The Sixth International Conference
on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices

Collaboration and Community:
Pushing Boundaries through Self-Study

JULY 30 - AUGUST 3, 2006
HERSTMONCEUX CASTLE, EAST SUSSEX, ENGLAND
The Sixth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices

Collaboration and Community: Pushing Boundaries through Self-Study

JULY 30 - AUGUST 3, 2006
HERSTMONCEUX CASTLE, EAST SUSSEX, ENGLAND

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S-STEP website: http://www.ukans.edu/~sstep/
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Introduction

We are delighted to be celebrating the tenth year of meeting together at this, the Sixth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP). In 1993 S-STEP began as a Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), attracting more members each year at paper sessions and in the business meeting at the annual conferences of AERA. In 1996 Queen’s University at Kingston, Ontario made available to S-STEP the incomparable International Study Centre at Herstmonceux Castle in East Sussex, England. Every other year thereafter the Castle Conference has brought us together from across the globe, with delegates traveling, such as this year, from Australia, Canada, Iceland, The Netherlands, New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

The word self in common use refers to something bounded by skin and a skull. By contrast, the self-study of the inherently relational practices of teacher education is often social in orientation. So the theme of Collaboration and Community: Pushing Boundaries through Self-Study was one readily agreed upon as appropriate for a celebration of a decade of coming together for collaborative conversations in lively community at the Castle Conferences.

These proceedings would not be possible without many kinds of collaboration. The summaries of the papers presented at the Sixth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices include many in which the authors collaborated in research and in writing, a few of which represent multiple pairs or groups of collaborators. Many of the single authors describe partnerships or focus closely on the community built by professors working together with preservice or inservice teachers. Every step, from the call for proposals to distribution of the proceedings at the Castle, has benefited from collaboration.

Learning from the illustrious series of editors who proceeded us as we co-authored our first S-STEP contributions, we co-editors have relied heavily on the wide-ranging expertise of a community of reviewers. With the blind review process masking any kinds of status differences between authors and reviewers, first-time contributors have freely advised much published founding members of S-STEP, and veteran members have guided peers and newcomers alike. While honoring the English spelling conventions of each author’s home country, we have used the fifth edition of the American Psychological Association’s publication manual for consistency in style. To accommodate self-study sources beyond print media, we have made liberal use of italics to represent quotations from such data as personal journals, feedback of professor to student and vice versa, course evaluations, discourse via e-mail, and transcripts of conversations.

Whether you are using these proceedings to inform your participation in sessions at the Castle Conference, or are joining the S-STEP community by reading and reflecting on these papers, we are delighted to have served you as editors.

Co-editors
Linda May Fitzgerald
Melissa L. Heston
Deborah L. Tidwell
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, IA USA

The Sixth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices
July 30-August 3, 2006

Sponsored by
the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices SIG of AERA
Acknowledgements

Planning the program and editing the proceedings for the Sixth International Conference at Herstmonceux Castle is truly a collaborative endeavor. The Editorial and Conference Planning Team could not have managed without all of the following individuals assisting in this great effort.

As always we have been inspired by and helped along at every step by Tom Russell, who makes sure we all have places at the Castle to come together, to eat, to drink and to rest. We are especially delighted that he secured the banquet facility this year so we could celebrate our tenth anniversary with a Bardic Dinner. By managing the conference website and e-mail distribution list, he keeps us all informed. By pushing away all obstacles, he makes sure we have what we need to build our lively community at the Castle.

A special thanks to Victoria Perselli and the School of Education, Kingston University, UK, for the printing of the proceedings.

Philip Fass, who not only is an incomparable graphic designer but also a colleague in self-study groups on our campus, has once again provided a visual medium that does honor to the fine papers represented in print.

Without Susan Jordan’s exceptional organizational skills we would have easily lost our way in the many details of double blind review of both proposals and full papers. She has created and maintained files, correspondence, lists, all with unfailing good humor and a dollop of anglophilia. We are especially indebted to Greg Stefanich, interim head of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, for authorizing our use of her time and talents.

Editorial process

The editorial process for the proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices involved double blind review for acceptance of proposals for presentation at the conference, followed by a double blind review process for the inclusion of full papers in the proceedings.

Reviewers for the blind review process

SUNDAY, July 30, 2006

TIME EVENTS
06:00–08:00 DINNER Welcome! Tom Russell and John Loughran discuss the original dream of the conference; what’s been accomplished; what’s ahead
08:00–??:?? PUB discussions & Mentoring Teams

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An influence that has been actively part of our formation as teachers is our experiences as students. We realize that much of what we do and do not do is in reaction to those experiences. For this Castle conference we want to explore the relationship between our education as children and the kind of teachers we have become. There is no question in Donna’s mind that her early experiences were so unrelated to her sense of person that she felt compelled to see if it were possible to teach in a very different way than she was taught. Jerry also developed a passion to teach teachers, though his awareness of the effects of his early education appeared much later in his life. We both emerged from our schooling as humanistic educators—so perhaps restrictive, unresponsive, oppressive education is really quite growthful!

The research we have done for a new book we are writing together explores student needs and how they were satisfied or not in schooling from kindergarten through twelfth grade. We looked first at ourselves and tried to unwrap what allowed us to survive what we each felt was unrelated to who we are as people and emerge with such lively interest in the process of educating. It seems strange that someone who felt such an active dislike for school should want to commit a life to schooling, so there must have been some very powerful and compelling aspects to our experiences.

We each wrote a letter to our grandson, Dylan, as a part of this process. In the letters we tell him about our school experiences, and from those letters we discovered what made us into humanistic teachers. We also wondered how other teachers were affected in their practice by their childhood education. We set up discussions with six teachers who we know well to explore their thoughts, creating a larger discussion within which to reflect on these issues. The letters and the discussions were centered around the following four questions: (1) What did you like about school as a child? (2) What bothered you in school? (3) What aspects of your schooling did you always say you would change if you were the teacher? And, (4) what influence does the way you were taught have on how you are teaching now?

We are essentially looking in this research at the questions Anastasia Samaras (2002) asked in her journal about her preservice teachers: “Who are my students—really? What are their stories? How have their backgrounds helped shape their thinking about how schools should be organized or how students should be taught?” (p. 41) Our slant to the inquiry is to discover not only what were the influences and their effects, but in what ways these influences lead teachers to become more humanistic. So much of what is taught about education today recognizes that focusing solely on the intellectual development of students is insufficient. In many ways, it seems that our influences as young students are now more likely to result in teachers who, rather than emulating traditions, try to be humanistic educators whose highest priority is the needs of the students.

A. S. Neill’s (1960) book, Summerhill, has been a widely read popular ideal for breaking with tradition in education. In rereading Neill’s Summerhill School: A New View of Childhood (1992), essentially the same book in print now nearly 50 years, it becomes quite clear that he was personally injured emotionally by his very strict, rigid education in Scotland. Interestingly enough, he viewed his father as a really good teacher within that rigid system. His inquiry into psychoanalysis and his work with a radical social worker who was dealing with very delinquent adolescents allowed Neill to imagine education could be radically different from his own. And, he did create such an environment: a democratic community run by teachers and students who all voted in most decisions related to the running of the school. Oddly though, he wasn’t overly concerned about how the actual teaching took place. From the perspective of a half-century ago, the school he created was his concept of a humanistic school. From our perspective today, the structure of a well-functioning humanistic school is quite different. This is what our new book is about; for now, we are limiting the discussion to the roots of functioning as good teachers in any kind of school in classrooms today.

A recent article in Studying Teacher Education by Peter Pereira (2005) speaks directly to the issues of how our past experiences affect whom we become as teachers. Pereira says when speaking about preservice math
teachers, “They must change the way they learn before they can change the way they teach” (p. 70). We believe that this applies to teachers in all areas of education. Unless we are conscientiously aware of what is driving our choices of behavior in the classroom, we are all too likely to revert to the ways of the teachers who taught us—maybe for the good, but usually for the not so good. Making practical sense out the implications of Pereira’s study requires teacher educators to model the goals they have for their students. The starting point of our research is to discover a better understanding of the foundations of our own teaching. This awareness, we believe, is essential to breaking with nonfunctional teaching behaviors in an effort to discover personal strengths as a classroom teacher.

Donna’s letter to her grandson (who is yet too young to read it) is an evocative piece that contrasts her dreary hours in elementary school classrooms with the excitement she experienced walking to and from school. Raised in Minneapolis, which then would have felt like a much smaller town than it was even at that time, there was a freedom of adventure for even a child of kindergarten age as she walked by herself to school. It was considered safe to walk 13 blocks there and 13 blocks home in the morning, for lunch, and after school was over. The outdoor environment provided an exciting array of gardens, roaming animals, worms, bugs, and friendly people. School was highly restrictive and judgmental. It was difficult for her to be good, and the result invited an abundance of painful criticism—at times, shame. She did learn a lot and did well. The difficulty centered on so much time spent in school where hardly anyone either knew who she was or cared.

Even as a child, and particularly in adolescence when given opportunities to teach younger children, Donna found herself imagining how teaching and learning could be different. She grew up with a sense of the importance of being interested in who people are, how they are the same as she is, and different. The influence of her childhood education developed into a strongly felt concern for knowing the unique characteristics of her students. As a teacher, she has always interacted with students in ways that let them know of her concerns. Over the years, as she became an experienced teacher, her thinking about teaching led to identifying herself as a humanistic educator. For her this has come to mean that student needs have to be the place where planning teaching begins. There is an important place for teachers’ and societal needs, but compromises should favor students whenever possible.

Jerry’s letter to Dylan is equally evocative but in very different ways. It’s about indoor life, literally and psychologically. And, it’s in two parts. Until the age of 11, he was raised in Chicago, which provided a strong sense of city life. Questions of safety weren’t on top of the list in the South Side neighborhood, and so as he got older, there was a lot of movement with friends permitted, even as far as the Museum of Science and Industry in nearby Hyde Park. His experiences, however, in comparison with Donna were more about seeing, doing, and making things that he could show off. At 11, his family moved to the small town of Wooddale 20 miles west of Chicago’s Lake Michigan shore. No suburb, it had a population of 800 and provided a striking contrast with life in the city. There was plenty of outdoors including open fields, small woods, and a creek. Though the environment shifted, his style persisted.

As to the relevance of school, Jerry was pretty much oblivious. There he was an oddball, who was not fond of playground activities, particularly those that had the potential of physical violence. He has few memories of what happened in school, though he certainly did well enough to get decent grades. One sharp memory was coming back to school after being out sick for a few days at around 9 or 10 years old and sharing with his teacher a constant between 1 and 2, not unlike pi. He had been playing with numbers to keep himself busy, probably in connection with drawing geometric shapes. In the process, he uncovered a reoccurring relationship. The teacher’s response went something like, “That’s interesting.” His resignation with school studies was more than balanced with trains, puppetry, magic, and projects like stringing tin-can telephones off a third-story back porch between his friends’ houses. In Wooddale, when he wasn’t playing outdoors, he put considerable time into learning to play the trumpet.

Jerry’s mind wasn’t on teaching while he was growing up. He did part-time teaching while going to college and graduate school, and he liked it and thought it was important. What he knew about teaching, though, was quite unsophisticated; his style was mainly motivated by not teaching the ways in which he was taught—leaving him dependent a lot on his sincerity, which turned out to be fairly valuable coin for an untrained novice. For sure, he did know that regard for the individual was key to good teaching. How to manage this was another story. The spirit of his childhood is what most influences his teaching now.

The six colleagues we consulted are from a variety of contexts in our lives—teachers with whom we’ve taught, family and friends. Centered around the four questions, they were asked to discuss their childhood likes and dislikes about school and their ideas about how what ought to be different has influenced their teaching. The point of the discussions was not about figuring out in general what these influences mean. Rather, we were interested in better understanding connections with our past in light of theirs. In this presentation, we are interested in the participants’ growing understanding of their influences in light of ours. In the big picture, it is not so much about how these connections take place as it is about how others can undertake this kind of inquiry for themselves in productive ways that can benefit the continued growth of the teacher self.
Talking with our friends, not everyone responded about what they liked about school in the same way we did. Some were equally negative. Their reactions included: “Very little”; “Nothing, I hated school”; “Recess, nothing else”; “It wasn’t good for me.” But others picked out what they did like: “The social intercourse which meant contact with other people”; “Learning new things and I liked a lot of my teachers”; “When we made things in the classroom.” It’s not the case that every one of them disliked school, but the discussions certainly began mostly on a negative note—considering that they were asked what they liked.

On the other hand, in response to what bothered them, the discussion was very on target. Moreover, the discussion clearly focused on the personal problems they were facing: “I didn’t fit in”; “I hated the mean and insensitive behaviors, teacher to student, child to child”; “Teachers didn’t talk to me so I could understand them though I knew I wasn’t stupid”; “I felt I was a failure as a learner, from kindergarten on”; “Socially, I didn’t feel taken care of”; “I always felt behind the 8 ball and could never do anything at my own pace.” The variety of responses reflects who “I” was as a student and what was needed to be a good student. It’s not so much a theme of negativity as it is a commentary on what was unnecessary or missing. For us, we saw more clearly how as students their basic needs were not being met.

Looking at what these teachers thought back then should be changed about schools, they imagined that teachers didn’t have to mistreat their students, they didn’t need to be mean. They felt it was possible to leave room for different learning styles. Comments included: “When someone gets something wrong, I wouldn’t get mad at them”; “Make a child feel like they could do something positive”; “Make the student feel special.” One of the teachers knew already that she wanted to teach art and concluded, “I didn’t want art to be part of school.” The personal connection with what bothered them about school was clear. Each teacher as a student wanted what happened in school to better attend to their personal needs. And, these are people who became successful teachers.

Consistent with our own experiences becoming and developing as teachers, their answer to the question about the effects of past influences on teaching now are vague. The first three questions had an effect of focusing past experience in a way that made logical sense. Arriving at the problem of applying how these insights influence their teaching now led to more general answers. They felt they were influenced thusly: “Doing the opposite”; “What not to do”; “I do everything in reverse”; “It didn’t work when I was little.” One teacher was simply vituperative about “the small minded negative reaction of teachers.” But one teacher did capture a hint of nuance: “Some were good, but some weren’t open-minded.”

Reflecting on our letters and the teachers’ discussions, we first had the wry thought that maybe we should have first asked these teachers, and maybe ourselves, about a favorite teacher. This is the usual inroad into the meaning of the effects of a teacher’s past on the present. Somehow writing our letters to Dylan led down a different path. One of the reasons is that we were particularly curious about the roots of our humanistic education—today so fundamental to us. From where did they take hold? The teachers with whom we spoke would not all identify themselves chiefly as humanistic educators. In a discussion, though, of what we mean by this, they would likely say, “Oh sure, it fits.” What comes to us is that most teachers who like teaching do make some improvements on how they were taught, even if they experienced good teaching much more than we and our small group of friends did. What is affirmed is our long-time experience teaching teachers: That to a person, they all claimed that part of their philosophy of education was humanistic in a sense that fit with their beliefs about the limits and desirability of this philosophy.

We are not talking about teachers who have come to a very despairing place in the profession, many already out. This is another study altogether about what did such teachers want as teachers and not get—that is, with an alternative focus on teacher needs. But here, we are intrigued with how different backgrounds revealed a lot in common and thought-provoking differences. Our personal differences, which we knew before we undertook this inquiry, reflect Jerry generally as the theoretician and Donna as the practitioner when we are writing. But in the day-to-day responsibilities we both have always done both. There is a dialogue that accompanies our daily professional lives; most often we have taught separately, sometimes together. But always, the practice of teaching and the writing about teaching somehow are woven out of our agreements and our differences.

What we find in ourselves and our teacher friends is that by engaging in the dialogue, we achieve a bit of clarity. For one, the philosophies of teaching have grown out of the wounds we experienced as children. This is a big topic that will be explored briefly in the session discussion. And two, it occurs to us that we became humanistic educators because, simply, the ideas that Jerry encountered in graduate school at the University of Chicago in the 1950s fit with Donna’s instincts about teaching. The interaction of two is what uncovered the roots and nurtured their growth. It is constructed knowledge within the context of our lives. The dialogue at the Caste is aimed at expanding this context and seeing where we get.

For this workshop, we invite conference participants who wish to join us for this session to bring to the session a letter they have written to some young person (whether you send it or not) telling about your early education and its effects on you as a teacher. Those who do not write such a letter will be part of analyzing the letters.

We will continue the discussion initiated here on the basis of sharing our letters and yours. We will then explore how the influence of our student days made us humanistic to some degree, if we think it did. We will end the session with an expansion of the discussion—asking whether for a humanistic educator the needs of students have to come first.
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Using Storytelling to Shape the Future of a College of Education: An Appreciative Inquiry Approach

Strategic planning. The simple mention of this process often sends shudders throughout an organization. The vision of strategic planning in many minds is endless hours of meetings to conduct a gap analysis and to develop plans… goals, objectives, action steps, timelines, and responsible parties… all around the organization’s weak areas. But most discouraging is the likelihood that the plan will be placed on a shelf to gather dust. That experience is precisely what our organization, the University of Memphis, College of Education (COE), did NOT want.

Our vision looked more like: a rousing two-day Future’s Planning meeting for 240 people involving all constituencies related to the University of Memphis, College of Education. Participants would be engaged in storytelling, discussion and idea development groups based on people’s interests and passions. The two days would conclude by developing a set of Aspiration Statements written and voted upon by all participants. Groups interested in helping the COE move toward the agreed upon aspirations would begin meeting to develop action steps, timelines, responsible parties, and metrics.

This vision is what actually happened on May 10 and 11, 2005. How did this all begin? What were the strategies employed to bring about such engagement and motivation? It all started when Ric, Dean of the COE met with consultant Mary Jo to discuss a planning process she was using called Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Ric was grappling with how to create a viable strategic plan responsive to rapidly changing needs, as well as one that would energize the College. Upon Mary Jo introducing him to an AI approach, he felt a resonance with his personal leadership style and was especially intrigued with the idea of personal stories as the starting point in planning.

THE CONTEXT
The College of Education is the second largest college at the University of Memphis with nearly 3,000 students. The COE has four departments with 67 programs of study, thus, the future’s plan needed to be broad enough in scope to include all areas. But most importantly, the approach needed to motivate faculty, staff, students and stakeholders by capturing passion and commitment to creating a future for the College.

Initially a Core Team of 23 people, consisting of department chairs, faculty members, assistant and associate deans, a staff member, school principal, and Mary Jo was formed. The role of the Core Team was to create the future’s planning process and oversee the implementation. It is important to note that all authors were not only members of the Core Team, but were active participants in all meetings and Summit activities.

Shortly after forming, the Core Team participated in a half-day, highly experiential orientation to AI storytelling. Each person told a story about a time when a group he/she worked with was exceptionally successful in achieving its goals. The experience of the Core Team members during the story sharing became their base-line standard for participant engagement as they designed the Pre-Summit and Summit.

For six months, the Core Team engaged in preparing a half-day Pre-Summit in April and a two-day Summit in May. The work began by each of the 240 participants telling to a partner a story of a high point experience with the COE. These partners then joined a group of eight and retold their partner’s story. Themes from these stories were identified which later became the foundation for the development of 15 aspiration statements for the College. For example, one aspiration focused on Recruitment, Retention and Development of Faculty and reads: The College of Education recruits and retains a diverse, high quality faculty. The College provides support, mentoring, and resources to foster achievement of professional and mission-consistent goals, including excellence quality faculty (COE Aspiration Statements, 2005).

At the Summit’s conclusion, interested participants volunteered to become members of Innovation Implementation Teams (IITs), one for each Aspiration Statement. These teams are responsible for developing action steps, timelines, resources, and assessment metrics.
to achieve their aspiration. To date, IITs have been meeting to refine action plans and setting action steps in motion. Many action steps have been implemented including hiring a COE director of development, revitalizing student professional organizations, proposing new PhD programs, appointing a student recruitment and development director, and piloting new clinical practice sites. On May 9, 2006 Summit II will be held to review progress and plan for future action toward reaching our aspirations.

Next we provide a summary review of the AI literature followed by the self-study questions, methodology, findings, and implications of the self-study.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a growing theory of positive organizational change created by two Management professors in 1987 (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987). Since then hundreds of people from all over the world have used and written about AI (Cottor, Asher, Levin, & Weiser, 2004; Fry, Barrett, Seiling & Whitney, 2001; Mahe & Gibbs, 2003; Stavros & Torres, 2005; Stetson & Miller, 2004).

