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Service-Learning Projects: Impact on Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Teaching In-Risk Youth

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Service-Learning Projects:

Impact on Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Teaching In-Risk Youth

By

Gillian Kornacki

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Service-Learning Projects:

Impact on Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Teaching In-Risk Youth

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates the University of Windsor's service-learning program Leadership Experience for Academic Direction's (L.E.A.D.) impact on teacher candidates perceptions of teaching in-risk students. The L.E.A.D. program focuses on introducing teacher candidates to the Ministry of Ontario's Student Success initiatives, reflective teaching practices, and places teacher candidates with Student Success Teachers allowing teacher candidates to learn from in-risk youth. This study adopted a qualitative approach using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to examine the lived experience of graduates of the L.E.A.D. program. Five graduates of the L.E.A.D. program who are currently practicing secondary teachers in southwestern Ontario were interviewed in one focus group and five individual interviews. The responses indicated themes of the importance of relationship building with students, the value of school support systems, the positive impact of L.E.A.D. coursework, and altered efficacy and perceptions of teaching in-risk youth.

Keywords: efficacy; teacher candidates; L.E.A.D.; teacher education; student success; caring adult

To Christopher,

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L.E.A.D.: Leadership Experience for Academic Direction

SST: Student Success Teacher

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Topic

The impact of the Leadership Experience for Academic Direction (L.E.A.D.) service-learning project at the University of Windsor's Faculty of Education pre-service program on teacher candidates' perceptions of teaching in-risk youth (Dweck, 2008).

Introduction

In the last two decades, service-learning has become part of many teacher education programs across North America and the United Kingdom as studies have shown that service-learning projects fill the gap between educational theory and real-world classroom experience (Anderson, Swick, & Yff, 2001). In Iverson and James' (2009) study, *Becoming,* the authors define service-learning as a reciprocal learning process where teacher candidates gain new skills and attitudes by providing a service of some kind to students or through a community program. Service-learning is an education trend that is transcending all levels of education. Elementary students are learning through community projects, high school students are learning about potential careers through cooperative education, and university and professional program students are practicing their skills in paid and unpaid internships. However, many Faculty of Educations have not implemented mandatory service-learning projects as assessment of the projects are often subjective and not as easily objectively evaluated as alternate and traditional methods of assessment (Swick et al. 1998).

Research Problem

Several service-learning programs at the University of Windsor's Faculty of Education involve teacher candidates working with students as a way for candidates to develop greater cultural competency and empathy. I argue that teacher candidates' experiences in the teacher education program are important to consider as teachers' attitudes, values, beliefs, and perceptions are often shaped during their program (Lund, D. E., & Lee, L., 2015). I am interested in how service-learning projects designed for teaching in-risk students affect the perceptions of teacher candidates towards in-risk students (Dweck, 2008).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of a particular service-learning project, L.E.A.D., on teacher candidates' perceptions of teaching youth who are considered in-risk after graduation (Dweck, 2008).

Research Question

What is the impact of L.E.A.D. on the perceptions of teacher candidates and teaching in-risk youth after graduation in a small working-class urban community in Southwestern Ontario? How does working with in-risk youth through service-learning projects and student success affect the negative stigma of in-risk students for teacher candidates? What are the implications of the LEAD program for teacher education programs?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this paper, "in-risk" students will be defined as any student who is in-risk of not graduating high school and because of the challenges they face need additional

support or motivation (Dweck, 2008). The term is adapted from the term "at-risk" used in most

Ontario Ministry documents; however, I use the more commonly accepted term in-risk as I argue

that students can move in and out of risk based on life circumstances and, therefore, should not

be permanently labelled as at-risk (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010 and Dweck, 2008).

Further, the term at-risk follows the deficiency model, instead I will be using Deweck's (2008)

growth mindset model of in-risk that promotes progress and social mobility (Ontario Ministry of

Education, 2010).

Interpretive Framework: Transformational Learning Theory

Methodologically, I investigated the research problem through the lens of

Transformational Learning Theory. Transformational Learning Theory is an adult education

learning theory established by Jack Mezirow (1975) in the late twentieth century. Mezirow

believed that when people faced challenging situations and participate in critical self-reflection

their dysfunctional worldviews were often altered (Merriam, 2004). Transformational Learning

Theory is used to understand significant and impactful learning that changes the learner in

profound and long-lasting ways (Jones, 2009). Mezirow supposed that people have Meaning

Perspectives which affect the way people understand the world around them. They are based on

up-bringing, experiences, and the taken-for-granted ways of seeing ourselves in the world.

People are rarely fully conscience of their Existing Meaning Schemes, but rather believe their

beliefs are just the way things are. When people experience new things, they filter this new

knowledge through those perspectives, adding to their way of seeing the world (Mezirow, 2000).

Mezirow believed that the Meaning Perspectives could be sub-categorized into three

Existing Meaning Schemes; psychological, sociolinguistic, and epistemic. Psychological pertains

to how we see ourselves and the things we are capable of doing. Sociolinguistic or sociocultural is what we believe about society and how it is organized, including matters of race, gender, and class. Finally, epistemic is our beliefs about knowledge, about what knowledge is and how it is made (Mezirow, 2000). Transformational learning experiences happen when new knowledge will not fit into existing meaning perspective. Therefore, forcing learners outside of their comfort zone to gain new or altered understandings. Mezirow (2000) believed that people often follow a ten-phase process when experiencing transformational learning. First, when new knowledge is encountered that does not fit into their meaning perspectives, people encounter a *disorientating dilemma* (Mezirow, 2000). Second, the individual begins *self-examination* that stems from uneasy, and at times frightening, new thoughts that come from re-examining ones

Figure 1: Mesirow's Ten-Phases of Transformational Learning (Mezirow, 2000)

previously held worldviews that felt very certain at one time (Jones, 2009). Third, a *critical assessment* of one's assumptions allows the individual to self-evaluate the underlying basic beliefs or Existing Meaning Schemes, and how those schemes were developed (Taylor, 2017). The fourth step, *recognition,* is the revelation that one's discontent with the new experiences and the process of transformation are

shared with others when one engages in rational discourse with friends and colleagues and discovers the new world view is not foreign to other people (Jones, 2009).

Fifth, *exploration* as a rational discourse is used to work through possible ways to continue through life with friends and peers (Jones, 2009). Mezirow notes that these steps must be done in a safe environment where learners feel comfortable sharing their disorientating dilemma and secure working through their recognition and exploration process (Mezirow, 2003). Next, learners *plan a course of action,* or a way forward that will accord with their new worldview. Seventh, learners engage with teachers, mentors, or training courses to *acquire the knowledge and skills* necessary to implement their plan of action. Eighth, *provisional trying of roles,* allows individuals to test out their new worldview and make modifications and adjustments if necessary (Jones, 2009). Next, the learner experiences a phase of *building of competence and confidence*. In this phase, the learners continue to practice their new roles with greater confidence in a wider range of situations, such a trying a new job or new work in their existing job (Taylor, 2017). Finally, a *reintegration* of the new knowledge into the learner's life dictated upon the conditions by the learner's new perspectives. Including being more respectful of the newly acquired, expanded, and more flexible worldview (Jones, 2009).

It is significant to note that Mezirow states it is not the experience that causes transformational learning, but the self-reflection that allows the learner to change their perspectives in impactful ways (Mezirow, 2000). This point has since been contested by other scholars in the field of education. Mälkki (2010) underlines these criticisms by highlighting the challenges to engaging adult learners in authentic reflection. Specifically, empirical research (Brookfield, 1994; Jokikoko, 2009, Taylor, 2017) reveals that reflection is not always a rational

process as Mezirow purposes. Instead, critical self-reflection, without direction, Mälkki offers can be quite difficult to carry out. Her article (2010) proposes an evolved version of Mezirow's theory to elucidate the challenges to self-reflection which adds a metacognitive aspect to the reflection and meaning making process. In such, Mälkki suggests that reflection cannot happen unless the learners first understand their own world view, in such she proposes that with the guidance of an instructor the students first assess their 'taken-for-granted' world views. This process will allow for a clearer reflection process as students will be more likely to be able to identify which views are being challenged when they encounter a disorientating dilemma. This can be done in a service-learning course prior to the school practicum to assist teacher candidates with reflection after their immersion experience. Next, Mälkki (2010) confirms with Mezirow's findings that it is imperative to have a safe relationship to guide one through the reflection process. Therefore, classroom community building and trust must be developed prior to the disorientating dilemma to ensure students have a safe place to and are able to reflect on their experiences effectively (Mälkki, 2010). Fazio-Griffith and Ballard (2016) offer practical strategies for building a helping relationship between learner and mentor. The authors' strategies rely on implementing the six core methods of transformational teaching strategies; "establishing a shared vision for the course, provide modeling and mastery experiences, intellectually challenge and encourage students, personalize attention and feedback, create experiential lessons that transcend the boundaries of the classroom, [and] promote ample opportunities for pre-flection and reflection" (Fazio-Griffith and Ballard, 2016, p.226). The authors suggest utilizing group activities, for instance, role-playing, case study reviews, and feedback exchange to provide the opportunity for a meaningful and authentic relationship to develop that mimic that of a reflective mentor-leaner relationship. Further, Fazio-Griffith and Ballard (2016) also emphasize

the importance of discussing transformative learning to prepare learners metacognitively for their anticipated transformational learning experience. Both articles, simply put, emphasize two main aspects of the learning process that need to be there for transformational learning to occur. First, students need to take part in metacognitive practices and be aware of their beliefs and of the transformational learning process. Second, a safe classroom environment and a trusting relationship between learner and mentor needs to be established for the teacher to become the learner's mentor in the self-reflection process.

Finally, scholars argue that over the last four decades Transformational Learning Theory has proven to have great staying power (Laros, Fuhr, & Taylor, 2017; Jones, 2009; Howie and Bagnall, 2013); however, many too argue that it is still a theory in progress (Christie et al., 2015; Taylor and Cranton, 2013; Baumgartner, 2001). Authors such as Taylor and Cranton (2013) argue that much still needs to be done in terms of primary and empirical research. They also state that the challenges of experience, development of empathy, and a desire to change are also understated in the literature on the theory. Even so, the authors still argue the benefits of the theory in that although transformative learning is difficult to accurately predict or ensure in an adult learning environment, it is a powerful form of learning. Christie, Carey, Robertson, & Grainger (2015) agree in their article where the authors state that the power of a transformational learning moment is clear and measurable, but more psychological empirical research needs to be done to establish a formula for ensuring transformative learning. Just as our understanding of how people learn evolves so will educational theories. From the available literature, it is clear that even though there is room to grow, Transformational Learning Theory is a strong educational theory with lasting impact.

Mezirow has updated his theory over the last forty-four years and states, in his 2009 article, the theory was evolving over time. He simplifies the transformational learning process compressing it into four main components; experience, critical reflection, reflective discourse, and action (Mezirow and Taylor, 2009). I believe this theoretical foundation to service-learning programs for teacher candidates. Through service-learning, teacher candidates gain new life experiences during immersion in a school or community and partake in critical self-reflection when these new experiences do not correspond with their own world views. This is followed by class discussion in a safe environment between professor and classmates and allows the teacher candidate to understand that their jarring realizations or changed perspectives are not foreign but being experienced by others in the class. Finally, teacher candidates have the opportunity to put these new worldviews into action on placement or in their future teaching careers. Mezirow (2000) does state that not all learning is transformation, but I believe with appropriate reflective practices service-learning is transformational learning.

In such, I believe that Transformational Learning Theory is an effective theoretical framework to study if the L.E.A.D. service-learning program impacts teacher candidates' perceptions of teaching in-risk youth as the program places teacher candidates into new and challenging situations while requiring teacher candidates to reflect on their experiences and new learning throughout the program (Dweck, 2008).

Locating Myself in The Study

In-risk students often come with a bad rap. They are seen as challenging and, because of this, teachers frequently have negative preconceptions about working with in-risk youth. As a graduate of the L.E.A.D. service-learning program at the University of Windsor, I feel that I have

gained confidence in working with in-risk students that I did not have almost four years ago. I also argue that if more teachers had the opportunity to work with in-risk students during their teacher training many of the negative perceptions of in-risk students would dissipate from practicing teachers. I believe that this study is important because working with in-risk youth in a reciprocal learning environment like a service-learning project will improve teacher efficacy and confidence for working with, and positively impacting, in-risk students (Dweck, 2008).

Though I only have two years of classroom teaching experience, I have worked in childcare for over ten years. I started working with toddlers and pre-school age children at a local daycare at fifteen and moved into a recreation setting where I taught a variety of classes and eventually became the director of a day camp of over two hundred children.

