# Learning to Lesson Plan: A Mentor's Impact on Pre-service Teachers

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**Abstract**

Lesson planning is considered an essential skill of teachers. As pre-service teachers first encounter the fundamental principles of planning for instruction, the complexity of planning to support the rigorous learning goals of content, curriculum, and individual student needs could be daunting. The mixed methods study explored how mentoring influenced early-program pre-service teachers' self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and progression through stages of concerns (Fuller, 1969) in relation to lesson planning. Participants, secondary early-program pre-service teachers enrolled in a Midwestern teacher preparation program, included a target group who received mentoring and a comparison group who did not. Using constant comparison techniques guided by the theoretical frameworks, researchers gathered and analyzed qualitative target group data from participant reflections and mentor conference memos. Researchers collected and analyzed quantitative data using Likert-type survey questions also linked to the frameworks of this study. Integrated findings from the qualitative and quantitative data revealed that when a mentor provided metacognitive modeling, addressed anxiety, recognized incremental victories, and offered focused feedback, pre-service teachers' concerns were addressed and their efficacy increased related to lesson planning.

*Keywords:* empirical research, lesson planning, pre-service teacher education, mixed methods

Many professions allow for a substantial learning curve at the outset of an individual's career. However, the field of education expects a teacher, immediately after completing a preparation program, to independently and effectively manage and monitor P-12 student learning. As beginning teachers start their careers under these expectations, they are likely to encounter high-stakes evaluations and concerning attrition rates. Understanding this context, teacher preparation programs should do everything possible to advance the skills of pre-service teachers as soon and as far as possible (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012).

Teacher preparation programs vary, but most address standards which include the fundamental skill of lesson planning (Chief State School Officers, 2013; Tummons, 2010). Despite being a basic teaching skill, the challenges of learning to lesson plan are well documented in the literature. In the following study, researchers addressed how intentional mentorship influences pre-service teachers enrolled in a traditional four-year university teacher preparation program.  Specifically, researchers examined how mentoring impacts pre-service teachers' self-efficacy and levels of concern as they develop the most basic of teaching skills – lesson planning.

## Literature Review

### Pre-service Teachers and Lesson Planning

Thoughtful lesson planning is complex, and teaching pre-service teachers the implicit cognitive processes involved in lesson planning is difficult (John, 2006; Jones, Jones, & Vermette, 2011; Tummons, 2010; Rusznyak & Walton, 2011). Many teacher educators teach pre-service teachers how to create a product - a lesson plan comprised of required individual components, such as objectives, materials list, procedures, strategies, assessments, and closures (Drost & Levine, 2015). Despite the explicit teaching of individual lesson plan components,

many pre-service teachers struggle with writing and assessing objectives (Jones, et al., 2011; Eun Kyung, 2012), as well as planning effective questions, (Purdum-Cassidy, Nesmith, Meyer & Cooper, 2015), student engagement (Jones, et al., 2011), and instructional strategies (Ruys, Keer, & Aelterman, 2012). Furthermore, pre-service teachers' response to this product-based approach may be primarily one of complying with technical expectations of the required lesson plan components rather than engaging in the complex cognitive processes involved in lesson planning (Tummons, 2010).

Preparation programs' vision and selection of key lesson plan components matters because most preservice teachers adopt components (e.g. objectives, procedures, strategies) required by their program. Only later in their careers will they begin to integrate important complex variables such as differentiation, learning styles, and cross-curricular connections into their planning (Fielder, 2014; John, 2006; Johnson 2000). This evolving nature of planning presents a further challenge in that lesson planning processes taught within preparation programs may not match the planning practices of more experienced classroom teachers with whom pre-service teachers are placed for clinical experiences (Eun Kyung, 2012).

Pre-service teachers themselves recognize their struggles with lesson planning. In an extensive review of nearly 50 years of literature, pre-service teachers consistently identified components of lesson planning (Cherubini, 2009) as a concern. Unsurprisingly, planning is a greater concern for pre-service teachers in the early stages than for those in more advanced stages of their preparation programs (Cho, 2017; Wee, Weber, & Park, 2014).

*Mentoring Pre-service Teachers*

Mentoring could potentially address some challenges of learning to lesson plan. Mentoring is defined as one-to-one support of a novice or less experienced practitioner (mentee)

by a more experienced practitioner (mentor), designed to enhance the professional learning of the mentee and to mediate their induction into the profession (Orland-Barak, 2014; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Hobson, Harris, Buckner-Manley, & Smith, 2012). Mentoring can make novice teachers "more autonomous as professionals, reflective of experience, and aware of the students' needs" (Kelehear, 2003, p. 35). Although mentoring is common in teacher preparation programs, who assumes the mentor role as well as the duration, context, and purpose of mentoring varies (Ambrosetti, 2009; Ambrosetti, Knight, & Dekkers, 2014; Hobson et al., 2009; Hobson et al., 2012).

Despite variation in the structure of mentoring, researchers have identified mentor qualities particularly helpful to pre-service teachers. First, mentors should have strong instructional skills in order to help pre-service teachers address the common and difficult task of transferring theory into practice (Orland-Barak & Hasin, 2010; Hudson, Usak, & Savran-Gencer, 2009; Schneider, 2007). Second, the ability of the mentor to provide emotional support is critical to foster a positive and productive relationship with pre-service teachers (Orland-Barak & Hasin, 2010; Feiman-Nemser & Rosaen, 1997a). Mentors foster effective relationships through affinity and personal commitment to the success of the mentee as well as by establishing goals and expectations with the mentee (Feiman-Nemser & Rosaen, 1997b). Finally, trust enhances the ability of mentors to hone skills, learn from mistakes, build confidence, and reach goals (Wasonga, Wanzare, & Dawo, 2015; Bennis, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Northouse, 2004, Schwille, 1997). Effective mentors establish trust with pre-service teachers by being flexible, enthusiastic, friendly, and willing to help (Orland-Barak & Hasin, 2010; Hudson & Nguyen, 2008).

