	0.51	0.83	0.61	

Note. Responses are based on 4-point Likert ratings, in which 1 = Not Beneficial and 4 = Very Beneficial.

* p < .05

Concerns from directing teachers related to peer pairs include being overly dependent on each other, finding sufficient time to help both practicum students plan lessons, and then enough time to give both practicum students quality feedback. Representative comments are:

The only difficulty I found in having a pair of interns was in my planning ahead to have two lessons each day for them to work up and present. (Study 1, Level 2, Teacher 15)

Although I acknowledge the security that derives from being one of a pair, I worry that the interns [practicum students] depend too much upon one another [in some cases] rather than upon themselves. (Study 2, Level 2, Teacher 13)

I found having a pair of students at one time beneficial to my students, however, I didn't feel I could give the individual attention to the practicum teachers' needs. It was difficult to give either of them the time to teach enough lessons and most importantly, the time to individually conference with them. (Study 2, Level 1, Teacher 10)

Instructional Skill Transfer: The ratings provided by the practicum students for the items addressing instructional skill transfer were somewhat lower, in general, than those addressing support. However, for Study 1 (Level 2) and the Level 1 practicum students in Study 2, the means all exceeded 3.0. The means of the Level 2 practicum students in Study 2 were less than 3.0 on three of the four items. The ANOVAs revealed statistically significant differences among means for two of the four items ("Presenting Lessons" and "Implementing Strategies and Techniques from College"). The pairwise follow-up tests revealed that for each of these items, the mean response of the Level 2 practicum students in Study 2 was significantly lower than the means of the other two groups.

In contrast to the differences reported by the Level 2 practicum students in Study 2, the directing teachers were consistently high in their responses to the three items addressing instructional skill transfer across all three groups. The means from the directing teachers ranged only from 3.45 to 3.77.

The qualitative data suggested that practicum students were especially appreciative of the constructive feedback provided by the peer coaches. They discovered that classroom teachers are very busy and often do not have the time or are reluctant to give specific suggestions. For example,

Peers have made suggestions for improving my lessons and were grateful when I commented on theirs. I also appreciated it when they spoke up and added vital information or taught a concept in a different way when the students did not comprehend. (Study 1, Level 1, Student 14)

[My peer coach and I] always talk about our lessons we are doing for the next week before we even leave the class. She offers good compliments and suggestions. (Study 2, Level 1, Student 7)

Paired Peer Placement with Peer Coaching

Hopefully practicum students continue to help each other in planning lessons when they return to the campus. However this is not always the case as one classroom teacher stated,

I believe the peer pairs help each other in the classroom, but I do not see much help outside when planning. (Study 2, Level 1, Directing Teacher 4)

Reflection: A single item measured the perceptions of practicum students regarding reflection. The responses to this item were consistently high across the three groups of practicum students ranging only from 3.30 (Level 2 of Study 2) to 3.53 (Level 1 of Study 2).

Surveys, journal entries, teacher and peer coaching forms, and seminar discussions frequently referred to the value of reflection on the practicum students' professional growth. The dialogue journal entries included,

We learned a lot by just watching each other and talking about it. Peer coaching helped in providing me with ideas for my own lessons. I get to observe and learn so much. It is good to take ideas from my peer partner's teaching. (Study 2, Level 2, Student 5)

I think that we really learned from each other's mistakes. On Monday she taught a wonderful lesson on armadillos. I was assigned to teach a similar lesson on Tuesday. I was able to pick up on a few things she missed and add the concepts to my lesson. (Study 1, Level 2, Student 17)

Perceived Effects on the Classroom

Additional items on the directing teacher version of the survey addressed potential benefits of peer coaching for the classroom (see Table 2). These benefits ranged from increased instruction for classroom students to classroom teachers learning from practicum students. As with the other responses from the directing teachers, the mean ratings to these five items were consistently high for the three groups. The means for these items ranged only from 3.36 to 3.83.

The open-ended responses from the directing teachers supported the perceived benefits of the peer coaching:

I saw a lot of growth in [the students'] lesson planning, presentations, and class control. They helped each other with lessons and ideas for lessons. It seems that the pairs really "coach" each other. (Study 2, Level 1, Teacher 19)

I also think [the peer coaching] benefits the practicum students in that it teaches them to be part of a "team teaching" experience which will benefit them in their professional careers. (Study 2, Level 2, Teacher 13)

Discussion

This program appears to be effective. Graduates have experienced success in the classroom as evidenced by the fact that four of the five semi-finalists for the

county Beginning Teacher of the Year Award were Study 1 participants. In addition, two of the Study 2 participants shared the distinction of receiving the county award as Beginning Teachers of the Year.

