

*Original Paper*

Using Positive Behavior Role Plays to Prepare Teacher  
Candidates for the Classroom: An Exercise for Classroom  
Management

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**Abstract**

*Teacher education programs across the country may infuse the latest research and resources of best practices in managing a classroom but there are not many opportunities to practice guidance and managing classroom behavior unless it arises while teaching in the actual classroom. There is not often a time or place to “practice” managing the classroom environment or practice encountering misbehavior until the actual situation arises within a field placement in an elementary classroom of students. Role play allows preservice teachers to practice guidance and behavior management of K-12 students in the college classroom.*

**Keywords**

*classroom management, positive behavior interventions, role play, teacher preparation, social emotional learning*

**1. Introduction**

Classroom management is a persistent and primary concern of teachers. Excellent teachers use specific techniques to manage their classrooms and engage students in demonstrating appropriate and productive behaviors for learning. They carefully analyze student behaviors in an effort to bring about changing that behavior (Charles & Cole, 2019). Teachers arrange their classrooms in a way to maximize student achievement. They build a classroom culture whereby students understand the expectations for learning and behaving. Still, practicing and pre-service teachers need on-going, intensive and intentional training and practice in order to become highly effective in developing the consistent, positive classroom environments where all students thrive. Awareness of, and training in, these techniques can change

teacher behavior, which in turn changes student behavior, and ultimately affects student achievement positively (Marzano, 2003).

In Educator Preparation Programs (EPP's) across our nation, preservice teachers enroll in classroom management courses designed to provide pedagogy, methods of guidance, positive classroom environment, behavior management, and basic organization of a classroom. These candidates enroll in required courses such as these in order to understand and develop the best practices of managing children. Ultimately, preservice teachers take on the responsibility to learn how to create a positive and flowing classroom environment conducive to the needs of diverse learners.

Nearly 40-50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years of beginning teaching (Ingersoll, 2012). Teachers leave the profession due to many reasons. These reasons include discipline issues, inadequate support from school administration, staffing problems, and low levels of faculty input in school-related decision making (Ingersoll, 2001). Increasing teacher workloads and lack of parent and student participation are also major concerns of teachers (Hughes, 2012). This study focused on the connection between students who exhibit challenging behaviors because of adverse childhood experiences and teacher's abilities to respond effectively.

One aspect of these diverse needs is challenging student behavior. Students who exhibit challenging behavior do so for various reasons. For example, according to Kaiser and Rasminsky (2012), challenging behavior is exhibited among children in crisis. Children in crisis include children experiencing poverty, homelessness, foster care, abuse, neglect, or other situations that are beyond the child's control. Preservice teachers need practice and experience with how to best handle challenging behavior and how to provide a safe and positive classroom environment for their students prior to beginning their first year of teaching, and especially for those students who are in crises. The ultimate goal is to build trust and establish a sense of community where the child feels safe and has consistency in his or her life, which may impact their behavior in the classroom. It is a common thread across classroom management literacy and student-teacher relationships, that when teachers build a sense of belonging and trust in the classroom, the security of such an environment can influence a student's life profoundly.

## **2. Literature Review**

The review of literature focuses on the need for preservice teachers to have authentic field experiences, the connection between teacher retention and challenging students' behavior, and the accreditation standards that guide educator preparation programs. There is limited empirical research for using role plays to practice positive behavior strategies in classroom management. This study was designed to add to the body of research in this area.

It is often a challenge to "teach" behavior management because it is something that is unique to the specific grade level or subject area being taught as well as the children in the classroom. Additionally, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Students enter the classroom with their own values, beliefs, circumstances, successes and challenges. They enter the classroom with their own cultural, societal, and

familial norms and customs. Therefore, the teacher has to invest in the humanity represented in each of his or her students to address their personality and behavior effectively.

While teacher educators within EPP's across the country can access the latest research and resources of best practices in positive classroom environment and managing a classroom, there are few opportunities to practice guidance and managing classroom behavior unless it arises while teaching in the actual classroom. This is a critical element in effective teaching and is also a desired result which most teachers are evaluated on. Additionally, teacher candidates and educator preparations programs are guided by the national standards that address how teachers should build productive cultures of learning in the classroom, this include an emphasis on classroom management and positive guidance supports.