I am currently a secondary long-term occasional teacher with the Greater Essex Country District School Board and a Master of Education Student at the University of Windsor. I was born, raised, and still reside in Windsor - a moderately sized city in south-western Ontario, Canada. I see Windsor as a blue-collar city because I grew up in a working-class household. Windsor is the fourth most culturally diverse city in Canada and also has the highest percentage of child poverty in the country; where, according to the 2016 Stats Canada survey one-in-four children in Windsor live in poverty. I was fortunate to be an only child and have a mother who saw the benefit of enrolling me in a variety of sports and recreation classes as a child, even if it was just to combat my hyperactive tendencies. These experiences have allowed me to gain valuable skills and make connections with people from diverse backgrounds. As a child, I was often referred to as bull-headed or stubborn because I actively fought against the word no, but it was the phrase "you can't" that really bothered me. *You can't* play sports; you are a girl, "you

can't" achieve good grades because you are not smart enough; *you can't* go to university because *you can't* afford it. I am very thankful that the life of *you cant's* has resulted in me becoming a very determined and resilient person. I have met all of these challenges head-on and believe that I have been successful. However, it was not an easy task. I believe that my stubbornness is not the sole reason for my successes. I am fortunate to come from a stable, two-parent, home where I did not worry about safety, security, or food; I am able-bodied and bright, and I have been able to create and use strategies to overcome my own learning difficulties. Without this, my life may not be as it is today.

From my experience working with high school students, I found that many of the teens labelled in-risk do not have resiliency skills. They too live in a world of *you can't* but are unable to overcome their obstacles because of life circumstances. I truly believe that every student has the ability to be successful with the proper support. That is what draws me to work with in-risk youth. It is another *you can't* challenge that I, now, enjoy in my professional life and that I truly believe in these teen's abilities to overcome whatever challenges they are facing (Dweck, 2008).

For this qualitative research study, I will take an axiological approach to be as translucent as possible while I discuss my values, personal experiences, and possible biases in an attempt to exclude them from skewing the data. I am a graduate of the L.E.A.D. program at the University of Windsor's Faculty of Education and I chose this research topic because of the impact the service-learning project had on my teacher education. During my time at the University of Windsor, I took part in three specialized programs; Practicum UK, the International Educator Certificate for IB Qualification, and L.E.A.D. The first two programs had me placed in high-performance education environments where achievement standards were high and classroom

management demands were low. In contrast, the L.E.A.D. service-learning program allowed me to work closely with teachers of in-risk youth for two years. This helped me to develop strategies to reach disengaged students and learn the true benefits of differentiated instruction. Through L.E.A.D., I gained an appreciation for working with in-risk students and would love to spend the rest of my career working with this demographic. L.E.A.D. as a service-learning project absolutely impacted my perceptions of teaching in-risk youth and led me to study this research topic. Therefore, as I have a personal connection to this research topic, I believe it is imperative to outline my biases and locate myself in the study to be as translucent as possible (Dweck, 2008).

Student Success in Ontario, Canada

Student Success initiatives in Ontario education have become a key support within Ontario secondary schools. Student Success Teachers and student success teams are mandated within schools to support students who are in-risk of not graduating high school. Students can be deemed in-risk for a number of reasons, including low credit accumulation, underachieving in previous EQAO scores, and home circumstances. Educators have adopted the term in-risk, in lieu of at-risk, as students can move in and out of risk throughout their school career (Dweck, 2008).

The King Report

In 2005, King, Warren, Boyer, and Chin (2005) determined low credit accumulation and lack of workplace and college-pathways course options in secondary schools as two main factors for low graduation rates in Ontario. In the first cohort of the Reorganized Program four-year program graduation rate was 57% and increased to 59% with the second cohort. At the time these statistics were well below other provinces such as British Columbia (72%), New Brunswick (83%) and Nova Scotia (82%) (King et al., 2005, p.1). The report to the Ministry of Education determined that students' low credit accumulation, especially in early high school, was a large barrier to students graduating high school. In the researchers' four-year study, the report found that not obtaining the full sixteen credits by the end of grade ten drastically reduced a students' likelihood of graduating.

The research (King et al., 2005) also showed that this negative effect of low credit accumulation largely impacted students enrolled mostly in Applied courses. The report found

that "credit loss in required courses is the biggest factor affecting graduation rates…by students taking mostly Applied courses" (p.3). The report found that students who failed to obtain all credits in grades nine and ten continued to not achieve all of their credits as they progressed through high school most often resulting in not graduating school in four years or not obtaining an Ontario secondary school diploma at all. This is most concerning as a single failure in any grade nine course could drastically reduce the chances of a student graduating secondary school in four years. Specifically, from the first cohort of the study, only 3.2% of "students who failed Grade 9 Applied English or Math completed 30 credits in four years" and only 15.8% of students "who had failed one Grade 9 course completed 30 credits in four years" (King et al., 2005, p.10).

The second issue the report addresses is the insufficient course options for students in the workplace and college-pathways. After grade ten, secondary courses are streamed among four pathways: apprenticeship, university, workplace, and college. The workplace-pathway courses are specifically designed to fit the needs of students' abilities and to give students the skills they need to be successful in work and adult life. However, the King report determined that many schools across Ontario offered a limited number of workplace- and college-preparation courses. The report names "staffing issues, low enrolments and low priority assigned to some courses… [and] some schools did not even make workplace-preparation courses available to students in the core areas of English, Mathematics, and Science." as the main reasons course offerings were lacking in schools (King et al., 2005, p.10-11). Finally, this lack of course offerings for student ability and pathway needs exacerbates the gap in credit accumulation between students enrolled in workplace and college-preparation courses and students in university preparation courses (King et al., 2005, p.4).

The report's recommendation for graduation rate improvement are threefold. First, remediation for students should begin in the first semester of grade nine. Second, credit recovery opportunities should be made available for struggling students. Third and most importantly, "courses should be more closely tailored to students' abilities and aspirations" (King et al., 2005, p.10).

Service-Learning Projects in Pre-Service Teaching Programs

Much of the literature declares service-learning projects as the missing link between studying theory and genuine teaching experience in teacher training programs. Råde (2015) argues that incorporating service-learning projects into teacher education allows candidates to solve real classroom problems with the guide of classroom teachers and academic staff. Råde (2015) reasons that this process develops problem-solving skills that will better prepare students to become effective educators.

Research also shows that service-learning projects support teacher candidates' education by developing candidates' skills for working with English language learners, immigrants, students with disabilities, changing candidates' perceptions of diverse students, and inciting social justice education advocates (Amaro-Jimenez, 2011). Amaro-Jimenez (2011) argues that while teacher training programs are required to prepare candidates to work with diverse learners, many are ill-prepared to effectively work with students from a linguistically diverse background. Amaro-Jimenez argues that service-learning projects provide necessary field-work experience for candidates to gain the skills necessary to effectively teach English language learners. A similar argument is made by Emerson in her doctoral dissertation *Impact of Service-Learning on Participants' Attitudes Towards People with Disabilities* (2011) regarding service-learning impacting pre-service teachers' notions of teaching students with special education needs.

Emerson's study revealed that after students completed a service-learning project working with people with special needs they experienced an increase in positive attitudes towards people with disabilities compared to a control group who did not complete a service-learning project.

Neito (1996) found that most pre-service teachers, regardless of cultural or class backgrounds, were raised and educated in pervasively monocultural, Eurocentric, anglophone environments. As well, they frequently knew little about other cultures, often causing biases against marginalized peoples including "parents and children of colour and/or of low-income backgrounds, children who are disabled, gay or lesbian, and … girls" (Sleeter, 2001, p.231).

Boyle-Baise and Kilbane (2000) use Neito (1996) as a foundation for their study on service-learning and multicultural education. In their interpretive, qualitative study they examined the impact of service-learning as a way to teach multicultural education as it allowed students real-world experience with effective reflective practices. Traditional field experience for pre-service teachers typically refers to practicum within a school and not in the context of the neighborhood's culture. Conner and Erickson (2017) argue that being a multicultural educator means first becoming a multicultural person. Boyle-Baise and Kilbane (2000) add that to become a multicultural person, pre-service teachers must challenge their own, possibly bias, beliefs, learn more about cultural diversity and learn to question situations from different perspectives. To successfully achieve this, pre-service teachers must participate in self-reflection and re-education (p.54). This led the researchers to evaluate service-learning projects based in diverse neighbourhoods impact on multicultural teacher education. Boyle-Baise and Kilbane (2000) findings revealed that explicit reflection on diversity and culture was required for teachers to analyze and learn from the diversity in their schools. When students focused on the school

without thinking of the greater context of the community their understanding of diversity was not affected. However, students whose service-learning projects were attuned to the views and concerns of the community learned to question new situations from diverse perspectives. Students reflected that this allowed them to consider the perspectives of the students they were teaching. Additionally, the researchers found that without working with associate-teachers and principals who see communities as an educational resource and "as significant learning places for youth—school experiences alone are unlikely to foster cultural awareness, or support alliance and advocacy" (Boyle-Baise and Kilbane 2000, p.56). To ensure multicultural education, diversity must be brought to the forethought of pre-service thoughts, otherwise, the training will be shallow and superficial. (p.54). Finally, the ethnographic techniques of the study revealed that pre-service teachers used the knowledge they gained from working in multiculturally-diverse schools to augment their teaching practice. Many teacher candidates stated they thought about diversity when planning assessments or developing programs within the school. Further, the majority of prospective teachers, who had participated in multicultural based service-learning, stated they saw themselves as multicultural educators and plan to continue to work in diverse communities at the end of the study (Boyle-Baise and Kilbane 2000). Thus, service-learning appears to be a viable means to imbedding multicultural education into pre-service education programs.

Bleicher's (2011) findings show that even a short service-learning program can substantially impact pre-service teachers. In her study, Bleicher uses mixed methods data to analyze the effects of a one-week immersion urban school field experience on a cohort of suburban and rural teacher candidates. Using self-reported teacher candidate reflections, Bleicher was able to conclude that "pre-service teachers' perceptions can be meaningfully influenced by a

short-term, cross-curricular immersion program when it is situated within a mutually-reinforcing, multicultural education curriculum that offers significant faculty scaffolding and structured reflections." (Bleicher, 2011, p.1170). Even a one-week service-learning program that embeds learning, reflections, and immediate application in a community service or in-need school can positively impact teacher candidates' skills, beliefs, and efficacy.

Conner and Erickson (2017) state that service-learning is a practical approach to provide teacher candidates with the skills necessary to meet the challenges of today's schools; which are richly diverse and have complex student needs. At the turn of the millennium when Conner and Erikson's work was published, technology had not emerged in the classroom, and therefore his argument continues to resonate as the complexity of students' needs have grown. This is harmonized by Tinkler and Tinkler (2013) and Lafferty and Pang (2014) that argue that without the real-world experience of working with a diverse group of students that service-learning provides, teacher candidates are graduating training programs ill-prepared to meet student needs and, in some cases, prejudice towards diverse school communities.

These arguments are further reasoned by Lund and Lee (2015) who looked at how a teacher education program in Western Canada used a social justice model in their community-based service-learning project to "raise critical awareness on power and privilege while countering deficit-model thinking" (p.1). Teacher candidates worked with community programs to serve immigrant children and youth, and the pre- and post-service interviews demonstrated that candidates gained humility and appreciation for immigrant students' strengths.

In Sharon Anne Cook's article *Reflections of a Peace Educator: The Power and Challenges of Peace Education with Pre-Service Teachers* (2014) she discusses her long-standing service-learning program Developing a Global Perspective for Educator in Ottawa,

Ontario. This extra-curricular program focuses on teaching Peace Education to teacher

candidates as an integral component of global education. The program, created in 2001, was

funded for its first decade by the Canadian International Development Agency's Global

Classroom Initiative. The elective program became a service-learning program five years after its

inception when the program incorporated an in-class, core curriculum component, where teacher

candidates were able to observe and apply the concepts learned in class in their practicum

classrooms (Cook, 2014, p.490).

To evaluate her multiyear program, Cook (2014) evaluated one hundred and fifty teacher

candidate-created lesson plans, assessing the successful inclusion and instruction of the peace

education fundamentals. This data was compared to fifty lesson plans crafted by preservice

teachers who had not enrolled in the Developing a Global Perspective for Educator service-

learning program. Cook concludes that the results were mixed, while some students did an

excellent job creating a lesson plan grounded in peace education, the majority of the lessons did

not demonstrate the teacher candidates had a clear understanding of the fundamentals of peace

education observing pre-service candidates showed little confidence that they understood the

principles of peace education (2014).

Yet, Cook's evaluation did conclude that the pre-service candidates work demonstrated

"consistent strength in candidates' identification of a wide range of interactive strategies and

their application of these pedagogies in their curriculum plans, in ways that resonate with work

conducted in their in-class instruction and extra-curricular conference and meetings" (Cook,

2014, p. 505).

Though many of the teacher candidates struggled to develop a clear understanding of the

sophisticated peace education, Cook's conclusions clearly determine the in-class component of

the program allowed teacher candidates to "develop sophisticated interactive pedagogical skills"

Cook, 2014, p. 506), thus further identifying the skill-building benefits of service-learning

programs that have teacher candidates apply their new knowledge in real-world classrooms.

It is clear from the literature that service-learning projects offer a great deal of positive

learning experiences and new skills for teacher candidates. However, it is essential to also

investigate the potential drawbacks associated with service-learning projects in teacher

education. Hildenbrand and Schultz (2015) discuss the difficulty of fair and equitable assessment

of a candidate's service-learning project. They state that the all-to-common learning portfolios

do little to address the inconsistency between subjective assessment of the service-learning

project and the objective measured-based assessment of more standard assessments. Further

research by Gelmon et. al. (2001) states that twenty percent of teacher training programs in the

United States have a service-learning component and another almost twenty percent are

interested in developing one, and though the interest is continuing to grow, faculty members are

skeptical of service-learning theory and practice as there are not enough case studies to prove the

value in engaging in service-learning nor are there definitive lines that separate community

service and service-learning. Lastly, Losser and Calderella (2018) attest that the assessment

process for service-learning projects is still vague, which makes consistent assessment

challenging.