Specifically, AI is a method grounded in the theory of social constructivism and is used for discovering and fostering organizational transformation (Bushe, 1999; Gergen & Gergen, 2004; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). Through the process of seeking the very best strengths that exist in the organization, AI reinforces and encourages discovery thinking, collaborative decision-making, and action-oriented results. At the heart of AI is discovery of personal experiences in the form of stories that help build a shared vision.

To achieve its outcomes, the AI model follows four distinct phases: Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987). During the Discovery phase participants inquire into factors and forces that have given life to the organization when it was most alive and successful. These personal stories produce an appreciation about the best of what is. During the Dream phase, participants envision what might be by answering the question, “What are we being called to be?” During the Design phase, participants co-construct answers to the question, “What should be the ideal?” And finally, during the Destiny phase, participants focus on implementing and sustaining the change with the emphasis on “How to empower, learn and adjust.”

One method frequently used with AI is a Summit format that directly involves a broad range of internal and external stakeholders. The AI Summit begins with the premise that organizations change fastest and best when the people impacted by the change are excited about where they are going, have a clear plan for moving forward and feel confident about their ability to reach their destination. The Summit design includes various forms of in-group and cross-group learning with key people in the same room, face to face, taking time to share stories, working through complex issues and gaining agreements for implementation.

In short, AI offers an exciting way to change organizational culture. In contrast to a problem-solving approach, AI is a positive thinking approach that employs storytelling to create an appreciative, applicable, provocative and collaborative process (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987; Ludema, Whitney, Mohr & Griffin, 2003). While the literature we reviewed presents a number of descriptive case studies on AI, we agree with Cooperrider and Whitney (2002) who state, “AI is clearly only in its infancy. Questions are many, and we believe they will be a source of learning for many years” (p. 2). Our intent is to add to this literature by answering specific questions related to storytelling and organizational change. While storytelling is well touted in the literature as a valuable, powerful and effective learning tool (Abrahamson, 1998; Adamson, Pine, Steenhoven & Kroupa, 2006; Boyce, 1996), limited research specifically connects storytelling to Appreciative Inquiry. The questions guiding the study include (a) How did stakeholders approach storytelling during the Futures Planning process? (b) What factors influenced the use of storytelling? and (c) What were the merits and drawbacks associated with the use of storytelling in Futures Planning?

DATA COLLECTION

A variety of data were employed in this study. First, participants completed an evaluation at the close of the Summit in May 2005. This instrument was completed anonymously and asked participants to describe their high-point experience at the summit; suggest how the Summit could have been enhanced; project the changes they expected in the COE during the coming year; identify the most important message, idea, insight or practice they are taking away from the Summit; and share any other perceptions related to the on-going Futures Planning work.

A second data source was responses to a two-question e-mail survey sent to all 2005 Summit participants asking what they had learned about the use of storytelling as a strategy for Futures Planning, and their perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of using storytelling to initiate strategic planning.

A focus group interview with members of the Core Planning team was a third data source. This interview probed observations and perceptions about using storytelling as a basis for Futures Planning during the 2005 Summit. The 45-minute interview was audio-taped and transcribed.

DATA ANALYSIS

Two members of the research team began the analysis by independently reading the responses to the Summit evaluations, e-mail survey, and focus group interview in their entirety to gain insights about using storytelling in the Futures Planning process (Mishler, 1986). These two members then completed a second reading, and, using open-coding, identified categories and themes for each data set (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The remaining two members of the research team made an effort to triangu-
late findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by the reviewing the data set and reaching agreement with the categories and themes identified. Emerging from these multiple levels of analysis were three salient themes of using storytelling to shape the future work of the COE.

**FINDINGS**

We identified three themes around the use of storytelling as applied in our Futures Planning process: (a) comfort zone, (b) equity of voice, and (c) collaboration and community. While these variables overlap somewhat, we use evidence from multiple data sources to report them as findings.

**Comfort zone**

Storytelling allowed the wide range of COE stakeholders to participate in the process in a way in which they felt comfortable interacting with others whom they did not know or who may have held superior positions. This theme emerged clearly from all data sources. For instance, immediately after the Summit participants wrote:

- Storytelling seemed comfortable for most people—it put their experiences in a narrative they could easily share.
- Most like the format perhaps because it lends a friendly and warmer aspect to a business topic.
- I found that people are at ease speaking from their own experiences.
- Storytelling is a great way to make an immediate personal connection with someone you may not know. It gives you insight into a person’s values and expectations in concrete, meaningful way.

Similarly, in the survey almost a year after the Summit, one participant reflected: *The main strength of storytelling for Futures Planning is that it brings persons to a common ground. For, “everyone has a story.”*

While most Summit participants and Core Team planners were positive in their evaluations of storytelling as a vehicle for Futures Planning, a few expressed reservations about how comfortable participants would be while using this approach: *Storytelling is like most activities—people have a variety of levels of comfort with it. Sharing a personal story with strangers seems awkward for some.* For some however, storytelling seemed a bit forced and contrived—they could not easily share a story with someone they did not know well.

In summary, if one criterion for institutional Futures Planning is to provide a comfortable way for participants to be involved, then storytelling is one approach that meets this criterion. It is important to recognize while the majority will be comfortable and willing to share, there may be a few reticent and uncomfortable participants.

**Equity of voice**

Equity of voice emerged strongly in all data sets. In addition to storytelling being a comfortable process for most participants, the process also led to the strong perception that using stories as a basis for Futures Planning allowed many voices to be heard. In our process storytelling allowed students, clerical staff, professional staff and community stakeholders to participate comfortably along with faculty and university administrators. Immediately after the Summit, participants expressed sentiments such as:

- It was nice for clerical staff to be included in the planning process. I felt as if there was a sense of ownership in planning for the future of the college.
- I have been an adjunct [faculty member] since 1983; I have never been invited to an academic meeting. Simply being invited was a high point!
- Everyone has a story and telling the story assures that each person has the floor for several minutes. It is a good strategy, but not one to overuse.
- I learned that many ‘voices’ may be heard, and each voice had an equal say or carried the same importance.
- When you let people talk, it makes them feel a part of the organization…
- I think the biggest thing I walked away with from the Summit was a real sense that individuals do count in the process. Organizations are not about organizations, they are about the individuals in the organization and that individuals can make a difference and they can facilitate change by getting involved.

Overall, analysis of immediate and long-term perceptions of Summit participants revealed that using storytelling allowed for diverse stakeholders to engage in the Futures Planning process and to feel that their voices were both welcomed and heard.

**Collaboration and community**

Given that most Summit participants felt comfortable telling their stories and perceived that their participation was valued, it is not surprising the theme of collaboration and community emerged from all data sets. Summit participants commented storytelling allowed them to connect with colleagues and others that they would not have been able to because of the size of the organization. For example:

- It [storytelling] gives you insight into a person’s values and expectations in a concrete, meaningful way.
- [Stories] help us recognize our institutional membership and expand our view of the college.
- The strength of storytelling is to help tellers and listeners to come to know one another somewhat. If there is an intersection of their interests and experiences, storytelling can strengthen our sense of community membership. On the other hand, to me, the obvious weakness is that the stories could be isolated and anecdotal. As a result, it is hard for some listeners to relate.
In summary, Summit participants thought that storytelling used for Futures Planning contributed to an increased sense of community and collaboration. During the past year, activities of the participants have demonstrated increased collaboration as stakeholder teams have met and taken action toward fulfilling the aspiration statements that grew out of the Summit.

DISCUSSION
AI is expanding as a process for promoting organizational change. Although AI is being used and studied all over the world, very little is known about the specific use of storytelling, as it applies to AI. This study was designed to explore the merits and drawbacks associated with this form of communication and drawing from our findings. We next offer four salient lessons learned.

LESSON ONE: AI and the storytelling approach is much more than a Futures Planning process. This approach encourages and promotes culture change within an organization because it turns the process of planning the organizational future over to the faculty, staff and stakeholders. We surmise that leaders who embrace this approach need to be risk-takers, willing to share control and understand that this is a major paradigm shift away from the normal way of doing business.

LESSON TWO: The use of storytelling is the genesis and critical component for laying the foundation for the Futures Planning process. The collective experience of listening to individual experiences and voices is foundational to making positive organizational change. We surmise that storytelling is not an option in the AI approach; rather, it is the catalyst for positive thinking.

LESSON THREE: Storytelling takes a positive approach that significantly changes the dynamic of the work. Building on the strengths of the organization rather than the weaknesses promotes a sense of hope and a realization that the way change occurs is determined by the direction of the inquiry. Participants left the Summit with a sense of optimism and hopefulness for the future of the COE. We predict that when participants believe that important goals and directions are established, then actions will result. Results from Summit II 2006 will test this prediction and will be available at the time of the conference presentation.

LESSON FOUR: Planning and preparation for storytelling is complex, time consuming and essential. In this study the Core Team spent countless hours in planning, rehearsing, and reflecting on this process. We surmise that creating a storytelling approach in organizational change may sound simple, but unless a critical mass is created to understand, believe in and implement the process, its value may not be realized. It is no small task to move a large group of people to take a positive approach to planning when they likely have only approached planning from a problem solving perspective. Using storytelling in the AI approach relies on participants discovering what they value in the organization, envisioning what might be, and aspiring to achieving the desired future. This approach relies on participants engaging in meaningful dialogue throughout so individual vision becomes a shared vision. In other words, the future’s creation is the responsibility of everyone. While the outcomes of the process we are currently living are not fully known at this time, there is ample evidence to suggest the approach has been able to sustain itself for nearly a year of planning, action and implementation.

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Technology-mediated learning: Implications for teacher educators

INTRODUCTION
Across most university campuses there is a growing trend around the use of technology to support instruction and learning. It is one thing to have the technology available, it’s quite another for university professors and instructors to know how to use it effectively to engage students in learning. While it may be tempting to simply attach technology to existing courses, we need to understand the impact that technology has on learning.

How can computer-based technology be integrated into contemporary teaching and learning practices in higher education? Sandholtz, Ringstaff and Dwyer (1997) suggest that “technology is most powerful when used with constructivist teaching approaches that emphasize problem solving, concept development, and critical thinking rather than simple acquisition of factual knowledge” (p. 174). Jonassen’s (1991) Constructivist Learning Environment model is based on design principles that reflect the importance of stressing conceptual interrelatedness, the necessity of providing multiple representations or perspectives on the content, the benefits of self-assessment, and the notion that learning is controlled and mediated by the learner. Chickering and Gamson’s (1991) principles for good practice in undergraduate instruction have been widely adapted in higher education and are relevant to this self-study. They suggest that good practice encourage contact and cooperation among student and faculty, the promotion of active learning, and setting high expectations for student performance within diverse contexts of learning.

This is the third in a series of self-studies in which I report on the process of engaging pre-service teachers in using their narrative inquiry into their emerging knowledge base for teaching (Badali, 2004, 2005). The issues raised in this paper are based upon the idea that personally constructed knowledge provides useful insights in helping students understand the process of learning to teach. For Olson (1994), narrative knowledge is “constructed from the contextual contingencies and complexities of our individual biographies in interaction with the sociocultural and historical contexts in which we live” (p. 26). It has been my experience that most preservice teachers are unaware or downplay the forces that influence their attitudes and beliefs about a multitude of issues pertaining to teaching and learning.

In this paper, I report on two related aspects of self-study research. The first and most important relates to how the course and my practice are influenced as a result of using technology to engage pre-service teachers in instruction and learning. The second is the self-study work of pre-service teachers themselves as they examine their learning through the assignments, course activities, and field experiences. To be clear, in this paper I am most interested in the extent to which integrating technology affects my own practice as a teacher educator.

ABOUT EPS
At the University of Regina, the Educational Professional Studies (EPS) subject area provides a developmental core of compulsory courses in the Faculty’s teacher education programs. EPS courses attend to the professional development of students becoming teachers as well as the exploration of specific skills and strategies for teaching. All EPS courses contain a field component for practice and reflection. EPS 100 is the first course pre-service teachers take which is intended to help them to learn to inquire into their emerging thinking and practices. EPS 100 students assemble for weekly large group presentations and small follow-up seminars, which engage them in planned and spontaneous activities.

This self-study is best understood within the context of the strong undercurrent of program change and renewal occurring in the Faculty of Education, University of Regina. EPS 100 course changes reported here grow out of a number of concerns on the part of myself and several of my colleagues. The current vision of EPS is premised upon certain assumptions that contrast sharply with premises that informed the last major program renewal efforts in 1991. The following assumptions continue to guide the manner in which I revise the course. First, in responding to provincial community school initiatives, I believe it is important to educate teachers in ways that put less emphasis upon developmental psychology and the curriculum, and which look at the mind of the
individual as if it existed apart from the society that produces it. Teacher education needs to focus more on educating about society and the way education is produced within it. Second, we need to broaden our views of social constructivism, so that we focus less narrowly on learning in collaborative classroom groups, and more broadly on the construction of subjectivity and teacher identity. Third, we need to do more than receive curriculum and focus on how to transmit it. We need to see curriculum as a cultural construction, which reproduces society; as a discourse subject to critique; as something to be negotiated in classrooms and schools; and as a site for social transformation. Forth, we need to reconsider the implicit discourses of teaching as a good job, and of teaching to remake pupils in one’s own image. We need to make it clear that we think the purpose of teaching and of teacher education, is working toward a better world. A social critical view of teacher education, one which seeks to raise the consciousness of future teachers about power relations and social systems of privilege and dominance, ones which value work for social justice, informs EPS 100.

METHOD
Self-study by teacher educators is powerful because of the potential to influence pre-service teachers. If pre-service teachers are unable to connect new knowledge with prior knowledge then it tends to have little impact on their teaching practices (Olson, 1993, 1995). Because of this, I was determined to challenge my students and to make explicit connections among course themes (e.g., teacher identity, reflective practice, and issues pertaining to diversity, inclusion and anti-oppressive education), and to use technology to enhance student learning.

Over the last 5 years, I have been carrying out a narrative inquiry into my own teaching practices. I concluded an earlier study (Badali, 2004, 2005) by highlighting the merit of long-term reflective practitioner dispositions in understanding complex pedagogical classroom issues. The research reported here is a part of a continuous work in progress. In this project, I review my current practices, I imagined the possibilities, I experimented with alternative instructional delivery models, and I reviewed my impact on students’ learning. By self-study, I refer to the intentional and systematic inquiry into one’s own practice.

In this paper, I describe the integration of a partial online component to an introductory teacher education course, EPS 100. I kept a reflective journal and detailed notes of the process in modifying EPS online seminars, course materials and assignments, and a Weblog. Although it would be fair to characterize myself as somewhat of a reluctant journal keeper, over time I came to realize the benefit from having an ongoing record of my actions and thoughts. I became less self-censoring over time as I gained confidence in the course development process. Reflecting on the journal and course materials enabled me to compare my own personal and professional development, document my changing perceptions, and expose both successful and unsuccessful routes of my learning. I continued to adapt McNiff’s (1995) action research framework: Why do I do the things I do? Why am I the way I am? How do I improve my work for the benefit of others?

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS
My focus has been to create integrated assignments that promote critical inquiry into learners’ prior knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and attitudes about teaching and learning. Three ways in which I focus students on their personal and professional knowledge are: a three-part school-site study, a series of reflection and reading analysis assignments, and the development of a professional portfolio that is modified in subsequent courses in the teacher education program.

SCHOOL-SITE STUDY
The three-part school-site study is linked to the field placement component of EPS 100. The primary purpose of the first two parts of the assignment is to focus pre-service teachers on learners, school cultures, programs and services available that might enhance student learning and support. This assignment encourages students to begin the process of critiquing what goes on in schools as well encouraging them to think about themselves as leaders and advocates for children and adolescent learners.

In any introductory courses such as this, I think it is really important to focus prospective teachers beyond traditional notions of curriculum, teaching methods, and classroom management. I contend that it is important for teachers to know something about how the world has changed since they were students. For example, there are more children and youth living in poverty, technology and the internet has become commonplace for more people, teaching for social justice and equity is central to many teachers’ practice, and Aboriginal and minority rights are part of the national discourse.

For this assignment and in all aspects of EPS, there is a balance between individual and collaborative work. Prospective teachers work with their field partner but each individual submits a three-page report. Before the face-to-face seminar, students post reports online to the other four members of their discussion group. Since developing this format, I have noticed a significant improvement in the depth of student analysis and discussion. The first part of the school-site study is a good way to engage prospective teachers into thinking about their role as teachers in diverse community contexts because they are compelled to identify and question their underlying assumptions and beliefs about teaching and learning.

The first two portions of the assignment take approximately four weeks to complete. The following types of overarching questions guide students: What is the relationship between teaching and learning? How are schools organized for learning? How do your beliefs influence how you might teach? How does a society support learning? How do individuals develop into teachers? What kind of teacher do you want to be? Need to be? Expect to be?
The third part of the school-site study is based upon the contention that students’ personal and professional perspectives and beliefs about teaching influence who they are as teachers. And who they are as teachers, in turn, affects what they do in the classroom.

Students draft an action plan for professional development by describing the areas of professional growth that they are interested in pursuing over the next few years. They are expected to outline specific strategies and actions. They consider their own schooling and educational experiences, the five commonplaces of teaching, community school principles, and anything else that they think would be relevant to their action plan. Students give periodic updates to members of their discussion group and submit a written report at the end of the semester.

**REFLECTION AND READING ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT**

Students submit four reflection analysis papers during the semester in response to open-ended questions I post online about issues such as diversity, inclusion, Aboriginal education, school reform, teacher as transformative agent, working with parents and other human service providers, and issues of class, race, gender, and privilege. The purpose of the assignment is to help pre-service teachers explore issues raised by the textbook authors in relation to their beliefs, attitudes and prior and current experiences about teaching and learning. There is both an individual and collaborative component to the assignment. Before coming to seminars, students complete the assigned reading and individually record their general thoughts and reactions to the readings. They describe key issues that are important to them, as well as compose questions that arise from the readings that they want to discuss further with members of their discussion group. By a designated date, pre-service teachers post their response to other members of their online discussion group. At that time, they respond to each other’s postings; the seminar leader is also involved in online discussions.

This assignment has worked well, in part, because students have taken responsibility for their own learning and they have done a good job of supporting other people in their discussion group. I’ve noticed that since obligating students to post their responses online before the seminar, students are more confident in both defending their views and being open to other perspectives. Having the time and opportunity to discuss issues in small groups before submitting papers to the instructor has been a positive benefit of the instructional technology.

**PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO**

All EPS 100 students are required to develop a professional portfolio. It is an evolving process, requiring constant monitoring, peer feedback, and self-evaluation. I begin with the assumption that becoming a reflective practitioner involves sharing thoughts, feeling and experiences about teaching and learning with peer colleagues. EPS courses are built upon the notion that reflection, as a method of inquiry into teaching, has both an individual and collaborative dimension. I acknowledge with students that reflection is often time-consuming, but nevertheless a valuable tool for learning. Reflection requires individuals to assess their thinking and actions from multiple perspectives. Students seem to welcome the opportunity to test their tentative thinking in small groups.

In the future, students will create an electronic portfolio but for now, they house the information in an organized binder. It is a challenge to convince some students that the portfolio is not a scrapbook; instead the singular purpose is for them to demonstrate their professional growth and learning over the semester. Most students organize the portfolio in the following manner: table of contents, resume, statement of philosophy of education and teaching, assignments and meta analysis of those assignments, field experience reflections, selected seminar items, website evaluations, and any additional items at the discretion of students.

This is a successful assignment because pre-service teachers see the value between professional reflection and the practical requirement of the end of semester exit conference. The conference is an opportunity for students to share their learning with colleagues, receive feedback and encouragement for future growth and development. The 20-minute exit conference takes place the last week of class with at least two other colleagues, each person describing and summarizing their professional growth over the semester using their portfolio. Each person is also a peer assessor for at least two others.

**WHAT HAVE I LEARNED?**

First, integrating technology is rewarding but difficult and time-consuming work. Faculty complaints about reconciling the tensions between teaching, research, and service are common. Devoting oneself to this type of course development is often invisible work and it could have negative implications for tenure and promotion. I’m unsure whether I would have spent several hundred hours developing this online component of EPS if I had been an untenured professor.