### **3. Standards for Educator Preparation Programs**

#### *3.1 INTASC Requirements*

Educator preparation programs require specific field placement hours in order for preservice teachers to gain experiences with children prior to graduation and gaining licensure. The INTASC standards or the Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium standards were created to raise the level of learning in classrooms across the nation. The standards include: (a) learner development, (b) learning differences, (c) learning environments, (d) content knowledge, (e) application of content, (f) assessment, (g) planning for instruction, (h) instructional strategies, (i) professional learning and ethical practice, and (j) leadership and collaboration([www.ncate.org](http://www.ncate.org)). In conjunction with INTASC standards, EPP's have modeled programs to best prepare preservice teachers for meeting these standards.

#### *3.2 CAEP Requirements*

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation or CAEP has also set forth standards for initial licensure and they must be followed in order for their program to be nationally accredited. Such standards for K-6 educator preparation include: (a) understanding and addressing each child's developmental and learning needs, (b) understanding and applying content and curricular knowledge for teaching, (c) understanding and applying content and curricular knowledge for teaching, (d) supporting each child's learning using effective instruction, and (d) developing as a professional (<http://www.caepnet.org>).

With such standards as INTASC and CAEP in place, preservice teachers are required to have experience in field placements and knowledge and expertise in working to educate the child in the most effective ways in order to become a professional educator. In order for preservice teachers to do this, authentic field placements must be provided in all areas of expertise. Preservice teachers especially need practice and experience in managing and providing a positive classroom environment for their students so that all of the other areas are able to be met.

#### *3.3 Immersion of Authentic Experiences*

Most of the courses in teacher education programs focus on academic content—math, science, social studies, and literacy. The preservice teacher or candidate creates a plan of instruction in conjunction with the curriculum and implements the lesson based on the needs of the students. When these students enter

their internship phase, there is limited time to “practice” managing the classroom environment with children included prior to actually teaching the lesson. They may also be in a position where they mentor teacher has established classroom and behavior guidance plans that the candidate is expected to follow. This leaves the candidate at a disadvantage to practice strategies to influence positive behavior and address misbehavior with integrity.

Educator Preparation Programs are being challenged to provide authentic experiences for preservice teachers prior to graduating and beginning a teaching career. Far too many programs focus almost entirely on academic content and have limited coursework and experiential opportunities to address classroom management, positive behavior guidance, or understanding various diversity constructs. This leaves new teachers at a disadvantage. They enter the classroom regardless of the preparation of their college years and educational program still in need of additional on-the-job training in managing a classroom and providing for all of the diverse needs their students will display.

When you couple their obvious lack of experience with the reasons why novice teachers leave the profession, it creates a dire situation across America’s school system. Therefore, teachers need more social and emotional, and diversity training. Role play can serve as a meaningful and authentic method for immersing teacher candidates in best practices for today’s learner.

#### *3.4 Social-Emotional Experiences*

Social emotional experiences focus on responsible decision-making, which helps all children make choices regarding their own personal behavior based on ethics and social norms within their own school and home environment. Students with increased social emotional learning in elementary classrooms have a tendency to have decreased behavioral concerns. When students are socially aware this increases empathy and allows them to understand that all people come from diverse backgrounds.

Students need social-emotional learning in order to be able to manage their own emotions and develop empathy and friendships within the classroom setting in order for the classroom culture to be one of positivity, community, and friendship (<https://www.casel.org/what-is-sel/>). By incorporating social-emotional lessons with children, the teacher can increase students’ abilities to make appropriate behavioral choices which may in turn improve the classroom community and behavior as a whole.

The *Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning* or *CASEL* (<https://www.casel.org/what-is-sel/>), defines social-emotional learning as learning that both children and adults need in order to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Through creating lessons utilizing the *CASEL* wheel competencies including: (a) self-awareness, (b) self-management, (c) social awareness, (d) relationship skills, and (e) responsible decision-making, students gain self-awareness while also learning how to best work with others in the classroom.