**Theoretical Framework**

This study, framed by the theories of Fuller (1969) and Bandura (1997), examined how mentoring support in the early stages of a teacher preparation program might resolve pre-service teachers' struggles related to learning to lesson plan. Fuller (1969) outlined three stages of concerns pre-service teachers encounter: (a) self concerns related to acceptance and self-adequacy; (b) task concerns related to the day-to-day responsibilities of teaching, such as lesson planning; and (c) impact concerns related to P-12 student learning. If unresolved, concerns could inhibit an individual's development as a teacher (Fuller, 1969).

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997) offers an efficacy framework to address pre-service teacher concerns identified by Fuller (1969) and improve their confidence. According to Bandura (1977, 1997) teacher efficacy is based on four components: (a) early mastery experiences; (b) emotional states; such as excitement or anxiety which lead to perseverance; (c) vicarious experiences; (d) actionable feedback from a mentor, coach, or respected colleague. Early support for pre-service teachers is crucial, as positive change in teacher efficacy is more likely to occur during initial stages of becoming a teacher (Hoy & Spero, 2005) and research has found a direct relationship between teacher self-efficacy and increased P-12 student performance (Ashton, 1984; Bandura, 1977, 1997; Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Denzine, Cooney, & McKenzie, 2005; Hoy & Spero, 2005; Lin & Gorrell, 2000).

## Rationale and Significance

Drost and Levine (2015) called for continued research on how to support pre-service teachers in the process of planning. Others have called for teacher educators to reconsider how to support pre-service teachers not only as they learn the individual components of lesson planning but also as they develop an individualized or personal process for planning (Eun Kyung, 2012; Peralta & Burns, 2012).

Jones, et al. (2011) suggested teacher educators "intentionally discuss the lesson planning and delivery decisions" (p. 855) with pre-service teachers at the time lesson plans are being written. However, research to inform a discursive, shared approach to teaching lesson planning is notably absent from the literature (Hobson et al., 2009). Existing studies have been limited to pre-service teachers during student teaching experiences (Morton & Gray, 2010; Smith, 2005). Furthermore, much of the existing research on mentoring pre-service teachers is within the supervisory context of student teaching and other field experiences where mentors have an evaluative as well as a mentoring role (Ambrosetti, 2009; Feiman-Nemser & Rosaen, 1997). This study explores mentoring as a means to decrease concerns and increase the efficacy of pre-service teachers in the area of lesson planning, a skill which has been identified as essential for beginning teachers (CCSS0, 2013).

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of mentoring as it related to early-program, pre-service teachers' concerns and efficacy related to lesson planning. Two research questions were addressed.

1. How will mentoring address lesson planning concerns of early-program, pre-service teachers?

2. How will mentoring support early-program, pre-service teachers' efficacy in regard to lesson planning?

## Methodology

Researchers employed a sequential explanatory mixed methods design. This approach allowed the quantitative data analysis to refine and provide general understanding to the qualitative data and overarching research problem concerning mentoring support for pre-service

teachers. The researchers employed two distinct methods phases: qualitative followed by quantitative (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). The interpretation stage included the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. Following this interpretation stage, qualitative and quantitative data were connected during the integration stage for further analyses. With complex design structures, visual models (see Figure 1) are considered best practice in expressing mixed methods procedures (Creswell, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

**Figure 1.**

*Visual model for the mixed methods design structure of this study*
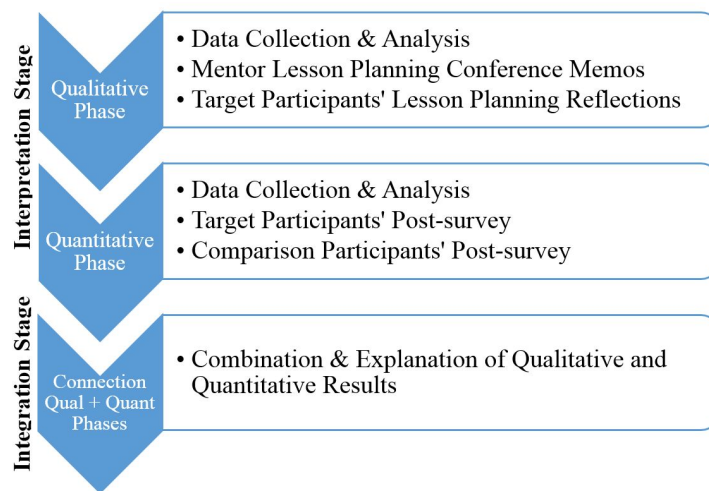


*Figure 1.* Visual model for the mixed methods design structure of this study.

The qualitative components of the mixed methods design utilized instrumental case study methods (Stake, 2005). The primary researcher examined the mentor's conference memos and early-program pre-service teachers' reflections. The memos and reflections were collected within a finite time frame, the specific context of a teacher preparation course, and from a relatively small number of pre-service teachers (N=11).

