

Using Digital Media to Develop Preservice Teacher Candidate's Abilities to Build Peaceable Classrooms

This poster session examines the use of digital media as a tool for providing virtual field experiences that allow early childhood teacher candidates to observe and assess children's social strategy use (SSU) in play situations. Experienced early childhood teachers indicate that they are finding more young children with and without disabilities arriving in group settings with fewer skills for interacting constructively with their classmates. In order to be responsible members of a caring and peaceful community, children need many opportunities to build a repertoire of positive social behaviors, attitudes, and skills. It is critical that early childhood teachers be prepared to assess and support social strategy use (SSU) in order to develop and implement appropriate interventions.

Increasingly children with disabilities are being included in regular classrooms; it has become apparent that a lack of effective social strategy use can greatly impede children's chances for successful integration (Prasad, 1994). These competencies can include communication, problem solving and decision making, assertion, peer and group interaction, and self-management (Sugai & Lewis, 1996).

The integration of social strategy use instruction into the regular curriculum can enhance a young child's ability to function effectively in the mainstream classroom. However, according to a recent survey of teacher education programs nationwide, social strategy use instruction was not addressed in mission statements, nor was it explicitly taught in courses (Marlow & Inman, 2001). Most of the education programs that responded to the Marlow & Inman study indicated an interest in helping their education candidates develop the skills, knowledge and dispositions necessary to develop and implement effective instruction on social strategy use.

Teacher candidates can learn about social strategy use by observing children engaging in appropriate play situations. An alternative to live observations of SSU are computer-based observations (CBO). In this poster session we explore the use of CBO, a series of digitized video cases, as a tool to refine teacher candidates' abilities to observe and evaluate children's individual strengths and weaknesses.

The digitized video cases contained in CBO provided opportunities for groups of teacher candidates to observe the SSU of a particular set of young children. Creating a multimedia CD ROM program facilitates the teacher educator's effective use of Computer Based Observations in teacher preparation programs. Teacher candidates watched video segments and used a rubric to analyze social strategy use captured on video cases. Impact of this instruction on preservice teachers will be addressed in this poster session. The multimedia CD ROM developed by the presenters will be shared with participants.