Service-Learning as Transformational Learning

In *Reimaging the Urban: A Canadian Perspective*, Daniel (2010) speaks to the negative

stigma Hollywood has created for urban schools. Too often depicting "White teachers entering

urban schools as saviors." (p.45). However, these deficit stereotypes perpetuated by the media

remain as people have not spent time in a real urban school or neighbourhood. Daniel (2010)

advocates that the only way to debunk these negative perceptions is through immersion experiences in urban schools. In 2013, the Urban Education Cohort (UEC), an immersion service-learning program in a large Ontario city, was created with the intention to combat the contrasting views of urban high schools and the positive experiences had by its students. Butler et al. (2017) use the UEC program to evaluate the misrepresentation of urban schools in the media. In particular, the research was conducted by program participants who interviewed students of one school that had a particularly poor reputation in the larger community. Contrary to the school's reputations, students saw the school as a positive learning environment. The authors attribute this to two main themes within the students' perspectives; the students felt safe and secure at school, as well as, they had ownership over the space. These experiences expressed by the high school students in Butler et al.'s article mirror the learning the teacher candidates receive when immersed in urban schools through the UEC service-learning program. Written by two recent graduates of the program, the authors discuss how the service-learning program removed the deficit stereotypes they had learned about their practicum school from the media and even peers and faculty members at their Faculty of Education who made condoling remarks to pre-service candidates who found out their placement would be at this particular urban school. As well as, taught them that every school culture is unique and that successful programs at one urban school may not be automatically transferred to another. Butler et al.'s article convey the that to properly prepare students for teaching in urban schools it is critical to immerse teacher candidates in the school communities to "engage with unique individual students and unique school cultures" (Butler et al., 2017).

In Sleeter's (2001) article, she discusses the literature of immersing white, Anlgo-pre-service teachers into culturally diverse schools, since the majority of teacher education cohorts

consist of white, middle-class females (Swartz, 2003). Collectively, this demographic has very limited knowledge of authentic urban schools, and therefore, hold stereotypic beliefs about urban schools and students (Sleeter, 2001). Sleeter also argues that preservice candidates who enroll in urban education programs voluntarily, regardless of their race or background, are more committed to social justice and multicultural teaching (Sleeter, 2001). Sleeter analyzes several strategies to ensure the programs will have an impact on teacher candidates. Specifically, Sleeter states that community-based cross-curricular immersion experiences combined with multicultural coursework were the necessary ingredients in effective urban education programs. When preservice teachers can learn from the urban students and communities, especially in one case study where teachers lived in the community they taught in, their preparedness to teach in urban setting increase exponentially (Sleeter, 2001).

Building on Sleeter's (2001) review of the literature, Carter-Andrews (2009) aimed to fill the gap of urban education program's impact on non-white preservice teachers. Carter-Andrews' investigated the impact of service-learning pedagogy on African American preservice teachers in her urban education course. Stating that a stand-alone multicultural course was not effective when it came to impacting candidates teaching practices. In 2006, Carter-Andrews aimed to circumvent this issue by incorporating an immersive service-learning component to The Urban Program, a two-year strand within a five-year teacher preparation program. Throughout the program, candidates work directly with students in schools and community centres and completed a detailed reflection process about the candidate's experiences and growth (Carter-Andrews, 2009). Through this service-learning process, Carter-Andrews' students "increased their understanding and examination of the sociocultural and sociopolitical context in which urban students learn and how they might serve as change agents in schools in their future role as

urban teachers" (p.274).She concludes that the service-learning experience developed the teacher

candidates' disposition for teaching urban students, emphasizing the reflection component of

service-learning as the facilitator for students to become more social-justice orientated in their

thoughts and amplified their commitment to urban teaching (Carter-Andrews, 2009). Carter-

Andrews (2009) findings coincide with other research done on service-learning as she states that

the field experience allowed the teacher candidates to make explicit and critical connections

among reading and activities, and their real-world application, resulting in an enhanced

understanding of social inequality issues in urban schools and transformed teaching practices ().

Donnell (2007) aimed to answer Daniel's question of how pre-service teachers

"experience the complex process of learning to teach in an urban school" (p.223). In her

longitudinal case study, Donnell interviewed teacher candidates who were placed in urban

schools for their practicums. Significantly, Donnell argues that preservice teachers in a service-

learning project experienced transformed teaching practices and enhanced efficacy if they

embraced the bi-directional learning that an urban school offers (p. 223). This follows Freire's

(1972) model where teaching practices that emphasized interpersonal connections created

independent learning for both teacher and student. Donnell's findings show that when teacher

candidates took student voice into consideration and took the opportunity to do what was best for

the students' learning the teacher candidate improve their efficacy for working with urban youth.

While teacher candidates who chose to take a teacher-centered approach to teaching or became

"immune" to the student's differences missed the opportunity to learn from their students

(p.227). Further, teacher candidates who did not embrace the bi-directional learning

opportunities of the service-learning program "steeled themselves to the tensions inherent in the

inequity around them or constructed deficit models to explain their discomfort" (p.

227). Donnell (2007) concluded that "the most salient, but at times elusive, knowledge or teachers was generated through interactions between teacher and pupils" (p. 232). Moreover, teacher candidates willing to take part in the reciprocal learning relationship of an urban school, reflected having a transformational learning experience in that they learned to create a student-centered, reflexive approach to teaching urban pupils (p.232). Further suggesting that service-learning, or learning while servicing an in-risk environment, is the missing piece of the puzzle when it comes to pre-service candidates applying their conceptual knowledge and increasing their teaching efficacy.

After examining the available literature on the impact of service-learning projects on teacher education it is clear that more research needs to be done. The research available is neither entirely up-to-date or expansive. More exploration needs to be conducted in the field to better understand the impact on preservice teacher learning as well as overcome the challenges of the equitable assessment. Finally, there is a clear gap in the literature when looking to understand how service-learning projects affect teacher candidate's efficacy for teaching in-risk students. With the emergence of designated student success teams in Ontario schools, this study will shed light on the impact of service-learning projects on the development of preservice teachers' skills to effectively help in-risk students find academic and social success (Dweck, 2008).

Literature and L.E.A.D.

The L.E.A.D. service-learning program at the University of Windsor's Faculty of Education immerses teacher candidates into Student Success classrooms with the intention of educating teacher candidates about The Ministry of Ontario's Student Success initiatives as well as equipping teacher candidates to effectively teach in-risk students.

Cook's (2014) Ottawa based Peace Education programme aims to teach peace education through instruction and classroom application. L.E.A.D.'s goal is to introduce students to Ontario's student success initiative. This too is done by classroom instruction of policy, concepts, and trainings, and is cemented for teacher candidates by applying this new knowledge and skills with the Student Success Teacher at their practicum schools. Beyond being service-learning projects, the programs are quite comparable as teaching models, as both aim to introduce teacher candidates to initiatives created by the Ontario Ministry of Education. The Peace Education programme aims to introduce students to peace education as an integral component of global education and was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency's Global Classroom Initiative and L.E.A.D. which aims to introduce the student to Ontario's student success initiatives (Cook, 2014). Both programs are aimed at making Ontario's future teachers effective educators who inspire specific qualities in their students; peace education aims to create peaceful, engaged citizens and L.E.A.D. to develop resilient, successful learners.

Further, the literature on Urban Education is clear: immersing teacher candidates in urban schools challenges their beliefs and, in turn, changes their perceptions of teaching in urban classrooms. A great deal of writing has been done on Urban Education service-learning programs to testify to this. However, only a fraction has been written on service-learning programs aimed at serving in-risk youth specifically. Though, I argue that many urban students, by simple definition of attending inner-city and often underfunded schools, are too in-risk. In-risk of not graduating high-school because of life circumstances. Not all urban students are in-risk, and neither are all of the students in the schools L.E.A.D teacher candidates are placed at. However, I argue, that all schools, whether they be urban, suburban, or rural have in-risk students. While

'urban' as a qualifying factor restricts itself to inner-city schools, in-risk goes beyond these geographical boundaries and assesses a student need based on their current challenges, from failing a course, losing a loved one, addiction, or homelessness. These issues can be found in any school population and that is why L.E.A. D's model of working with Student Success Teachers, the teacher assigned to supporting these students, is so effective. I am studying L.E.A.D. because though there is extensive literature on Urban Education programs effects on teacher candidate's perspective of urban youth, there is a gap in the literature pertaining to how L.E.A.D. as a service-learning model changes teacher candidates' perspectives.

<center>**CHAPTER THREE**</center>

<center>**METHODOLOGY**</center>

The purpose behind this study was to explore the impact of the L.E.A.D. service-learning project on teacher candidates' perceptions of working with in-risk youth. In such, I researched the perspectives of in-service teachers who have graduated from the L.E.A.D. in-service program. A qualitative methodology was appropriate for this research as it the best method for examining the specifics of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2013) such as the L.E.A.D. service-learning project. Further, the process of qualitative research allows for new interpretations of the data and discovery of new themes (Creswell, 2013). The in-depth and specific data learned from this method of research will illuminate the impact of the L.E.A.D. service-learning project on the perspective of pre-service teachers for working with in-risk youth (Dweck, 2008).

More precisely, I utilized an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in accordance with the guidelines outlined by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). IPA is based on three central theoretical standpoints: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. These three perspectives intertwine in IPA to understand an individual's experiences. IPA is described by Smith et al. (2009) as a "qualitative research approach commitment to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences" (p.1).

Interpretive Theoretical Analysis

Central theoretical perspectives of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Smith and Osborn (2004) describe the aim of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as exploring how participants perceive their lived experiences. IPA is phenomenological in nature and includes an exploration of someone's personal experience and emphasizes a dynamic research process with

<center>26</center>

an active role for the researcher. This includes trying to understand the participants 'world'. I believe this is a good research framework for my study as I am also a graduate of the L.E.A.D. service-learning program and therefore will not only have a good understanding of the participants' world but will also be able to use my own perspectives and narrative to analyze the data.
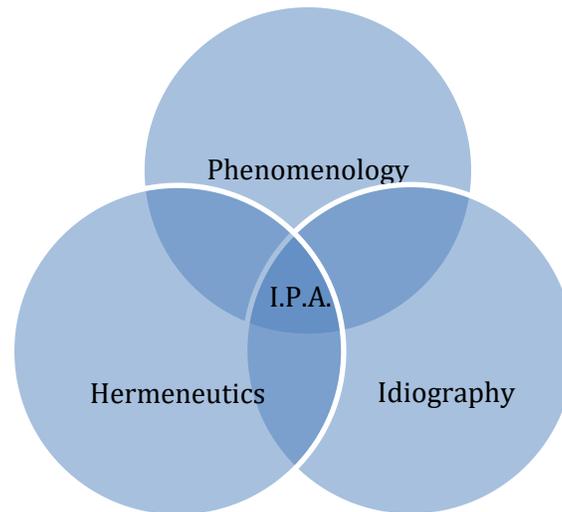
Figure 2: Three Central Perspectives of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Fougere, 2014, p.23)

According to Smith and Osborn (2004), an IPA researcher develops an understanding of the participants' world through a double hermeneutic process. This two-stage interpretation process relies on the understanding that our research is founded on the idea of "The participants… trying to make sense of their world; the researcher… trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith and Osborn, 2004, p. 53). In this way, IPA is consistent with its phenomenological origins. IPA is concerned with trying to understand what it is like from the perspective of the participants. Where, at the same time, a detailed IPA analysis can also include asking critical questions of participants when needed (Smith and Osborn, 2004).

Selecting Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as a Methodology

IPA was chosen as a methodology with the intention of discovering how L.E.A.D. impacts pre-service teachers' perspectives and thinking. An individual's experience is subjective in nature, and therefore the IPA process is considered especially useful as, according to Smith and Osborn (2008), it is particularly useful when studying the complexity, process, or novelty of a phenomenon. In this case, I am interested in studying all three. Teaching teacher candidates to work with in-risk youth is a complex task that L.E.A.D. aims to fulfill. The process in which a service-learning experience impacts a teacher candidates' perceptions of teaching in-risk youth and the novel experience supplied by the phenomenon of service-learning projects. The objective experience of the participants, their personal reflection on their experiences, and their altered perspectives towards teaching in-risk students will be explored, described, and interpreted in detail. IPA will allow for a better understanding of how the individual research participants make sense of their particular experience in the L.E.A.D. service-learning program.