The quantitative component utilized survey methods. Two groups of pre-service teachers,

a target (N=10) and comparison (N=21) group, completed a survey. The research team compiled and compared data from the groups using descriptive statistics and independent samples t-test analysis. The research team deemed the t-test to be an appropriate statistical analysis given the sample size (De Winter, 2013).

The mixed methods design minimized the quantitative disadvantage of a small sample size and mitigated researcher bias in the qualitative findings (Creswell et al., 2003; Greene & Caracelli, 1997). The research team gave equal priority to the data, analyzing and integrating both quantitative and qualitative data through the lenses of Fuller's stages of concern and Bandura's concept of teacher efficacy.

**Participants**

Researchers used a convenience sample of early-program pre-service teachers recruited from a first-year lesson planning course in an undergraduate, secondary teacher preparation program at a mid-sized Midwestern university in the United States. Students enrolled in the course represented varied secondary education subject areas. Participants in the target (11) and comparison (21) groups were drawn from two distinct sections of the course and taught by the same instructor who was also one of the researchers. Both sections included the same assignments and grading criteria, as well as a required 60-hour practicum experience. Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants signed informed consent prior to taking part in the study.

The mentor, also the primary researcher, was a graduate assistant with 13 years of teaching experience who did not evaluate or grade any participants or other students enrolled in the course or clinical experience. An internal graduate research grant funded the research, and a university institutional review board approved the research.

**Data Collection**

Data collection spanned a 16-week semester. As a requirement of the course, participants in the target and comparison groups completed four lesson plans in their designated content areas. During the first 10 weeks, participants created the initial three plans for a hypothetical class of secondary students. Participants spent the remaining six weeks of the semester in a 60-hour practicum experience in a secondary school. For the fourth lesson plan, participants planned and taught a lesson as stipulated by a classroom teacher in the practicum setting. Data were collected from three sources: (a) mentor conference observation memos; (b) participant reflections; (c) end-of-course surveys.

*Mentor Conference Observations Memos*

In addition to the lesson plan assignments, members of the target group participated in three, 15-20 minute mentor conferences scheduled one week prior to the submission of each of the first three lesson plans. During the conferences, the mentor asked participants to identify areas of strength and points of concern related to their lesson plans. Answers to these questions guided the discussion for the remainder of the conference. The mentor offered in-person or telephone conference options for the second and third conference as time constraints became a factor for some target group participants. Approximately one-third of the target group took advantage of the telephone option for one or both conferences. Following each conference, the mentor wrote observational memos describing the lesson plan, participant concerns, and the support and metacognitive modeling offered by the mentor.

*Participant Reflections*

Within two weeks after completing the first three lesson plans, target group participants wrote an initial reflection regarding their experiences. In their reflections, participants answered

seven questions related to their lesson planning experiences (Figure 2). To encourage honest

responses, participants submitted reflections using an anonymous online response system. A

second reflection, also anonymous, focused on the final plan, which participants created without

the mentor assistance. Participants completed the second reflection after teaching the final plan

during their practicum experience. The second reflection targeted the identification of unplanned

or surprising moments during the lesson (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.**

*Participant reflection questions*

| Initial Reflection Questions |
| --- |
| 1.    What about the lesson planning process concerned you the most? |
| 2.    Did you notice a change in concerns over the course of planning sessions 1-3? For example, were you uncertain or apprehensive about aspects of lesson 1 that no longer worried you in lesson 2 or 3? Please explain. |
| 3.    Over the course of planning lessons 1-3, what did you feel most comfortable with? |
| 4.    Did you start the class at this level of comfort, or did it grow over time? Please explain. |
| 5.    Were there any internal or external reasons you can pinpoint for helping you to become a more effective lesson planner? |
| 6.    Were there any internal or external reasons you can pinpoint that hindered you from becoming a more efficient lesson planner? |
| 7.    Optional: Is there anything else you would like the researcher to know about your experience in this study? Feel free to reflect on anything not covered in the questions above. |
| Second Reflection Questions |
| 1.    What about teaching the fourth lesson went differently than planned? How did you respond to the unplanned moments? |
| 2.    What surprised you about the planning and teaching of this lesson? |
| 3.    How has your lesson planning evolved throughout this course experience? |

**End-of-course survey.** The four-point Likert-type survey addressed lesson planning

through the lens of Fuller's stages of concern. Items 1-5 addressed self concerns, items 6-10 task

concerns, and items 11-15 impact concerns. The primary researcher's literature review of Fuller's stages of concern formed the basis of the survey and paralleled a lengthier validated survey related to Fuller's stages of concern for student teachers (Author, 2003). The course instructor as well as a program faculty member, both with previous experience teaching the course, reviewed the survey and provided suggestions to the primary researcher. Ten of 11 target group and 21 comparison group participants completed the survey using an anonymous online survey tool.

**Data Analysis**

Following completion of the course, participants' reflections and mentor's observation memos were investigated a posteriori (Constas, 1992) for recurring categories and themes using the three-stage constant comparison model outlined by Strauss & Corbin (1998). In the open coding stage, the primary researcher read reflections multiple times, highlighting statements that characterized and defined participant responses and/or observations of the mentor. During this stage, the theoretical frameworks provided an initial reference for themes (Constas, 1992). Once the primary researcher found no new defining codes, members of the research team organized the initial codes into axial codes representing broader categories participants expressed or the mentor had observed in the conferences. In the final stage, researchers integrated axial codes and assigned names to the themes (Constas, 1992). The primary researcher used tree diagrams (Creswell, 1998) to visually analyze the: (a) relationship between mentor observation memos data and the theoretical frameworks; (b) evolution of concerns and efficacy evidenced in initial reflections of participants; (c) themes from the second reflections of participants.

