

## ABSTRACT

### A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN AN INNOVATIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM

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The roles that students and teachers play in the classroom have everything to do with the way in which teaching and learning are approached. In programs with stakeholders from multiple educational perspectives, some of which may be in conflict with one another, the approach to teaching and learning may not be clear-cut. The purpose of this study was to create a description of how learning and teaching were conducted in a program that operated under such conditions.

The TILE program was bound by four main components: the middle school philosophy, technology integration, student achievement (in particular Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS)), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Explorer Schools (NES). Going into the study there was some evidence, based on test scores, that the program was effective in helping students be successful on AIMS, but how the program approached teaching and learning to be successful on this was unclear. Furthermore, the role of other three components of the program had not been addressed at all.

In order to develop a description of teaching and learning in a program where these four components were the core ingredients, the researcher implemented a case study design. This case study focused on fifty-seven students, two teachers, one student teacher, and the learning environment in which they interacted. To fully develop the intricacies of the program, the researcher gathered data from a number of sources utilizing multiple methods. The sources of

the data were the teachers, the students, teacher documentation, and the learning environment. The methods for gathering data were face-to-face interviews, observations, and a questionnaire.

Although how the data of this study is connected or disconnected from the current literature concerning the four components of the TILE program are considered, an evaluation is not the purpose. The findings are to be generalized in a naturalistic manner where the reader finds personal meaning in the data. This data is “then intuitively combined with their previous experiences” (Stake & Trumbull, 1982) to be used for use in their own future experiences. The findings of this case study, therefore, cannot be determined by the researcher, but by the individual reader through the change brought to their educational practice.