Research Design

To investigate the impact of service-learning on teacher candidate's perceptions of teaching in-risk youth effectively, I analyzed multiple sources of information including one-on-one and focus group interviews, as well as my own perspectives as a graduate of the L.E.A.D. program. First, I interviewed the participants in a group setting to allow the conversation to flow as the teachers speak about their own experiences. After the focus group, I interviewed each participant one-on-one. I believe the group interview allowed for discussion between participants that created interesting insight into their experiences while the one-on-one interviews allowed participants to share ideas and experiences they may have been hesitant to share with the group. I

think the combination of these two interview styles allowed for the most authentic and expansive data collection. The L.E.A.D. service-learning program spans the two years of the participants' teacher education program. I interviewed participants after they graduated from the program and had begun working in the education field as I believe this allowed participants sufficient time to develop opinions of working with in-risk demographic and allow me to assess and draw conclusions on the full impact of the program (Dweck, 2008).

Each interview was coded to reveal common themes that emerge through the interview process in addition to providing an interpretative analysis of the data. I believe that analyzing multiple sources of information allowed for the most accurate examination of L.E.A.D.'s impact on graduated teachers' perceptions of teaching in-risk youth (Creswell, 2013). Using both individual and group interviews to establish themes and patterns allowed me to evaluate the overall impact of the Leadership Experience for Academic Direction service-learning program had on in-service teachers' perceptions of teaching in-risk youth (Dweck, 2008).

Research Question

What is the impact of L.E.A.D. on the perceptions of teachers who were former teacher candidates in the L.E.A.D. program and teaching in-risk youth after graduation in a small working-class urban community in Southwestern Ontario?

Sample Size, Site, and Participant Selection

To understand the influence L.E.A.D. had on teaching practices I interviewed five graduates of the L.E.A.D. program. All five participants had at least two years of teaching experiences, had taught in a long-term assignment for a minimum of four continuous months and

were working for the same school board in southwestern Ontario. I chose to limit my participant

pool to five teachers to ensure a manageable participant pool size with a deeper search into the

perspectives. I have also chosen to specifically seek participants who are currently teaching

secondary school full-time as I believe the consistency of secondary training and full-time

classroom experience will allow the interviewees to be able to reflect on the influence the

L.E.A.D. service-learning program had on their current teaching practice.

Participants were recruited through an email to all partakers of the L.E.A.D. program

who graduated over the last three years (2015-2018). The email sent out by a Faculty of

Education administrator asked for volunteers who met the participant parameters and who were

willing to meet for an individual and group interview discussing their experiences and thoughts

on the L.E.A.D. service-learning program. Once volunteers responded, five participants were

randomly drawn. Selected participants were contacted via email and a date was set for a focus

group interview. The focus group interview took place in the Faculty of Education building at the

University of Windsor and lasted 75 minutes in length. At the conclusion of the group interview,

participants set up a time with the interviewer to meet back at the University of Windsor for their

individual interviews. All individual interviews took place within two weeks of the focus group

interview and lasted 30-60 minutes.

Participant Profiles:

All five participants completed the L.E.A.D. service-learning program during their

Bachelor of Education at the University of Windsor. As you can see from their profiles below,

they are newly qualified teachers but have already spent significant time teaching in Ontario

secondary schools. Just as the needs of in-risk students vary at every school, the role of the

L.E.A.D. teacher candidate looks different at every school. All five participants were placed at different schools, the school names have not been listed here to keep the participants' identities confidential. All school names mentioned in the interview transcripts have been replaced with pseudonyms. Significantly, in 2016 all teacher education programs in Ontario, Canada moved from a one-year to a two-year model. Because of this, two of the participants completed their Bachelor of Education in one year, while three graduated from the two-year program. Kaitlyn was part of a concurrent education program, allowing her to be grandfathered into the one-year program. All other participants were part of a consecutive cohort. For confidentiality purposes, all participants have been given gender-appropriate pseudonyms.

Margot

Graduation year: 2017

Numbers of years in the L.E.A.D. program: 2

Placed in a county school as the sole L.E.A.D. teacher.

Years of teaching in Ontario secondary schools: 2 years

Long-term assignment experience to date: one month as Student Success Teacher, two months teaching alternative adult education, and four months teaching English.

Logan

Graduation year: 2017

Numbers of years in the L.E.A.D. program: 2

Placed in a county school as the sole L.E.A.D. teacher.

Years of teaching in Ontario secondary schools: 2 years

Long-term assignment experience to date**:** Four months teaching general science and biology.

Kaitlyn

Graduation year: 2016

Numbers of years in the L.E.A.D. program: 1

Placed in a city school as one of two L.E.A.D. teachers.

Years of teaching in Ontario secondary schools to date: 2 years (+1 year in England)

Long-term assignment experience to date (in Ontario)**:** one month teaching general science and a full semester teaching general science and physics.

Avery

Graduation year: 2015

Numbers of years in the L.E.A.D. program: 1

Placed in an inner-city school as one of four L.E.A.D. teachers.

Years of teaching in Ontario secondary schools: 3 years

Long-term assignment experience: 1.5 semesters teaching English.

Contract Teaching Experience: two years teaching English and science.

Lana

Graduation year: 2017

Numbers of years in the L.E.A.D. program: 2

Placed in an inner-city school as one of four L.E.A.D. teachers.

Years of teaching in Ontario secondary schools: 2 years

Long-term assignment experience: two full semesters teaching English

Data Collection and Analysis

IPA analysis attempts to understand how participants create meaning from their experiences (Smith et. Al., 2009). Unlike other post-modern literary theory, where the authors interpretations and understanding are not considered in the data analysis, IPA analysis aims to go beyond the explicit language of the participants and find meaning within the data. Smith et al. (2009) indicates this "added value" comes from the methodical and detailed analysis of the transcripts, but significantly, it will also come from finding "connections which emerge through having oversight of a larger data set and … from dialogue with psychological theory" (p. 23). Thus, the investigator has an advantage over the participant for analyzing their experiences as the researcher can compare their experiences to other participants' and find connections and themes across a larger data-set. Further, Smith et al. (2009) asserts that this added value is dependent upon the researcher sharing common ground with the participants. Thus, IPA analysis is beneficial in this research study as the researcher and participants have experienced the same phenomenon; L.E.A.D..

To understand the participants world, the researcher must be inductive in their approach and move from basic description of the data to interpretative understanding. To achieve this, I followed the steps for processing data in IPA as laid out by Smith et al. (2009; Figure 2). While the interviews took place, I took initial notes on important points that arose during the discussion and later, while listening to the audio-recording for the second and third time, made detailed notes and began systematically sorting the discussion points into categorical themes. Once I

Step #1: Reading and re-reading

Step #2: Initial noting (descriptive/linguistic /conceptual) comments

Step #3: Developing emergent themes

Step #4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

Step #5: Moving to the next case

Step #6: Looking for patterns across cases

Figure 3: Steps for the process of analysis in IPA (Smith et at, 2009)

had completed these steps for each interview, I compared notes to discover connections between categories. This process allowed me to move by analysis beyond summary and begin to conceptualize the information into broader thematic and theoretical contexts (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). These categories that persisted across the dataset became the emergent themes of the research.

<p style="text-align: center">**CHAPTER FOUR**</p>

<p style="text-align: center">**DATA ANALYSIS**</p>

Introduction

Using IPA interpretation means going over transcripts multiple times and using the researcher's original notation to discover emerging themes (Smith et al, 2009, p. 69). Though this process is not novel to IPA, utilizing a thematic analysis to interpret the dataset in qualitative research permits the researcher to be open and flexible, allowing for new insights to emerge from the data (Holliday, 2002). Significant quotation and dialogue are used in this thematic description in hopes of more accurately illustrating the rich intricacies the of individuals' experiences in the L.E.A.D program.

After examining the data by re-listening to the audiotapes and rereading the transcripts, notating, and analyzing, five overarching themes have been derived from the dataset: i) building relationships, ii) value in school supports, iii) classroom-based intervention, iv) L.E.A.D. coursework, and v) altered perceptions and efficacy.

At the conclusion of the focus group interview, Margot made the following reflection that I think accurately depicts the dynamic conversation about L.E.A.D. that took place.

> I think we talked about L.E.A.D. being valuable because of the exposure to, and in terms of us, working with in-risk students now. But it's not only the exposure we got, but the reward we got and having that little bit of reward, whatever it was, in those times in the L.E.A.D. program is literally the fuel that pushed all of us to say, "Yeah I want the applied class", "I want to do this", and "I'll have that conversation", because even though

the experience might have been bad and we struggled and left the school crying it was

that little reward that we took away from that experience that continues to fuel our fire.

Theme 1: Building Relationships

The first theme that arose from the dataset was the participants' emphasis on the

importance of building relationships with students. In the focus group, Logan remarked that his

expectations of his own social skills when he began the L.E.A.D. program did not meet the needs

of the in-risk students he was working with in the Student Success room.

> Logan: I thought it was interesting for relationships because going in I thought like no
>
> problem you can make a relationship with any student like it will be easy, we're easy
>
> going people, it won't be an issue. But with these students, it actually took quite a while
>
> to make a good relationship with them. That was the biggest surprise, I think.

Participants agreed that having the opportunity to observe the Student Success Teacher

work with the in-risk clientele allowed them to begin to develop the skills necessary to build

positive relationships with the students. In the focus group Margot reflected:

> Margot: I loved being able to watch, I had a really good Student Success Teacher that
>
> was my mentor so being able to watch them and literally just like watch them and take in
>
> how they engage with, how they start a conversation, and talk to a student or bring a topic
>
> up was such a learning experience for me. Just to be like part of that in terms of learning
>
> from another person.

While Avery, who was placed more frequently within in-risk classes to support classroom teachers, commented in her individual interview that her learning was most affected by the variety of teachers she was able to observe.

> Avery: Being able to go not only in the Student Success room but into different classrooms I got to see not just my Student Success mentor, but all these other teachers and the way they approach different situations. There was one particular teacher at the school I was at that I thought was nuts, but it turns out I learned the most from her out of all the teachers I was able to be around.

All of the participants agreed that having the experience of observing experienced teachers work with in-risk youth, then having the a safe environment for them to each begin learning these skills by building authentic relationships with these students has had significant impact on their success as classroom teachers after graduations; Lana comments: "that's kind of the idea, that this trial run is with a supervising teacher so there's less pressure, it's a safe free trial as a new teacher and if you had never had those experiences it's terrifying."

In the focus group, a recurring point of discussion among participants was how working directly with Student Success Teachers and in-risk students taught the participants how to balance their relationships with students between academic teaching and being a caring adult.

> Logan: I think going with what Margot said to about absorbing from the mentor or from the SST, it was really interesting to see when the time was right to be like a teacher academically and when it had absolutely nothing to do with the curriculum. That was like the biggest impact you would make. So that's like a big point for specifically L.E.A.D.

Lana (responding to Logan): More particularly in my career so far than in my placement, not learning to switch between those roles, but knowing when academics can take a back-step and right now you just need to be a caring adult, rather than the teacher, right? And I think being in that student success room or even in those other classrooms you're learning that relationship can sometimes jump ahead of that teacher role that you're in. So, building those relationships, having harder conversations, and being able to give yourself that opportunity and having the experience of the L.E.A.D. placement helped make those conversations now a lot easier.

Margot responded: I agree. Learning how to pick up on those cues that your students aren't engaged or hearing you at all when there's other things going on and I can recognize that now.

Following this, Avery shared how her understanding of how teachers should interact with students changed during her immersion in an in-risk school.

Avery: Even as another preconception, I feel like, again, when I was in high school. You didn't ask your teachers personal question and you didn't know anything about their personal life. I feel like after experiencing L.E.A.D. I'm more comfortable giving examples from my personal life or like talking about things that happen to me because I don't feel like it's wrong, where I think our former teachers maybe felt that way.

Margot followed this by stating that she too learned the benefit of sharing personal experiences with students to build relationships and teach resiliency.

Margot: I find that students respond well when you do that. When you relate it back to your own life or experience, even if you share a past failure in some sense, right, they're like "Oh you're not good at something?" they see you as more human and it's beneficial.

Finally, the participants agreed that having the opportunity to remain in the same school for all of their placements allowed them to develop authentic relationships with students and develop the skills that they continue to use in their practice today.

Avery: I also just think L.E.A.D. allowed us to stay in the same school for a longer time. You don't have enough time in a one-month placement at a school to build these skills, right. I think that we were largely benefited by that.

Logan: When you come back and they're like, "You're back!"

Full group agreement

Avery: Yeah, it's not even just our personal skills but the connections you make.

Logan: Interesting to see how students change from one year to the next. Going from grade 9 to 10 the maturity, even from 11 to 12 that they think all the sudden "oh it means something."

Avery was fortunate to return to her placement school as a contract teacher two years after completing the L.E.A.D. program. She spoke about how returning to the school allowed her to continue building relationships and return to being a caring adult has been impactful for her as an educator.

Avery: I got super lucky, because I got to go back to Pacer [high school], right so

L.E.A.D. school for one year, saw these kids, I taught the grade 9s kids for subject area

and not my L.E.A.D.s classes and getting to get my contract there when they were in

grade 11 and watching them graduate in grade 12 was so amazing for me. Because I had

those relationships with those kids when I was there and the ones that were the L.E.A.D.

kids were the ones that like, it just makes you feel so good to watch them graduate and

they know you played a part of that. So that comfort level is always going to be there

with the whole staying at the same school.