It is sometimes quite difficult for Educator Preparation Programs to schedule their candidates to observe and gain teaching practice within authentic field placements where the preservice teacher can have opportunities to gain practice and expertise in providing social-emotional learning and managing

challenging behaviors. School districts maintain busy schedules and are not always willing to allow preservice teachers into their facilities to practice their professional skills on an ongoing basis every semester. Yet, classroom management is consistently an area of concern for school leaders about novice teachers.

### *3.5 Diversity Experiences*

Diversity remains a significant challenge in educator preparation programs. Teacher candidates often report feeling less prepared to work with students from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds. Furthermore, there is an overrepresentation of students of color, especially young boys and men, and increasingly young girls, referred to special education generally related to social and emotional or behavioral issues. While this is a much deeper issue that speaks to the need for systemic change, it is troubling and should be addressed.

Teacher candidates need to have rich and meaningful experiences embedded throughout their programs to prepare them to work with all students regardless of racial, cultural or other differences. Weaving role plays and scenario-based content throughout a program of study will allow for greater opportunities to dismantle some of the stereotypes, stigmas, biases, and other education equity issues. These types of activities can serve as a power tool to engage awareness, understanding, empathy and humility. It might also allow teacher candidates and practicing professionals to create the type of classroom culture that represents an appreciation for, and willingness to accept, diversity in all forms.

### *3.6 Role Play Experiences*

Role play can be implemented by college instructors and professors as an additional way to increase practice of skills within the confines of a college classroom among peers. This can be accomplished as practice prior to implementing the skills within a school district. Role play is a time when the preservice teacher leads a lesson or activity as the peers in the college classroom participate as students (Kazemi, Ghouseini, Cunard, & Turrou, 2016). Role play is an engaging tool for professors and instructors of education to utilize within their classroom management and guidance courses. It engages preservice teachers in the delivery of a service among their peers within the college classroom. During role play, there is one lead preservice teacher who instructs the lesson, and other peers within that course assume the role of an elementary student. This method allows the preservice teacher to rehearse his or her planned lesson while engaging in supporting positive behavior and classroom management in a risk-free environment while gaining confidence in the delivery of the content knowledge prior to actually delivering the lesson in the elementary field classroom placement.

### *3.7 Description of Act "Outs"*

One instructional tactic that complements role play within the college classroom is "act outs". "Act outs" are designed to further enrich the preservice teacher's ability to deliver the skill or lesson while also addressing any challenges that may arise. The professor of the course uses 4-5 index cards with descriptions of possible behavioral challenges that may be encountered and administers these randomly to the participating peers in the classroom prior to the preservice teacher's lesson. These peers must "act

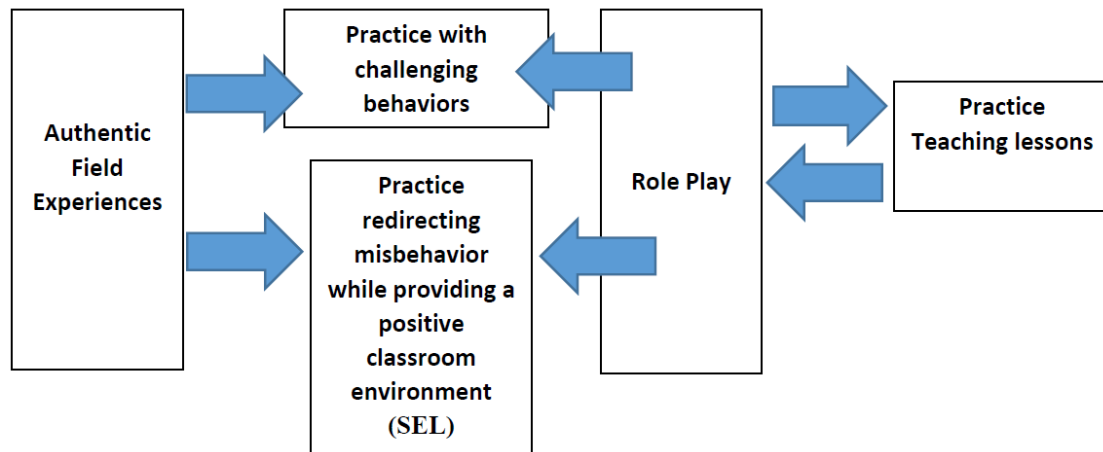
out” the behavior listed on the index card while the preservice teacher continues to provide instruction. This is a time for the lead preservice teacher to experience challenging behavior while continuing with instruction as a means of gaining experience of situations that may arise within their profession. The peers with the “act out” cards continue to exhibit the behavior on the card while the lead preservice teacher addresses the behavior during his or her instruction.