Second, the majority of students embrace technology. Based upon my experiences, almost all students report being comfortable with the technology utilized in EPS. However, I did not anticipate the initiative and enthusiasm that many students exhibited in their discussion groups. I was pleasantly surprised not only by the number of postings by students but by the depth of understanding embedded in their interpretations and critiques. I do not think it was a competitive thing among students as much as them being at ease with a familiar technology. From both a student and instructor perspective, the online discussion component was a positive feature of EPS. I think we all realized the practical advantages of working together within a supportive professional community.

Third, a major benefit was that students were better prepared to engage with their peers during seminars. Because of the online preparation, I saw better quality and depth of analysis in students’ work. The use of tech-
ology was clearly a positive factor in promoting responsible citizenship among members of discussion groups. Given that students’ work was more transparent than in previous EPS classes, it was easier for instructors to identify problems associated with poor academic performance and intervene to support learners as necessary.

Fourth, the online features emphasized in EPS encourage cooperation among students and faculty. I think one of the observable advantages of using the technology is that it promotes a solid professional relationship between students and instructors. In my experience, students have become more involved in the course work, in part, because they know instructors will be closely monitoring their progress throughout the semester. The technology that was utilized in EPS enabled those students to access instructors, web sites, and peers at their convenience.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

I want to conclude this article by remembering the self-doubt and fear I experienced when developing the online component of EPS. The greatest fear came from that fact that I had no previous experience with online course design. In addition, I did not relish the thought of having to re-conceptualize a course that I had just re-designed over the preceding 4 years – a course that I liked very much and one that consistently received positive evaluations from student teachers. I want to point out that it was not I who instigated the development of the online component of EPS. The initiative came from central administration by way of a $20,000 technology enhanced learning grant. Without this support it is unlikely that I would have considered an online component to EPS because of the extra time to create and service the course.

Other sources of self-doubt derived from my fear that the course would be diminished somehow. What if the newly designed course was worse than the one it was replacing? Would an online component make the course too structured, less flexible in responding to student interests? What if the new course alienates students? How will I plan for a course not knowing in advance the technical skills of prospective students? What should I expect in terms of students’ attitudes towards technology? Who will I go to for technical support? What if the technology breaks down? How will I support the four seminar leaders who have even less experience with online courses?

In the end, the fear was gradually replaced with a sense of accomplishment largely because of the first rate technical support I received from the university Centre for Academic Technology, and the pedagogical and moral support I received from Del Fraser, Joy Woodard, Don Gartner and Gerry Cozine, the four sessional seminar leaders who have been instrumental in helping me develop and revise this course.

REFERENCES


The purpose of this self-study was to evaluate how I implemented current views of literacy in two sections of a preservice reading methods course. Data sources included my weekly journal entries and class agendas. Based on Lankshear and Knobel’s (2003) theoretical framework, I identified five new literacy teaching episodes. These episodes involved three types of literacy mentioned in the literature—visual, technological, and critical literacy. Political literacy emerged from the study as another type of literacy having implications for reading methods courses.

A key challenge for literacy educators is to prepare our students to teach forms of literacy needed in today’s rapidly changing world. Therefore, the purpose of this self-study was to examine current views of literacy and evaluate how I implemented these views in my reading methods course.

To guide my reflective process, I kept a weekly journal while teaching two sections of a preservice reading methods course this past semester. I analyzed my journal for “nodal moments” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 19) in order to compare my professional goal of implementing current views of literacy with my current practices (Russell, 2005; Schon, 1983). This self-study provided another perspective on my life as a teacher educator, and it also suggested ways for me to improve my teaching that may resonate with other teacher educators (Loughran & Northfield, 1998).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: NEW LITERACIES

Lankshear and Knobel (2003) described three senses in which literacy can be considered new. In the paradigmatic sense, new literacy entails understanding literacy through a sociocultural lens, as opposed to the previous psychology paradigm. In the new paradigm, literacy researchers emphasize the social practices in which language is embedded rather than an individual’s cognitive skills (Gee, 1990).

The second way in which literacy can be new, the ontological sense: …refers to the idea that changes have occurred in the character and substance of forms and practices of literacy associated with changes in technology, institutions, media, the economy, and the rapid movement toward global scale in manufacture, finance, communications, and so on (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 2).

This concept of new literacies involves recent technologies, such as computers, DVDs, and videos (Marsh, 2005). This broader view of literacy also highlights the growing importance of “multimodal” (i.e., words, images, sound) aspects of communication (Bearne, 2005, p. 15).

Lankshear and Knobel’s third sense, “chronological…is the idea of ‘new literacies’ as ones that are relatively new in chronological terms and/or that are new to being thought about as literacies, and that are important to take into account in literacy education” (2003, p. 3).

Two new literacies that fit the chronological sense of literacy are visual and critical literacies. According to Burmark (2002): “The primary literacy of the 21st century will be visual: pictures, graphics, images of every kind” (p. 1).

Similarly, critical literacy is becoming increasingly important in today’s world. As defined by Ira Shor (1987):

Critical literacy goes beneath the surface to understand the origin, structure and consequences of any body of knowledge, technical process, or object under study. This model of literacy establishes teaching and learning as forms of research and experimentation, testing hypotheses, examining items, questioning what we know. (p. 24)

Giroux (1987) provided four specific implications of critical pedagogy: (a) different student voices are heard and appreciated as the basis for critical dialogue, (b) curriculum materials are analyzed critically, (c) students learn a “language of morality” (p. 179) through which society is evaluated, and (d) students come to believe that their actions have an effect on the world.

CONTEXT AND METHODS

At the University of Hawai’i at Manoa, elementary teacher candidates are assigned to cohorts of approximately 25 students who take courses and field seminars.
together. Candidates spend two days each week in elementary classrooms, where they apply strategies learned in methods courses. As part of their requirements, students take a two-semester literacy methods course, entitled Elementary Literacy and Literature.

This self-study was conducted in two sections of the first semester of this literacy methods course. The course emphasized reading, and students in both sections participated in similar activities and assignments. In response to the federal No Child Left Behind Act and standards-based instruction, I divided the course into four major topics: (a) reading processes/definitions, (b) decoding/word study, (c) comprehension/literary response, and (d) approaches to teaching reading. Knowledge of children’s books was an important aspect; students read, evaluated, and shared books of various genres weekly.

After the semester ended, I read and reread my journal for entries dealing with new literacies as described by Lankshear and Knobel (2003). I also examined the course syllabus and weekly agendas as documents in the study.

FINDINGS
Analysis of my literacy methods course journal revealed the following five instances of instruction in the new literacies.

1. Visual Literacy through Artistic Styles in Picture Books (Week 5)
In this class, I showed examples of picture books representing various artistic styles, such as Gerald McDermott’s (1974) use of abstract art in Arrow to the Sun. When students presented the picture books they had chosen to share with the class, they told which artistic style they thought it was and why they thought so.

2. Critical Literacy through Reading Definitions and Three Examples (Week 8)
Students discussed and evaluated a list of reading definitions, including critical literacy. Then they read a one-page story about camel drivers who learn a great deal from a poor man in the desert. By answering two sets of questions—one traditional and one critical—students came to see the depth of comprehension possible when teaching from a critical perspective. In a second example of critical literacy, I read aloud The Story of Ruby Bridges (Coles, 1995). Students completed a chart that asked critical questions such as, “Write one or two statements from someone whose perspective is not represented in the book” (Vasquez, 2003, p. 39). I finished the class by reading excerpts from Through My Eyes by Ruby Bridges (1999). Finally, I distributed an article with instructional ideas and recommended children’s books, Democracies Young Heroes: An Instructional Model of Critical Literacy Practices (Ciardiello, 2004).

3. Visual/Critical Literacy through an Illustration (Week 9)
I showed the class a copy of Norman Rockwell’s (1964) striking illustration of Ruby Bridges, flanked by U.S. federal marshals, walking to a formerly segregated school. Students wrote a one-paragraph response and provided a title for the illustration. After students shared their titles, I gave the actual title, The Problem We All Live With, eliciting renewed discussion about racism and its impact on education and society.

4. Visual/Technological Literacy through Web Searches (Week 10)
During a discussion of historical fiction, I gave students a list of Web sites related to Karen Hesse’s (1997) Out of the Dust, a gripping book about the 1930s Dust Bowl. Students used their personal computers to browse Web sites that would deepen children’s understanding of the book and the Depression Era.

5. Political Literacy (Week 14)
In my week 14 class, I informed students about a bill under consideration by our state legislature. Submitted by the Hawai‘i Automobile Dealers Association, with the help of E.D. Hirsch, Jr. (Core Knowledge Foundation, 2006), the bill sought to develop a statewide core curriculum. Our conversation moved beyond the implications of this particular bill to the need to stay informed about outside influences on education.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS
All five teaching episodes fit Lankshear and Knobel’s (2003) chronological sense of new literacies, since I believe they represent needed components of reading methods courses. In each instance, however, there are ways I could improve my instruction of these new literacies.

My first use of visual literacy occurred when I had students recognize artistic styles and categorize books according to those styles. Picture books provide an ideal vehicle for discussing visual images because preservice teachers are already sharing books with children in field placements. My approach, however, did not help students learn to: “Interpret, understand, and appreciate the meaning of visual messages.” (Christopherson, cited in Burmark, 2002, p. 3) or how to teach this expanded view to children. For example, I could have led students in discovering where and how illustrators directed our eyes through single and double-paged images (Bearne, 2005). We could have discussed why illustrators selected certain styles, and what made some illustrations more effective than others. In all cases, I should have asked, How might this be taught to children? This change in practice would have taught students to read illustrations and to teach children to do so.

The Internet, of course, is an excellent source of images for developing visual literacy. When I asked my students to browse Web sites related to Out of the Dust, however, I did not guide their interpretation of those images. Therefore, I plan to provide more explicit guidance in future viewing of historical photographs, using prompts such as those recommended by Burmark (2002): What emotional impact do these photographs have on
you? Can you relate to the people in the photos? Can you imagine being in their place? Ask students to select a photograph that touches them, and ask them to share with the class how it deepened their understanding or changed their perspective on the characters or historical events. (pp. 16-17)

Beyond visual literacy, the class was a missed opportunity to discuss how to use the Internet effectively (McNabb, 2006). In contrast to reading books, “Searching the web often means zigzagging back and forth between screens, making sense of the proffered information through a kind of network of ideas” (Bearne, 2005, p. 21). Therefore, I should have taught students to help the children in their classes avoid navigational problems (Reinking, 1997) by using a framework such as:

1. Set a purpose for searching.
2. Employ effective search strategies.
3. Analyze search-engine results.
4. Read critically and synthesize information.
5. Cite your resources.
6. How successful was your search?

(Henry, 2006, p. 618)

This framework would also help hypertext users avoid the tendency to read broadly but superficially (Leu, 1996).

My classes on critical literacy were the most powerful of the semester. Discussing reading definitions that included critical literacy led naturally to the examples I shared; the Camel Story and the books, The Story of Ruby Bridges (Coles, 1996) and Through My Eyes (Bridges, 1995). I was even more pleased with the results of sharing Rockwell’s (1964) The Problem We All Live With, since it integrated critical and visual literacy. My only change would be to require students to implement and evaluate at least one critical literacy lesson in their field placements.

Another way I could expand students’ knowledge of visual literacy is through use of films. In the future, I plan to ask students to: (a) compare films with the children’s books on which they are based, (b) retell or write the action of a film, including aspects such as characters and atmosphere, and (c) compare the differences between storytelling in books and films (Bearne, 2005). Preservice teachers also need to learn how to evaluate children’s films in order to select high quality examples for their students.

Political Literacy is a concept that emerged from this self-study. Although I have not come across this term in the literature, it is a topic “important to take into account in literacy education” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 3). In a typical semester, I might have overlooked our class discussion of how impending legislation could affect students’ lives as teachers. Through self-study, however, I saw the importance of preparing politically savvy teachers in a time when so many curricular decisions are made by politicians and others outside of education.

By conducting this self-study, I achieved a deeper understanding of the degree to which I include new literacies in my reading methods course. In spite of a jam-packed curriculum, I did manage to introduce my students to new literacies and ways they might teach this expanded concept of literacy to children in their classes. These topics led to the most engaging conversations of the semester, partially due to my own enthusiasm, but also due to college students’ high level of comfort with images and technology. Although I still have far to go, my journal analysis and professional readings led me to reconfirm my commitment to teaching new literacies in my reading methods courses.

By way of summary, I end with a quote that impressed me as a goal and spurred me on.

“We need to work collaboratively with them [children] in a way that allows us to bridge the gap between the many dynamic, constantly changing worlds in which they live; and the older world that is still in existence for many adults… (Evans, 2005, p. 10).

After this self-study, I have a clearer vision of how to accomplish this goal.

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Extending Our Boundaries through Self-Study: Framing a Research Agenda through Beginning a Critical Friendship

INTRODUCTION
In self-study, one defining characteristic of the field is collaboration with one or more other people (Lighthall, 2004). Enlisting colleagues to collaborate in studies of teaching practice offers insights into experience that are not possible when working alone (Brookfield, 1995). When colleagues share critical conversations about practice, new possibilities for practice can emerge as well as new ways to analyse and respond to problems. At the same time, professional knowledge and expertise can be developed and shared as collaborators learn to articulate their insights and reframe their conceptions of practice. This is particularly important in the field of teacher education where the professional knowledge base of teaching about teaching is relatively scant (Berry, 2004). This paper reports the beginnings of an international collaborative self-study between two teacher educators, (Mandi and Alicia - authors) and explores the nature of our critical friendship as we build a shared research agenda for the development of our knowledge of practice.

COLLABORATION IN SELF-STUDY
In self-study, collaboration can operate between different groups of people (e.g., colleague/colleague/s, colleague/student/s) and via a range of different media (e.g., face-to-face, e-mail) depending on the purpose of the study and the location of those engaged in the research. One form of collaboration (Lighthall, 2004) is that which aims to bring together self-study researchers separated by geographical distance. Examples of long distance collaboration of self-study researchers include those working within their own country (e.g., the work of Guilfoyle and her colleagues, 1996, 2000, 2002) and those working internationally (e.g., Dalmau & Gudjonsdottir, 2000; Russell & Schuck, 2004). Collaboration can also be contrived (Hargreaves, 1994) or self-selected emerging naturally from participants’ needs and interests (Bullough, 2001). Our long-distance collaborative relationship has emerged through recognizing a shared desire to better understand and develop our pedagogy as teacher educators so to improve the quality of the learning-to-teach experience of prospective teachers in our respective classes.

METHODS
Our research approach is based on collaborative enquiry conducted initially, via e-mail. Using this approach, “Each participant in the collaborative research is helping the other identify and interpret his (sic) professional knowledge as a teacher [educator] by reading and commenting on e-mail accounts of teaching-learning experiences.” We view our collaborative relationship as one in which partners engage each other in ways that promote the critical reflection of each, as critical friends, in a partnered practice of critical reflection. Loughran (2004) identifies the value of accessing a critical friend which can then lead to reframing thinking through opportunities to reconceptualise new approaches to practice and new possibilities for students’ learning. We anticipate that our critical friendship (in lots of ways) can lead to challenging taken-for-granted assumptions and in so doing, build both our individual and collective knowledge of practice.

BECOMING PEDAGOGICALLY ACQUAINTED
One of the strengths of the self-study special interest group of the American Educational Research Association is that it brings together teacher educator researchers from around the world in a context that aims to promote sharing of experience, expertise and research in self-study. This collaborative environment then leads to enhanced opportunities for individuals to identify and pursue shared interests and develop research agenda. This has certainly been the case for us; as new teacher educators, we each discovered a home in self-study, and although located in different countries (Australia & U.S.A) and in different disciplines (biology method & social studies methods), we hold similar pedagogical perspectives and face similar challenges in our teacher educator roles. For instance, each of us holds the view that prospective teachers should feel empowered to develop personally relevant knowledge about teaching, yet at the same time we each struggle to know how we might teach to facilitate such empowerment. It was this common perspective and struggle that brought us together to pursue a collaboration.
experiences” (Beck, Freese & Kosnik, 2004, p.1269).

Hence, e-mail offers a form of Information Communication Technology (ICT) that supports thinking about, refining and reframing practice. Our e-mails thus far have been conducted over a period of eight months, with an average of about one e-mail exchange each week.

E-mail serves both as our means of communication and a record of our conversations for study. Through analysis of our e-mails thus far, we have been able to determine themes and from these themes we have developed a research agenda that will enable us to pursue the study of our practice in a more purposeful manner. Our self-study is therefore designed to enhance our sense of purpose while teaching, while at the same time working towards the development of knowledge of practice that might contribute to a pedagogy of teacher education.

BEGINNING OUR COLLABORATION

One of the first challenges we faced in approaching this research was deciding how to focus our inquiry. As we began our dialogue we were unsure of how to begin our collaboration. Initially our impetus for collaboration was conceptualized around the broad frame offered by self-study: How do I improve my practice? How do I help my students improve the quality of their learning about teaching? We wondered, should we begin with a more narrow focus or just write to each other and see what happens? In the end we just began to write. Our e-mail exchanges helped us identify questions about practice that we wished to address in our self-study. These questions emerged from our experiences of teaching preservice teachers although the location and timing of our self-study meant that one of us was beginning with a new group of students at the same time that the other was concluding an academic year. This meant that our immediate questions and concerns were somewhat differently focused.

At first, we shared questions and experiences which allowed us to begin to understand each other’s thinking. Interestingly, the questions or problems we shared in those initial exchanges did not become the foundation for our collaborative research; rather they seemed to be the immediate questions and concerns that we wished to address in our self-study. These questions surfaced and a possible new frame for considering these questions emerged, as illustrated in the exchange below.

As our dialogue continued, we began to see common questions surfacing and a possible new frame for consideration of these questions emerged, as illustrated in the exchange below.

As I prepare for spring I've been thinking about what challenges me most and I think one thing is getting students, future teachers, to begin to think more and more like teachers. Sounds simple but it is a constant issue... I would like to know about what help[s] them begin to move to a more teacher thinking place. How do I get them to get past classroom management and into student learning, how to get them to think about lessons as conceptual wholes instead of a bunch of activities? That is actually something I've been grappling with a lot for the last couple years.

(Alicia, Jan 12, 2006)

[In your e-mails] I could see these questions (amongst others) popping out:
1. How do I help my students think more like teachers?
2. How can I help student teachers think/move beyond survival and more about their students’ learning?
3. How can prospective teachers think more about lessons as conceptual ‘wholes’ and less like a (mostly disconnected) bunch of activities?  
4. How can I help student teachers develop a conceptual thread through their teaching, to promote student learning?  

Then I realised that these were the same kinds of questions that I was asking myself, too, and that linked with the frame ...[of] seeing the work of teacher educators conceptualised as a series of tensions. I saw the ideas of the tension between ‘telling and growth’ really strongly here. I’ll explain a bit more about what I mean and hopefully this will make a bit more sense (?!?!).  
(Mandi, Feb 9, 2006)

Through the process of articulating our questions, particular facets of our thinking became highlighted that related well to a particular tension experienced by teacher educators, identified in earlier self-study research by Mandi (Berry 2004), between the notions of telling and growth. This tension relates to the experience of teacher educators wanting to help their student teachers learn about teaching without perpetuating a transmission model of teacher education. The notion of telling is most commonly experienced as an attempt to transfer propositional knowledge from the teacher to the student (and a practice deeply embedded in the culture of education), although it rarely carries sufficient understanding to the receiver to be personally useful. Teacher educators who attempt to alter this deeply embedded teaching style need to find ways other than direct telling to support student teachers to learn what they intend. In this case, Alicia wanted to encourage her students to think more like teachers, yet she could not achieve this simply by telling them to do so, or offering her experiences of teaching as substitute teaching experiences for her students. By beginning to conceptualize our practice through this tension, both of us also recognized an important shared assumption about the need for student teachers to develop their own personally meaningful understandings of practice rather than learning to reproduce the teacher educator’s teaching approach. This view was one not necessarily shared by their colleagues, as Alicia explained in an e-mail to Mandi.