The participants attested to learning the importance of building rapport with students to

be able to be a more impactful teacher as a caring adult and as a classroom teacher.

Lana: I think that whole thing where it says who's going to be the caring adult, being in

the L.E.A.D. program, it's like allowed us to be that caring adult. You realize like "oh my

god these kids need this, I can be the caring adult they need," and realizing that and

taking the time to build those relationships makes teaching content way more effective.

Theme 2: Value of school supports

Interestingly, many of the participants were unaware of the Ministry of Education's

student success initiatives until they were introduced to the L.E.A.D. service-learning program at

the start of their Bachelor of Education studies. The two participants who spoke about knowing

that the role existed in the focus group, remembered there being a Student Success room that

students went to, but not knowing why or the overall purpose of the room. Margot reflected: "I

didn't know in high school what student success was until I came to faculty. I knew it existed

and I knew kids went there but had no idea why."

Many of the participants reflected that their exposure to the school support system while in the L.E.A.D. program, that is rooted in the Student Success Team, allowed them to discover how utilizing the supports can be advantageous for student and teacher.

First, the participants reflected that understanding "all the hats" the Student Success Teacher wears, and how effective these hats can be at supporting student achievement, influencing them to utilize the Student Success Teacher's support in her career. In her individual interview, Lana stated:

Lana: My Student Success Teacher where I was just at teaching, had said to me at the end of the year "you're always organized and you're always like one step ahead". Well, it's because I know when I have students using the Student Success room, I have to bring up the assignment the day before or if it's like fourth period I have to bring it up before that period. She said, "Some teachers just don't like think that far ahead". But I've been in the room when kids come up without the test. Being in that role, you appreciate that role and so as a teacher now, not in the Student Success room, you appreciate all those hats they wear, all the logistic sides you don't see as a teacher. Now when I'm asking the Student Success Teacher for something, or whatever, I realize so much more of what their job is about and you appreciate them, which you should anyways, but really see what goes on."

In addition to learning the extent of the Student Success Teacher's role, participants also comment on the scope of knowledge the Student Success Teachers have about their roster of in-risk students. Logan began his most recent long-term assignment midway through the semester.

To mitigate any issues this may have caused, Logan sought the knowledge of his school's

Student Success Teacher to learn about his new students.

> Logan: I'll go first if you don't mind. The last school I was at was Riverview, which has
> a crazy amount of support at that school, probably more than any school in the board and
> right when I got there the first thing that I did after getting my list was go right to Student
> Success Teacher and Learning Support Teacher. I probably never would have done that if
> I didn't understand how much info these people have. So that was huge.

All of the participants were in agreement with the merit of Logan's strategy. In response

to Logan, Avery and Margot replied

> Avery: I completely agree

> Margot: I did the exact same thing with a notepad and sat down with the Student Success
> Teacher and made tons of notes because those little things are what are so helpful.

This discussion within the focus group interview indicated that the participants' time in

the Student Success room as L.E.A.D. candidates did not only teach them about the role of the

Student Success Teacher, but taught them to value the Student Success Teacher's knowledge of

the issues students may be facing.

Logan and Margot were fortunate enough to be included in Student Success Team

meetings during their L.E.A.D. placements. Logan remarked that learning the level of knowledge

the Student Success team had about students was shocking.

> Logan: Did any of you guys every sit in on SST [Student Success Team] meetings with
> the VP [Vice Principal].

Margot: Yes

Logan: That was the best part of my whole placement. We would go in and it would be the Vice Principal, Student Success Teacher, Learning Support Teacher, Guidance Counsellors, and Child and Youth Worker for sure. They literally had a list they projected on the screen of all the kids they had flagged, and I don't know how they did it at your schools, but ours were flagged red, yellow, or green. We started at red in the beginning and it was alphabetical from there and the information they had on these kids was crazy.

Lana: What is the flag for?

Logan: Anything in-risk. Anything – relationship problems, at school, at home, self-harm, poor academics, home life, whatever. That information caught me way off guard. How much info that they have. I think about my classroom now and I wonder how much info they have that they don't share with regular teachers that would be so helpful. Because being in Student Success you know that's why [a student] acts that way. And now I know the extent of information the student success team has because we were made privy to that confidential information regular teachers don't get. Like maybe sometimes they give the teachers the information, just what is essential for them to know. But if you actually knew all of it and you could and you could read the whole thing, it would change your whole perspective on your whole class.

Margot added that though the amount of information was overwhelming, the best part of being included in the Student Success Team meetings was watching the school's critical players succinctly make action-plans for students in-risk.

Margot: It was information overload for sure, but the dynamic of it; you discuss a student and it's like boom, boom, boom, you know what I mean? Everyone has some sort of example or idea and it's so like cohesive to come up with a plan of action.

Logan: They would put a section on the chart that said "caring adult" and they would put the initials of who in the building would be that kids caring adult to make sure everyone was accounted for.

Margot: Ours was the same, there was an agenda and a follow-up section from last week. Every week we'd have kids and we'd go over the issues from last week and if it wasn't resolved we would tweak our action plan. It was for kids who were failing a course, out of their house, you find out a lot.

Learning that students who are struggling have a team of caring adults in the school ready to create an action plan to help them find success demonstrated to the participants not only the knowledge base the Student Success Teachers have to offer, but the value of tapping into this support system in their careers.

Lana: You value their opinion.

Margot: As a new teacher who maybe hasn't worked with these other individuals in the building then it might be really intimidating to go say "hey I'm having this problem with this student, what can you tell me?" They might be hesitant to tell you, but because we have this sort of background where you know and you feel comfortable you could go to them.

Lana: I like what you said there "I have a problem with this student". One of the things L.E.A.D. has for sure is taught me is to say "I need help", I'm struggling with this student, for whatever reason we're not connecting or they're failing, and not that it's not always you, sometimes it's actually the student, right? So like if you have 30 kids and 2 of them are serious behaviour and whatever, whatever sometimes it is actually them. So, to admit to your Student Success Teacher or guidance or Child and Youth Worker "I need your help" for whatever reason this isn't working, these kids are whatever. I think being in L.E.A.D. and knowing those supports, I'm more open to admitting I need your support.

Interviewees remarked that because of their participation in the L.E.A.D. program and working with the Student Success Teachers, in their current practice they are comfortable seeking out support and being part of the action-plan planning process to support in-risk student in their classrooms.

Avery: Yeah, that's what I said too. Admitting I need help, I think L.E.A.D. has definitely taught me to admit when I need support. Because those supports are there for a reason, they're not there because no one uses them, or like Student Success is this scary room you can't send kids. Where I'd go to the [Student Success Teacher] and say "I need help, I can't reach this kid, something is going on". I've done x, y, and z in my classroom and it's not working. Admitting that and realizing teaching is not terrifying.

Significantly, participants agreed they were comfortable seeking support and as practicing teachers wanted to continue learning from critical players on the Student Success

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Team within their schools. L.E.A.D.'s promotion of help-seeking behaviour also seemed to create educators who are interested in being lifelong learners.

> Kaitlyn: I think that when you have those conversations early, from the onset, it makes you fear being seen as not prepared and overwhelmed like you're not ready to be there. But, once you open yourself up to that "I'm looking to learn about these kids from you" when something does happen it okay. I had a kid who had a meltdown and got suspended and [the Vice Principal] was like "I know why you gave her three chances but this is why you shouldn't have and why students like this require more structure. We give her a little bit more room because of all the things in her life, but in this moment, she needs a little more structure and she needed someone to say no". and I was like okay this is a good learning moment and I was happy to take this as "actually I can learn something" and [the Vice Principal] didn't take that as a "you don't know what you're doing".

Theme 3: Classroom-based Intervention

The participants reflected that L.E.A.D.'s influence on their teaching practices was threefold; first, the participants' acknowledged becoming more empathetic to student needs; second, participants place more emphasis on classroom community building; and last, teachers integrate intervention models into their classrooms to better support student achievement.

Interviewees enthusiastically agreed that L.E.A.D. made them more empathetic to the issues students face outside of school by making them aware of what students were dealing with and giving them tools to support these students in their classrooms. In the focus group interview, Margot stated the biggest impact L.E.A.D. had on her development as a teacher was becoming aware of the issues that affect today's students:

Margot: The most valuable thing of L.E.A.D. for me was to gain a different perspective of what kids are dealing with and what kids experience outside of the classroom and then how to address that back in the classroom. How to take that knowledge of what you learned in the Student Success room and put it in your own teaching.

Logan furthered Margot's comment by stating his time in the L.E.A.D. program, through both working closely with the Students Success Teacher and the strategies learned in class, have not only made him aware of the issues students struggle with, but have given him the tools and strategies necessary for him to support students in his classroom now.

Logan: It gives you like tools. Because we've now had some experience. You're never going to cover every experience that can happen, but we have had some and they're relatable usually to other things that happen so you have something to go off of. You're not like "I've never seen this before so I don't know what to do."

At multiple points in the focus group interview, the participants discussed the importance of teaching the "whole student". This meaning, not just focusing on academic dissemination but attempting to ensure that all of the students' needs are met.

Kaitlyn: L.E.A.D. like, changed my whole philosophy of teaching. I guess I thought we only had to teach the curriculum, but now, I know it's more than that. We teach the whole student, that means going beyond content to character development and social emotional support.

Margot: I think in terms of my daily practice too, just giving me overall more better comfort level to approach kids and have conversations with kids that might be a little more difficult and to have the confidence and willingness to go up and have those

conversations and recognize when something needs to be addressed and there's an issue.
I think just seeing students and going through L.E.A.D. helped…. really just having an open door and communication policy too, just letting them know that if you need someone to talk to come talk to me tell me, we can fix everything by communicating. And remembering those moments where you're so angry that you have to check yourself. Like there's probably something else going on and you feel like they don't have an excuse at that moment but maybe there is an excuse and other things and it makes me a little more self-aware of like okay I have to check-in and remember that there's a fine line between kids taking advantage but L.E.A.D. helped us recognize that line when there's an actual issue and when someone is taking advantage.

Through the focus group interview, participants began to discuss student behaviour as communication. They stated how their work with in-risk students in their practicums taught them to search for the underlying cause of negative student behaviour and, significantly, because of this have adapted to mitigating this behaviour in their daily practice by being caring adults.

Lana: I always think behaviour is communication, so when they behave a certain way they're trying to tell you something without using their words. Even though they are high school kids they're behaving a certain way because of something.

Avery: Yeah, and we don't need to know. You can't push kids to tell you.

Lana: But it's recognizing that behaviour because of some other reason and it's not because of you or this classroom, it's not because they have to write a news report.

In her individual interview, Lana gave an example of her mitigating negative behaviour by understanding when a student needs more support. She states the importance of understanding that the issues that students may be facing outside of school impact their ability to perform at school. Lana stated that when a reoccurring issue arose this year in her classroom, she was able to rely on her experiences in the L.E.A.D. program, looking at how her Student Success Teacher and in-risk classroom teachers dealt with home issues in a positive way.

> Lana: Logistic things and preparing for things helps. So like if you have a student who sees her dad every other weekend, and when she would come back in on Monday she was a mess she was cranky and rude and disrespectful so it's almost like preplanning for those things so you're one step ahead. Like you know the students not going to be prepared with this on Monday because this, this and this, so you're always thinking four steps ahead of the kids, I guess, and for me L.E.A.D. helped me with that."

Classroom Community Building

Another way that participants discussed L.E.A.D. impacting their daily practice was their emphasis on classroom community building.

> Avery: For me, two things, the idea of building a relationship means more at the beginning of the semester than jumping right into the curriculum and I do this every year. I spend about a week doing team building activities of various kinds before I even get into my curriculum and I've learned that that's okay, and not only is it okay it's really important because the kids get to know you better.

Avery, who stated throughout the focus group her initial hesitation to teach in-risk students and nervousness to open herself up to her class, now places a heavy emphasis on building a classroom where students are comfortable, as she states that "if students do not feel safe, and their basic needs are not met, then how are they supposed to perform to the best of their abilities". Significantly, her experiences with the in-risk population while in the L.E.A.D. program have made her more comfortable in working with in-risk students. She stated:

> I agree because like I'm the one that said I was afraid to teach the applied classes but I loved teaching my applied and workplace students this semester. I loved them. They drove me crazy every day but if I could choose which classes to teach it would be them because there is gratification in it.

All of the focus group interviewees were in agreement when Avery spoke about the positive impact on learning that building a classroom community has on students. Avery later continued:

> Avery: Also, just feeling more confident to tell people that I'm great at my job and I know that even when I'm crying because I've had a rough week and my parents are telling me that I need "to get out of Pacer", I have had that experience multiple times over the last two years, I'm confident to tell them that I know my connections that I make with the students that lead me to feel upset sometimes because of what I'm hearing is okay, it's okay that that's happening because I'm a better teacher for it.

Further, in her individual interview, Margot spoke about her connection to the school community as a support for her as well, helping her through a difficult time this year.

Margot: Yeah, just preparing yourself for those hard situations, those really rough things

that you experience, maybe as a new teacher the first time you experience those things.

It's really hard to swallow, and this is really hard to say, because I had a student commit

suicide this year, I don't want to say that L.E.A.D. prepared me for that but the kind of

understanding and community aspect I have with the school itself to get through that

could maybe have been part of L.E.A.D. to reach out and understand.