The quantitative analysis included calculating means and standard deviations for survey items and using an independent samples t-test to compare the mean scores of the target and

comparison groups' perceptions of concerns related to lesson planning. Researchers chose

independent samples t-test to examine potential differences in the groups. This test assumes the

difference in mean of the dependent variable (perceptions of concern) is found because of the

influence of the independent variable (mentoring support). All analyses set 95% as the

confidence interval, and $p < .05$ was considered statistically significant. Researchers measured

the internal consistency of the 15-item survey using the Cronbach's Alpha reliability statistic. A

coefficient of .910 indicated a high level of internal consistency for the scale given the sample.

The researchers analyzed survey data using SPSS, version 11.

## Findings-Qualitative Analysis

### Mentor Observations After Conference One

Six themes, shown in Figure 3, emerged from the first set of mentor observation notes.

Theme 1 represented participants' over-reliance on teacher-centered direct instruction as the

primary method of delivery. Therefore, the mentor interventions focused on directing

participants toward more student-centered methods. Theme 2 signified a lack of detail in the

plans. The mentor reinforced the need to include steps for procedures, intentional grouping, and

transitions where appropriate. Theme 3 reflected participants' struggle with individual

components of the plan. Intervention included reviewing delivery models, re-working objectives,

and adding formative assessments to the plans. Theme 4 centered on mentor suggestions to focus

the direction of the lesson plan as well as ideas for aligned activities. All participants were

receptive to feedback and guidance. However, many added the mentor's suggestions verbatim

into their plans. Few participants expanded or elaborated on mentor suggestions. Additional

mentor interventions included modeling strategies to deepen participant understanding of

concepts. Theme 5 emphasized participants' lack of instructional techniques to guide secondary

students through subject-specific content. The mentor interventions helped participants plan for

strategies such as note-taking, graphic organizers, and text annotation. Finally, Theme 6

highlighted participants' insecurity related to the lesson planning process. Interventions focused

on identifying strengths within plans and recognizing successful completion of individual

components of a lesson plan as important initial steps toward completion of the entire plan.

**Figure 3**
*Self-efficacy for the task at hand- mentor reflections from conference one*
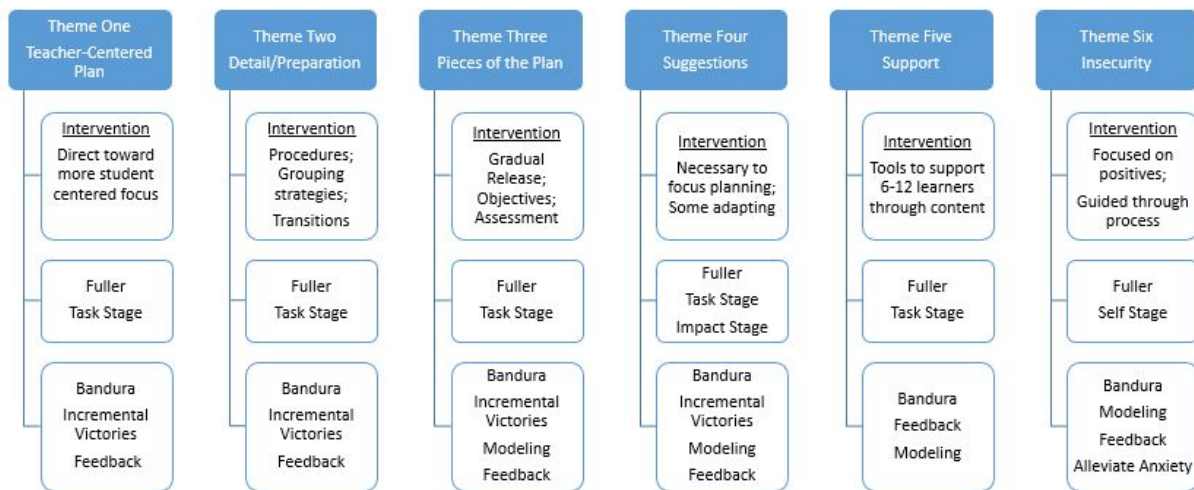


The mentor observation memos from three participants provide evidence of the themes.

"A lot of Alex's lesson was teacher centered. We worked together to break up the lesson

so it became more student centered. She used suggestions to do the first third whole class, the

second third small group and the final third independently. Inserting student engagement

strategies as well as creative grouping was necessary as those were details she didn't yet

understand."

***Themes One, Four, and Five- Teacher-Centered Plan, Suggestions, and Support***

"I basically combed through the lesson [plan] to tweak it for missing procedural aspects.

She (Ashley) was open to any suggestions that would make her plan better. She was very intent

on getting all points possible... I talked her through questions like: Do they cut the shapes out?

Do they draw the shapes? Can they use the shapes more than once? Can they cut a circle in half to make a dome?"

### *Themes Two, Four, and Six- Detail/Preparation, Suggestions, and Insecurity*

"She (Terry) started out unsure of how to write a clear and measurable objective and had a plan that was lacking in detail, instructional strategies and intentional grouping. She was unclear on the lesson planning process and our first conference was spent going over every section in detail."