You wrote [previous e-mail]: “Learning to teach does not mean learning to teach like me. Being an effective teacher educator means that I need to develop ways of working that are responsive to and encourage the strengths, interests and concerns of individual preservice teachers rather than their learning to reproduce my approach.” Yes, yes. I had this talk with my two social studies colleagues at Kent and they were surprised that I don’t tell more stories. I explained that I don’t usually, especially in the beginning because I feel that it sets them up to think that I am the master and they the clone.  
(Alicia, February 10, 2006)

Alicia explained to Mandi how she deliberately withdrew her authority of experience (i.e., telling stories; Munby & Russell, 1994) to facilitate students’ development of their own authority as teachers. Her view led her to plan alternative ways to teach. For example, she identified that helping student teachers draw on knowledge developed through their own experiences and making explicit to student teachers her (Alicia’s) thinking about the purposes for various activities are important parts of her approach. However a difficulty she confronts is that despite her chosen approach students often still struggle to accept and take on their own forms of authority.

MOVING FORWARD
Our preliminary explorations of our understanding of the tension of telling and growth have led us to conceptualise an agenda for the next phase of our collaborative research. Our task involves identifying ways in which we deliberately plan for teaching with the tension between telling and growth in mind, how we recognize and respond to instances related to this tension as they arise within our teaching, and how we learn to understand and use this tension to facilitate the growth of student teachers in learning about teaching. In this manner, we plan to bring more strongly into focus the relationship between our actions in teaching about teaching and the development of our professional knowledge, just as we would encourage our students to do in their practice, and in so doing, create real and meaningful possibilities for understanding and improving practice.

In pursuing our research agenda we propose to gather data from a range of sources, including: planned approaches to teaching (lesson plans; journal entries; student responses (interview/survey) to our teaching); artifacts of student work; and our ongoing e-mail conversation. Together, this combination of data sources is intended to create a rich picture of the development of our professional knowledge and of our students’ learning as we explore the ways in which we attempt to manage the balance between informing student teachers about teaching and creating opportunities for them to reflect and self-direct. One important outcome of this research will be in identifying how specific insights and understandings about the nature of student teacher learning related to this tension impacts both our own and our students’ approaches to teaching.

Exchanging these data also represents an important step in the development of our critical friendship, as we intend to use this opportunity to work towards uncovering and articulating assumptions embedded in our practice in ways that move beyond simply affirming and encouraging each other. This is the important role that pursuing a critical friendship can play. Thus, another important outcome of this research will be in sharing how we learn to find and push the boundaries of our learning, informing our understanding of the nature of collaboration in researching teaching.
LONG DISTANCE COMMUNICATION

This research has come about through our access to long distance communication tools, such as e-mail. E-mail has proven both a challenge and an opportunity in the development of our critical friendship and this research. In this final section of the paper, we briefly consider some of the ways in which this mode of communication has shaped our collaborative research.

While we struggled at times to find words to convey our ideas, our shared struggles to articulate our thinking and our openness to do so both acted as an apology for lack of clarity and as evidence to ourselves that we needed to add more detail and refine our statements. For example, during the time in which we were developing a shared frame for our research we wrote numerous comments about the difficulties associated with writing and finding the right words to convey the meaning we wanted to impart. An excerpt from an exchange between us at the beginning of October (2005) illustrates this point. Alicia begins, “I wish I could beam my brain to you to make the thought clear- ok try again - a conversation, analysis, etc. of what we do to construct the environments we want to help the students learn what we want (wow - how ambiguous)! I’ll have to work on this.” The next day Mandi replied, “I wish I could ‘brain beam’ too!!! It is often so hard to get all the things out in the way I want.”

Issues with communicating in writing only also linked the notion of writing as a formal act and hence bring expectations about the quality of the writing. For instance:

*I know exactly how you feel. A conversation over coffee would be so much easier. Do you think it could be because it is text and asynchronous? I just miss spelled asynchronous and had to stop to fix it that could be a problem too? Knowing that our conversation is written takes it into the realm of the formal. That’s definitely something to overcome as well as the since that it should be profound to be written. (Alicia, November 7, 2005)*

As we consider the development of our long distance collaboration, we see that such a collaboration needs time and deliberate effort to make it successful. We found that no matter how well intentioned, it was hard to find time and energy to write to each other in the beginning. Since we had known each other for several years, we expected the process to be quick and require little time or effort to evolve. Instead, we found that we needed to commit time to better understand each other’s context as well as develop a sense of comfort with an e-mail mediated process. We needed time initially to set the stage for each other so that we could better understand each other’s experiences, questions and motivations. Only after we began to feel as if we had a sufficient shared understanding of each other’s context were we able to commence a more elaborate and substantial dialogue about our teaching, beliefs, and dilemmas. This first step of getting to know one another and getting used to the nature of a long distance collaboration appears vital and should not be underestimated by those beginning this process.

CONCLUSION

Our study thus far has allowed us to explicitly explore some of the challenges we share in teaching about teaching and to identify a future pathway for analysis of our practice. We believe that in putting forward a collaboratively developed research agenda that deliberately identifies a frame through which to examine our practice including what we need to pay particular attention to in investigating our practice, we have developed a clearer and stronger focus for our self-study as well as producing a more rigorous form of self-study. In this way, the research teaching nexus is constantly addressed as our research genuinely influences practice while the approach to practice is also developing.

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INTRODUCTION
What can the examination of silence and the unsaid in teacher education classrooms contribute to our understandings as learners and to our ways of knowing as teacher educators? This paper explores the ways in which the silences were identified, constructed and enacted within the Teaching and Learning Mathematics units of the Bachelor of Education Course. Examining the unsaid arose from a longitudinal self-study (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; Loughran, 2005; Russell, 2004; Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2004) I had been conducting with cohorts of preservice teachers. Although I had recognised dominant voices during roundtable reflection interactions, I had not explicitly explored what might be happening in the silence. Roundtable reflection (see Brandenburg, 2004a, 2004b) replaced what were traditionally tutorial sessions, and provided a means by which the preservice teachers could unpack and reflect on their teaching and learning experiences in a supportive learning environment. An assumption that underpinned this approach to learning about mathematics teaching was that those who verbally engaged in reflective discourse would be maximising opportunities for learning.

Through the transcription of audio-taped roundtable discussions and the analysis of critical incident questionnaires (henceforth CIQ, Brookfield, 1995) some key themes emerged. The themes that will be discussed in this paper relate to explicit teacher educator questioning about silence and the unsaid; learning styles; accommodation and frustration, and learning by listening. Through examining silence and the unsaid, more has been explored about teaching and the ways in which a (re)construction of self as a teacher educator might have an impact on others in learning about teaching.

CONTEXT
This self-study research was conducted as a means of systematically monitoring a reconceptualised and reorganised approach to teaching and learning mathematics in the Bachelor of Education Course at the University of Ballarat, Australia. The preservice teachers were completing their third year of the course and their second compulsory learning and teaching mathematics unit. Consistently, whilst researching the conduct of roundtable sessions, it became evident that individuals would dominate (or attempt to dominate) roundtable reflection sessions. While this provided fuel for discussion, it became evident that in some sessions, the majority of preservice teachers were either silent or contributing verbally in a minimalist way. My experiences as a result of my participation in these sessions led me to question: • Do preservice teachers elect to remain silent or is this silence imposed? • Are preservice teachers engaged, yet silent? • How would dominance be perceived by preservice teachers? • What was my role as teacher educator?

THEORETICAL INFLUENCES
A social constructivist paradigm portrays learners as constructors of their own knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978) and through reflection on experience, learners create meaning. By problematising experience (Dewey, 1916, 1933) and reflecting in and on experience (Schön, 1983, 1987) learners come to know. In this way, then, we do not simply awaken each morning and stumble through a predetermined and fixed reality. Each of us actively creates/constructs our own reality … we discard some aspects, construe and reconstrue others, and in doing so, we constantly shape and re-shape our own reality. (Whitaker, 2002, p. 76)

Therefore, by encouraging systematic reflection on learning, by way of roundtable reflection, for example, multiple alternatives for complex problems, encountered as part of the experience, will be exposed (Dewey, 1916, 1933).

Learning about ourselves as learners can often be found in the unsaid. As Brown and Coupland (2005) suggest, silence within organisations is a “phenomenon that has been largely overlooked by conventional analysis of organisations which focus on them as sites characterised by talk (polyphony) rather than its absence” (p. 1049).

Studies related to silence have included research about
how particular cultural groups utilize silence (Plank, 1994) and on discourse processes which have focused on turn-taking and on temporal dynamics, and alternative approaches, such as silencing being “accomplished through processes of social space … [whereby] participants position themselves and others such that they are more or less privileged or silenced” (Leander, 2002, p. 194). Other studies report on case studies of classroom teachers who, through narrative, explore/examine the ways in which voice as a teacher is found (Gitlin & Russell, 1994).

Alerby and Elidottir (2003) suggest that silence can be explained by representing it as internal silence and oppressed silence in which the internal silence is private and a space where, through reflection, knowledge and meaning making take place. Oppressed silence relates to force and minimises the opportunities for voice, and in this respect, the political/power dimension of silence is acknowledged (Freire, 1970).

Van Manen (1990) speaks of three categories of silence: literal, epistemological and ontological. Literal silence refers to the “absence of speaking” (p. 112) and within this space a qualitative judgement is made that in this instance, it is more effective to remain silent, to “leave things unsaid” (p. 113). Epistemological silence is the silence created when we face the “unspeakable” (see for example, Polanyi, 1958) — a state where there is a “rich domain of the unspeakable that constantly beckons us” (p. 113) and that oftentimes, what may be unspeakable at that moment, may “be captured … in language the next moment” (p. 114). The third category, ontological silence, is the “silence of Being or Life itself” (p.114), which states that at some point, we always return to silence.

Leander (2002) suggests that there are three categories of research that provide a useful framework for understanding silence: the first is concerned with the documentation that silence/ing occurs; the second category refers to how silencing occurs; and the third category explores why. In what ways then, might an exploration of silence and the ways in which it is experienced, interpreted and enacted within preservice teacher education, contribute to understanding more about the ways in which we construct these realities? What more can we come to know about ourselves and others as learners?

DATA SOURCES AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH
Two primary sources provided the data for the examination of silence presented in this paper: two excerpts from roundtable sessions that dealt explicitly with the exploration of silence; and preservice teacher written responses to critical incident questionnaires (Brookfield, 1995), which were completed during May, 2004. The analysis presented in this paper refers to data provided from Roundtable 11 (August 25, 2003) and Roundtable 12 (August 27, 2003). The two excerpts from the transcripts were selected as they made specific reference to silence within the discourse. They were conducted within a particular time frame (August, 2003); were of similar length

DISCUSSION
The analysis of the data (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) produced some key themes. Those to be explored within this discussion relate to the explicit teacher educator questioning about silence and the unsaid; learning styles; accommodation and frustration and learning by listening. (Each of these themes will be discussed in detail during the conference presentation). The first of these themes relates to explicit questioning about silence.

Teacher educator questioning about silence
An examination of the data indicated that questions about silence had remained perplexing for me and this was particularly evident through my questioning which was designed to explicitly explore the issue of silence. For example, during Roundtable 11, three introductory and consecutive questions were asked which related specifically to exploring the meaning of silence:

So do you learn from listening and participating in a group? Now I’m aware that some people didn’t make a comment in that roundtable, but I want to know what the silence means? I’ve made some assumptions, but I want to know what that silence means? (R11.009).

Eight lines later, a further question: What about those that aren’t verbal. Can I put them on the spot? (R11.018). Similar explicit questions regarding silence were asked during Roundtable 12: What does silence in a group like this mean? (R12.047). During Roundtable 11, twelve teacher educator questions relating to silence were asked, which may indicate by sheer numbers alone, that although the roundtables were established to encourage preservice teacher reflective discourse, that the reality may be that the agenda had been determined and based on my explicit exploration of silence, as it remained perplexing for me.

Preservice teacher responses: Learning styles
During both Roundtable sessions, twelve instances of talk were directly related to a consideration of what silence might indicate. Multiple responses indicated that this occurred for a variety of reasons:
A further explanation provided by preservice teachers in response to the questions about what the silence may mean, was a recognition and acknowledgement that silent spaces were both times of contemplation and anticipation: they might not want to express, they want to go away and think about it (R12.049) and it can mean you are waiting for someone to jump in (R12.048). These suggestions also correlate closely with the reflections provided by Justin, who stated that I tuned out of what was happening after this comment, because my own thoughts were focussed on this remark. The roundtable format allowed me to sit in the shadows and have this time to think to myself. Through examining these preservice teacher responses it became evident that silence was more than a void, an emptiness or an “absence of speaking.” (van Manen, 1990, literal silence) but rather could be considered as a rich and actively constructed space. Rather than being identified as a deficit or disengaged, silent spaces were both times of contemplation and anticipation (R11.025) and went on, in some instances, to justify and explain their approaches to learning which could be seen by Emma’s comment: I verbalize it like I have a verbal concept map and like that’s how I put all my concepts and as I’m saying them and I catch them back sort of thing (R12.058).

Some preservice teachers suggested that these dominant voices were essential as they stimulated conversations and discussion (R11.023) and although others recognized that they felt confident in sharing their experiences (R12.056), it was also suggested that it [didn’t] necessarily mean that other people [hadn’t] had equally as important experiences (R12.056). However, although the verbal roundtable responses were positive in terms of accepting the dominant/vocal preservice teachers’ voices, other written data suggest a level of frustration which is evident, for example, in Jane’s response: I felt most distanced from what was happening in class this week when I couldn’t get a word in or have my say about what was being discussed (Critical Incident Questionnaire, 3/05/2004). It seemed that for some, dominance was accepted and acceptable; for others, it was tolerated.

Learning by listening

Extensive education research reports on the inadequacies and limitations of listening as a means of learning and teaching as telling (Berry & Loughran, 2002). However, the analysis of the data revealed that listening to peers’ experiences during roundtable sessions promoted learning connections and new understandings among preservice teachers. These non-verbal connections with the spoken-about experiences were also exposed as preservice teachers continued to explain silence. For example, a number of preservice teachers mentioned that they were learning, and making sense of their own experiences, by listening to others:

when someone says something… I immediately think what else they could have done … but it means that when other people share what they have done in certain circumstances then I can remember those and … all these things pop into my head … so I am learning from other people’s experience in that so that I can adjust those to my situation (Linley, Written reflection, Roundtable 11).

This is supported in the preservice teachers’ written responses from the Critical Incident Questionnaire completed during May 2004. Of the 57 completed questionnaires, 43 mentioned that the roundtable was a positive experience, supportive and that they learned while listening to, and about, others’ experiences. The following are illustrative examples that reflect a connection with peers’ experiences:

• Talking and discovering myself it made it clear in my mind the gaps in my own knowledge and that I have to plan - I thought it would just happen (Allie, CIQ)
• During our roundtable discussion, it felt refreshing to hear about what the students had to say, their experiences (Xin, CIQ)
• I found the conversations at the roundtables affirming and helpful as I’ve learnt so many teaching strategies and I can raise any concerns and receive help (Katie, CIQ)
Helpful to hear of actual experiences that are happening in classrooms and to relate to own experiences. Makes you feel that you are not alone (Eils, CIQ). This suggests that in the silent spaces, listening can contribute to learning about teaching.

Learning about silence

Voice has long been privileged in teaching and learning contexts and my teacher education mathematics classrooms were no exception. However, through the examination of voice and silence, three key learnings have emerged. Firstly, the analysis suggests that perhaps I felt more discomfort within, and about the silence than the preservice teachers, as evidenced by my ongoing questioning—my explicit attention to silence and the dominant voices at the roundtables. Further to this, my assumption that those who verbally participate in reflective discourse are in a privileged position has been challenged. Preservice teachers who were not verbal were still learning, engaged, constructing the space, albeit in another mode. It had become evident to me that one could be unintentionally seduced by the polyphony, the presence of talk (Brown & Coupland, 2005). Therefore, this highlights the need for me to actively listen and withhold judgment about those who chose not to verbally interact in roundtable sessions and to provide opportunities and focused invitations to participate. (Current, modified roundtable reflection requires each member of the roundtable to initially write about a concern, which is then followed by a brief articulation of that concern. The preservice teachers then determine the focus of the discussion. In this way, each preservice teacher is provided with a formal opportunity to voice a concern regarding their mathematical teaching experience).

Secondly, the micro-analysis of the transcripts particularly, acknowledges and exposes the complexities associated with the everyday experiences of learners in the teacher education classroom. Rather than interpreting the silence and speech within this approach as opposing extremes of a continuum or a dichotomy (Jaworski, 1993) it might be more meaningful to consider more closely the orientations of the learner and the compatibility of the approach. In understanding more about the existence of these orientations one can then direct and inform teacher educator practice and understanding. For example, some preservice teachers may be in harmony with the style of reflection, have confidence to express themselves, and connect verbally in relation to teaching and learning. Perhaps it might be that as teacher educators, we may need to look beyond the polyphony (Brown & Coupland, 2005) and explore the silent spaces, for it is the research about and within these spaces that deeper insights into teaching and learning might emerge.

REFERENCES


So When Do We Teach Mathematics? Grappling through a Troubling Dilemma

CONTEXT
This paper explores the dilemmas we confronted as we traversed a professional development community for high school mathematics teachers. Faced with the real, multi-layered problems of one urban charter school in the midst of crisis, we had to transform both our approach and goals for this authentic professional development experience. Through a self-study of our roles and the needs of the teachers we were able to re-design this effort in ways that would legitimize and incorporate their experiences into this collaborative learning journey. As teacher educators at a suburban university, we developed, researched and taught within this experience.

This effort was situated within a large (1,500) charter school (School A) located in a sizeable, financially challenged city. Charter schools are publicly funded elementary or secondary schools that have been freed from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools in exchange for some type of accountability for producing certain results which are set forth in each school’s charter (National Education Association, n.d.). For example, it is not required that all students attending a charter school live in the immediate vicinity, as is the case with many traditional public schools. School A was exemplar of many other urban charter schools plagued with uncertified staff, high teacher turnover, and no clear vision of how to achieve high student outcomes (Carver & Neuman, 1999). The majority of the student body at the time of our study was African American and considered underprivileged. This school articulated a focus on increasing student achievement and preparing students for post-secondary educational and/or workforce experiences. Our initial conversations with faculty indicated that they were concerned about their students’ learning and interested in on-going professional development with our university. Most of the mathematics teachers in the high school had not yet completed state-level certification, including passing the required state basic mathematics examination.

Although our observations suggested a positive learning environment and student/teacher ratio (approximately 22-1), this school had been unable to make any gains in standardized mathematics assessments. Aware of the acute high-stakes testing situation, this school had made a proactive attempt to improve scores through isolated, short-term in-service presentations, with no documented or visible results. Although charter schools are being held accountable at the same level as their district counterparts, most of the professional development done in these schools has been initiated by for-profit groups with little or no research supporting their effectiveness (Ascher, Jacobowitz, & McBride, 1999; DiLorenzo, 1996). What is clear in the research on mathematics teacher education is that without on-going professional development that addresses teachers’ understandings of mathematics and supports their efforts to improve practice within their own classrooms, no gains can be made in students’ mathematics achievement (Ball, 2000). We designed our professional development experience to be an on-site program for which participating high school mathematics teachers would earn graduate course credit toward state-level certification. The courses were integrated, co-taught courses that blended mathematical content (e.g., algebra and functions) and pedagogy (e.g., instructional design and assessment). We met weekly in a collaborative forum through which the teachers could share ideas about teaching.

OBJECTIVES
Early in this work we recognized that the teachers at School A were faced with daily struggles that prevented them from arriving ready to participate in the goals of our professional development community. Throughout this experience we grappled with how to address their on-going emotional needs and practical problems, while maintaining an effort that would facilitate change in mathematical understandings and practices. Reflecting within our research meetings we became acutely conscious that it was essential to listen to these teachers and integrate their dilemmas into what was explored within the community. Our work thus expanded to include a reconceptualization of our process and what could be realistically achieved (Loughran, 2004).