Tutorial Days Incorporated into Bi-Monthly Classroom

Finally, participants stated that after seeing the success of the school intervention system

they all incorporated some aspect of that model into their classroom structure. The intervention

system is a model used by the local school board to assist students with incomplete work. When

a student has not completed work or is at risk of not attaining a credit, the classroom teacher

initiates the process by sending the student and their work to the second tier of intervention, the

Student Success Teacher. If the student continues to not complete work with the Student Success

Teacher, they are then directed to the third tier, usually the Vice Principal.

Lana discussed how she embedded "catch-up days" into her teaching on a regular basis to

ensure students have the ability to become caught up on outstanding work. This allows for

students who may have attendance issues due to home-life issues.

Lana: Even with those catch up days in my class, …. so those days they were like, "What

can I do if I'm done" and I would say, "You can play one of these literacy games,

Scrabble, Scattergories, etc.", and they would be like, "What do you mean?" and I would

be like. "Well, because you worked so hard, right, you're caught up so you can either

play some games or read your book" and it's almost like a reward for them and it would

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encourage other kids to stay on top of things because when it came time for these catch up days they could do whatever they wanted instead of catching up on work. So it was incentive to do well because on catch up days they could have fun.

Avery too spoke about gaining an understanding that the school intervention process begins in the classroom. To facilitate this, she incorporates tutorial days in her classroom and feels comfortable being able to implement the intervention process within the confines of her classroom.

Avery: And the second thing with the intervention process is that … you need to learn to do it in your classroom and so I have. I feel really confident setting up a day saying "we're all just going to catch up today" or even if it's five kids I have a plan for those five kids to get intervention from me in my classroom before we send them downstairs [to the Student Success room].

Theme 4: L.E.A.D. Coursework

The theme that permeated throughout the focus group interview was the benefits candidates acquired from the L.E.A.D. course itself; all participants were in agreement when Logan remarked:

Logan: Also, we had the class. So, most of the classes here [at the Faculty of Education] were not my favourite ones. L.E.A.D. was one of the better classes we had in terms of the conversation with the instructor and with each other, for sure it was huge.

During their studies at the Faculty of Education, L.E.A.D. students met once a week to fulfill the curriculum component of the service-learning program. The course focuses heavily on

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teaching candidate's relevant information for teaching in-risk students today. In Nahaiciuc's study of the L.E.A.D. program in a compensatory school, she examines the following quote from the L.E.A.D. coursework instructor.

> The L.E.A.D. Instructor talks about this by saying that: "The L.E.A.D. course starts with foundational theory; then, we introduce the reflective process. First, explicitly, we talk about student success - what is it, looking at Ministry documents and why the needs exist and the roles of the Student Success Team, which usually includes the Principal, the Vice-Principal, the Student Success Teacher, the Learning Support Teacher, Guidance, and different department heads - how their roles shape student success practically within the schools and how they are shaped by the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education. Additionally, we've talked about resiliency - students who are at-risk within the school system have a hard time bouncing back (Nahaiciuc, 2017, p.39).

When the participants were asked what aspect of the coursework made the L.E.A.D. program so worthwhile, all were in agreement when one participant offered "the instructor". It is relevant to notes that though the five participants graduated over a three-year period, all completed the L.E.A.D. program with the same instructor.

From the focus group conversation, the instructors' merit was summed up from being a "current teacher". The participants expressed how he imparted relevant knowledge and vital teaching strategies for being a current teacher.

> Margot: I think that's a good point too, that L.E.A.D. almost allows you or helps you to be a current teacher and understand like current issues and what currently is going on in

education. As opposed to any other class at the faculty, it allows you and helps you understand current issues.

L.E.A.D. was the course that made teacher candidates prepared to teach today's students. In the focus group interview Margot spoke about how her placement in a county school taught her that every school has in-risk students, who all have the same issues. The participants agreed, L.E.A.D. prepared them to teach in every classroom as all schools, and all classes, have in-risk students.

> Margot: So what is very interesting about L.E.A.D. is that it looks different in every school and the idea of what an in-risk student might look different too. And for a county school, there is just as many issues, but what's so interesting is it's not at the forefront. Where if you look at an inner- city or urban school its often at the forefront of the school itself, but in a county school we have all those issues, we have kids who are hungry we have kids who are dealing with all these issues but it's often underneath.

Coursework

Logan also remarked that L.E.A.D. further prepared them for modern classroom teaching through the incorporation of useful twenty-first century teaching tools to further expose them to strategies they could use in their future teaching practice.

> Logan: Also, back to the class with our instructor, we got to preview Edsby (online classroom software) before we started and we did Kahoots and just other things that I actually still do today. Remember we did the one with the cards..plickers!..so our instructor introduced us to some different strategies like that are used in school, because

were as, like we said, professors that are out of touch wouldn't do that because they literally don't know.

Another factor of the in-class component for the L.E.A.D. program that participants spoke about being impactful to their learning was the relevant guest speakers and training sessions. In the focus group all were in agreement when Logan and Lana spoke about the applicable guest speakers who spoke on current issues in education such as mental health, LGBTQ+ rights, indigenous education, and more. In addition, the class has trainings courses imbedded in the curriculum to support teacher candidates in real-life scenarios, such as suicide prevention (QPSR) and Teaching Personal and Social Responsibilities (TPSR). Students leave the program not only with certificates they can add to their CV, but with tangible training they can utilize in the future.

Logan: I was about to say that. The guest speakers that were brought in were good relevant guest speakers.

Lana: All the guest speakers. The relevant ones from school boards, not professors. They were current in the board. It almost wasn't lecture based. It was very discussion based and group based it was hands on, it was, you know, this is a teaching strategy but you are going to do it, rather than like let me tell you how you're going to do it. Instead of, I'm going to show you how like grouping pencils work we're actually going to use these pencils. Rather than me telling you, group yourselves. It was very practical strategies.

In her individual interview Kaitlyn discussed how though she did not have as a fulfilling placement as the other group members had reflected. She found the L.E.A.D. course and guest speakers were the best part of her experience in the L.E.A.D. program.

Researcher: My next question then is what part of L.E.A.D. made it worthwhile for you?

Avery: For me it would have been classes, like actually yeah, the classes and guest speakers and stuff like that because I would say I really had no L.E.A.D. practicum experience.

Service-Learning Projects and Community Building

Throughout the L.E.A.D. program, L.E.A.D. candidates are working on a major project. The Service-Learning Project (SLP) as it is titled in the course, requires candidates to assess the needs of the school they are placed in and create a program or event to meet an unfilled need. In the focus group discussion three participants spoke about the impact their service-learning project had on their experience.

Margot's SLP connected in-risk students with health and wellness local businesses in the community. The students went on two trips, to a locally owned gym and a paddle boarding company. At each location they were given tutorials and an opportunity to use the facilities. The program was aimed at exposing students to positive activities in the community while maintaining personal wellness.

Margot spoke about how she believes her SLP has impacted the wider community because one of the local business has continued this program and now travels to local schools to give demonstrations and workshops.

Margot: "I was also just thinking in terms of service-learning project and things that L.E.A.D. helped for me specifically, it allowed me to make connections between the school and the community around me. What I did for my project was go out into the

community and take my students out on two field trips. Then one of the communal connections that we made with a gym, they still travel around to grade schools and high schools still today and do seminars. They do Lunenburg and Calvary [county schools] and, not that I started it, but I feel like I was able to introduce a positive community relationship with the local high school and a business; and I think L.E.A.D. can allow you to do that sometimes in terms of bringing kids outside in to the community.

Whereas Lana's SLP looked inward to develop the school-community connection in-risk students at her school were lacking. Lana and the other L.E.A.D. candidates placed at her school organized a holiday luncheon for students in need of school-community connection. One hundred students were recommended by staff and each student enjoyed a catered meal, gift, and a door prize (averaging about $40), all which was fundraised by the L.E.A.D. candidates. Lana stated how she learned something as small as a luncheon can show a student there is a school community that cares about them. The SLP has become a legacy event at the school and ran for its third year this past December, demonstrating one of the ways L.E.A.D. students have lasting impact on their placement schools.

> Lana: I learned from my project, which was a holiday luncheon, it was about connecting the kids who are the most disconnected from school and giving them something to look forward to… it's about bringing these kids into a school community and saying "we care about you, we want you to be here, we're so happy you're here, keep coming."

Avery spoke about how impactful her SLP was on her own learning and how it has remained a 'fuel to keep her going' during trying moments in her career thus far.

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Avery: Our service-learning project, I loved, I loved doing that because there were three other people with me at Pacer and we were able to do an amazing, I'm going to toot my own horn a bit, our project was awesome. I still look back at my pictures from those days and it like rejuvenates me as a teacher to know that those things can be done in the classroom. I use that one activity that we did…do you need me to talk about it?

Researcher: You can talk about it.

Avery continued: We did like workshops, we developed two different types of workshops. One was on positive relationships and the other was about asking for help. And so, the activity for the asking for help one, I do it every semester at the beginning of every class…it's not something that other teachers would do. I literally put blindfolds on my kids and make them do this activity and they get scared and whatever and I don't think a lot of teachers would feel comfortable doing those sorts of things, but having that service-learning project and seeing its benefit encouraged me to do it."

Becoming Reflective Practitioners

Reflection is a major component of practice of successful practitioners of education. Reflection is also a main element of a service-learning program. Reflection is a key component for service-learning to go beyond a simple practicum and serve as a method of re-educating teacher candidates to learn from the diversity in their schools (Boyle-Baise and Kilbane, 2000)

This intentional reflection completed by teacher candidates in the L.E.A.D. coursework on a weekly basis "provide Pre-Service Teachers with the opportunity to develop a heightened

awareness and empathy for at-risk students who may experience any number of these issues" (Nahaiciuc's, 2017, p 39).

The participants of the focus group reiterated the power of the reflection process by sharing how the class discussions with the instructor and their peers allowed them to learn about their own experiences and beliefs as well as learn from the experiences and their peers.

> Avery: L.E.A.D. is different in every single school and it's 100% true, but because the L.E.A.D. program allowed even us within our own group to bond as teachers we knew what was going in other school… we knew what was going on in each other's schools, and so even though I didn't experience what was going on in another school I knew and I was less afraid of it because of that."

Further, Avery spoke about the community the class discussions built between herself and her peers. She speaks to developing a network of future teachers she could rely on during her teacher training and has now relied on in her career.

> Avery: And just one more thing to add about the confidence level. My friends experienced all of that and even the new people that I've met who have gone through the program after me, I'm confident to call them up and be like, "What's going on in my classroom right now?" like "I need help" and that adds to my confidence because I know there's always going to be somebody I can call after doing this program.

The weekly class discussion served as valuable reflection allowing the pre-service teachers to speak about issues in a safe environment while developing their empathy and confidence for working with in-risk students.

Theme 5: Altered Perception and Efficacy

The most powerful theme that arose within the focus group and individual interviews was how the L.E.A.D. program altered the participants' perspectives of what it was like to teach in-risk. All of the participants were from the suburbs or rural areas of the county they had their L.E.A.D. placements. Further, all were of middle-class English-speaking backgrounds, and all except one participant was Caucasian. The participants noted early in the interview that they realized now that there were in-risk students in their own high schools; however, being in the University stream they were not exposed to them enough to notice while they were in high school.

> Kaitlyn: I think that's part of the conversation is that we came through an academic
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> stream and without being elitist, to be a teacher you have to have two university degrees,
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> so we didn't experience these applied level classes and what comes with that.

Participants were asked to think about how they viewed in-risk students prior to the start of the L.E.A.D. program they reflected on having a dramatized version of the negative behaviours associated with these students. It is evident that the media had played a role in the participants' perceptions of what it would be like to teach in-risk students.

> Lana: So before starting L.E.A.D. I had this perception of what in-risk kids were, which
>
> is that they are this scary group of kids, you know these terrifying urban, city kids who
>
> are impossible to teacher, like Freedom Writers or like other TV shows that like make
>
> them seem so scary and so difficult.

While Lana's expectations of in-risk students was clearly influenced by the media and overall stigma of inner-city youth, Avery discussed her initial fear of teaching in-risk students came from the fear of the unknown (Daniel, 2010).

> Avery: I think I was terrified to teach applied students because I didn't know any of them. My whole high school experience was academic based and I didn't have many friends that weren't also in the academic stream. I went to a pretty privileged school where we didn't really interact much with the other students and if we did, I didn't really know that they were in a different level than me. So, I think going into teacher's college my fear was not knowing how to teach in-risk classes and it had a big impact on that and helped me understand more what I was getting into.

In her individual interview, Kaitlyn reflected how she had a negative perception of in-risk youth without realizing it. She continues to state that she believes that it was something she had not been asked to contemplate before the L.E.A.D. program. Kaitlyn articulated a taken-for-granted meaning perspective that Mezirow (2000) articulated in his Transformational Learning Theory. Significantly, do to socio-cultural influences Kaitlyn had a negative perspective of in-risk students and assumed that that was just the way things are.

