

We're All in This Together: A Multiple Faculty Model for a Teaching Methods Course

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Introduction/Need for Innovation

Educators are more successful when they receive initial instruction related to the development of pedagogical skills (Scoretescu & Sava, 2024; Sheehan & Moore, 2019; Swan, et al., 2011). Pairing pedagogical knowledge with the opportunity to engage with students in a classroom is paramount for developing educators who are effective in designing instruction, facilitating learning, and managing a learning environment (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Many school-based agricultural education programs assign a single faculty member to instruct a course related to the methods of teaching agriculture, although many could agree that in any given teacher preparation program, there are numerous individuals with the knowledge and expertise required to help shape the pedagogical knowledge of preservice educators.

Numerous researchers point to the importance of a team approach in preparing teachers. Allowing novice teachers access to multiple viewpoints and teaching styles is a key component to allowing them to develop their own strengths as educators (Kwok, et al., 2021). Challenges exist in developing teaching methods programming, from timing of the course to determining what should be included in the instruction (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017). This innovative idea stemmed from a desire to prepare strong teacher candidates and began with a single question of professional curiosity: *what if a teacher preparation program could capitalize on the strengths of ALL faculty members in delivering content related to teaching methods within a single course?*

How it Works

The four credit teaching methods course at the University of Idaho falls in a single, 16-week semester immediately preceding the semester of their teaching internship (student teaching). Prior to Fall 2024, the course was taught primarily by a single faculty member with occasional infrequent interface with other faculty. The course includes both class sessions and field experiences teaching lessons on four occasions in area high schools.

For the Fall of 2024, we determined that all four-teacher education faculty should collaborate in delivering primary instruction for the teaching methods course. At a planning meeting, instructors discussed course objectives, assessments, and session topics. A faculty lead was also assigned for each class session. Through self-reflection and group consensus, we assigned course sessions based on the skillset and personal preference for each of the team members. Capitalizing on the strengths of faculty members led to a course syllabus and schedule aligned to student needs and faculty schedules. Course topics included topics related to curriculum design, learning environment management, and preparing lessons for teaching internship.

Instead of having a single instructor with an occasional guest lecturer or dividing the course into blocks of instruction for each faculty; the lessons or units taught were left in the sequence most conducive to scaffolding student knowledge and taught by the faculty with the most experience or interest in it. Students could see three or more faculty in a week and faculty could teach a single lesson or a sequence of lessons.

Results to Date

Feedback from students was generally favorable with the new format. A graduate student conducted a survey with the teacher candidates to gather their perspectives and rating for the course. All but one of the students indicated the class made them feel “prepared” or “very prepared” to enter a classroom and design curriculum. When asked *what aspects of the course have been most beneficial to your learning?* one student noted, “probably seeing everyone’s different teaching styles because I definitely feel like my teaching style aligns with some but not the others.” Almost all students commented positively that having multiple perspectives shared was beneficial to their overall development.

Students did indicate potential need for changes should the format continue. Many felt as though the course needed additional structure to ensure all faculty and students were on the same page regarding assignment components and due dates, and many expected more timely feedback with all professors engaged. Two students did not particularly like the multiple viewpoints shared over the semester and would have preferred a single source of instruction.

Faculty members noted that the students moved through material at a much more rapid pace than other groups, which could have been credited to this group of students or could have been the rapid pace of the course. Faculty members also agree that engaging with each student as they conceptualized teaching concepts the semester before student teaching allowed for better baseline data and more customized feedback for students over the arch of their preservice development. We agree that assignment components and deadlines could be clarified if the course continues in this format. It is of note that faculty recognize not all students appreciated the multiple viewpoints, but we feel combining viewpoints to form an opinion is more realistic to the feedback they will receive when teaching than our original single viewpoint format. We also note that it was unique and beneficial to learn from each other, create a shared vision, and examine our own philosophical viewpoints.

Future Plans & Advice to Others

At this time, we have not made a final decision on what the Fall 2025 course will look like. What we do know is that we plan to integrate all teacher education faculty in the delivery of the methods course again. We plan on clarifying assignment details in more depth and now that we have a semester to reflect on, we will continue to refine the topics and expectations for students. It is the nature of education to remain flexible and continue to adapt to meet the needs of students. We hope to continue to examine innovative practices in teaching methods from our colleagues around the country to bring new and fresh ideas to our preservice educators. For others looking to adopt this model, we found that strong teamwork, joint vision, and adaptability were key components.

Costs or Resources Needed

The format of the course took no additional monetary investment, but did require a considerable amount of effort in planning for the course split to occur. Rather than have the course on the mind of one faculty, all played an active role. The FTE allocation for the course was split, which was easily facilitated by our institution, we recognize not all institutions allow split allocations with ease.

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