Our goal within this paper is to deconstruct the layers
within this experience, thereby allowing us to incorporate what we have learned into our on-going practice as teacher educators. The following question guides this self-study: How can we structure teacher learning within an authentic community that addresses the complex realities of inner-city practice? With this work we aim to contribute to what is understood about teacher learning and how to foster change in practice that includes teachers’ stories, as well as our own stories, and ultimately leads to student achievement. Finally, we hope to shed light on how others can explore similar questions in their own research and practice.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Relevant research in the areas of mathematics teaching and learning, and teacher development and change, provided a framework for our original research study of this professional development experience (e.g., Benken & Brown, 2004). It is our belief, and the finding of many studies, that effective professional development can be an invaluable foundation for high-quality teaching that leads to improved student learning and achievement (e.g., US Dept. of Education, 2000). Furthermore, teachers serve as the primary catalysts for change in students’ learning (Borko & Putnam, 1995). Designing professional development becomes increasingly complex when layered with issues specific to inner-city settings. In urban schools, teachers often avoid teaching that requires students to use higher-order critical thinking (Walker & Chappell, 1997).

Given the national (e.g., NCTM, 2000) and state-level recommendations for an approach to mathematics teaching that allows students to communicate, problem solve, and engage in conceptual mathematics, it is critical that we address teachers’ content knowledge. Thus, our frustration over not immediately getting to the mathematics represents a real concern. In this self-study we explore our approach toward confronting this dilemma in order to further what is known about successful mathematics professional development. Although there exist lists of what must be incorporated in successful professional development programs (e.g., Wilson & Berne, 1999), rarely does this literature explore how to embed these components within the realities of context. This work warrants that we must first seek to understand the teachers’ stories and lives before we can select both what is done within a professional development effort, as well as how it should be implemented.

METHOD

Our scholarly approach is motivated by our belief that human behavior cannot be understood without insight into the meanings and intentions that individuals attribute to their actions. Ascribing to a hermeneutic (Gadamer, 1992) and participant-observer (Jorgensen, 1989) view of research, we believe that the researcher is involved in and part of the interpretation of the experience. Thus, it is essential that we both recognize and integrate what we bring to our research, making this study a ripe context for self-study.

The teachers in our study included three, full-time high school mathematics teachers, none of who had completed their initial state-level secondary teaching certification. For each of these three teachers, teaching was not their first career; these three African American women were born and raised in the same urban community, giving them a passion to both help their students, as well as be a part of making this newer (less than five years) school a successful public alternative.

We, the participants within our self-study, designed, researched, and taught within this professional development experience. We are both assistant professors (one in a school of education and one in a mathematics department) at the university that sponsors this charter school, and were originally encouraged to hold an on-site program to address the curricular and staffing needs of School A. As part of an internal grant project, we developed two integrated courses for these teachers that blended pedagogy, mathematical content, and pedagogical content knowledge. We aligned our course goals to reflect our common orientation toward teaching and teacher education. These goals include active knowledge construction, opportunities for on-going reflection, a focus on enduring mathematical understandings, modeling teaching practices that support these tenets, as well as aligning course goals with authentic activities (e.g., Stein, Smith, Henningsen, & Silver, 2000). Having done our doctoral work at the same, large research university, we arrived at our current university together and have since formed a collaborative research agenda that has served as the foundation for our on-going friendship. This relationship has provided the necessary trust that we believe has allowed our process of self-reflection to be honest and professionally fruitful.

In the course of our work, we drew upon five primary data sources: (1) journal entries; (2) e-mail correspondence; (3) assignments of participant teachers that were narrative in nature; (4) transcripts of community meetings; and (5) end of professional development evaluations. Our emphasis was on finding ways to conceptually separate which aspects of our work was responsive to the teachers’ stated needs versus intentioned in our goal of improving mathematics learning and teaching. We believe it is imperative to learn both what we did and why we did it in ways that will inform our future work.

Analysis related to this self-study evolved naturally through the process of qualitatively analyzing our work as teachers and designers within this professional development experience. What immediately became apparent through our coded reflections was a conflict between our original intentions for the experience and the in-class outcomes that occurred through our efforts to be responsive to the teachers’ needs. Simply stated, we became frustrated that at least half of each group meeting centered on the teachers’ griping about their experiences within the school (e.g., all-school announcements interrupting class, students living as independent adults with no supervision, and required administrative duties during class time), causing our planned lessons to be largely ignored.
Although addressing their needs became our choice, we sought to understand why we were making this choice and how we should resolve our new dilemma of helping these teachers and this school to improve mathematics education in a way that would be authentic to the teachers’ state of mind. At this point in our research study our focus moved from examining growth in content understandings and practice to looking for patterns related to both the teachers’ comments that prevented them from engaging in mathematics and/or pedagogical dialogue, and our reflections on the experience of reshaping the entire program. Specifically, we coded all transcriptions of meetings and our reflective journals for the following emergent themes: (1) content and length of discussions related to planned lessons; (2) content and length of discussions related to non-course student issues raised by teachers; and (3) content and length of discussions related to non-course school issues raised by teachers. Through this process of redesign we wanted to learn both what was preventing these teachers from engaging in reflective growth and how we could address this cause through effective professional development. If not mathematics, what were these teachers learning and what was our role?

SELF-EXAMINATION OUTCOMES
Our results revolve around three areas: (1) what we learned; (2) how we changed what we were doing in the project based on what we learned; and (3) how what we experienced has transformed our paths as researchers-teachers. In the sections that follow we elaborate each of these outcomes.

What did we learn?
Our learning centered around three primary themes: (1) finding a common ground; (2) understanding the development of context-driven professional identity; and (3) addressing teachers’ views of what it means to be a good teacher. Related to the first theme, in order to facilitate these teachers’ growth, we came to recognize that we had to meet them where they were in their learning. These teachers were very concerned and upset about changes made by the administration and their perception of the lack of support from the administration. Additionally, they were very concerned about many of their students’ needs and came to our course meetings unable to focus on mathematics and how to teach mathematics.

Simultaneously, we became aware that the teachers had built up defensive facades to prevent others from realizing their lack of conceptual content knowledge (mathematics). Analysis of discussions illuminated the strong role that their school context was playing in this process. Data revealed that teachers diverted conversation more during mathematical lessons within the professional development program than in discussions that centered on how to best design a lesson or assessment. Intertwined with these teachers’ personal identities were their views of themselves as teachers and what constitutes good teaching. These teachers saw themselves as present in the school to make change and help students. However, rather than discuss this mission in terms of their ability to explain and understand planning and assessment, or ways to help students achieve mathematically, they spoke of their goals relative to improving students’ emotional and circumstantial needs, as well as helping administration to set long range improvement plans. We perceived teachers to not be connecting the important role that their own learning of mathematics and new pedagogy could play in their students’ learning and achievement.

How did we change what we were doing based on what learned?
We made changes in three main areas: (1) our role in course meetings; (2) how we facilitated course meetings and structured assignments; and (3) our presence in School A. Perhaps the most fundamental change occurred within the first two weeks of this experience. Upon our recognition of the amount of time spent on the teachers’ venting of student and building issues we immediately questioned our role within this professional development community. We needed to be included in and genuinely emotionally involved in the teachers’ feelings and needs before we could understand how to better guide the meetings in ways that would eventually lead to lessons on mathematical content and lesson design/assessment. First, we learned that we needed to reveal our complex selves. We both had much experience in inner-city schools and needed to communicate our shared concerns over these teachers’ students and building environment. Second, through this process we became better listeners, who were now able to reflect on how to improve meetings and assignments.

After re-envisioning our role, we soon recognized that before we could move to planned lessons on design, assessment and mathematical concepts, we needed to find a way to structure our sessions so that the teachers would move past their gripe mode to a more open-to-learning frame of mind. To begin, we moved some meetings out of School A (e.g., a restaurant in the downtown area near the school) with the intention of only talking about their needed agenda, which included personal sharing. Additionally, our lessons now began with an agreed-upon 15-minute period of open discussion. This time revealed to the teachers our acknowledgement of their needs, as well as validation of their experience. Simultaneously, we focused the initial coursework on designing lessons, only using the mathematical concepts as a context. We could then move our discussion to what mathematical concepts are, which then transitioned nicely to exploration of these concepts. Reframing our sessions in this way helped to alleviate teachers’ mathematical anxieties. Finally, we also changed assignments to incorporate the teachers’ immediate content concerns and to parallel our new approach to course sessions. Specifically, we allowed the teachers to select concepts that they perceived to be emphasized within the building. As part of this process, we encouraged the teachers to
send us electronic drafts of their work, highlighting the importance of reflection and revision in knowledge construction.

The final area in which we proactively made change was in our level of involvement within School A. We began working collaboratively with on-site administration to make changes that they desired within the building. As part of this expanded role we showed the teachers our genuine dedication to improving their school, as well as modeled how they themselves could serve as change agents. Additionally, we began spending more time with the teachers in the building outside of our planned meetings. For example, we helped teachers to implement course-motivated lessons and attended faculty meetings on curricular reform.

How has what we have experienced transformed our paths as researcher-teachers?
This experience has changed our path as researcher-teachers in three primary ways. First, we believe that we understand more about teachers’ needs in failing schools. Specifically, teachers should be provided a vehicle through which they can feel empowered to voice and make change. They want to feel as though their opinions are heard and valued. Perhaps due to the dire situation of School A and the inner-city context, this realization became paramount. Second, we now recognize more acutely that teachers in our future professional development situations and/or research projects need to view us as human beings who care, as opposed to merely two Ph.Ds, who are present to tell them things. Although many may find this observation obvious, we intend to convey here that this understanding must be explicitly and overtly attended to in the planning and implementation of projects. Lastly, we acknowledge the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the culture in which we implement professional development prior to beginning the formal experience. In this situation, fostering relationships before engaging would have alleviated much of the time spent on negotiating roles and finding our place in the building.

MOVING FORWARD
Our relationship with these teachers continues today. One of the teachers is currently completing a master’s program in education at our university. As part of this program, one of us is leading an independent study in mathematics education. A second teacher has since left School A, but keeps us apprised of her life through frequent e-mails. She is currently pursuing a career in theology. The third teacher is viewed as a future administrative leader within the building; School A recognizes that her previous background in business can help pave the future for K-12 schooling.

Currently we are leading a professional development mentoring project within the K-5 building associated with School A. Due to our work with the high school teachers and administration at School A, we were immediately welcomed into this new venue, making the transition period much shorter and more fruitful. The design of this new project reflects the learning shared in this paper. This self-study illustrates that teacher development grows out of relationships premised on trust and built on a long-term, joint commitment to change.

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Team Teaching as Self-Study: Learning and Re-Learning
How We Help People Learn How to Teach

We are, respectively, a beginning Ph.D. candidate and an experienced teacher educator. We share an interest in self-study from our work in 1997-1998 when Shawn was a preservice teacher candidate (Russell & Bullock, 1999). In 2005-2006 we shared the teaching of two preservice teacher education courses, in physics methods and in practicum supervision. In the Fall Term, we worked as teaching assistant and teacher; in the Winter Term, Shawn became teacher in his own right while Tom was on sabbatical leave.

As a doctoral candidate teaching preservice candidates for the first time, Shawn was quick to notice that his experiences leading in-service activities for experienced teachers did not prepare him for working with preservice teachers. Self-study provided a way for Shawn to examine his beliefs and practices in the early stages of forming a personal pedagogy of teacher education. Tom was quick to notice that he drew support for his teaching from Shawn’s presence and contributions and he began to re-examine his own assumptions about how he works with those learning how to teach. When Shawn assumed the teacher role in his own right, he was able to further test his understanding of his own assumptions in the practice setting. Thus a team teaching context that uniquely involved both university classes and practicum supervision became a rich context for critical friendship and self-study (Schuck & Russell, 2005).

Our self-study generated highly productive conversations about and insights into our assumptions and our practices related to helping people learn to teach. We were particularly struck by the importance of frequent comparisons across three levels of learning:

1) Shawn learning to teach new teachers
2) Tom learning to teach a new teacher educator
3) Teacher candidates learning to teach students in schools

Across these three levels we were particularly attentive to parallels in terms of learning from experience. We focused on the inevitably slow process of changes in expectations, both by ourselves and by teacher candidates. Our findings describe not only our assumptions about working with teacher candidates but also the changes in our assumptions that occurred in response to particular events in our work with candidates. We conclude the study with specific comments about the process of self-study in the context of team teaching.

LEARNING TO TEACH NEW TEACHERS (SHAWN)
Prior to beginning my Ph.D. program I spent two years as an in-school teacher consultant for a large metropolitan school board. My first foray into teacher education was to work with colleagues who, quite often, had much more classroom experience than I did. As part of my responsibilities as a teacher consultant, I was required to participate in monthly training workshops offered by the school board. The workshops were taught in a familiar transmission-based style with the goal of telling us the teaching strategies that we were to share with teachers in our schools. Little or no attention was paid to the pedagogy of teaching teachers.

My early experiences in teacher education were firmly rooted what Schön (1983) called the swampy lowlands of professional practice. The school board and the training it provided represented a kind of ivory tower that seemed disconnected from the front lines of teacher education where I spent most of my time. There was considerable resistance to the idea of an in-school teacher consultant, and I responded by presenting myself as a resource to help teachers work through professional problems rather than as someone transmitting school-board initiatives and policies.

When I began my formal Ph.D. studies in September 2005, I anticipated that two years working with experienced teachers to reframe their professional practice would provide a strong base of experience that would guide my work with teacher candidates. I soon discovered that my assumptions about how teachers learn were inaccurate when applied to teacher candidates. For the first four months of the school year, I was teaching assistant for Tom’s physics methods and practicum supervision classes. In early October, shortly after the teacher candidates left for their first four-week practicum, Tom challenged me to write about the differ-
ences I had noticed between teacher candidates and experienced teachers. This led to some very productive writing summarized into three categories of pedagogical stance, subject-matter knowledge and professional concerns.

**Pedagogical Stance**

Experienced teachers have a well-developed pedagogical stance, although they are often not able to articulate it. The pedagogical stance is shaped by experiences as a student, by professional development, by departments, and by school districts. The justification for making particular choices in the classroom often comes down to statements such as “In my experience…” The difficulty in naming pedagogies often creates misunderstandings among teachers, administration, and parents. Experienced teachers are also passionate about their pedagogy, and typically only willing to discuss it with teachers of the same discipline and grade level.

Teacher candidates have a well-developed pedagogical stance that is almost exclusively shaped by their experiences as a student. It seems that many candidates are either trying to emulate a favourite teacher or trying to avoid the mistakes they endured as a student. I see their pedagogical stance as more malleable than that of experienced teachers, in part because they are consistently looking to acquire new resources to add to their repertoires. At the same time, teacher candidates are generally looking for comfortable pedagogical approaches, not ones that might feel risky in a classroom.

**Subject-Matter Knowledge**

Experienced teachers seem to be self-assured in their knowledge of subject matter, although many rely on textbooks for the acquisition of new knowledge. I found that teachers are proud of their disciplines and that subject-matter experts gain instant credibility with experienced teachers of the same discipline. There is a prevailing belief that a science teacher, for example, is unlikely to say anything of relevance about teaching to an English teacher.

Many teacher candidates have just completed undergraduate degrees and seem very confident in their subject-matter knowledge. Many candidates seem to feel that their primary role is to transmit that knowledge. Much discussion among candidates seems devoted to what they teach rather than to how they teach.

**Professional Concerns**

Experienced teachers are concerned about the structure of the school system. They see significant system-level structural impediments that need to be removed so they can do their jobs more effectively. Professional development sanctioned by the school district is generally scoffed at, whereas subject-based activities provided by professional organizations are regarded in a positive light.

Teacher candidates seem obsessed with issues of classroom management. They are understandably concerned about controlling a class and many see management as the first order of business when they step in front of a class. Many candidates seem to take the issue of classroom management personally, as a reflection of their character and of their ability to be a teacher.

These assertions about the differences between experienced teachers and teacher candidates revealed important differences between the two groups that I needed to consider in my personal pedagogy of teacher education. Additionally, I was aware of the mixed messages teacher candidates often hear in their preservice programs, most notably the discrepancy between how they are taught and what they are taught. Thus the infamous lecture about the importance of not lecturing to students adds to the already confusing nature of the preservice year, in which candidates are alternately students, teachers, and students of teaching. At times I felt as confused and uncertain as the teacher candidates as I wrestled with the inescapable conclusion that my experiences as an inservice teacher educator had not prepared me for the complexities of learning to teach preservice teachers.

At the conclusion of the Fall Term I conceptualized my self-study as a series of questions that challenged me not only to minimize the differences between how I taught and what I taught, but also to further explore the differences noted in Table 1. I saw the differences between my earlier experiences with experienced teachers and my experiences with teacher candidates as a series of problems to help me reframe my developing pedagogy of teacher education.

1) **Pedagogical Stance**: Do I solicit teacher candidates’ prior conceptions about their pedagogy?

2) **Subject-Matter Knowledge**: Do I provide experiences that encourage teacher candidates to think beyond their subject-matter content?

3) **Professional Concerns**: Do I make the tacit internal structures of a classroom explicit to teacher candidates?

My research questions were influenced by Tidwell’s (2002) caution against investigating characteristics of practice before finding out if one’s practice is enacted as it is intended. For example, instead of asking how I solicit teacher candidates’ prior conceptions about their pedagogy, I asked if I solicit candidates’ prior conceptions of their pedagogy. There is an important distinction between the two questions, for the second question does not involve a priori assumptions about the characteristics of my teaching. Thus I hoped to avoid making assumptions about what I was including in my pedagogy of teacher education; the three self-study questions focused my thinking on the dynamics of my interactions with teacher candidates.

The primary data source is a teaching journal in the form of a web log (blog) that I added to after each preservice class that I taught. Hernández-Ramos (2004) reports that teachers who wish to encourage writing are exploring the pedagogical potential of web logs. I found that web-log technology allowed me to quickly record...
thoughts about my practice regardless of where I was. Blogs also permit sharing a journal of others, a useful feature given that Tom was on leave in Australia during my January teaching. Excerpts from my web log speak to the three focus questions.

1. Do I solicit teacher candidates’ prior conceptions about their pedagogy?
I noticed in the Fall Term that many of the teacher candidates in the physics class would often engage in discussions about what they teach rather than how they teach. I also noticed that many people in the class of 31 had a strong interest in astronomy. In the third class of the Winter Term, I presented a media-literacy exercise without labeling it as such. I showed the FOX television program, Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?, which presents 10 ideas intended to convince viewers that the Apollo moon missions never really happened. It quickly drew the teacher candidates into a heated discussion of the veracity of the claims made, to the point that I abandoned my plan for the remainder of class and put them into groups to refute the claims by applying principles of physics. For example, one of the claims made is that the lunar photographs are doctored because they show stars visible in the sky. The teacher candidates concluded that the reason no stars are visible in the pictures is that film needs to be exposed for a long time to capture dim starlight.

At the end of class I asked the candidates if they would use this activity with high school students. By not taking up the physics content of the activity, I hoped to get them to focus on the pedagogy. The result was unexpected: So What? How and when could a video like this be used pedagogically? The teacher candidates were nearly unanimous in their caution against using the video with grade 9 or 10 students. Their concern seemed to centre on the danger of confusing students with a flashy video. Some candidates suggested that the correct explanations were too difficult for high school students to understand. (Personal web log, January 12, 2006)

Most candidates seemed focused on whether or not students would be able to understand the right answer, namely, that the Apollo missions did land on the moon and that the program was based on flawed reasoning. Most candidates felt that it was safer not to deal with the video, even though students have opportunities to watch controversial programs, regardless of whether teachers address them explicitly. No one seemed to notice the potential utility of the pedagogy.