“Act out” cards could include any behaviors that the professor feels the preservice teacher needs practice managing. One such card might read “*student in first grade refuses to stay in his seat*”. Prior to the beginning of the lesson, the professor or instructor asks the lead preservice teacher to leave the room while the “act out” cards are administered to 4-5 students randomly throughout the classroom. The lead preservice teacher does not know who will exhibit a behavioral challenge nor which type it will be. The professor or instructor explains to the students that their job is to continue, as instructed on the “act out” card, until the lesson is complete or until the lead preservice teacher has addressed the behavior. It is in the hands of the professor or instructor to determine at which point the lead preservice teacher may exhibit frustration with the behavior and have the behavior cease. The lead preservice teacher must continue to deliver the instruction while addressing the situations that arise from the peers utilizing the “act out” cards.

Upon the lesson completion, the professor or instructor leads the class in a debrief conference, which encourages input on best strategies used to target and redirect the exhibited behavior presented during the service. The lead preservice teacher reflects afterward and determines which strategies should be used the next time an event like this occur. The professor or instructor of the course also encourages a reflection time afterwards for the class of peers who witnessed the delivery of the service to discuss what transpired, how to best approach these behaviors in the future, and to reflect on actions taken during this. The professor or instructor coaches the preservice teacher to think of the best ways to maximize instructional time while also addressing and redirecting any challenging behaviors. These practical experiences should continue until most of the preservice teachers have had an opportunity to practice teaching their lessons while engaging with challenging behaviors.

### *3.8 Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual framework for this study is rooted in the idea that preservice teachers need authentic field experiences prior to graduating and embarking on their first year of teaching. Preservice teachers in an EPP, (educator preparation), program will most likely be exposed to field experiences to best fulfill INTASC standards and accreditation requirements of the program in which they are enrolled. In today’s teacher education training it is difficult to locate field placements to log hours of practical teaching experiences. Partnering school districts are not always willing to allow preservice teachers into the classroom to practice their teaching skills without limits. As EPP programs grow attempt to meet these evolving needs, they may look at examples of role play opportunities to accompany field placements as additional practicum experiences for their students. Role play allows preservice teachers to practice what is learned and experienced in their field placements with peers in the college classroom to refine practice.



**Figure 1. The Connection between Role Play and Field Experiences**

Role play is a unique technique that can be used by instructors and professors with embedded practicum experiences in their programs of study. Role play engages the preservice teacher in practice with three key areas that are necessary for teachers to gain expertise in while preparing for their first year in the profession. These three key areas are: (a) practice with challenging behaviors, (b) practice with teaching lessons, and (c) practice redirecting and providing a positive classroom environment which incorporates Social-Emotional learning.

#### **4. Methodology**

The researchers utilized a qualitative methodology of design for this study. Qualitative research includes methods to achieve a more detailed understanding of the subject or subjects in the study (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). A qualitative research approach searches deeper to provide a more in-depth understanding of the participants being studied. Phenomenology was the type of qualitative research design used for this study as it is typically used to help researchers to understand and gain depth and meaning of lived experiences. Hermeneutic phenomenology was the type of phenomenology used in this study as it is the phenomenology heading or type that is focused on the subjective experience of specific individuals within a study (Kafle, 2011).