### *Theme Two and Three- Detail/Preparation, Pieces of the Plan*

"Analysis of the observation notes revealed evidence of Fuller's stages of concern. Participants' anxiety associated with successful completion (i.e., getting a satisfactory grade) of the lesson plan was indicative of self concerns. Participants also demonstrated task concerns in their desire to perform an important skill, lesson planning, with fidelity. Impact concerns emerged as participants began to integrate mentor instructional suggestions to enhance student learning opportunities into their plans."

Examination of the observation memos also revealed interventions aligned to Bandura's sources of efficacy attainment. The interventions of the mentor fell into four categories: (a) identifying and praising incremental victories (glimpses of participants' early mastery of planning); (b) alleviating participant anxiety; (c) creating vicarious experiences through the mentor's metacognitive modeling; (d) providing focused feedback.

### Mentor Observations After Conference Two

Figure 4 depicts five themes, stages of concern, and interventions identified within the second set of observation memos. Themes 1-4 paralleled those following the first conference although participants' progress was noted in each area. A new theme reflecting participants'

ability to transfer and integrate suggestions from the first conference into subsequent lesson plans was noted. The need for support and the insecurity of participants had subsided by the time of the second conference.

**Figure 4.**

*Self-efficacy to shift thinking- mentor reflections from conference two*
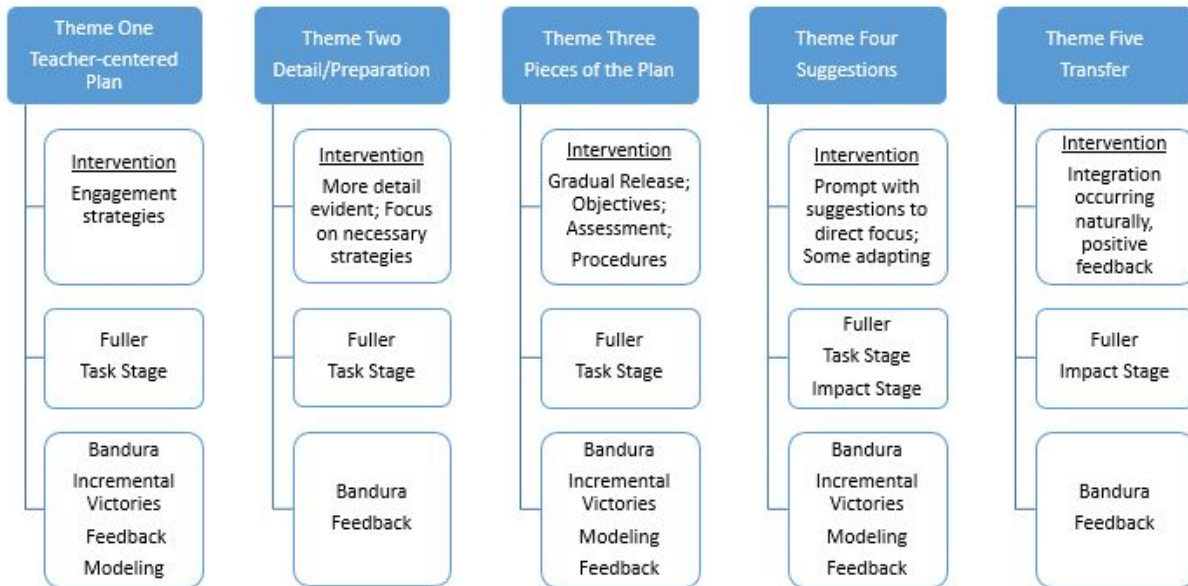


Quotes taken from the same three participants noted above, exemplify the themes and a progression from first to second conference.

> She (Alex) grouped more intentionally this time on her own...Students were to identify the story elements. Her mode of questioning needed developing in that she wanted to just have the teacher ask questions of the whole class. Then she took my suggestion to use a picture book as a tool to read a complete short story that would be easier to manage for the purposes of her objective – to map the 5 elements of a short story.

***Themes One and Five- Teacher-centered, Transfer***

> "Ashley was very intent on doing well in this class and was not afraid to add or subtract where necessary to make this happen."

### *Themes Two and Four- Details, Suggestions*

"I could tell Terry was more confident with the process in that she was more prepared with the amount of work she put into this lesson. She was missing some of the procedural components so important for new teachers to understand, but she was so open and eager to include versions of my suggestions, or her own to make that happen."

### *Themes Three and Four- Pieces of the Plan, Suggestions*

"Fuller's stages were now primarily task focused, with the impact stage emerging in Themes Four and Five. Interventions related to Bandura's theory focused primarily on helping participants achieve incremental victories within the second plan, and creating opportunities for vicarious experiences through modeling the metacognitive process involved in planning, and providing focused feedback."

### Mentor Observations After Conference Three

Figure 5 includes the themes found in the third set of mentor observation memos as well as the stages of concern and interventions. By the end of the third lesson conference, two new themes emerged. The first new theme reflected the majority of participants who arrived at conference three with a complete plan. The mentor intervened with positive feedback. Mentor statements drawn from the observation memos from the same three participants referenced in conferences one and two illustrate the first new theme.

Alex came well prepared with a lesson that had more detail than previous lessons with special attention to including student engagement and planned grouping. Her activities paced well and learning was not all teacher directed.

### *Theme One- Comprehensive Plan*

"I would say by the third lesson she (Ashely) was more intent on doing whatever it took

to arrive at a good product instead of so much concern about her grade."

### *Theme One- Comprehensive Plan*

"She (Terry) just kept on growing. This time she added the following: interactive AS [anticipatory set] with color coding to be connected to later learning; formative assessment throughout (in italics); intentional grouping; purposeful observation; and a graphic organizer for the video portion…. I believe Terry had begun to distinguish herself as a learner who was evolving to more than just checking the assignment box."