2. Do I provide experiences that encourage teacher candidates to think beyond their subject-matter content?
In the middle of January, Tom sent me a file of quotations from Bain’s (2004) What the Best College Teachers Do. I used three quotations from the book as an opening activity for one of my physics classes, asking candidates to select a particularly meaningful quotation and write a response. One of the quotations dealt explicitly with the role of subject-matter knowledge:
[The best professors] were no longer high priests, selfishly guarding the doors to the kingdom of knowledge to make themselves look more important.... A sense of awe at the world and the human condition stood at the center of their relationships with those students. Most important, that humility, that fear, that veneration of the unknown spawned a kind of quiet conviction on the part of the best teachers that they and their students could do great things together. (Bain, 2004, p. 144)

My account of the results is as follows: Our discussion seemed particularly poignant at this moment. One of the complaints that I often heard as a teacher consultant was that teachers live in subject boxes. I have often overheard the conversations among teacher candidates as they share war stories about their physics and engineering undergraduate programs. Survival is a badge of honour. I know these discussions well because I have been a frequent participant in them. The risk is, of course, that in our pride we assert ourselves as high priests of the discipline, with knowledge to disseminate to the ignorant masses. Many of the candidates spoke eloquently about the importance of relationships, often sharing anecdotes from their practica. The discussion was an important step in underscoring the importance of how we teach, rather than what we teach. (Personal web log, January 26, 2006)

3. Do I make the tacit internal structures of a classroom explicit to teacher candidates?
This focus was least apparent in the physics course. There was one candid moment, however, when I instigated a discussion about unconscious elements of teaching with some candour about my own challenges in overcoming tacit behaviours:
A critical moment came about halfway through the class. I asked the candidates if anyone would be willing to share an element of teaching that they tried to modify upon returning to their placements in December, perhaps as a result of an associate teacher’s comment. I then told them about my tendency to cross my arms when I am nervous or trying to project an air of authority. I told them about where I acquired the habit and the fact that my associate teacher mentioned it to me in discussions in 1997. Finally, I told them that Tom had alerted me to the fact that I was folding my arms in this, my newest teaching situation. The story was received well and opened the floodgates for all kinds of teaching behaviours that they were trying to modify (talking to the board while writing, saying “anyone?” when asking questions, etc.). It felt like a real bonding moment between us. (Personal web log, January 5, 2006)
Learning to Teach

A New Teacher Educator (Tom)

This was the ideal year for Shawn to begin his Ph.D. studies, as it provided the personal teaching experiences that will guide his reading and the development of his own research. We worked closely in the Fall Term, but in the Winter Term there was no place for the buck to stop but on his desk. Working with Shawn both face-to-face and electronically in these two teaching contexts has enabled me to encourage his challenging of his own assumptions while also re-examining my own. Sharing two groups of students in both classroom and practicum settings added significantly to our self-study, as our differing interpretations of individuals invited us to identify and critique our personal assumptions. Working with someone so committed to becoming an outstanding teacher educator has provided refreshing stimulation for self-study.

The spirit of our work together is expressed in the following words:

It is important to search out independent evidence that the widely accepted routines of teaching are in fact serving the purposes for which they are enacted. We need to find a critical vantage point from outside the routines and their supporting myths.... The approach I have learned to take is to look at teaching through the eyes of students and to gather detailed data about the experiences of individual students. (Nuthall, 2005, p. 925)

As Shawn worked to critique his assumptions and practices by listening to teacher candidates, I worked to critique my own assumptions and practices by looking through his eyes at the experiences of someone learning to teach teachers. As Nuthall suggests, both teaching and teacher education have routines and supporting myths that demand the critical vantage point that self-study can provide.

The Road Ahead: Still Learning to Teach

Engaging in self-study at this early stage in his career as a teacher educator allowed Shawn to understand why his prior experiences working with experienced teachers were insufficient preparation for working with teacher candidates. Guided by the differences between his prior experiences and his observations of teacher candidates, he regularly reframed his practices. By posing research questions that did not make a priori assumptions about how he taught, he was able to investigate the characteristics of his pedagogy. Tom was often able to extend Shawn’s perspectives on teaching, both by validating his practice and by suggesting ways to reframe experiences (Loughran & Northfield, 1998).

A sequel to this self-study would explore links between perspectives offered by teacher educators and those offered by teacher candidates. Teacher candidates’ perspectives help us to better understand our pedagogies, particularly the relationship between how we teach and what we teach. We hope that sharing our work with other teacher educators will inspire comments that challenge us to think further about our assumptions about teaching people to teach. Identifying and critiquing the myths and routines of teacher education is fundamental to the improvement of teaching and teacher education.

References


Over 27 years of teaching somehow didn’t quite prepare me for what awaited me these last couple of years. I had no idea of the kind of courage I would need to possess in order to teach mindfully, to acknowledge my values and strive to teach following them; in essence, to learn to teach with my heart and not only with my mouth. It all began long ago, like many other stories do…

…And then in my own stillness, I heard something: “Where have you been?” my inside body whispered to my outside one. Its sense of outrage was there, but dulled by the grief of abandonment. “We had IDEAS. There were things to DO. Where did you go?”

I had no real response to that question. The truth was that I had wandered out, meaning to come back, but like Hansel and Gretel, the breadcrumbs that I had dropped behind me had been blown away…

Somehow, at some time, somewhere along the line, I had become lost, the person that I had once been – that I had thought I was – disappearing from view. The question was not whether I could find myself again, but whether the person I was looking for still existed…and if she did, did she want to be found?

This section of my self-study, The Diving Narratives, was actually born from that moment of self-awareness. At that time, I looked all around me and realized that the fires of transformation had changed my life forever. I had a choice: I could scrap my entire life and start anew, or I could piece my life – what was left of it – together, rebuilding it from the foundations.

Viewing the ashes of my former professional life, looking at the results of mistakes made – the opportunities let go, the messiness of it all – I knew that I wanted something more. The problem was that I wasn’t sure what that might be. On the other hand, starting over would mean I would have to obliterate pieces of my life and heart that were very precious to me.

In the end, I decided to unchoose my life, to rebuild it, but to do so carefully and thoughtfully this time, to work off the original blueprints, to unchoose certain decisions I had made. In order to do that, I knew I would have to go back and re-visit parts of my former life, decide what was important, and reconstruct myself accordingly, using the lessons I had learned.

When I made the decision to unchoose my life, I also made the decision to write about my teaching life exactly as it had been, as it had seemed to me: passionate, wonderful, troubled, oppressive, chaotic, beautiful. The following is a small part of the story born of that decision. It is not really a political story or a fable. Nor is it the story of Teaching. It is the story of how one teacher is trying to come to terms with her own history and values; it is a love story for the classroom.

There comes a time between dusk and stars
when what we know is truly ours.
In the soft waning of daylight’s glow
what we sense is what we know. – ksc

Unchoosing – whether one looks at it as turning (similar to Heidegger’s Kehre, cf Schrag, 1986) or as change – of necessity involves leaving. Leaving is not all that unusual, in and of itself: people regularly leave places, situations, growth plateaus, habits, relationships, interests, experiences, preferences, feelings, ideas – and life. Yet all of this seems to be an inseparable part of living, part of a natural rhythm of arriving and leaving, of attaching and separating. Living life to its fullest, then, not only requires a surrender to that rhythm, but also a commitment to managing its effect. All people leave things – but unfortunately, all too few of us manage to leave deliberately or well.

Of course, some leavings occur so naturally and so slowly that the transitions are scarcely noticed and conscious decisions are not part of the process; these are things like childhood speech patterns and other growth plateaus. Of course, not all leavings are quite as simple as those. Some leavings are abrupt, jarring, and noticeable. Anger, illness, political shifts, and even passions like religions or romance tend to trigger swift exits, sudden releases, hard separations.

Leave. To go out of or away from. Separate. Depart. Take off. Change. Scram. None of these convey the idea of being ejected, expelled, or booted out. These are, in fact, passive words, words that describe things done to

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Diving In
us. Leaving, on the other hand, connotes exercising volition, choice. Even when asked to leave, we are the ones who actually make that move, who take action; this is because leave is a responsibility word.

Imagine a diver, propelling herself into the air, hurling straight down towards the unknown, towards change. She has left the safety of the diving board, seemingly to plummet out of control, and is headed for the hard, unforgiving water. Then, in a split second, she swiftly arches her back, tucks her head, and points her toes, taking full advantage of this new opportunity. She finishes the dive, slicing cleanly through the water.

Diving
Balancing on the tips of their toes
the adventurous hurl themselves
outward and down,
head first:
ever exactly sure of
how deep or how far they will descend –
and never knowing how
quickly the bottom may come up to greet them.

The trick is
never falter, never look down,
but always always
focus ahead –
secure in the knowledge that
the body will simply
follow the arc of the course set for it.

Divers know something the rest of us don’t:
diving, itself, is an act of will –
a suspension of time when
the mind must truly believe in
the strength of the heart.

The beginning of my decision to unchoose my life
came about as a direct result of a devastating critical incident I experienced while teaching several years ago. The need to take action on this decision only escalated when my son died. In the wake of both personal and professional abysses, my response to this disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991) was to embark upon a personal and professional abyss, and is headed for the hard, unforgiving water. Then, in a split second, she swiftly arches her back, tucks her head, and points her toes, taking full advantage of this new opportunity. She finishes the dive, slicing cleanly through the water.

Learning how to paint has been an extremely interesting, exhilarating – but often terrifying – voyage, one which has taught me to appreciate the very creative and inventive process that comprises learning. I believe that this experience has not only humbled me by instilling within me a greater respect for the risk-taking involved in learning anything new, but also has helped me grow in ways I never thought imaginable by awakening all sorts of creative impulses inside me.

Accompanying this shift has been the personal realization that I have an ethical responsibility to know as much as I can about myself if I am to become a more aware and effective teacher. Because of this, I believe it is vitally important for me to examine the complexities of my own professional stance and practice.

CONTEXT
An experienced adult educator with over 30 years in the field, I am a Language Arts teacher and a mentor who works with adult students enrolled in a full-time academic high school program in the public sector. The student population in my center could best be described as marginalized and generally disaffected; many of my students are young adults from 16 to 19 years of age who have previously been unsuccessful in school. A growing number of the people I teach have few academic skills. For the majority of these students, my school is their last chance at getting a high school diploma – and perhaps qualifying for a job.

AIMS/OBJECTIVES
In an attempt to improve my practice, I have asked myself how I could help the students in my classes to grow academically and personally so that they could become active participants in their own learning. By nurturing this attitude in my classroom, I believe that I can help students acquire a stronger sense of ownership and pride in the work that they produce. As part of my ongoing reflection into my practice (Schön, 1983), I have wondered what I could change about what I am doing in order to help me become a better, more effective teacher and offer better services to the people in my care.

Accordingly, I have engaged in an on-going formal inquiry into my practice as a teacher working with adults, and am investigating my practice by exploring how my growth in creativity has helped to clarify my embodied values and how this has become an educational influence on my students’ learning. When reflecting on my educational influence on my students’ learning I am looking at the range of understandings I already bring into my educational relations. I also look into the ways that my students mediate this through their originalities of mind and critical judgment in their learning and in their own voices.

METHOD
Using the lens of autobiographical self-study as a way of looking at my practice (Hamilton, 1998; Mitchell & Weber, 1999; Whitehead, 1993, 2000), I have been examining the way in which learning to use my own creative abilities has helped me foster a more accepting, open teaching style, and a classroom environment in which self-expression and creativity can flourish – a community.
in which students’ dignity and self-worth is respected. I rely heavily on self-reflection and the poetry and the art that I produce as a way of articulating my research. I also use the narrative form as a way of knowing (Bruner, 1985, 1986; Carter, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988) and to look at myself as an educator. Many times I will combine these narrative vignettes with poetry and image texts to illustrate and share my experiences and understandings (Childs, 2001; Cole & Knowles, 2000, 2001; Diamond, 1997; Diamond & Mullen, 1999; Eisner, 1997, 2002). As well, I use student artifacts and samples of student work as examples of the type of creativity, engagement and critical reflection that I try to encourage in my classroom.

Because I am a teacher, the work that my students have done in my classroom is important to this investigation and forms a vital backdrop to my daily practice. I draw on student work for much of my data, using student artifacts and samples of student work that have already been produced in my classroom. In particular, I have chosen to look at the research projects (such as autobiographical self-studies, videos, illustrated children’s books, poetic transcriptions/treatments, etc.) completed by my Senior English students. The students who have produced this type of inquiry have already worked through the decision to make their investigations public and available to others as an integral part of the research projects they undertook to produce.

An integral part of my autobiographical self-study, the Diving Narratives are part of the way that I have chosen to represent some of my learnings. They are a group of narratives, poems and images intended to illustrate, describe, and share my experiences as a teacher whose Living Educational Theory (Whitehead, 1993) comprises a relational philosophy of teaching, learning, and leadership. This philosophy is based on the notion of caring concern and respect for each individual I work with and involves paying attention to the individual and helping each individual’s sense of worth (dignity) to flourish. This group of writings and images deals with my reflections on my practice and my everyday relationships with students and their work and is loosely woven around an original poem entitled Diving (accompanied by its own illustration, a painting), which speaks about the type of courage and determination I feel it requires to do the kind of work good teaching involves.

As a teacher, I tend to explore practices of teaching which integrate the arts as a place to find languages which cross boundaries and borders. I believe that the arts provide such opportunities—and that they can be a positive personal outlet from which people can gain a sense of self and community (belonging). Inherent to my understanding of teaching is the belief that there are ways to incorporate and engage both the heart and the body; therefore, I attempt to explore the arts not only as a way of looking at and articulating research, but as a way of living and searching in the world.

Teaching often feels like gathering a wild, dark iridescent thing in my hands, tight enough to shelter it and even calm its trembling—yet loose enough not to frighten or imprison it.

As a teacher-researcher interested in exploring my own practice, I use a creative approach as a way to become more reflective and involved as a practitioner. I am drawn to the purpose of arts-based educational research, which is to come to a deeper understanding of the educative experience using the arts as a medium for reflection (Cole & Knowles, 2000, 2001; Diamond, 1997; Diamond & Mullen, 1999; Greene, 1995, 2000; Eisner, 1993, 1997, 1998, 2002; Finlay, 2003).

Over the course of the past years, I have struggled to live up to values I hold dear, to my ideals. The more that I thought about and reflected on them and the type of teacher that I wanted to be, the more it became apparent to me that if I really trusted students the way that I believed I did, I needed to let go of a fair amount of intellectual and emotional control, both inside and outside of the classroom. This meant that I needed to find some way of expressing that willingness to trust, something short and affirmative, something that all students could relate to. The shortest, most affirmative thing I could think of was “yes” – and so the idea of saying “yes” to students was born.

Actually, saying “yes” is more than mouthing the word, is more than letting students do what they ask to do; saying “yes” in my practice has become a shorthand form of my living educational theory and is based on my conviction that trust and caring concern are the best ways for me to work with students. My “yes” is my way of letting students know that I respect and trust them.

For the past several years I have struggled with the fact that there is a teacher persona that I don on a regular basis both professionally and personally. This teacher self is primarily concerned with the growth and development of others, with watching, guiding and encouraging—often to the detriment of my own personal space.

There are, however, other selves, other personas, that exist within me, that I have lived with for some time, now—most notably, my poet self (the Poet) and my newly-expanded artist self (the Artist). For years, I erroneously believed that I could keep my art—my poetry—and my teaching life separate. For years I tried, struggling to maintain a distance between the Poet and the Teacher. However, as I grew as a creative person and started to become a visual artist, I realized that this dichotomy could never be. Whatever piece of me that had been missing, that needed art to fulfill me as a person, was a missing piece of my teaching, and to deny this essential part of me was to diminish me as a teacher, to renounce my full voice. Through my artistic endeavors I have developed new languages with which to speak, new ways to communicate and articulate my feelings and my life.
The poet self and the artist self are much more inner-directed and self-centered, more intuitive and more willing to take risks than the teacher self. The Poet and the Artist are different than the Teacher because they take time for feelings, not just ideas. They value connections, ambiguity, and leaps in logic and notions. They know that meaning often comes from form, and appreciate flexibility, wandering. Theirs is the belief that education is the light in the eye, and is a process of engaging hearts and not just minds. Perhaps the creative process is the truest metaphor for learning that there may be – a learning that involves impulses and intuition, a constant working and reworking of ideas and processes, an ability to see any one thing from multiple perspectives.

My teacher self needs to allow my other selves to enter the classroom because they recognize that any creative process tolerates complexity and avoids assumptions. Engaging in the creative process seems to compel people to believe in themselves; creating in the arts strengthens the sense of self. My poet and artist selves say “Yes” frequently, fervently, joyously.

Nowhere is this philosophy more evident than in my Senior/Level V Language Arts classes, where the majority of my students work on alternative/non-traditional research projects. Over the past four years, I have experimented with different ways in which the research process could be enhanced and expanded in my Language Arts classroom to allow my adult education students greater opportunities to produce pieces of research that they feel are sincere, authentic, and representative of their learning. The result of all this experimentation is what I refer to as the alternative research project – a piece of research that can integrate anything from self-study techniques to more arts-based types of re-presentation. This type of research project is now firmly ensconced in the classroom culture as a possible alternative to the standard research paper.

The fact that this option has become so popular with my students can be attributed to the astounding fact that students actually see themselves and others who are working on these projects as becoming more successful, as becoming stronger and more capable students as a direct result of their work on their research projects.

Of course, hard on the heels of this excitement were doubts brought about by my teaching reality, those ever-present curriculum concerns: the grids to be filled out, the objectives to be met and checked off. Could I ever let them go? Did they need to be addressed?

I finally made the decision to ignore the grids and curriculum suggestions, to view them as the intentions they were (surely) meant to be, to work with them as guidelines and not the word of the law. The decisions I made concerning the research paper were based on one single belief, our school systems are there to encourage learning. The way I see it is that if the system doesn’t pay attention to the manner in which students create meaning, schooling fails to be educative. So if my students happen to choose a slightly different approach to create meaning and can learn from that experience, so much the better for all of us. Learning about ourselves helps us to make sense out of our world and enables us to make more informed decisions about what is right and true for us to do.

**USING NARRATIVE TO SHARE AND REFLECT ON EXPERIENCE**

In speaking about meta-communication, the hypothesis that language is used to communicate within and about a relationship, Gregory Bateson (1991) maintains that a cat’s meow is the same whether the cat wants to be fed or to be let outside. This same meow sound works, Bateson maintains, because what the cat is actually doing is invoking a care relationship of sorts. In this sense, “meow” actually means, “Hey, come and take care of me,” or sentiments to that effect. In much the same way, I believe storytelling to be a form of meta-communication because it aids in communicating experience – and because of that, it creates community. A story is not simply words, but the relationship between words and our experience. Community and caring grow when people share experiences.

Stories create bridges between people’s experiences. When someone tells us a story, even though the actual details of the experience it talks about are different from ours, there are times when we feel a certain resonance between the experiences. It is this resonance that helps us connect and relate to them as being similar to our own.

It is my hope that presenting and sharing my small, personal body of work and my thoughts with others will start or continue conversations that will lead to more discoveries and critical reflections on the work that we all do, giving us the impetus and strength we may need to stay the course, change or adjust – to grow and renew.

...We are all divers of sorts.

**REFERENCES**


This is a reflection on the often unexamined issues of power and control that obtain when research is labeled as collaborative. Both authors have conducted projects that they considered to involve collaborative research (e.g., Clift, Veal, Holland, Johnson & McCarthy, 1995; Johnston & PDS Colleagues, 1997); both are continuing to do so. In the first section of this paper we separately and briefly summarize some of the key findings from the previous research—noting what we have learned about ourselves as researchers and as teacher educators based on that work. In the second section of this paper we, again individually, discuss two projects that are nearing completion. Clift will discuss her work with four (now two) graduate assistants with whom she has worked (and published) on a longitudinal study of teacher education graduates. She and her graduate student colleagues read through notes on her instruction in the first two semesters of an English teacher education program and a transcription of her students’ reflections on the class one year following graduation. They categorized discrepancies between the notes and the participants’ recall of their experiences, ostensibly assisting Clift with her analysis of any long term impact of her own teaching. But, in the process they began to explore the power dynamics within the research team and the factors that impacted their willingness to discuss and critique Clift’s teaching. Each team member then wrote separate reflections on their connection to the larger research project and their connection to assisting Clift with her reflections (Clift, Brady, Mora, Stegemoller & Choi, 2005).

Johnston-Parsons will discuss her longitudinal study of the role of doctoral students in a school/university collaborative project. In this study she and her colleagues used a variety of data sources. They audio-taped many of their conversations, transcribed many of these audiotapes, read them, discussed them, and identified themes and patterns. They also wrote narrative accounts of their experiences in the program, particularly related to their roles as TAs and coordinators in the program. They wrote many sections of the paper over time and then at the end of an 11-year history of work in this program, a small group gathered all the writings and discussions together to form a final document. This was then shared with others for feedback. Talking, writing, and reflection were continual throughout this longitudinal project. Tensions, differences, and change over time were the focus of the analyses as they studied their own experiences.

In the final section of this paper our voices will unite as we jointly examine the issues of relationships, power, and ownership within collaborative research projects themselves. We also discuss how these issues may or may not resolve in the larger arena of the preparation of teacher education researchers within a research-intensive teacher education department. But first we must acknowledge some of our assumptions that impact our reflections on and interpretations of our work.