##### *4.1 Application of design*

The researchers in this study utilized qualitative methods, specifically pulling emergent themes from the students' responses from the reflective questions upon completion of the role play activity in the class. During data analysis, the three themes that emerged were: (a) behaviors noted, (b) lessons learned, and (c) reflections. The researcher categorized this qualitative data into these three thematic categories. Reflections and lessons learned included connections to teaching in their field placements.

##### *4.2 Instrumentation*

Students were to answer a series of reflective questions upon completion of their morning meeting lesson which included a question that asked the following questions:

- (a) What issue or need will the morning meeting address?
- (b) What concerns do you have regarding the successful implementation of this activity and the possibility of its success for all students in your class, based on the unique needs highlighted in the class description?
- (c) What modifications/accommodations might you make to assist all students to learn, based on the unique needs highlighted in the class description?
- (d) Briefly describe the flow of the morning meeting and discuss any behavioral concerns that came about during your meeting. How did you address the behaviors?
- (e) How did this project impact your understanding of the Morning Meeting strategy and its potential effect on developing a positive learning community? Of these questions asked, the researcher analyzed responses related to behavioral concerns within question b, c, and d.

#### *4.3 Sample*

This study comprises 33 students enrolled in a public state university. The 33 students are seniors within a college of education. The 33 students have been fully accepted to the elementary (K-6) initial certification program on track for a K-6 elementary education state license. The 33 students were in their intern I semester which was their last on-campus semester of courses. The 33 students would be entering intern II or student teaching following this semester. The preservice teachers within this study were enrolled within a senior elementary, literacy and special education K-6 initial certification program. This specific course focused on guidance and management of challenging student behaviors.

#### *4.4 Demographics*

There were 33 students enrolled within this face-to-face course. The students met once a week on campus for two and a half hours. Students were assigned in pairs to plan and deliver a small morning meeting lesson to their peers which focused on one of the five CASEL competencies. Preservice teachers had to work together with one partner to create, write and implement a morning meeting focused on one of these five CASEL components. These CASEL competencies include: self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (<https://www.casel.org/about-2/#>). The morning meeting lessons were to last no longer than 15-20 minutes.

This qualitative study incorporates preservice teachers' reflections that were submitted as part of a class assignment while delivering a morning meeting lesson to their peers. The preservice teachers within this study were enrolled within a senior elementary, literacy and special education K-6 initial certification program. This specific course focused on guidance and management of challenging student behaviors. Topics within this course included, children in crisis, neurological disorders, behavioral intervention for tier III behaviors, and how children within these situations exhibit challenging behaviors. Other needed areas of guidance to create and establish a positive classroom environment were also included in this course.

Prior to the beginning of the morning meeting the professor of the course dismissed the two students who were going to deliver the lesson out of the classroom while she administered "act out" cards to 3 fellow



peers. These “act out” cards were labeled with the following behaviors: (a) student plays with his shoes, (b) I don’t like morning meetings, and (c) I cannot keep my hands to myself. The students who were given the “act out” cards were told to only exhibit the behaviors until they were corrected once and then they could “act out” two more times but not to frustrate the teachers.

Students were then asked to reenter the classroom and deliver their morning meeting lesson to their peers as their peers acted as if they were elementary students. The three students with “act out” cards were not allowed to have their cards visible and could not tell anyone what their card said, not if they had a behavior card to utilize. During the progression of the morning meeting, the teachers of the lesson had to redirect the challenging behavior while continuing instruction.

After the lesson was completed the students and the professor debriefed and the teachers had to say who they thought had the “act out” cards and what the behaviors were. Peers in that course had to discuss whether or not the teachers addressed the challenging behavior appropriately and provided any suggestions and feedback to the teachers. The students were assigned to deliver one morning meeting for each week on a rotating basis with new students taking on “act out” cards each week. Continuous debriefing and feedback were provided after each lesson was taught.

