As we delve headfirst into a future characterized by constant media usage, we have been confronted with a dangerous reality: unhealthy self-comparison to the unrealistic images in the media has sparked an epidemic of negative body image and subsequent body disorders in one of our most vulnerable populations. Research demonstrates that a high number of pre-adolescent children are already experiencing a desire to be thinner; even more abundant is the research that identifies an overwhelming number of teenagers and adults who suffer from profound body dissatisfaction. In order to slow this trend, healthy body image needs to be addressed affectively in the elementary classroom- and by teachers with access to ample resources. The following in-depth analysis presents both a qualitative and quantitative perspective on the issue as well as provides an examination of existing preventative programs. Finally, evidence-based suggestions for improvement in both research and application are offered. This resource will be widely available to any education professional who wishes to address body image concerns through preventative measures.
The current study analyzed four major research questions: (1) Are the attitudes and beliefs of pre-service teachers correlated with constructivist/traditionalist approaches to technology integration? (2) Does prior technology usage predict constructivist/traditionalist approaches to technology integration, as well as pre-service teachers’ general attitudes/beliefs about technology? (3) Does taking a technology integration course predict pre-service teachers’ confidence in and approaches to technology-based pedagogy? (4) What forms of evaluation materials (typical checklist, abstract checklist, or concrete checklist) facilitate analysis and application of digital materials for effective classroom instruction? Pre-service teachers from the University of Utah (N = 30) indicated their attitudes/beliefs towards technology, rated hypothetical teaching scenarios for effective technology use, and used one of the three checklist forms to evaluate online lesson plans.

Results demonstrated a positive, significant correlation between pre-service teachers’ general values about technology and traditionalist (teacher-centered) practices but failed to show any significant correlations between prior technology experience and student-centered technology pedagogical practices. Results showed that taking a technology-integration course increased confidence in and intentions to use technology in future classrooms. Finally, participants who used the concrete checklists that contained both principles and cognitive examples of technology integration were more accurate in evaluating the quality of technology integration found in online lessons.

Overall, this study suggests that expectations of technology use in classrooms has resulted in all teachers being more likely to use technology for traditional instructional methods, but more work and training is needed to help pre-service teachers move beyond teacher-centered instruction with technology. Scaffolding technology-based lesson plans with evaluative checklists that include realistic examples of student cognition for principles of technology integration can help teachers analyze technology-based lessons more effectively. However, additional research is necessary to understand how different training and support can help pre-service teachers apply and transfer their understanding of technology integration in a variety of contexts.
How to Effectively Align Utah Effective Teaching Standards with American Indian Values: A First Step for Elementary School Teachers.

Many times we find that American Indian students are disengaged in their K-12 education and classroom practices can conflict with their culture. This disconnect between value structures can make it difficult to navigate the educational pipeline leading to low college enrollment and attrition. This project will identify ways to align the Utah Effective Teaching Standards, specifically the distinguished level, with cultural values and best practices for American Indian students. By identifying ways teachers in Utah can meet both the teaching standards and their student’s values, educators can create environments that reflect the values of their American Indian students, which can help engage students. By summarizing effective empirically supported solutions we will identify the strategies that will work best in the classrooms providing highly skilled instruction that both encourages learning and creates a welcoming environment. Additionally, this project will outline values of American Indian students and discuss how they can be incorporated in teacher instruction. Using these sources of research the project will create a resource for Utah elementary educators to help effectively align teaching strategies to cultural values of American Indian Students.
DIFFERENTIATION IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS
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Abstract

In conjunction with the Utah Educational Policy Research center and under the supervision of Dr. Andrea Rorrer, this paper examines the current research surrounding differentiation in public elementary school (K-5) classrooms in the United States. This paper will seek to find a clear, singular definition of differentiation, including means by which teachers may differentiate. This will encompass differentiation of content (what students are learning), process (how students are being taught) and product (how students demonstrate what they have learned). It will also explore the benefits, challenges, and weaknesses for students, teachers and administrators. Areas for potential future research and gaps in current research will also be explored. In order to help educators and administrators determine if instruction is well-differentiated, an evaluation matrix has been created.
Chronic absenteeism is an issue that greatly affects Utah schools (AttendanceWorks, 2010; Research Brief: Chronic Absenteeism, 2012). Daily school attendance is becoming increasingly important in education. There is a growing relationship between attendance and academic performance (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Chang & Romero, 2008; Gottfried, 2011; Parades & Ugarte, 2011; Rothman, 2001; Research Brief: Chronic Absenteeism, 2012). When students are not in school, they not only miss out on academics, but also on crucial interactions with peers (Gottfried, 2011). The major problem with absenteeism in elementary schools is that young students need to be in school to “gain a strong foundation for subsequent learning” (Romero & Chang, 2008, p. 3).

When creating possible solutions to decreasing absenteeism, it takes a comprehensive approach with a sustainable goal to improve attendance (Sheldon and Epstein, 2004). Students missing school can be split into three categories: students who cannot attend, students who will not attend, and students who do not attend due to the low priority of education in students’ families (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Solutions must address all of these categories. The purpose of this honors thesis project is to explore a possible comprehensive solution to chronic absenteeism through a descriptive narrative study. Being presented is a case study of one program that has implemented a plan for increasing student attendance. The study is intended to inform readers of the issue of absenteeism in modern elementary schools and offer possible solutions using a multi-prong approach.
PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL MATHEMATICS TEACHING IN UTAH: A GUIDE FOR NOVICE TEACHERS

ABSTRACT

Mathematics is one of the core subjects taught daily in elementary and secondary schools. As with other major content areas in K-12 teaching, the leading national mathematics organization in the United States, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), offers a list of principles to aid American teachers of math in providing exemplary instruction.

In Utah, the State Office of Education asks K-12 educators to follow a set of core principles for teaching all content areas in the public schools. These principles, called the Utah Effective Teaching Standards (USOE, 2013), detail the guidelines teachers should follow to be effective classroom teachers. The guidelines are tied to the evaluation for teacher licensure renewals, and thus are closely followed by Utah educators. When Utah educators look for ways to be successful in their classrooms, they frequently reference both the Utah Effective Teaching Standards and the principles from their content area’s national organization for guidance, such as those from NCTM.

Further, many teachers will also look for principles and standards suggested for their particular level: early childhood, elementary, middle school or high school students. The Association for Middle Level Educators (AMLE), for example, offers a widely used set of characteristics of successful schools called This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents (2010).

Too many lists of principles and standards can sometimes be overwhelming, particularly for novice teachers. First and second year teachers also may find the generality of the standards lists too cumbersome with wording that seems more vague than concrete. With this in mind, the purpose of this thesis was to create a single, practical list of essential principles for success in teaching a middle school mathematics classroom in Utah. New teachers could easily use the list. The list combines national standards for teaching mathematics, state principles for effective teaching, and national standards for teaching middle school students to make one simplified list of five principles. For each of the five principles, outstanding classroom examples of these standards in practice were also provided to better exemplify each principle.

To create this list, three sets of standards were compared for commonalities: the Utah Effective Teaching Standards (2013), the NCTM national principles for mathematics educators (2000) and the This We Believe (AMLE, 2010) document from AMLE. Once commonalities were determined, one list of five principles was created specifically for middle school math teachers in Utah. To help make these principles easier for novice teachers to understand, and ultimately apply in their classrooms, exemplary classroom scenarios were also provided to better exemplify each principle.

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These scenarios were real-life examples observed during 50 hours of observation of two exemplary middle school math teachers in Utah.