Power and status relationships are factors in any form of collaboration (Ellsworth & Albers, 1995; Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1990), although they play out somewhat differently as the research settings and the institutional settings differ. Within any collaborative research project there are many circles/networks of social, cultural, and political forces–any or all of which may be influencing actions within the project (Clift, et al., 1995; Johnston & PDS colleagues, 1997). A sense of self and of perceptions of self as perceived other are impacted in a shifting, fluid manner, by the power and status relationships in the collaboration, as well as by social, cultural, and political forces. As a result, public reflection may not be in one’s best interests or, at the same time, lack of reflective disclosure may harm the collaboration.

As we write this paper we, too, are influenced by these givens. Clift, while a tenured full professor, is an Associate Department Head reporting to Johnston-Parsons who occasionally refers to herself as Clift’s boss. Even when Clift stops being an Associate Head, Johnston-Parsons still makes recommendations on Clift’s workload and salary each year. Johnston-Parsons, before moving to our present university, felt somewhat in awe with Clift’s work and her political connections. Being her colleague is a real benefit of this new job for her, but being her boss makes her worry about how this might interfere with a professional relationship she values.
JOHNSTON-PARSONS’S RESEARCH
For an 11 year period I worked in an M.Ed. (master’s of education) certification program in Ohio. During this period, 34 doctoral students supervised our M.Ed students in this collaborative program and a professional development school (PDS) network. Each year, we had four to six doctoral students, typically spending 20 hours a week, supervising a cohort of 25-34 students and working with 40-45 classroom teachers in the PDS. Many of the doctoral students were my advisees and did their dissertation research within this project. Many of these students, now ensconced at the university, were previously teachers who felt they had feet in both worlds. However, they were not yet full-fledged participants at the university. Neither did teachers see the doctoral students as teachers, as one of them. These boundary-spanning roles were comfortable for some and troubling for others. We talked a lot about these struggles related to identity and roles – often in tape recorded sessions.

In year 11, the teacher education project was discontinued due to changes in state licensure requirements. Three doctoral students and I decided that it was important to do a more systematic analysis of the boundary-spanning nature of the doctoral students’ experiences and write about what we learned from our work together. The data included writing by individuals and groups, audiotaped conversations from the past, and additional conversations to discuss writing this article. There were also transcripts of conversations over the years that included critical incidents and problems associated with supervision. And there were several unfinished drafts of a similar paper written at different periods.

In earlier discussions of writing about doctoral students’ participation in the project, I felt it was their story. I listened and tried to ask questions that would push their thinking, but I didn’t feel much ownership of any written documents. As we began to work seriously on writing about this project and began using the accumulated data to identify themes, together with critical incidents, and narrative accounts to tell the story, a number of ethical issues came into play for me. While all collaborative work with doctoral students can raise ethical issues related to power and to the representation of other peoples’ voices, in our analysis we had years of data on participants who were now absent. Who had the right to represent the views and experience of so many, now absent, students? Could we ethically include their writing or quote their taped discussions? Who had the authority to put it all together?

We contacted many of the participants but we could not find some of them. In the end we had eight primary authors, plus me and the other co-coordinator of the program (Mike Thomas). But Mary Christenson and I took major responsibility for crafting the paper. She had been with the program throughout, first as a doctoral student and a PDS classroom teacher, then as a supervisor in the PDS, and finally as an assistant professor at Ohio State.

The ethical issues persisted for me. Throughout, I felt that I was writing my interpretation of the experiences of others—of the doctoral students/supervisors. Of course, I did member checks where possible; I tried to be informed by the data; and I never changed first person writing. But I was the mentor of the doctoral students (many of them were my advisees) and they (including Mary) usually deferred to my interpretations, although we also had heated debates about some issues and I tried to be critical of my own decisions and preferences. I did most of the final editing of the text and had authorial power over it. I was very conscious of my power and of the limitations of my interpretations in this situation.

When we listed author names, Mary and I decided to put Mike and me at the bottom of the list. My rationale was that many of the doctoral students, now assistant professors, needed to have their names high on the list more than I did. But perhaps this was also the result of subliminal guilt on my part. Had I robbed them in some way of the power to represent themselves or of the opportunity to learn?

CLIFT’S RESEARCH
Over my career I have conducted collaborative research with colleagues, teachers, and doctoral students and have written about a few of the ethical issues inherent in such research (e.g., Clift, Meng & Eggerding, 1994). But it was not until two years ago, when my graduate students and I wrote about many of the issues that arose as we conducted a longitudinal study of graduates from our teacher education program that I began to actively think through myself as graduate teacher by virtue of the fact that I was collaborating with graduate students on research projects. For me, this paper represents a chance to process my own thoughts and feelings surrounding both my work with my students and my improvement as a teacher/advisor. I acknowledge that writing alone may, itself, be considered an ethical issue. Do I have the right to write about the research project alone? Do I need my graduate students’ permission to do so? For me, this paper is a reflection by me on my teaching through my research project and, therefore, I must write it by myself. But I need to be very cautious because I can’t speak for others or reveal anything that they have not already made public. In other words, I draw from our work of two years ago (four quotes from four different students), but I am analyzing and interpreting my own thoughts and feelings since then.

The first and last quotes are from graduate students I advise and whose dissertations I direct. The middle quotes are from graduate students who are not my advisees and on whose dissertation committees I do not serve. These two students have not continued working on the longitudinal project this year, in part because they are working on dissertations that have nothing to do with teacher education. Each quote is excerpted from Clift, Brady, Mora, Stegemoller and Choi (2005).

Well also it has to do with our own, how we’ve always related to authority, etc. And I think that I have become increasingly comfortable telling you [Clift]
how I really feel, but I don’t know if…there is definitely a very strong edit button. (Brady)

I think Renée does have the power over us as the two quotations show. Would it be possible to have this type of conversation about Renée’s teaching given that Renée is the professor and we know each other in multiple ways? (Stegemoller)

So we talked about how a lot of self study researchers ask their graduate students to discuss and analyze their teaching. To me that makes sense because who else are you going to ask to do this? I think that any time people analyze their teaching it can be a difficult thing to do. It may be that some people feel uncomfortable about a professor’s teaching and that they hold back for that reason. (Stegemoller)

When does the transition from grad students to colleagues [quotation marks, not italics not in the original] happen in a professor’s mind, if that ever happens?…When does that transition happen in a student’s mind? Does academia really prepare both professors and students to realize that one day they might be at the same level? (Mora)

I think of myself as reasonably open to criticism and feedback. I encourage students in my courses and students with whom I work closely to think of writing as a two-way communication and to see revising as a valuable tool for improving the clarity of that communication. I write with my students; I try to make sure that every student who wants an academic career has an opportunity to publish before graduating. In my graduate teaching, I often ask for anonymous feedback mid-way through the course; I allow students to negotiate final products to align with their own educational needs; and I get positive student evaluations. But that may not be sufficient. In the time since we wrote and revised our joint paper I have looked closely at me as the professor/principal investigator as I struggled with three issues surrounding collaborations with graduate students:

How do we grapple with the nature of project ownership and participation when graduate students are paid to participate or (perhaps) feel that they must participate because of their advisor?

Where is the locus of interpretive control when the professor is the principal investigator, but the graduate student’s dissertation is derived from the study?

What makes it possible, given the nature of academe, for a graduate student to become a colleague?

JOHNSTON-PARSONS’S THOUGHTS

I find it helpful to think about the nature of relationships and the words we use to describe them. For example, in general, the empirical and conceptual literature on mentoring describes the mentor/mentee relationship as complex, but positive (Feiman-Nemser & Beasley, 1997; Trubowitz & Robins, 2003). When it works well, there is a free exchange of ideas and both learn from one another (Silva & Thom, 2001). The concept of mimicry, which comes from post-colonial theory, is different. In mimicry, there is someone, the Other, who tries to be like the colonizer (Bhabha, 1984). Bhabha (1994) provides the example of an Indian person trying to be English. The Other, in this case, can be Anglicized but never quite English. Rather the mimic adopts the correct postures, attitudes, and understandings to become, in the eyes of both, an improved other, but remains still an Other. The mimic’s experience and thoughts can never be quite the same as those of the mimicked. It is a representation of self as something that it is not. For Bhabha, mimicry in the colonial situation is often seen as both flattering and at the same time subtly threatening. For the mimic both copies and raises questions about authority.

If I use the concept of mimicry rather than of mentoring—that is, if I compare the relation of the professor and doctoral student with that of the colonizer and colonized—I can see that the colonizer’s requirement of mimicry becomes the professor’s requirement to adopt the same attitudes, ask the same questions, think the same thoughts, and in this case, to accept the same text. What looks like reciprocity in a mentoring relationship can be seen as mimicry in a colonial one. The difference may lie in whether the student feels pressure to conform to standards that are not really his or her own, to adopt attitudes that are more external than genuine, to agree with thoughts that are not well understood, and, in this case, to accept textual representations of self that are not quite accurate. There is always a power relationship between the professor and student; almost always the professor possesses more of the authorized — and authorizing — knowledge that is to be passed on and accepted.

CLIFFT’S THOUGHTS

I find it helpful to draw more on Bourdieu’s (1990) interrelated concepts of habitus, field, and cultural capital. As I understand Bourdieu, the habitus is developed and continues to develop in relation to others as individuals interact in various social fields (home, schools, work settings, etc). Each field has its own system of rules and prescribed power relations, but in crossing fields the habitus seeks both to preserve itself and to reconfigure itself in order to succeed within the field as it learns to play by the rules within that field. Overtime and always to varying degrees the individual acquires or loses cultural capital in relation to others as he or she engages in social interactions, which themselves signal hierarchical relations and assign the social status.

If I think of the professor/graduate student(s) relationship as a process of learning the rules of the academic game and the graduate students as bidding for social status and accumulating cultural capital within the field, I think of the advisor’s role as conflicted — although not as conflicted as that of the graduate students. The professor/advisor has accumulated a certain amount of capital, power, and authority and, also, reinforces the rules of the process of moving from graduate student to the doctorate.
The graduate students are making a bid for acceptance and, in so doing, are making a case that they understand and can play by the rules. Any overt critique of the professor or the system might possibly be construed as not playing by the rules or, even more damaging, as not being able to learn and master the rules. At the same time, the graduate students must preserve their own power and status within in the field of graduate education. This may result in a clash in expectations for self in terms of both maintaining one’s comfortable and successful role as student and negotiating an uncertain and uncomfortable shift to the role of colleague – a shift that cannot occur without the permission of the professor, but that is not likely to occur without the initiative of the student.

OUR COMBINED THOUGHTS
The doctoral student can never think exactly like the professor, any more than the colonized can be exactly the same as the colonizer. And, of course, we wouldn’t want our student to think like us; we want them to think for themselves. At the same time we are purporting to introduce our students to the game called academia and we are passing on certain attitudes and values by virtue of the fact that we work in a research intensive, doctoral granting university. Also, we both have some ideas about what constitutes quality, merit, and creativity and we convey those ideas through overt and covert feedback.

The power of one person over another, or a group of people over an individual or another group, both interferes with and is reinforced by our academic ideals of intellectual equality and excellence. The social processes through which our community promotes acceptance and yet assigns merit are complicated, context-dependent, and always shifting. We are finding that labeling work as collaborative has the potential to mask the surface of the power relations and tensions because it blurs boundaries that hierarchical decision structures make fairly transparent. Our work suggests that we, as self-study researchers and teachers of graduate students, cannot afford to assume that what is visible (or what we assume is visible) is correct. As self-study researchers we feel that we must examine our teaching and advising in all areas and that we must always be open to thinking through ways of developing a community in which our students can communicate; it makes us better (we hope) at dealing with ethical problems and issues.

In continuously developing the communities in which we work and live – our department, our college, and the wider self-study community – we feel that it is important to interrogate that which we refer to as collaborative and to identify and talk through questions related to power dynamics among researchers, in addition to questions of validity and research integrity. Such conversations can and should occur among faculty members, but we also feel that it is important to create occasions in which our students are able to think through these issues in a safe environment and then share their own questions, concerns, experiences, and recommendations. The word collaboration and the experience of being collaborative are often very different. In our view, exploring those differences and their impacts on communities and individuals is an important extension of the self-study research and practice agenda.

REFERENCES


Moving Closer: Approaching Educational Research through a Co/Autoethnographic Lens

We do not learn a way of life and ways of deploying the mind unassisted, unscaffolded, naked before the world. Rather, it is the give and take of talk that makes collaboration possible. For the agentive mind is not only active in nature, but it seeks out dialogue and discourse with other active minds. And it is through this dialogic, discursive process that we come to know the Other and his points of view, his stories. We learn an enormous amount not only about the world but about ourselves by discourse with Others. Agency and collaboration are rather like yin and yang. (Bruner, 1996, p. 93)

Reflective teaching is effective when teachers have ownership of their learning process and when they are able to construct their own questions, use their own teaching examples, and theorize for themselves. To be effective, this kind of work cannot be done in isolation, leading as this can to a narrow interpretation of practice. As Loughran and Northfield (1998) explain, although “learning in self-study is intensely personal, it requires collaboration” (p. 14). However, as teachers using self-study, we are struck at the dissonance between much educational research and the needs of teachers to address their own issues as they arise from their practice. We argue for a method of research conducted by teachers and teacher educators where they themselves are considered both the objects of inquiry as well as the inquirers. We argue, in short, for the use of co/autoethnography as a valuable method of undertaking meaningful research into our own practice. When teachers conduct collaborative self-study using co/autoethnography, they mirror the kinds of relational processes that are necessary in classrooms to facilitate the learning of their students. Their construction of relationships and community among themselves as teachers ideally resembles those created with students. In this paper we describe the co/autoethnographic method, how we use it for ourselves and with our students, and the impact using this method of self-study research has had on our own thinking and teaching as well as that of our students.

**HOW CO/AUTOETHNOGRAPHY EVOLVED**

We developed this research method organically from a concern with our own practice; one of our students has called this a “community assisted journey” (EG [student initials]). Co/autoethnography as a method emerged from living the position that learning is a social activity, that social constructivism as commonly understood is the most acceptable way of understanding how humans learn. In our self-study research we started from our basic beliefs about what learning is: that we learn through interaction, discourse, dialogue, and the sharing of points of views and narratives. In short, we construct our own understandings of the world together. We adopt what Bruner (1996) calls “a pedagogy of mutuality” where each learner is encouraged “to express her own views better to achieve some meeting of minds with others who may have other views” (p. 56). We took seriously from the beginning the collaborative nature and implications of a pedagogy informed by social constructivism. We interpret this as being deeply democratic as it rests on the idea that the views of each member of a learning community are valued and respected.

We engage in self-study to examine the ways in which our beliefs are actualized with students and thereby to improve our practice. We also embrace self-study to strengthen our agency, whether that involves making changes in the classroom, advocating for a student, or making larger institutional changes. Agency cannot occur alone as we know from our own experiences, history, and the stories of our students. Since our goals revolve around developing our practice and action for others, it is essential that our research model be collaborative. Reconciling these frameworks of teaching/learning and research was the motivation underlying the developing method of research we call co/autoethnography.

**TOWARDS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST MODEL OF RESEARCH: MOVING TO CO/AUTOETHNOGRAPHY**

In developing this new method we took seriously the idea
that in a constructivist paradigm of research, as Lincoln & Guba (2000) write, “Truth – and any agreement regarding what is valid knowledge – arises from the relationship between members of some stake-holding community (Lincoln, 1995). Agreements about truth may be the subject of community negotiations regarding what will be accepted as truth” (p. 177). We therefore argue that a constructivist research model should conduct research on self with others rather than simply on participants.

We started our self-study research unselfconsciously working with teachers on our autobiographies. We used traditional ethnographic methods such as the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze our results and discovered that these methods continued to perpetuate the dichotomy between the researcher and the researched and between the knower and the learner. We wondered why outside experts added validity versus the teachers with whom we were in relationship. As we ourselves moved into more focused studies of our own practice using autobiographical narrative methods, we became increasingly frustrated by the available methods of analysis which seemed more and more to miss the point. We did not find our concerns with the relationship between ourselves, our pasts, presents and futures, and our teaching practice addressed. We did not find what we hoped for in terms of understanding the relation between ourselves, and our context. We were able to generate a lot of data according to the protocols, but not a lot of illumination. What we needed was a method that respected rich thick selves informed by their social, cultural, historical, and political context, and which took them seriously as a source of knowledge. Autoethnography seemed to provide this.

As Ellis & Bochner (2000) describe it, “Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth ethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations” (p. 739). As Reed-Danahay (1997) says, autoethnography “foregrounds the multiple nature of selfhood and opens up new ways of writing about social life. A dualistic view of the autoethnographer may be better substituted with one stressing multiple, shifting identities” (p. 3). While this framework proved vital in the position it takes on the importance of our interpretations of our stories and cultural identities as a source of understanding, we soon found that our particular form of autoethnographic research was not adequately captured in these definitions. They lacked recognition of the deeply collaborative nature of our autoethnographies.

Combining the defining features of autobiography with the methods of ethnography while foregrounding collaboration, co/autoethnography is a method whereby we share our stories and the stories of our preservice teachers as a way to understand our practice and discover ways to navigate the crises that we face. Co/autoethnography involves investigating our own selves and engaging in self/other analysis with others because teaching is a profoundly human activity and cannot be accomplished well without self-awareness in a social context. We understand this social context not merely in the sense that each of us enters the teaching world thick with our pasts, or that the teaching world itself is thick with cultural, social, and historical meanings, but that this social context cannot, or should not, be understood in an individualist manner. Although autobiographical methods are used, which may seem to imply a focus on the self in isolation, and autoethnography implies the self in its social context, co/autoethnography insists that the meaning of our teaching practice can only be fully understood if it is constructed in collaboration. As one of our students writes, it is “the process of exposing your formative experiences, through artifacts or narrative, and letting a group help you see those experiences in a new way, ultimately granting you a new perspective on yourself, your place in the world, and your potential as an educator” (MN).

Our specific contribution lies in the interweaving of our stories and those of our preservice teachers: the reliance on the reflection that results from the stories being in dialogue, the role of the other in this dialogue adding validity, but also insight and analysis. We are, in an important sense, writing into each other’s lives (Coia & Taylor, 2001). The process is about heightening awareness: becoming more knowledgeable about our identity development as teachers/agents of change/teacher educators, something we argue can only be done in collaboration (Taylor & Coia, in press). Our analysis is derived from the theoretical, practical, and personal knowledge we bring to conversation, trying to make explicit our experiences and the theories that inform and are informed by them, trying, in effect, to reveal the process of coming to know where this does not privilege either the subjective or the objective.

The purpose of co/autoethnography is to strengthen our identities as teachers, to improve our practice, to become meta-aware of our students, their learning experiences, to reflect on our teaching, to understand what we bring to the table for our students, and to practice a pedagogy of mutuality. As we encourage our students to use co/autoethnography as a way of understanding their practice, we hope to help them think about who they are becoming as teachers, what their beliefs are about teaching and learning, where these beliefs may have come from and how they will put these beliefs into practice. Equally important we are, by the very act of having them write co/autoethnographies, fostering their sense of agency and demonstrating that teaching involves being a member of community of learning.

We believe our model of educational research, co/autoethnography, does what so much of qualitative research says it will do: it values the voice of the researched and gives them ownership of the analysis and
CONDUCTING A CO/AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

We have many different starting places for our co/autoethnographies. In common with other ethnographies, they do not necessarily start with a research question; the question or issue often emerges from our experiences within a context, and can change. As with other learning experiences, it is often through being exposed to someone else’s concerns that the other is stimulated to further consider the issue although in co/autoethnography this involves a deeper personal exploration and interweaving of stories than would traditionally be the case.

The method calls on the autobiographical, situating the question/issue within the stories we tell to each other. We tell each other complementary and opposing stories that may or may not directly impact the question. But it is more than autobiographical in that we give prominence to the socio-political context and the dissonance between sense of self, which is recognized as being socially constructed and alternate socially constructed versions of the self. In our work this centrally involves the social construction of teaching and learning. We use our personal voices to bring this out. The whole process is collaborative from beginning to end. It is set up collaboratively and the process only works because we are more than one, yet close enough to use autobiography. As we work through the process of writing, reflecting and revisiting, our stories get closer but do not collapse. In the process of, as our students say, “digging deeper,” we attempt to further our understandings of our practices.