### *Theme One- Comprehensive Plan*

The second new theme represented two participants who did not have complete plans. Both of the participants continued to be unable to produce a coherent lesson plan and needed extensive support. However, neither implemented the mentor's suggestions.

"I worked with him (Leon) explaining/suggesting turning his simple story into a puzzle (cut sentences into strips) and put them in envelopes. Then, pass them to small groups and have them try to put the story in order...I told him this was only one way to engage learners and he could come up with his own idea. He didn't do either. He left the written, skeletal text he arrived with exactly as he had it."

### *Theme Two- Progressing*

"I could tell it was just the start of a lesson because it was a very broad outline that I could understand only after talking with her (Julie) on the phone ...I encouraged her to include an instructional strategy... However, she did not do this in her submitted lesson."

**Figure 5**
*Self-efficacy to impact learning – mentor reflections from conference three*
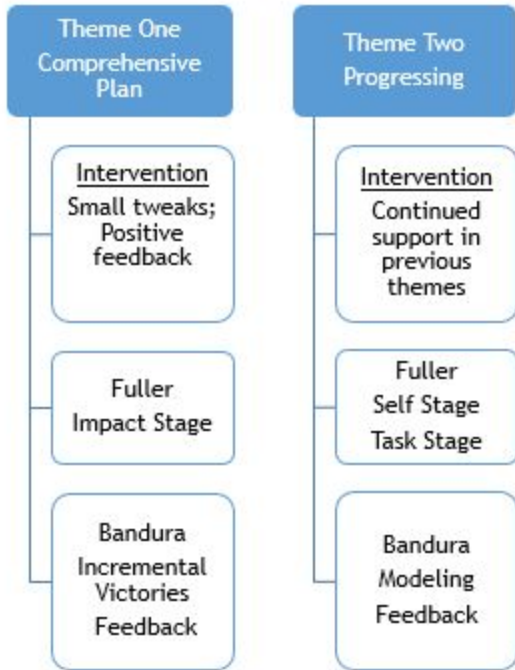
Although most participants had reached Fuller's impact stage, two remained in the self and task stages. Their lesson plans continued to be teacher-centered, and they struggled with writing a complete plan. Interventions related to Bandura's theory focused on recognizing incremental victories represented within the comprehensive plans, continuing the metacognitive modeling of planning, and providing focused feedback.

**Participant Reflections**

Participant reflections provided the second source of qualitative data. Participants wrote initial reflections after submitting the first three lesson plans and a second reflection after completing and teaching the fourth plan. Examination of the reflections uncovered common topics of concerns, ways in which concerns were resolved, and a progression toward increased efficacy represented in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**

*Path to self-efficacy in lesson planning- participants' initial reflection*
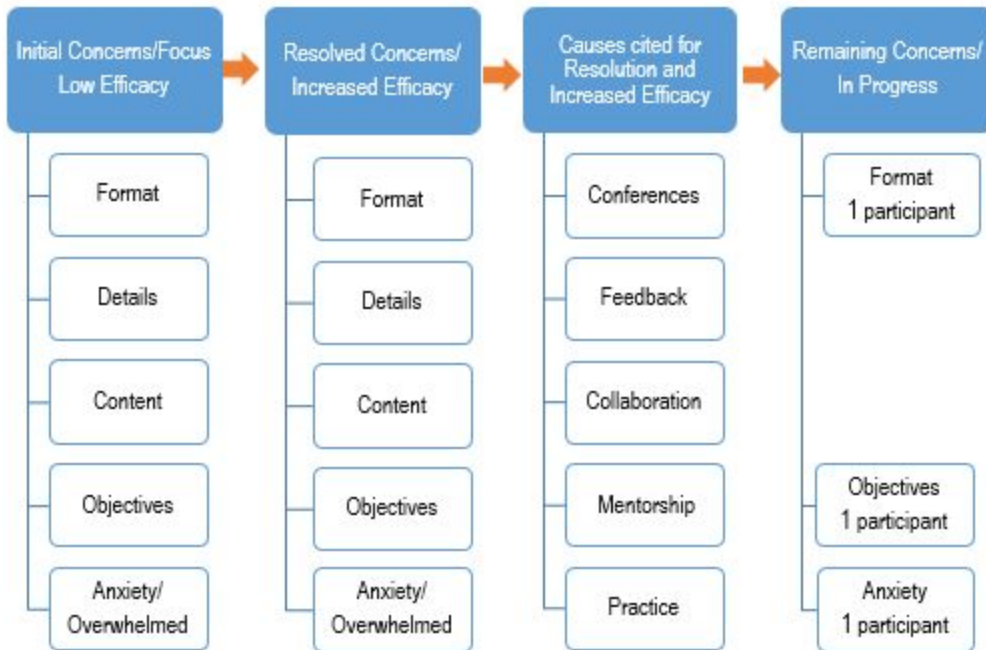
When asked to review the lesson planning process, participants' initial concerns focused on format, details, content, and objectives. Additionally, some participants noted anxiety related to lesson planning and expressed being overwhelmed with the assignment. However, after completing the last of the three plans, participants perceived those concerns as resolved and noted a sense of confidence with writing plans. Participants' reported increased efficacy was a result of conferences with the mentor, feedback, collaboration, and practice. One participant voiced ongoing concern with lesson planning format, writing objectives, and continued anxiety.