> Kaitlyn: I don't know if I fully contemplated what it would be like to teach in-risk students. Well I guess first, we called them at-risk kids and that to be has a worse connotation than in-risk. I think I knew it would be hard. I expected to be called names and disrespected you know, like I thought they would see me as this new teacher who doesn't know anything. Actually, when my mom heard I was going to Calvary she was happy, she said "at least it's not Central" because of its bad reputation. So, I know I had a

bad image of these kids in my head, maybe I just hadn't really processed it. But what is

really interesting is it's not that way at all. I worked with the 'toughest kids in the school'

and they were great. They just need someone to care about them and meet them where

they are in learning and life.

Significantly, Kaitlyn encounters a disorientating dilemma when she finds that the

students did not fit into her Existing Meaning Schemes, and though she does not reflect on

feeling disorientated, she has transformed her Meaning Perspectives to include a positive view of

in-risk students (Mezirow, 2003).

Kaitlyn: Yes sorry, when I say meet them where they are, I mean make sure they are

ready to learn before teaching. You don't have to fix all of their problems, but if you

show authentic sympathy for the stuff they're going through and really just respect them,

they feel more empowered to learn. It's all rapport building. I think that's what L.E.A.D.

taught me, that you have to build a caring relationship with these kids if you want to

teach them effectively. If you care about their needs, they are less likely to have negative

behaviours and more likely to engage in their own learning. Don't get me wrong, I have

had students swear at me and threaten fights with peers in my classroom but because of

L.E.A.D. I feel prepared to deal with that. I also have had really great experiences with

these "tough kids" that make those negative situations easier to deal with, ya know?

Further, Avery and Lana also discussed how working with in-risk students in their L.E.A.D.

practicum allowed them to feel more confident and therefore less nervous, about working with

this demographic.

Avery: It did change my perspective because I just thought it'd be a lot more challenging and then, in the end, I realized it is rewarding. It can be challenging at times but all kids have some issues, even ones not in-risk and in the end, most kids are all the same. They just want respect from us before we get it from them. And that's my teaching philosophy really. Also, English discussions can be so much more complex and fun when working with in-risk kids because of the experiences they can share. And in science, taking them on field trips is great because they don't get to do a lot of those experiences otherwise.

Lana continued that having the experience of working with in-risk kids in a safe environment as a LEAD teacher candidate helped her to feel more confident working with in-risk youth in her teaching career.

Lana: Because you are exposed to them without being like the sole intervener, I don't know if that makes sense. Like as a L.E.A.D. student teacher you're always under the supervision of another teacher, so that fear of working with them was lessened because you were sort of under the wing of an experienced teacher. And through that, uh leadership, being forced to work with these in-risk kids was less scary. Now as a teacher having that experience, I am more confident intervening, doing all these things, because I have had that experience.

The participants shared that working with in-risk students taught them that the negative stigmas related to in-risk youth are not consistent with their own experiences with in-risk youth and that working with these students as teacher candidates allowed them to build competence and confidence that has helped them developed a stronger self-efficacy for working with in-risk students in their current careers.

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<center>**CHAPTER FIVE**</center>

<center>**CONCLUSION**</center>

Discussions and Conclusion

The purpose of this Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis study was to explore how the L.E.A.D service-learning program impacted teacher candidates' perceptions of teaching in-risk youth. To facilitate this, five currently practicing classrooms teachers who are recent graduates of the L.E.A.D. program were interviewed. The focus group and individual interviews produced the following five themes: i) building relationships, ii) value in school supports, iii) classroom-based intervention, iv) L.E.A.D. coursework, and v) altered perceptions and efficacy. These themes illustrate the practical strategies L.E.A.D. equips teacher candidates with to use in their future teaching practices and how the L.E.A.D. program not only removed the negative stigma associated with in-risk students but showed the participants how rewarding teaching this demographic of students can be.

In the first theme to arise in the dataset, *building relationships,* the participants reflected how they learned the importance of building a relationship with students to be an effective educator. Interestingly, they noted that building a rapport with in-risk students was harder than they had expected. They needed to learn how to develop a relationship with students, something they had not considered before the L.E.A.D. program. Logan stated that he believed he had the skills required to work with these students, but his perceptions of his own abilities were inadequate. This echoes Laferty and Pang's (2014) conclusion that real-world experience in in-risk schools is necessary to prepare teacher candidates for working in diverse schools. The participants stated that they benefited greatly by having the opportunity to observe teachers

interact with in-risk students in the Student Success Teacher room and in the classroom. Logan and Margot reflected that having the opportunity to learn from their Student Success Teacher through watching them interact with in-risk students and then having the opportunity to build relationships themselves was vital to them learning how to work with in-risk students. Moreover, Avery stated that working with a classroom teacher of an in-risk class of students, showed her how to be dynamic and open with her future students.

All participants agreed that the most important lesson they learned in rapport building was learning to balance their teacher-student relationships. Many in-risk students' issues require a caring adult, someone in the school who shows compassion to the student and helps them with non-academic issues. The participants learned being a caring adult is an important role to be an effective teacher in today's classrooms. However, it is hard to balance teaching curriculum content and supporting students' emotional needs. It is especially difficult, as Logan notes when students aim to distract from learning by speaking off-topic. Notably, the participants' reflections revealed that their L.E.A.D. placements taught them how to build caring adult relationships and how to balance that relationship with teaching curriculum. More concisely, this theme illuminated that the L.E.A.D. program taught the participants the necessity of building positive relationships built on trust and respect to be an effective teacher of in-risk youth.

The second theme to emerge, *value in school supports,* came from the participants reflecting on how being apart of the Student Success Team while being a L.E.A.D. teacher candidate showed them the value the Student Success Teachers and the intervention systems have for their students. Students referred to learning "all the hats" the Student Success Teacher wears, including supporting students in their Student Success room by being a caring adult and

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motivating students to do work, leading the Student Success Team in weekly meetings, overseeing intervention for student who may be failing, and having a plethora of knowledge on the issues kids are facing as well as strategies to support students through those challenges.

Further, participants reflected that they did not know about the Student Success Teacher role before beginning the L.E.A.D. program and may not have been exposed to it without L.E.A.D. specifically placing them with the Student Success Teacher. In Bleicher's 2014 evaluation of service-learning programs, he examines how a short stay in an immersion program can have a lasting impact on teacher candidates' practices. The participants each reflected that the knowledge gained about the Students Success model has had lasting impact on their daily teaching practices.

Participants stated that they can use the knowledge of the Student Success Teacher supports they learned in the L.E.A.D. program to effectively utilize the Student Success Teacher in their teaching careers; L.E.A.D. allowed the participants to become more than just a cog in the wheel, but a crucial component of the success of the students in their classroom.

In the third theme, *classroom-based intervention*, the participants spoke about how they took their knowledge of the Student Success Teacher role and infused it into their classroom teaching practices. This occurred through exposure to a variety of student issues, allowing the participants to develop empathy for what students are dealing with outside of the classroom. As well, they learned the value of using classroom community-building activities to develop a trusting relationship between teacher and peers. Additionally, the participants reflected feeling confident in their ability to provide their students with classroom-based intervention methods, through catch-up days and small-group teaching. Participants shared how they believe L.E.A.D.

went beyond changing their attitude, L.E.A.D. has impacted their daily teaching practices and classroom structures. So in that where the fifth theme focuses on the perceptions the participants possessed, this theme focuses on the practical changes to their teaching philosophies; including being more sympathetic to student needs, creating a learning community where students feel safe before beginning to teach curriculum, and placing onus on themselves to be the first level of intervention in their own classrooms for their students' success (Bleicher, 2014).

The next theme, *L.E.A.D. coursework,* demonstrated the advantages of service-learning programs combining immersive practicum and in-class learning. While the first three themes prove that practicum is extremely important for candidates to practice the skills necessary to be successful *current* teachers, the participants also stressed the significance of their learning in the L.E.A.D. course. This focus on the L.E.A.D. curriculum components within the focus group interview could not be ignored. The participants referred to the L.E.A.D. class as the course that was most relevant to their current teaching practices. They highlighted the practical and modern strategies imparted by the instructor as well as the valuable knowledge they gained from engaging guest speakers. The two most significant benefits they learned from the L.E.A.D. class that are specific to service-learning programs, was their Service-Learning Projects and their in-class reflections.

The Service-Learning model requires two components, a service of some kind within a school or community and self-reflection. The final project for L.E.A.D. candidates is the Service-Learning Project where they are to tasked at meeting an unfilled need within the school they are placed. The participants discussed a few lessons they learned from this process, but the most significant was how the project invested the Teacher Candidates in their placement school

community. The project became a vessel for Teacher Candidates to become a member of their school community while on placement. Becoming part of the community is an important aspect of teaching, and as Margot reflected, something that has helped her get through a tragedy in her second year of teaching. Self-reflection is the key component that takes an experience like this from community service to true service-learning. The participants stated the benefits of in-class discussion throughout the focus group, specifically the value of class discussion and conversations with the instructor. Though participants did not refer to it as reflection they spoke about how valuable it was to learn about others' experiences with in-risk students and how the instructor modelled working through real-life problems with them. This reflection process is a great model of transformational learning theory in practice as the participants went into placement, encountered the disorientating dilemma called in-risk students, and then had a safe place to work through their transformation process, including a safe place for critical self-reflection, recognition from peers, and a place to work out an action plan for altering their worldviews (Mezirow, 2003). Thus, the in-class component of the L.E.A.D. program served a very valuable purpose: reflection – making the program truly service-learning and transformational, altering the teacher candidate's perspective on teaching.

In Donnel's (2017) recent empirical case-study, she too discovered that when pre-service teachers, who were placed in an urban school embraced the mutual learning opportunity of learning-while-teaching in-risk youth, experienced transformed teaching practices and enhanced efficacy (p. 223). This bi-directional learning that Donnel discovered over a multi-year case study is also present in the reflections shared by this study's participants who enthusiastically agreed they learned most from the in-risk student. L.E.A.D. offered an opportunity to safely

become learners in a challenging environment, which also led to the fifth theme, *altered perceptions and efficacy.*

Finally, the participants provided a clear answer to the research questions when they spoke about how their opinions of in-risk students changed. The final theme *altered perceptions and efficacy* is a good summation of the dataset as participants discussed how the knowledge and skills they learned from the L.E.A.D. program including relationship building and classroom-based intervention lead to them feeling more competent and confident when teaching in-risk youth. The L.E.A.D. program improved the teacher candidates' skills which allowed them a greater self-efficacy for teaching all students, but specially a positive mindset for teaching in-risk students.

So, to answer the original question**: What is the impact of L.E.A.D. on the perceptions of teacher candidates and teaching in-risk youth after graduation in a small working-class urban community in Windsor-Essex County?** And **How does working with in-risk youth through service-learning projects and student success affect the negative stigma of in-risk students for teacher candidates?** The answer is clear, L.E.A.D. provides Teacher Candidates with the opportunity to build the skills necessary to work with the most difficult students to teach. As well, working with in-risk students in a safe and intimate environment gave the Teacher Candidates the opportunity to learn that these students do not deserve the blanket negative stigma associated with the label in-risk, but rather with the respect and compassion of a caring adult are caring and capable learners. This revelation directly correlates with the work of bot Daniel (2010) and Butler et al. (2017) who found working with in urban schools was a clear method for debunking the negative stigma attached to in-risk youth in today's media and

Hollywood films. Significantly, participants also remarked that they felt the most reward when working with in-risk students, which has made them enjoy teaching these students more. Many of the participants also offered that they hope to continue exclusively teaching this demographic in their careers.

The final question for this study was: **What are the implications for teacher education programs?** All of the participants speak to the skills built from working in a situation that they once felt nervous about entering. When Teacher Candidates are challenged in a safe environment they learn the most. All of the participants discussed gaining a new understanding of teaching in-risk students. In the case of these five L.E.A.D. graduates, L.E.A.D. offered them a transformational learning experience by bringing them out of their comfort zone and expanding their worldviews. I believe the implication for teacher education programs would be to increase teacher candidate's likeliness to have a transformational learning experience by offering more service-learning programs that, like L.E.A.D., offer challenging practicums and a safe environment for critical self-reflection.

Study Limitations

This research was delimited by the size of the study as I interviewed five in-service teachers who graduated from the leadership Experience for Academic Direction (L.E.A.D.) service-learning program within the last three years. This criterion was chosen as it allowed for an intimate look into, if, and how, the service-learning program impacted the in-service teachers' perceptions through one focus group and five one-on-one interviews. The study is further limited as the results will be singularly applicable to students of the L.E.A.D. service-learning program and cannot be generalized to other existing teacher candidate service-learning programs

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that also focus on in-risk youth (Dweck, 2008). That is because the L.E.A.D program follows a specific curriculum and has different course objectives then other related service-learning programs. However, if followed properly, the L.E.A.D. program could be used as a model for implementing effective service-learning in other teacher training programs.