#### *4.5 Findings*

The researcher gathered data from the candidate’ reflections. Two overall themes emerged: (a) misbehaviors the candidates noted during the role play, and (b) the candidates’ ability to inform their practices. Reflections and lessons learned included connections to candidates’ field experiences.

#### *4.6 Misbehaviors during Role Play*

Regarding behaviors noted during this morning meeting role play activity were also noted throughout the preservice teachers’ reflections. While reflections were gathered from n=33 candidates, this paper highlights two reflections that capture the overall thematic underpinnings. One reflection indicated a direct relation between the lack of planning of the morning meeting and the behavior of the students participating. It read, “a few students in the class had some behavior issues and I think a more engaging activity would have helped cut down on the misbehavior”. Another preservice teacher reflected on behaviors she noticed were going on during her morning meeting lesson. She stated,

“Some students kept talking to their neighbor and one student refused to participate. I helped her decorate her hand and she helped me back. When she acted inappropriately I would refer back to our lesson and ask her if snatching her paper from me was respectful or not and how that could have been handled differently. I walked over to the students that were talking and asked them if it was respectful to talk while I was teaching”.

One reflection pointed out three specific behavioral challenges noticed during implementing the morning meeting with one particular student. The reflection stated,

“One struggled with keeping her hands to herself. We had this student move closer to us on the carpet. One student was defiant and didn’t want to participate at all. This was a challenge getting her to want to participate. We tried to call on her often and have her contribute in some way. The

third student talked some here and there. We had to use “reminding language” of what our expectations were in a morning meeting”.

Other reflections indicated specific misbehavior that was noticed during the morning meeting lessons including off-task behaviors, playing with shoes, not willing to participate, refusing to join the rest of the class on the carpet for the activity, being talkative and having difficulty keeping their hands to themselves. Talking was a popular misbehavior that was noted and did come up often in reflections of preservice teachers. Some responses within these reflections indicated the teacher’s attempt to redirect the student who was talking. There was constant talking going on that was a behavioral concern. One preservice teacher stated she chose a student to model the greeting of the morning meeting initially because she noticed this student talking out of turn and not paying attention. This allowed the preservice teacher to practice redirecting and involving a student who exhibits off-task behavior to further engage him or her in the activity at hand.

#### *4.7 Candidates’ Informed-Practice Reflections*

The following are examples that highlight how candidates might implement their learning into their practice. These reflections made connections between social and emotional experiences, academic instruction, diverse learners, and best practices. Each example supports the need for educator preparation programs to immerse candidates in authentic experiences. Additionally, the lessons learned through this experience promoted the need to plan for positive behavior as much as for academic instruction. One student reflected,

“This project made me realize how morning meetings can be used to reinforce good behaviors and redirect bad behaviors. My peers pretending to be students and having them actually act out misbehaviors made the morning meeting more real world. Also, I strongly believe that morning meetings have a huge impact on developing a positive learning community. Students learn to listen to what their classmates are saying, relate to what they said, and add a meaningful reply. Students also have the chance to discuss social emotional content in more depth than just a side comment during a lesson. After presenting our morning meeting, I feel like I rushed through the read aloud and didn’t really make the purpose of the story really understood”.

Another preservice teacher reflected that it could be possible that a student with a poor attitude might bring the morale down for the other students. Another student reflected on the way this project “opened my eyes to all of the possibilities that can occur during morning meetings”. Preservice teachers enrolled within this course felt that this was a good experience in working with students with challenging behavior.

One preservice teacher in the course reflected,

“I already had a good understanding of what a morning meeting consisted of because of previous courses, but with this activity particularity, I was able to deal with behaviors that I wasn’t necessarily prepared for. This was a real life situation that I felt was a good learning experience.

These types of situations will happen frequently in a real classroom, and this activity prepared me a

little more for them”.

These reflections of preservice teachers indicated that there were common misbehaviors happening in the classroom during the delivery of instruction and efforts were made to recognize and address the behaviors.