When contemplating the implementation of a paired peer placement with peer coaching program, college supervisors may have to *sell* practicum participants on the advantages of teaching with a peer. Directing teachers may also have to be *sold* on the advantages to classroom students and the teaching profession. Another challenge facing many supervisors is the competitiveness across and within groups which sometimes occurs. Such effects were noted during Study 2, Level 2 and are reflected in the resulting student teacher data (see Table 1). Redencich, et al. (1998) note the formation of cliques, group pressure, and the development of serious and recurring problems across some teams. They suggest a "systematic study of team cultures in preservice teacher education programs is much needed to guide colleges in maximizing the potential of teams to build caring and moral professionals with inter- and intrapersonal skills befitting the profession" (p. 30).

One limitation of this study is the lack of clear method for measuring the degree to which lesson planning, preparation, and presentation were enhanced, thus anecdotal data were used. Future research opportunities abound for more precise measurement of this phenomenon perhaps through the evaluation of videotaped lessons (Wynn, 1986). Another area of potential research is a thorough examination of the effects of different types of pairing; for example pairing a weaker student with a stronger student, pairing a strong student with another strong student, and pairing students with different teaching styles. As this study has taken place over a four-year period on the same university campus, additional insight could be obtained by replicating the study on other campuses to determine the possibility of generalizing the findings to other populations. Suggestions and collaboration with colleagues in the preparation of future teachers is welcomed.

Based on the qualitative and quantitative data from this study, the implementation of an Instructional Strategies Model along with paired peer placement with peer coaching in early elementary field experiences has a perceived positive impact on practicum students teaching experiences and professional growth. The perceived benefits of peer coaching in early elementary field experiences include: (1) development of support and collegiality; (2) improved instructional strategy implementation; and (3) expansion of opportunities for reflection and self-analysis for both the practicum student being observed and the peer coach. Practicum students, classroom teachers, and elementary students all profit from paired peer placement with peer coaching to enhance lesson planning, preparation, and presentation in early field experiences.

References

Ackland, R. (1991). A review of the peer coaching literature. *Journal of Staff Development*,

Paired Peer Placement with Peer Coaching

- 12 (1), 22-27.
- Anderson, N.A., & Radencich, M.C. (in press). The value of feedback in an early field experience: Peer, teacher, and supervisor coaching. *Action in Teacher Education*.
- Anderson, R.H., & Snyder, K.J. (1984). Peer coaching. *Record of Educational Administration and Supervision*, 5, 30-32.
- Chrisco, I.M. (1984). Peer assistance works. *Educational Leadership*, 46 (8), 31-32.
- Hawkey, K. (1995). Learning from peers: The experience of student teachers in school-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 46 (3), 175-183.
- Hull, R., Baker, R., Kyle, J., & Goad, R. (1981). *Research on student teaching: A question of transfer*. A report of a research seminar conducted at the University of Oregon. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 223 561).
- Joyce, B., & Showers B. (1980). Improving inservice training: The message of research. *Educational Leadership*, 37, 379-385.
- Kurtts, S. (1997). Peer coaching and the development of reflective practice in preservice teachers. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Eastern Educational Research Association, Hilton Head, SC.
- McAllister, E.A., & Neubert, G.A. (1995). *New teachers helping new teachers: preservice peer coaching*. Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication.
- Neubert, G.A., & McAllister, E.A. (1993, Fall). Peer coaching in preservice education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 20 (4), 77-84.
- Neubert, G.A., & Stover, L. (1994). *Peer coaching in teacher education* (Fastback 371). Bloomington, In: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.
- Redencich, M.C., Thompson, T., Anderson, N.A., Oropallo, K., Fleege, P., Harrison, M., Hanley, P., & Gomez, S. (1998). The culture of cohorts: What's happening in preservice teacher education teams? Manuscript submitted for publication, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.
- Rooney, J. (1993). Teacher evaluation: No more "Super" Vision." *Educational Leadership*, 51 (2), 43-44.
- Showers, B., & Joyce B. (1996). The evolution of peer coaching. *Educational Leadership*, 53 (6), 12-16.
- Wynn, M.J. (1986). Student teacher transfer of training to the classroom: Effects of an experimental model. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.
- Wynn, M. (1995). Paired peer placement, peer coaching, and transfer of training in early elementary field experiences. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Eastern Educational Research Association, Hilton Head, SC.
- Wynn, M.J. (1996). *Creative teaching strategies: A resource book for k-8*. Albany, NY: Delmar.