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ONLINE TUTORIAL FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS: STORYTELLING FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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Mentoring teacher candidates to successfully navigate the complex and intersecting roles of student and beginning teacher is a core component of teacher education. The online Professional Practice Tutorial for Beginning Teachers created in 2011 consisted of seven case studies which invited teacher candidates to critically analyze and reflect on the application of the Ontario College of Teachers Ethical and Professional Standards of practice. The tutorial was successful with 26% (540 invited) teacher candidates responding, and 52% of these respondents completing the tutorial. In 2012 the tutorial was enhanced to include video learning objects to accompany case studies based on teacher candidates' stories from the field. Bell (2010) asserts that in using anti-racist pedagogy, "…stories and words of others sometimes open up less defensive, more honest dialogue" (2010, p. 10). Therefore, storytelling was used to develop case studies based on the experiences of teacher candidates, and to provide a creative opportunity to explore the professional standards of practice in a non-threatening and meaningful manner.

The importance of the video learning objects was two-fold in terms of increasing student engagement:
1) offered a differentiated approach by providing visual and auditory formats;
2) allowed for a nuanced understanding of the material by incorporating body language and verbal tone to create meaning.

The use of video learning objects with a tutorial text provided an innovative approach to learning and student engagement. The involvement of recent graduates in 'storytelling from the field' resulted in relevant learning resources which were specific to the learning needs of teacher candidates.

Intended outcomes included:
• Case studies based on 'stories from the field' allowed teacher candidates to explore the ethical and professional standards of the teaching profession in a non-threatening and meaningful manner.
• Teacher candidates critically examined and reflected on the application of the ethical and professional standards to envision what professional practice meant to them personally, and as a member of the teaching profession.
• This peer-developed educational resource supported and guided the application and integration of knowledge – linking theory and practice for teacher candidates as they engaged in an experiential learning process (Darling-Hammond, as cited in Joong, 2007).
• The tutorial promoted best practices and continuous learning.
The Professional Practice Tutorial for Beginning Teachers was developed to emphasize the importance of professional practice as a core component of the teacher education program.

Success as a beginning teacher may be directly related to the ability to engage in professional practice, and as Osterman (1990) asserts, this is why teacher education pre-service programs incorporate reflective practice as a component of professional development.

References:
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keywords: professional practice, teacher education, ethical and professional standards, reflexivity.