## **5. Conclusions**

Teachers need practice providing authentic and well-planned, engaging lessons for their students as well as practice in supporting positive behavior in a classroom. It is often hard to simulate such experiences due to the inconsistent nature of children’s behavior. By incorporating “act outs” into role-playing situations that mirror clinical settings, the intern can experience a simulation in which interns can practice working with challenging behaviors encountered in order to best prepare them for their profession. Role play and “act outs” allow the professor to “coach” the intern with the best practices that allows the intern to maximize service time.

## **6. Implications**

Teachers need practice providing authentic and well-planned, engaging lessons for their students as well as practice in supporting positive behavior in a classroom. It is often hard to simulate such experiences due to the inconsistent nature of children’s behavior in a classroom.

Second, while simulated experiences cannot provide a real-time experience, role play can offer candidates authentic experiences and multiple experiences with multiple shifts and curve balls to elicit different responses. Offering candidates the ability to practice and to do so with support from their instructors will deepen the candidates’ resources and toolkit to address various types of challenging behaviors. Most importantly, the candidates can promote and foster a positive classroom culture.

Third, these types of experiences allow candidates a safe space to make mistakes and learn new ways of thinking that can be incorporated into their practices. These experiences allow instructors, mentor teachers and peers, in many instances, to support the candidate by offering suggestions and feedback. By using role play and other types of simulated exercises, one might alleviate candidates from experiencing undo stress and fear of failure. The goal is to optimize the experiences to give candidates opportunities to build references and resources to implement positive behavior strategies and approaches in their own classrooms.

Fourth, role play and scenario-based activities can provide an opportunity for candidates to intersect the learning with their practices, overall. And as it relates to issues of diversity and belonging, simulated experiences might allow for more in-depth work in the area of representation. It also supports creating a positive classroom and school culture and climate through practices and approaches that move beyond cultural competency to embrace cultural humility and sensitivity (Barnes, Rutledge & Parker, 2020).

## 7. Recommendations for Future Study

The following list suggestions for future research in this area to continue adding to the body of literature on positive behavior, role play, and immersion of authentic experiences.

- A further analysis of preservice teachers' confidence levels after their first implementation of a lesson in the field when approaching challenging behavior could be analyzed.
- Replicate the study and incorporate technology. For example, allow school leaders and mentor teachers to provide suggestions and recommendations to candidates as they engage in role plays via video conferencing and in real-time.
- Collaborate with video gaming companies to develop simulated programs that might allow for role plays that resemble classroom and school settings. This would allow for candidates to experience multiple scenarios, practice various strategies, and engage in deep learning.
- Additionally, a future study that disaggregates scenarios based on situational or societal issues might offer greater insight into how teacher candidates address culture, stigmas, biases, disabilities, etc... Classrooms should be a place where students from all backgrounds, histories, and identities are represented. The way in which the teacher creates a climate and culture where those students feel a sense of belonging is critical to that concept. Therefore, a study that focuses on role plays and scenarios that address such issues will provide instructors, mentors, and the teacher candidate with opportunities to promote greater equity.

## 8. Final Thoughts

By incorporating “act outs” into role-playing situations that mirror clinical settings, the preservice teacher can experience a simulation in which preservice teachers can practice working with challenging behaviors encountered in order to best prepare them for their profession. Role play and “act outs” allow the professor to “coach” the preservice teacher with the best practices that allows the preservice teacher to maximize service time.

As educator preparation programs respond to current trends and issues in our society, it is imperative that teacher candidates are prepared to address those trends and issues. Student behaviors can be manifestations of traumatic events, familial stress, community changes, etc... Those behaviors might appear as challenging, or perhaps resilient, depending on how the student is supported and encouraged. Role play can be a method that allows teacher candidates to practice and promote positive reinforcements, learn about their own triggers, recognize their biases, and demonstrate empathy for students experiencing challenges.

Student behaviors and interactions might also be influenced by their background, cultures, and histories. Classroom teachers and school educators, in general, need to have opportunities to fill their toolbox with skills, resources, and practices to develop positive classroom environments that support positive behaviors and a culture for learning, empathy, and humility. Role play, therefore, is a critical and valuable approach for educator preparation programs, especially for teacher candidates during their internship and

field experiences.

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