

Teacher Preparation Experiences and Early Teaching Effectiveness

Better ways of preparing new teachers might improve their classroom instruction and, ultimately, their students' achievement. Improving teacher preparation might even close the achievement gap, since new teachers are concentrated in high-poverty schools with lower-performing students.¹ Yet little is known about teacher preparation experiences, and how – or whether – they relate to effectiveness in the classroom.

To better understand teacher preparation and inform ways to improve it, this study surveyed about 3,300 new elementary school teachers about their preparation experiences. The survey asked about their experiences learning specific teaching strategies across two categories of classroom instruction: “Creating a productive learning environment” and “Promoting analytic thinking skills.” For each strategy, teachers reported how often within their preparation they engaged in four different ways of learning them: *coursework*, *observation* of other teachers, *practice* within a classroom setting, and instructor *feedback* on their classroom practice. The study describes the frequency of these experiences and which experiences may matter for teachers' effectiveness in improving student test scores.

KEY FINDINGS

- Of the four ways of learning –coursework, observation, practice, and feedback– teachers' preparation most frequently included coursework and least frequently included receiving feedback. On a scale of 1 (rarely/never) to 5 (very often), teachers reported an average of 3.8 for coursework and 3.4 for feedback.
- Practice in “Creating a productive learning environment” was the only way of learning related to teaching effectiveness in

English/Language Arts (ELA) *and* math (Exhibit). More frequent observation of others and feedback from program staff or their cooperating teacher was also related to improved teaching effectiveness, but only in ELA. The frequency of coursework on “Creating a productive learning environment” was not related to how effective teachers were in either subject once they got to the classroom, despite coursework being the most common learning opportunity teachers experienced.

- Having more preparation experience with “Promoting analytic thinking skills” –through any of the four learning

Relationships Between Ways in Which Teachers Learned “Creating a Productive Learning Environment” Strategies and Improved Teaching Effectiveness

	Improved Teaching Effectiveness in ELA	Improved Teaching Effectiveness in Math
Coursework	---	---
Observation	✓	---
Practice	✓	✓
Feedback	✓	---

Checkmark indicates that the relationship is statistically different from zero, with $p \leq .05$. These findings do not necessarily mean that learning strategies for Creating a Productive Learning Environment causes improved teaching effectiveness.

opportunities–was unrelated to teaching effectiveness. It would be premature to conclude that experiences focused on these teaching strategies are not important components of effective preparation; however, it does suggest more investigation into the nature of these strategies is needed to guide improvements in preparation.

¹ Bruno, Paul, Sarah Rabovsky, Katharine Strunk (2019). Taking their First Steps: The Distribution of New Teachers into School and Classroom Contexts and Implications for Teacher Effectiveness and Growth. CALDER Working Paper No. 212-0119-1.