



Advancing Critical Thinking through Relevant Issues in Public Schools ©

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Concepts

Public Schools in America (PSA)

- Education foundations course, required for all Elementary, Middle and Secondary, and Special Education, junior/senior pre-service teacher candidates (PSTs)
- Examines the historical, sociological and philosophical foundations of education with particular attention to issues of equity
- Addresses diversity, school governance, educational philosophies, and history of public education
- Critical thinking infusion focus since fall 2010
- Identified as the undergraduate course for meeting Title II requirements

Pre-service Teacher Candidates (PSTs)

- Possess a variety of experiences
- Experiences (or the lack of) shape their assumptions of Kentucky students from rural or urban areas, and of students from low-income families

Title 2 Federal Mandate

- Requires all teacher certification programs to train PSTs to work with
 - Students from rural areas
 - Students from urban areas
 - Students from low-income families

Our Project

- Funded through an i2a SUN grant for 2012
- Seeks to strengthen students' critical thinking skills, using Title II issues as the vehicle
- Project Goals
 - Provide professional development for course instructors
 - Enhance critical thinking through instruction of Title 2 activities in PSA
 - Collect specific data related to critical thinking and Title 2 through common course assignments

Assumptions (Faculty)

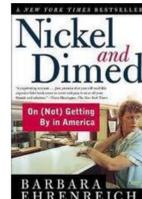
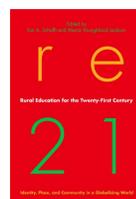
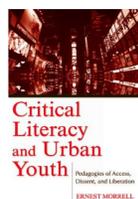
What we did:

Examined and challenged personal assumptions about students who live in poverty, and students who live in rural or urban areas through book study. Each selected text focused on one of the Title 2 concepts integrated into PSA.

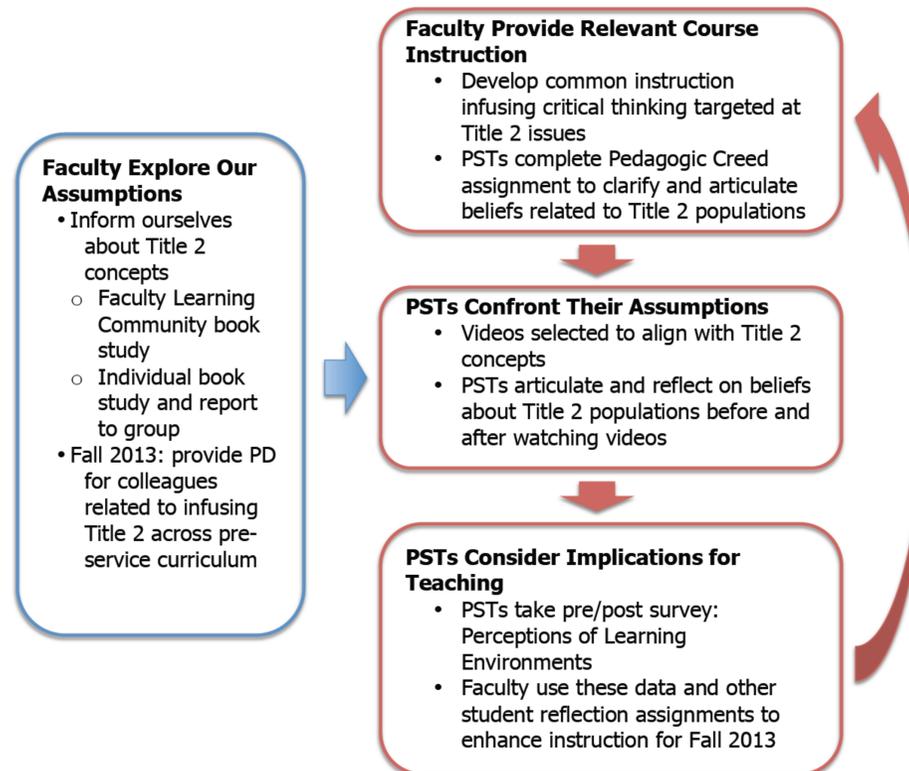
Connection to Critical Thinking:

Allowed us to articulate what we do and do not know about Title 2 concepts ourselves. Identified ways in which our own experiences have shaped our beliefs about students and teaching, particularly with respect to Title 2 populations.