The following comments, taken from four participants' anonymous initial reflections, exemplify the shift in Fuller's stages of concerns and increasing efficacy which occurred throughout the first three mentor conferences.

"I really had trouble with objectives when we first started planning lessons, but after conferences with the mentor, I felt much more confident about where my lessons were going. Now, as I'm prepping lessons for practicum, I feel completely comfortable with

objectives."

"Over time I became more comfortable with the idea of planning towards students. At first it was planning for an assignment, but by the end of was keeping in mind what my practicum classroom of students would be able to handle and keep up with."

"Feedback was well thought out and very helpful. The mentor had great ideas. Sometimes talking to a teacher can be hard, but she made everything easy and put me at ease about what to do in my lesson. She always stayed positive."

"I felt that I internalized a lot of the mentor's advice after conferencing with her. For example, in lesson plan two she gave me a lot of ways of presenting ideas, but in lesson three I felt more confident in determining for myself how to present topics and came to the conference with a nearly complete lesson plan."

The second participant reflections occurred after having written and taught a lesson plan in their practicum. Reflections were again examined to uncover common topics shown in Figure

**Figure 7**

*Self-efficacy transferred- participants' second reflection*
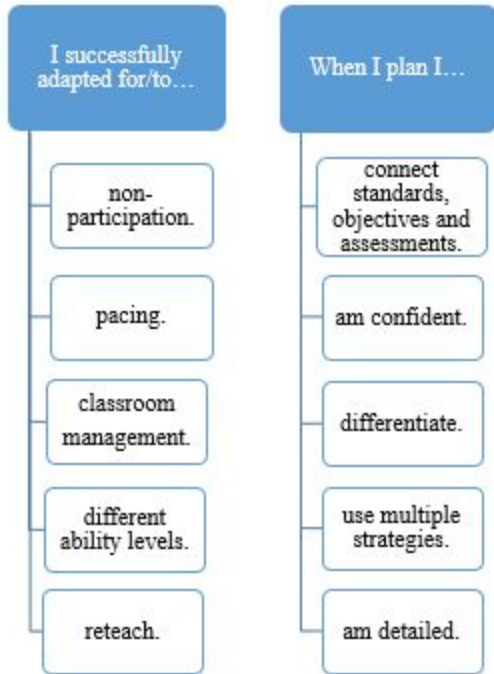
After reflecting on the process of planning and teaching a lesson, most participants recognized the need for flexibility to adapt to a specific context. The following comments reveal participants' perspectives on the evolution of their lesson planning knowledge, skills, and confidence throughout the semester and under the guidance of a mentor.

"I was able to make small changes as I progressed through the lessons. As I moved onto more and more lessons I noticed myself feeling more confident in the parts of the lesson plan. I also noticed that I did not make as many errors because I had received feedback and made changes on the lessons prior."

"I am now able to think and plan for multiple scenarios. Instead of assuming that my lesson plan will go one way, I can now think ahead and decide what I will do if it doesn't. I also have been able to progressively differentiate my lesson plans."

"It (lesson planning) has gotten much more detailed and I've developed a lot more confidence in using the Gradual Release model. I've also gotten more confident with

knowing what activities and assessments I think will be best to meet the lesson

objective."

Participants stated they were now able to complete components of the plan, such as objectives,

and assessments, and were confident about the planning process. Participants were aware of the

importance of detail and felt capable of incorporating additional details in future lesson plans.

They differentiated their instruction for varied student abilities and used multiple strategies when

planning.

## Findings-Quantitative Analysis

At the end of the semester, participants in both target and comparison groups completed a

Likert-type survey on lesson planning. Researchers used an independent samples t-test to analyze

differences between target and comparison group data. Table 1 includes the means, standard

deviations, and t-scores as related to Fuller's three stages of concern: self, task, and impact.

**Table 1**

*Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of Planning Related to Fuller's Concern Theory*

| | Control | Experimental | *t* | *df* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Concern for Self | | |
| Question 1: My instructor gave positive feedback on my objectives. | 3.52 (.51) | 3.90 (.32) | 2.13* | 29 |
| Question 2: I can plan anticipatory sets that will be well received by my students. | 3.19 (.40) | 3.90 (.32) | 4.49** | 29 |
| Question 3: I can plan assessments that are appropriate and insure I am doing my job well. | 3.20 (.62) | 3.50 (.53) | 1.32 | 28 |
| Question 4: I planned questions to ask students to help me determine if I was on the right track. | 3.19 (.81) | 3.50 (.53) | 1.09 | 29 |
| Question 5: | 3.19 (.52) | 3.70 (.48) | 2.64* | 29 |

I planned closures that
would help me conclude
the lesson.

## Concern for Task

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Question 6:<br>My lesson objectives met<br>the requirements of the<br>assignment. | 3.24<br>(.43) | 3.90<br>(.32) | 4.28** | 29 |
| Question 7:<br>My anticipatory sets were<br>planned according to<br>instructor guidelines. | 3.38<br>(.59) | 3.80<br>(.42) | 2.01 | 29 |
| Question 8:<br>I planned appropriate<br>assessments in my lessons. | 3.38<br>(.50) | 3.70<br>(.48) | 1.68 | 29 |
| Question 9:<br>I planned pertinent<br>questions according to the<br>correct levels of Bloom's<br>Taxonomy. | 3.47<br>(.51) | 3.40<br>(.52) | -.39 | 29 |
| Question 10:<br>My lesson closures were<br>planned to summarize<br>content and manage<br>end-of-class procedures. | 3.14<br>(.48) | 3.80<br>(.42) | 3.71** | 29 |