The study is further limited by the size and duration of the study. As I using this study to complete the thesis for my Masters in Education, I must limit the length of the study to one year; only allowing a snap-shot of the impact of L.E.A.D. on teacher candidates' perceptions of teaching in-risk youth (Dweck, 2008). If I were able to continue this study, longevity would permit me to compare the results of one group of L.E.A.D. teachers against future graduates. The ability to interview a larger group of teachers over a multi-year study would provide a better understanding of how the L.E.A.D. course may impact teachers' perceptions. As a former L.E.A.D. teacher candidate, I have selected a topic that I am personally connected to and this may lead to researcher bias within the study and results. To combat this researcher bias, I have to implement member-checking procedures where the subjects were given opportunity at each stage of the research process to assess that my interpretation of their experiences in the L.E.A.D. program are accurate. This involved proof-reading transcripts of interviews, determined themes, and my final conclusions.

Recommendations

Based on the literature review and the reflections of the participants, I suggest the following recommendations for teacher training programs. First, incorporate guest speakers who are currently working in education into teacher education programs. The participants reflected giving additional merit to guest speakers who are currently working in the school board. From

teacher-consultants to superintendents, it was not the job title that mattered to the teacher candidates, but the speaker's abilities to speak to the current education climate. The ability to shine a light on what education looks like today was captivating to the teacher candidates and therefore more engaging.

Second and in continuation of the first recommendation, employ working teachers to train future teachers. Though this may be logistically challenging as practicing teachers are only available after-school, leave the pedagogy to the professors with doctorates and attempt to have working teachers teach the practical strategies they use in their classroom so that teacher candidates can be prepared to teach in *current* classrooms.

Third, an increased emphasis on reflection of holistic teaching. The teachers spoke at length about the importance of holistic education, meeting a student needs where they are before teaching them curriculum, but only made the connection to their beliefs as following holistic education with practice. Possibly adding reflection explicitly on holistic teaching (think Maslow's hierarchy of needs) could benefit the development teacher candidates' beliefs and practices.

Finally, I suggest more immersion in the same school. Practicum experience should be about depth not breath. All of the participants spoke about the benefits of staying in the same school, including building authentic relationships with students, developing mentor-mentee relationships with associate teachers, and being an invested stakeholder in the school community.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research of the L.E.A.D. service-learning program will allow a greater understanding of the teacher candidates experience in the phenomenon. A larger-scale version of this study would allow for a wider scope of participants. One recommendation would be to include the Student Success Teacher's experience having L.E.A.D. teacher candidates as mentees. This research could investigation of this reciprocal relationship between Student Success Teacher's and L.E.A.D. teacher candidates across multiple schools. Additionally, an addition of quantitative data could provide concrete evidence to the transformational learning the participants shared. Ideally, surveying a cohort of teacher candidates on their perceptions of in-risk youth prior to and at the conclusion of the L.E.A.D. program would prove as beneficial data for understanding of how service-leaning alters teacher candidates' perceptions.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to beginning this research, the University of Windsor Research Ethics Review Board reviewed and cleared this research to ensure that this inquiry is ethical, respectful, and that it focuses on the content that it is intended for, thereby causing no apparent harm to the participants.

All participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study without penalty until the audio-tapes were transcribed, verified, and de-identified. It was explained to participants prior to the focus group interview that they could redact their contribution data from being transcribed at any time during the interview if they wished.

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Participants were granted confidentiality and all data collected is presented with pseudonyms to protect the participants identity. All interview data is stored in a password protected folder on the researcher's personal computer. All file names will be assigned identity codes to ensure the confidentiality of all participants and audio-tapes will be permanently erased after the completion of this thesis.

All interviewees completed a consent form, documenting freely given informed consent to participate in the study, an audio taping consent form, and thanked for their participation with a ten dollar gift card to Tim Hortons.

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APPENDICES

University of Windsor

Hello,

I am currently completing the thesis component of my Master of Education at the University of Windsor. In my thesis, I am focusing on practicing secondary teachers who completed the L.E.A.D. program during their B.Ed over the last three years to understand the impact, if any, the L.E.A.D. service-learning program had on their teaching practices. I would be very grateful if you would be willing to share your ideas around L.E.A.D. and its real-life application in our teaching practice.

I have received clearance from the University of Windsor's Research Ethics Board to conduct this research and have obtained your contact information with the permission of the Dean of Education. I have attached a Consent Form and a Letter of Information with my intentions for my research. If you are interested in becoming a participant in my study, please email me with your confirmation of interest by September 20, 2019.

 I look forward to our collaboration,

Gillian Kornacki
OCT, B.Ed., B.A.[H] University of Windsor
kornackg@uwindsor.ca

University
of Windsor

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: *Service-Learning Projects: Impact on Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Teaching In-Risk Youth*
You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by **Gillian Kornacki** at the University of Windsor. The results will be contributed to the investigator's thesis.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact **Faculty Supervisor, Dr. Geri Salinitri. Her daytime phone number is (519) 253-3000 ext: 3961.**

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to discover the impact of the Leadership Experience for Academic Direction service-learning project at the University of Windsor's Faculty of Education pre-service program on teachers' perceptions of teaching in-risk youth.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:
-Participate in a one-time focus group with your fellow practicing teachers who graduated from the L.E.A.D. secondary panel
-Participate in a one-time individual interview
-Reflect on the experiences garnered within the LEAD program
-Make connections between student success strategies implemented in the student success room during your B.Ed. practicum and your current teaching practices
length of time for participation: 1 hour [focus group]; 30-45 minutes [per individual interview]
location of the procedure: Neal Education Building, University of Windsor

-The total length of time for participation: 1 month, to be concluded in October 2019
-The frequency of procedures: only once; once in October 2019
- The completion of the audio consent form will be taken as the participants' consent to participate in the study as well as consent to be audio taped during focus group/individual interviews
-After the conclusion of the investigation, participants will not be contacted for follow-up sessions

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

A foreseeable discomfort may include a social component for you, the participant, sharing personal experiences and reflections publicly with peers. This discomfort will be managed by letting you know before the commencement of the focus group that you may choose not to answer any of the questions that you are uncomfortable with and that, if you would like to add any personal or sensitive information, you may choose to do so during individual interviews that can be set up after the focus group. Similarly, during individual interviews, any discomfort towards answering a question will be managed by letting you know before the commencement of the individual interview that you may choose not to answer any of questions that you are uncomfortable with.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Participants will benefit from the study by acquiring a personal reflection of their experiences in the L.E.A.D. service-learning program and how this experience has impacted their teaching practices.

The potential benefits to society expected from the research is focused on an increased awareness of student success initiatives at secondary schools, and the benefits of implementing mandatory service-learning projects in teacher education programs.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

Complimentary coffee and Timbits will be provided before the start of the focus group interviews. Participants who participate in the focus group and individual interviews will receive a gift card to Tim Hortons for $10 as a thank you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Participants are guaranteed confidentiality of the data collected since any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified will be disclosed only with the investigator's permission. No person or agency will be given access to the data collected from this study. The data collected will be stored in a password-protected file on the investigator's personal computer. As well, the identities of the participants will be protected in the study by using pseudonyms. The information will be retained for two years and then all data will be permanently erased to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

The focus group will be **audio taped** and the participants will be notified orally before the beginning of the focus group of their right to review/edit the tapes. The investigator will be the only one who will have access to the audio recordings which will be transferred to the same password-protected file in which the transcripts for the audio tape will be kept. They will be erased in two years' time along with all other data collected for the purposes of this study.

The focus group will be audio taped and the participants will be notified orally before the beginning of the focus group of their right to retract comments from the transcript but not the audio recordings. Participants will also be notified that the focus groups are public events and therefore full confidentiality cannot be assured by the researcher. The investigator will be the only one who will have access to the audio recordings which will be transferred to the same password-protected file in which the transcripts for the audio tape will be kept. They will be erased in two years' time along with all other data collected for the purposes of this study.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

All participants will be informed of their voluntary participation. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. The participants will be told before the focus-group interview begins that they may stop participating at any time but that their contributions to that point cannot be withdrawn.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

A summary of the research findings will be made available to participants through email in October of 2019
Web address: kornackg@uwindsor.ca
Date when results are available: October 2019

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications and in presentations.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study *Service-Learning Projects: Impact on Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Teaching In-Risk Youth* as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

University of Windsor

LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Service-Learning Projects: Impact on Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Teaching In-Risk Youth

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by **Gillian Kornacki and Dr. Geri Salinitri**, from the **Faculty of Education** at the University of Windsor **in which the results will contribute to the completion of a Thesis.**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact **Gillian Kornacki,** kornackg@uwindsor.ca **or Dr. Geri Salinitri, sgeri@uwindsor.ca**

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to discover the impact of the Leadership Experience for Academic Direction service-learning project at the University of Windsor's Faculty of Education pre-service program on teachers' perceptions of teaching in-risk youth.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:
To begin the interview candidate process I will contact Dean of Education, preservice, Dr. G. Salinitri seeking gatekeeper permission for the email addresses of all graduates of the LEAD service-learning program from the last three years. Once I have received the contact list potential participants will be contacted via email asking for voluntary participation in a one-time focus group with fellow practicing teachers and a one-time individual interview with me.

Length of time for participation: 1 hour [focus group]; 30-45 minutes [per individual interview] and the interviews will take place at the Neal Education Building, University of Windsor where the participants completed their Bachelor of Education. The total length of time for participation is one month (June 2019). The frequency of procedures is only once. Participants will b
e emailed a summary of the research findings in October .

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

A foreseeable discomfort may include a social component for you, the participant, sharing personal experiences and reflections publicly with peers. This discomfort will be managed by letting you know before the commencement of the focus group that you may choose not to answer any of the questions that you are uncomfortable with and that, if you would like to add any personal or sensitive information, you may choose to do so during individual interviews that can be set up after the focus group. Similarly, during individual interviews, any discomfort towards answering a question will be managed by letting you know before the commencement of the individual interview that you may choose not to answer any of questions that you are uncomfortable with.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Participants will benefit from the study by acquiring a personal reflection of their experiences in the L.E.A.D. service-learning program and how this experience has impacted their teaching practices.

The potential benefits to society expected from the research is focused on an increased awareness of student success initiatives at secondary schools, and the benefits of implementing mandatory service-learning projects in teacher education programs.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

Complimentary coffee and Timbits will be provided before the start of the focus group interviews. Participants who participate in the focus group and individual interviews will receive a gift card to Tim Hortons for $10 as a thank you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Participants are guaranteed confidentiality of the data collected since any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified will be disclosed only with the investigator's permission. No person or agency will be given access to the data collected from this study. The data collected will be stored in a password-protected file on the investigator's personal computer. As well, the identities of the participants will be protected in the study by using pseudonyms. The information will be retained for two years and then all data will be permanently erased to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

The focus group will be **audio taped** and the participants will be notified orally before the beginning of the focus group of their right to review/edit the tapes. The investigator will be the only one who will have access to the audio recordings which will be transferred to the same password-protected file in which the transcripts for the audio tape will be kept. They will be erased in two years' time along with all other data collected for the purposes of this study.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

All participants will be informed of their voluntary participation with the understanding that they may withdraw completely from the study at any time without penalty. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. The participants will be told before the focus-group interview begins that they have the right to remove any or all contribution data from the study at any time during the interview.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

A summary of the research findings will be made available to participants through email in October of 2019

Web address: kornackg@uwindsor.ca
Date when results are available: October 2019

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications and in presentations.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

Focus Group Interview Script

Welcome and thank you for participating in this study. I am Gillian Kornacki and I will be conducting the interview today. The interview should last approximately 60 minutes, are you okay with this time commitment?

The interview will consist of a series of open-ended questions that will look at your reflections of your experiences of completing the LEAD program. The interview will be audio recorded and the script provided includes the questions that will be asked.

The purpose of this interview is to understand how at how the LEAD program has impacted your current teaching practices.

Have you read through the Letter of Consent prior?

Do you understand any and all potential risks that are associated with the interview portion of this study?

Do you understand your right to withdraw from the study?

Do you have any questions or concerns pertaining to the interview or study?

Signing of Letter of Consent

If at any point during the interview you feel uncomfortable or wish to no longer continue, you have that right and will receive no penalty for doing so.

The questions will be open-ended, you can take time to think and gather your thoughts before answering if necessary. The questions provided will be used as prompts, in the hopes that the conversation will develop naturally among interviewees. Please try to refrain from using any personal identifiers if you tell an experience or happening. If you have any questions or need clarification about any of the questions, please ask.

Begin audio recording

1. Please describe, in general, your experience in the LEAD program?

    a. Were you placed in a school with multiple lead teacher-candidates or alone.

    b. Did you work exclusively in student success or in in-class support?

2. Did your experience in the LEAD program alter any preconceptions of teaching you may have had prior to starting Teacher's College?

3. Have your experience impacted the way you teach now? How so? (classroom set-up, intervention processes, etc)

4. What part of the LEAD program, if any, did you find most helpful in preparing you for teaching?

5. How comfortable are you working with in-risk youth? Has his confidence come from your experience in the LEAD program?

6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

PANEL ON RESEARCH ETHICS
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Gillian Kornacki

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

Date of Issue: **8 October, 2017**

VITA AUCTORIS

NAME: Gillian Kornacki

PLACE OF BIRTH: Windsor, ON

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1993

EDUCATION: University of Windsor, B.A., History, Windsor, ON,
                               2015
                               University of Windsor, B.Ed., Windsor, ON, 2017
                               University of Windsor, M.Ed, Windsor, ON, 2019