Outcome: Faculty confronted preconceptions regarding Title 2 concepts. Discussions identified ways in which Title 2 concepts relate across the PSA course as well as conversational points to bring up with students to encourage their critical thinking.



The Big Picture



Assumptions (Student)

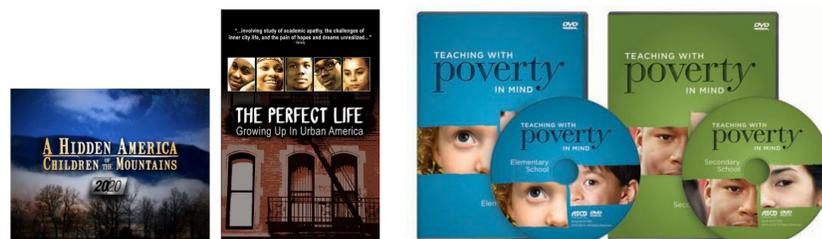
What we did:

Selected videos for in-class use. Each video related to education of students from urban, rural, or low-income environments.

Connection to Critical Thinking:

Students articulated assumptions and beliefs about relevant populations before and after videos through class discussion. Students took notes on a chart-based template to help them clarify how their beliefs had changed. Written reflections encouraged them to discuss their beliefs in greater detail.

Outcome: Faculty have a better sense of student backgrounds and ideas related to Title 2 issues. Faculty learned that some videos created additional conflict during class discussions; ongoing course revision will address how we can facilitate these discussions to maximize growth in PSTs' thinking about Title 2 concepts.



Relevance

What we did:

In class, read and discussed John Dewey's *My Pedagogic Creed* (1915). Students were asked to outline their perspectives around 5 principles. At the conclusion of the semester, students reviewed and reflected on how their thinking has changed. In their Creeds, at least one principle must include an explanation of how the student would consider/instruct a) children from low income families AND b) within an urban OR rural context.

Connection to Critical Thinking: Principles align with the College of Education's and Human Development's conceptual framework (Inquiry, Action, and Advocacy) and enable PSTs to be more clear and precise in their thinking about teaching. Articulating beliefs is highly relevant to their career aspirations as PSTs are likely to be working with many students from Title 2 populations.

Criteria Intellectual Standards	Target	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Principles	Responses include a complete, clear, and accurate definition of at least three selected principles as well as thoughtful, internally consistent responses to the guiding questions.	Responses include an accurate definition of all selected principles as well as thoughtful, internally consistent responses to the guiding questions	Responses include an incomplete, inaccurate or unclear definition of one or more principles; missing or unclear responses to the guiding questions.
Title 2 Provisions Relevance	At least ONE Principle includes relevant, insightful considerations for a) children from low income families AND b) within an urban OR rural context.	Limited considerations for a) children from low income families AND b) within an urban OR rural context.	Missing or irrelevant considerations for a) children from low income families AND b) within an urban OR rural context.
Extensions Significance	Responses thoughtfully integrate appropriate information from readings and experiences to enrich and extend definitions of each principle.	Responses integrate appropriate information from readings and experiences.	Responses do not integrate information from appropriate readings and experiences.

Implications

What we did:

Created and piloted an online pre/post survey instrument to assess PSTs' backgrounds, experiences, and how well-prepared they feel to teach students from Title 2 populations.

Connections to Critical Thinking:

Use of this survey serves to triangulate other indicators of PSTs' perspectives on their future learners' backgrounds and experiences. The survey allows faculty to examine the implications of content related to Title 2 relative to PSTs' career decisions

Outcome: Sample responses to open-ended pre-test items include:

Student Educated in Urban Schools: *I would prefer to teach in rural areas. These areas usually have a better atmosphere. The staff are usually more friendly and the students are more accepting.* (31212)

Student Educated in Rural Schools: *I would prefer to teach in an urban area. From my experiences during my methods courses at UofL I have found a passion of working in the urban schools with children of low socioeconomic status. I have found it very rewarding to watch these children grow as students and I hope to continue working with them throughout my career.* (31202)