## Concern for Impact

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Question 11:<br>I connected lesson<br>objectives to the standards<br>to insure meaningful<br>learning. | 3.23<br>(.62) | 3.60<br>(.52) | 1.59 | 29 |
| Question 12:<br>I planned anticipatory sets<br>to engage learners to<br>maximize understanding. | 3.23<br>(.54) | 3.80<br>(.42) | 2.90* | 29 |
| Question 13:<br>I included opportunities for<br>assessment into my lesson<br>plans and understand how<br>results can be used to<br>inform future instruction. | 3.25<br>(.55) | 3.40<br>(.52) | .72 | 28 |
| Question 14:<br>I planned questions to<br>develop students' critical<br>thinking skills. | 3.52<br>(.60) | 3.30<br>(.67) | -.93 | 29 |
| Question 15:<br>I planned closure<br>techniques to review and<br>reinforce lesson content. | 3.24<br>(.54) | 3.60<br>(.52) | 1.78 | 29 |

*Note.* $* = p \leq .05$, $** = p \leq .001$. Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means.

Items 1-5 focused on participants' perceptions of planning related to Fuller's concern for

self. Based on descriptive statistics, pre-service teachers in the target group were more confident

on all five items compared to the comparison group. Within the self-concerns stage, the target

group's efficacy means differed significantly from the comparison group's means in the following lesson planning categories: behavioral objectives ($t(29) = 2.13$, $p < .05$), anticipatory sets ($t(29) = 4.49$, $p < .001$), and lesson closures ($t(29) = 2.64$, $p < .05$).

Items 6-10 focused on perceptions of planning related to Fuller's concern for task. Pre-service teachers in the target group reported efficacy scores significantly higher than comparison group efficacy counterparts in the tasks of writing behavioral objectives ($t(29) = 4.28$, $p < .001$) and using closure to summarize content and manage procedures ($t(29) = 3.71$, $p < .001$).

Items 11-15 focused on perceptions of planning related to Fuller's concern for impact. Pre-service teacher's efficacy scores for planning anticipatory sets to impact student learning was significantly higher in the target group than the comparison group ($t(29) = 2.90$, $p < .05$).

*Interpretation*

Findings of this study described how mentoring increased efficacy and lessened concerns for pre-service teachers' lesson planning development. As in previous research (Kelehear, 2003; Jones, et al., 2011), mentoring mattered for participants in this study, both in terms of addressing their concerns and their efficacy. The data demonstrated pre-service teachers who were mentored in the area of lesson planning perceived their ability to address a number of lesson plan concerns to be significantly stronger than those who were not mentored. The pre-service teachers' concerns were addressed as their efficacy increased, and mentoring was a critical factor contributing to this self-perceived confidence. Pre-service teachers, even at this early stage in their preparation, began to include differentiation into their plans, something often not done until a teacher has gained several years of experience.

Pre-service teachers and the mentor provided rich descriptions of the impact of

mentoring. Initially, planning was based on the pre-services teachers' internal need to complete assignments to fulfill course requirements. However, after observing metacognitive modeling of the mentor, addressing anxiety, achieving incremental victories, and receiving focused feedback, the focus of pre-service teachers turned outward toward planning for student learning: Fuller's concern for impact. Mentor conferences provided timely feedback, encouragement, and lesson planning suggestions to pre-service teachers who subsequently felt more capable of planning. These interventions support literature addressing pre-services teachers' varied approaches to lesson planning assignments (Tummons, 2010) and the necessary components to increase the self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

This study supported existing literature addressing the intricacies of guiding pre-service teachers through the complexities of lesson planning (John, 2006; Rusznyak & Walton, 2011). In this study, mentoring built a metacognitive scaffold, which pre-service teachers believed they could use to inform their future planning. Mentoring was the bridge which addressed Fuller's concerns via Bandura's concept of self-efficacy.

Participation was voluntary, and highly motivated pre-service teachers might be more likely to participate in a study, which requires them to dedicate additional time and effort. Additionally, these findings should be viewed as preliminary as they are limited by the small sample size and specificity (secondary education pre-service teachers) of the participants. Like Drost and Levine (2015), the researchers call for continued examination of the topic.

*Implications*

Though learning to lesson plan can be a challenge, as an essential function of teaching, pre-service teachers must be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to do so. Results of this research are compelling enough to consider implementation of lesson plan

mentoring into early coursework in teacher preparation programs. The positive outcomes of this intervention indicate the value of mentoring early-program pre-service teachers as they learn how to plan. However, can this experience be replicated without the resources required for intense mentoring?

One way to incorporate mentor-like support might be through the flipped classroom approach. The mentor role in this approach could be assumed by a course instructor. Jones et al. (2011) suggested including intentional lesson planning discussions into the early traditional course requirements. Lesson plan components could be introduced via videos pre-service teachers watch prior to class, thus allowing instructors to spend course time modeling and discussing metacognitive processes involved in lesson planning. Another way to incorporate mentoring might be through adapting the mentor conference used in this study. Course schedules could be adjusted to allow time for instructor-led lesson plan conferences. The conference structure could also be adjusted to include small-group sessions comprised of pre-service teachers with similar needs.

Mentoring during the early stages of teacher preparation programs may be one way to mitigate concerns and increase the self-efficacy of pre-service teachers in regard to lesson planning. As such, teacher preparation programs should consider mentoring as a means to better prepare pre-service teachers for the expectations of their future classrooms.

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