Co/autoethnography looks slightly different when we invite our students to use it. We invite students to begin to think about their past experiences as learners and as teachers, both inside and outside schools, as a lens for the ways in which they think about who they are becoming as teachers. We attempt to replicate the co/autoethnographic process we use ourselves. We encourage students to form small groups in which they work for the entire semester. We format the process in a deliberately open-ended way, inviting students to write, share, ask questions about, reflect on, and re-write narratives throughout the course of the semester. We do not require their narratives to focus on topics or themes that we deem important; rather we hope that through the interweaving of their stories themes emerge. We ask that at the end of the semester they put together a final co/autoethnographic reflection that includes what they have learned about their beliefs about teaching and learning through the co/autoethnographic process.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR THINKING AND PRACTICE

Because co/autoethnography as a method has its genesis in our theories of learning, our teaching, and our ethical commitments, we continue to find ways to adapt it. The phase we are currently in, using co/autoethnography with our preservice teachers and with ourselves, has been underway in a focused fashion for the past two years. As a result, the implications for self-study research can only be considered preliminary. In this final section we share some of these findings.

The students’ co/autoethnographic experiences help them to realize the value of belonging to a community as they develop their understandings of what being a teacher means. Although somewhat skeptical at first, many students recognize the power of working on the self collaboratively with others. As one student writes, “I’ve learned the benefits of sharing experiences with colleagues; how it can broaden my understanding of myself. The social community enhanced the process and validated my own feelings while adding new perspectives” (DS). For several students, the importance of trust for a functioning community has emerged: “I’ve learned that community builds trust, and when you feel safe in a group, you’re able to share more. When you are able to share openly, you learn more about yourself, and others are able to give a non-biased analysis of who you are” (MN).

The notion of community has become valuable for the students both in their present exploration as well as in the ways that they envision their futures as teachers. Students describe their newfound awareness of the usefulness of other people as resources of professional development. One student reflects, “This experience has taught me to think outside the box and not be shy to get outside help. This help can come from many sources like fellow teachers, parents, friends, family, or students themselves” (CM). Another student connects reflection with community, writing that “this experience has made real the importance and value of reflection in community” (DS).

Besides learning to appreciate the worth of the social community, students discuss their coming to terms with the ambiguous nature of the co/autoethnography. Although the ambiguity causes stress for the students throughout the semester, they have very different responses after their co/autoethnography experiences. One student reflects, “I think the fact that the project was unclear at times was integral to the process. We are so used to cut and dry requirements, but this project opened our minds to other possibilities. The ambiguity of this project was just as integral as the project itself” (NM). Another student expresses her initial frustration and then appreciation for the ambiguity:

At first I thought this process would be pointless and not very successful … I didn’t know where to start or where I was supposed to be when I finished. I feel that the freedom that we were given was actually conducive to creating a final product that was helpful to us as teachers. I believe that all of our individual methods to solving the problem were important and effective in completing the assignment. (TF)

For many, exploring their past, present, and future identities as teachers necessitates space and room to
explore. “With something this personal, I think it would have negatively affected the final project if the directions were any more specific than they were,” (AB) writes a student. We believe that the co/autoethnography invites students to think about learning from a very different paradigm than what many of them know. This experience has encouraged some to begin to expand their definitions of learning to include ambiguity.

Using co/autoethnography has influence our teaching and our understanding of what teaching is. Using co/autoethnography has given us a more profound and hopefully not idiosyncratic understanding of social constructivism. The deeper appreciation we have gained of what the personal collaborative process can yield has naturally led us to consider the conditions necessary for this form of thinking and learning. As one student writes, “I feel like the co/auto process is not done for me, and maybe never will be” (JG).

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Joseph Schwab, Self-Study Educator: A Personal Perspective

UNCOVERING MY PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE
Recently, I, along with Vicki Ross, authored the teacher development chapter in the Handbook of Curriculum (in press) where we built on Clandinin and Connelly’s (1992) work in the previous handbook. In our work, we reasoned that, if teachers are curriculum makers as Clandinin and Connelly argued, then teacher development implies developing teachers as curriculum makers. To make our case, we drew heavily on Schwab’s work, setting parameters extracted from his scholarship to warrant inclusion in our literature review (Craig & Ross, in press). With these criteria in place, self-study quickly surfaced as a leading approach to teacher development. What was enormously intriguing, however, was that, in contrast to other approaches, the connection between Schwab and self-study was not strong.

While Ross and I worked our way through the literature, a manuscript, Self Study: The Fifth Commonplace, was published. In it, Clarke and Erickson (2004) claimed that the self-study field is suffering from “collective amnesia…with respect to the intellectual heritage underlying self-study as a way of understanding teaching practice” (Clarke & Erickson, 2004, p. 199). To them, “Schwab’s…seminal papers on ‘The practical’ left an indelible mark on the profession…” (pp. 208-209). In order to remedy this deficiency (as Schwab would term it), they speculated that Schwab’s theorizing, particularly his belief that any situation could be understood in terms of four commonplaces, implied the existence of a fifth commonplace, self-study.

Meanwhile, Ross and I began to experiment with one of Michael Connelly’s narrative practices (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002). We adapted Connelly’s notion of “walking around the curriculum tree” as a way to re-situate Schwab’s curriculum commonplaces. For Connelly, “walking around the curriculum tree” broadens educators’ perspectives. In supervising Ross (2003), he urged her not to approach her dissertation research from a single perspective but to consider Schwab’s four commonplaces (teacher, learner, subject matter, milieu) as perspectives from which a metaphorical curriculum tree could be viewed. This narrative practice subsequently awakened Ross—as it does readers—to a more expansive view of curriculum as “a multistoried process” (Olson, 2000).

As foreshadowed, Ross and I then readjusted Schwab’s commonplaces on Connelly’s curriculum tree. Because our focus was on teacher development, we placed those who work with teachers in the teacher position and shifted teachers to the learner position on the tree. Meanwhile, subject matter was stretched to include the content and processes of teacher education and milieu to include local, state, and national policies. In the original commonplace configuration, Schwab maintained that no account would be “adequate” without the inclusion of the teacher perspective. In our reconfiguration, no account would be complete without the teacher educator perspective.

Thus, while Clarke and Erickson concentrated on a fifth commonplace, Ross and I underscored the fact that Schwab’s scholarship had much to say about teacher development and curriculum studies. Further to that, Clarke and Erickson linked Schwab’s practical as a significant source of self-study’s intellectual roots and Ross and I identified self-study as a stellar teacher development practice Schwab would staunchly approve. However, deeply embedded in my readings of Schwab’s writings, in my discussions with his former students, and in my conversations with Ross, I discovered something else at work: Schwab appeared to personally engage in the self-study of his teaching and teacher education practices alone and in the company of his colleagues and graduate students. Put differently, Schwab was “a student of teaching” (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001) prior to self-study emerging as a field of inquiry. Before I continue this line of thinking, I define self-study and introduce my research method.

SELF-STUDY
Self-study involves “the study of one’s self, one’s actions, one’s ideas, as well as the ‘not self’” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 236). It includes “the autobiographical, historical, cultural, and political and [takes] a thoughtful look at texts read, experiences had, people
known, and ideas considered” (p. 236) and their connections to teaching and teacher education practices. In addition to improving teaching, those who engage in self-study seek to assert or refute understandings, to acquire additional viewpoints, and to deliberate, test, and judge educational practice with the intent of building and sustaining a teaching and teacher education community (LaBoskey, 2004). This, in turn, contributes to the knowledge base of teaching, although the substance and purpose of such a knowledge base is highly debatable. To date, self-study has been approached empirically, philosophically, and methodologically. Primarily qualitative, self-study research includes reflective practice, action research, practitioner research, and narrative inquiry.

NARRATIVE INQUIRY
Developed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry is best understood as a human experience method where story serves as both method and form (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Drawing on a long intellectual history that cuts across multiple disciplines, the research approach involves me thinking about, viewing, narratively representing, and contextualizing my knowing of Schwab as a self-study pioneer. Most specifically, I pull on the corpus of Schwab’s scholarship and mingle it with my personal interpretations, which then form my perspective.

INTRODUCING JOSEPH SCHWAB
Joseph Schwab was a well-known scientist who became a leading curriculum theorist of the 20th century. Holding baccalaureate degrees in physics and English literature and a doctorate in genetics, Schwab uniquely understood the existence of both scientific and poetic forms of truth. He adamantly rejected “rhetoric of conclusions” (1956/1978, p. 134)—the certainty of education understood as a scientific endeavor—that he believed was falsely projected in textbooks and teacher education manuals. What is less known about Schwab was his deep commitment to his personal pedagogy and his unwavering support of “teachers … looking at their own practices and the consequences of them…” (Schwab, 1959/1978, p. 168). In all cases, from matters of curriculum to testing to educational policy, Schwab left discretionary powers with teachers because he understood that no deliberation could be complete without their active involvement. For Schwab, this was the only road to sustained improvement because “only as the teacher uses the classroom as the occasion and the means to reflect upon education as a whole (ends as well as means), as the laboratory in which to translate reflections into actions and thus to test reflections, actions, and outcomes, against many criteria is he [sic] a good … teacher” (pp. 182-183). Awarded the University of Chicago teaching excellence award on three occasions, Schwab aimed for students not only to be involved in the construction of meaning but also to participate in generative inquiries (Schwab, 1958/1978, p. 163). He was known to reflect on his teaching practice as an individual, with his students (Shulman, Eisner, Connelly, Fox, and others) and with his colleagues (McKeon, Kuhn, and others). Schwab also was among the first professors in a university to introduce discussion methods in undergraduate teaching. He, as I continue to argue, was also among the first to break ground by making his personal teaching practice “a proper object of study” (Shulman in Brandt, 1992).

MY JOURNEY OF COMING TO KNOW SCHWAB AS A SELF-STUDY PIONEER
When I was prepared as a teacher in the 1970s, my introductory teaching courses focused on Dewey’s Experience and Education. Given that Schwab was a neo-Deweyan, my introduction to Dewey created a foundation on which to rest my knowing of Schwab, although I did not know it at the time. Then, in my master’s degree work, I was formally introduced to Schwab’s practical papers, which I ironically came to know in a theoretical manner (Craig, in press). Later, when I pursued my doctoral program with Jean Clandinin as my advisor and my post-doctoral program supervised by both Jean and Michael Connelly, I was invited to make personal connections between the literature and my growing understanding of teaching and teacher education. Such narrative practices as “walking around the curriculum tree” helped bridge the theory-practice divide about which Schwab eloquently wrote. During this time, the human side of Schwab became known to me because he had been Connelly’s advisor and he had offered Michael and Jean feedback on their teachers’ personal practical knowledge conceptualization and on their preliminary work on narrative inquiry as a research method. Also, during this era, Schwab published his Practical 4 paper, which was responded to by some of Schwab’s former students, Eisner, Shulman, and Fox in particular.

I then began my higher education career in the teaching and teacher education area, carrying with me narrative practices I learned from Jean and Michael. During my tenure and promotion reviews but also at conferences, I began to have stories given back to me that spurred me to want to know more about the curriculum and teaching fields. For example, a discussant of an early AERA paper called me as an “academic blue-blood.” On another occasion, I was labeled a “neo-Schwabian.” Such phrases—along with the text of my tenure and promotion review letters—caused me to want to probe deeper, to know more.

When I was asked to write the handbook chapter, the dabbling in which I had engaged turned into a full-blown project. During 2005, I read every published article Schwab authored. I also listened intently to the Michigan State University audiotapes of his teaching (1975) and the recently discovered 1962 deliberations at the Ramah Center, which I had transcribed. I also began to ask probing questions of Connelly, Westbury, Reid (i.e., 1999), and Eisner. I furthermore became acquainted with Tom Roby, Schwab’s last doctoral student who, in turn, introduced me to other University of Chicago alumni—Peter Pereira (i.e., 2005) and Bill Knitter, for example, who
provided additional insights and pointed me in other worthwhile directions. I additionally was granted interviews with Bob Floden, who was at Michigan State during Schwab’s audiotaped session there and with Lee Shulman, whom Schwab taught as an undergraduate and with whom he maintained a lifelong friendship. Around this time, I also read Block’s (2004) book, which connected Schwab’s theorizing on the practical to his Jewish heritage, an interpretation that Roby (personal communication) somewhat refutes. Furthermore I read Hiebowitsh’s (2005) generational ideas paper, with which Westbury (2005) took serious issue. In both instances, I learned the underside of interpretation. While such interpretive endeavors may narratively resonate with, and be highly useful to, particular authors, they may not be historically true (Spence, 1982) for those who lived on the scene.

Despite the possible dangers, I persisted. I began not only to read the lines in Schwab’s papers but increasingly between them. My questioning of Ian Westbury led to the Schwab/Kuhn connection. My questioning of Elliot Eisner led to his assertion that “Schwab changed the field forever” (Eisner, personal communication). And my queries of Michael Connelly caused him to wonder why I was asking questions that he had never posed.

While I imagined my Schwab inquiry would end with the chapter writing, it did not. In fact, it forced me to think about narrative inquiry and self-study in new ways. I had come to known that the research and teaching of Schwab served as a precursor not only to Shulman’s notion of pedagogical content knowledge and use of case study methods, Eisner’s commitment to arts-based research and educational connoisseurship, and Connelly and Clandinin’s conceptualization of personal practical knowledge and development of narrative inquiry as a research methodology, but also pushed the boundaries and laid important groundwork for the self-study of teaching and teacher education practices. Thus far, I have laid an evidence trail to this effect. Now, I move on to the most compelling evidence concerning Schwab’s teaching and research practices as his teacher self appeared to understand them.

PRELIMINARY INSIGHTS INTO SCHWAB’S SELF-STUDY OF HIS TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRACTICE

In Schwab’s early writing, he outlined the distinctive properties of human beings. The “human person,” he wrote, was a “self-moving living thing” that is able to “produce itself,” to “develop itself,” and to create a “personal history” that is non-replicable (Schwab, 1964, p. 8). This description, to me, resonates extraordinarily well with self-study. Also, when Ross and I co-authored our chapter, we played with metaphors of teacher learning through exploring the differences Schwab painted between stable and fluid inquiries. While appearing to favor education as growth, Schwab boldly declared that persons are not only products of their education, but products of the choices their selves make (Schwab, 1960/1978, p. 218). Furthermore, in the end result, teachers teach their “best-loved self” (Schwab, 1954/1978, pp. 124-125). In his later work, he went on to add that flexible inquirers—those able to adapt to complex milieus—are the result of “intelligent rebellion and self-education after [they] are trained…” (Schwab, 1971, p. 23). These statements, which seem to be informed by Schwab’s teaching experiences, help explain the internal consistency between what he had to say about curriculum deliberation in his research papers and how his classroom discussions unfolded at the Ramah Center and at Michigan State University.

Also at the height of “the structure of the disciplines” movement, Schwab made a stunning comment about teacher educators. Rather than seeking shelter behind the disciplinary boundaries comfortably afforded him, Schwab insisted that “the faculty member is a possessor and imparter of disciplines in quite another sense: mentor, guide, and model; ally of the student against ignorance, participant with the student in high adventures into the worlds of intellect and sensibility” (Schwab, 1969, p. 20). Once again, the real-world conversations to which I listened confirmed this facet of Schwab’s teaching self.

Hence, it is little wonder that Schwab’s students attest to the intellectual rigor they experienced as they actively engaged in inquiries with him. There is also little doubt why they speak of having had “clammy hands, damp foreheads, and ever-attentive demeanors” (Shulman, 2004, p. 240). While Schwab was keenly supportive of personal meaning making, he also was not one to “suffer fools lightly” (Roby, personal communication).

MOVING FORWARD

Here, I have grazed the surface of a multifaceted topic. While there is a great deal more that I and others can, and will, write about Schwab and the emergence of self-study, it certainly appears that “the new scholarship of teaching” (Zeichner, 1999) is not as new as our generation thinks. On the other hand, what others have termed collective amnesia may only be indicative of how slow “the slow revolution” (Grant & Murray, 1999) in teaching and teacher education really is.

REFERENCES


I am an educator who teaches development to preservice teachers at a Midwestern USA university where teacher education is still a good part of the mission. It is clear to me that in order to have any impact on student thinking, my courses must engage students (Doyle, 1983; Weimer, 2002; Wiggins, 1989). Indeed, I have found some ways to do that, but not as consistently as I, and students, might hope! Inducting preservice students into the discourse community of child development is central to my teaching. I am not educating developmental psychologists, I am educating future teachers and I want to do it in a way that is useful and intellectually engaging for them and for me. The concept of boundary objects helped me see assignments as acts of engagement rather than acts of transmission.

One of the paths I have followed in trying to understand student engagement is that of discourse communities (Bruffee, 1983) and in that inquiry I encountered the term boundary object (Wilson, 2003) coined by Star (1989) and used by Star and Griesemer (1989) in their study of the ecology of a natural history museum. They defined boundary objects as objects that “inhabit several intersecting social worlds and satisfy the information requirements of each of them” (p. 393). The object can be an actual thing. For example in their original article about institutional ecology surrounding the formation of a museum of vertebrate zoology, maps of the environment from which specimens were gathered were identified as boundary objects because they were used in various social worlds such as that of scientists, amateur naturalists, and environmentalists, albeit differently. A boundary object can also be a process or idea. Star and Griesemer identify the museum’s managerial system as such. That system crossed the worlds of the university administration, research scientists, amateur collectors, and patrons. The managerial system had different meanings for each world of people, but it retained its identity as the museum’s managerial system thereby meeting the definition of boundary object.

Boundary objects have varied meanings across the intersecting worlds but are “common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable as a means of translation” (Star & Griesemer, 1989, p. 393). Boundary objects are plastic in that they can “adapt to local worlds” (p. 393) and robust in that they retain their identity across worlds. So, despite the fact that their meanings vary, boundary objects also make sense of some sort in all of the involved worlds. The differences in each world’s perspective of the boundary object and the on-going negotiations that those differences call forth become sources for rich interaction and exchange between the worlds while allowing worlds to maintain their structure and identity. Boundary objects are not about consensus (Star & Griesemer, 1989) so do not require groups to sacrifice their identities. In Wilson’s (2003) discussion of boundary object, he emphasized that the meaning of a boundary object is not set by one group for another as boundary objects have multiple open access points not regulated by any single group.

Since coined, the term boundary object has been used for research in the fields of computer science, organizational theory, and design (for examples, see Christiansen, 2005; Gal, Yoo & Boland, 2004; Jennings, 2005; Lutters & Ackerman, 2002; Pawlowski, Robey & Raven, 2000). The term has not, however, been used in education. Because the classroom is the intersection of the social worlds of teachers and students, the boundary object concept has a potentially useful role to play in the study of the classroom.

While teaching is largely comprised of designing academic work for students (Doyle, 1983; Holt-Reynolds & Johnson, 2002), students and teachers often have relatively few rich (as in connected to content) interactions around assignments because assignments are treated as acts of transmission. The assignment is handed out, students do it, return their product to the instructor, and receive it back graded. Even in this limited process, assignments have the characteristics that make them, by definition, boundary objects between student and teacher worlds. They cross the social worlds—both students and teachers have an understanding of what an assignment is and what they do with it though the meaning is different in the student world and the teacher world. Assignments have multiple access points as seen in the different
interpretations of a particular assignment by students in the same class. Finally, though teachers design the assignment and seem to have the control, assignments are not fully controlled by either world. This is seen when assignments draw from students either significantly better or poorer products than a teacher imagined when creating the assignment. (For instance, see Holt-Reynolds & Johnson, 2002.)

Assignments are often used to simply pass information from one world to the other, and are not used as boundary objects. As a transmission process, assignments lack the richness and negotiation that can be created around boundary objects. When we make this limited use of assignments, we miss enlivening the interactions between the student and teacher worlds. This leads to less learning for student and teacher.

With one sample assignment and the interactions it provoked between students and me, I will consider how interaction around an assignment used as a boundary object engaged both students and me in new thinking about course content. While I start the consideration with the assumption that the assignment is the boundary object of interest, I am led to a different and more interesting conclusion.

THE ASSIGNMENT
In my development class, a poster is part of the culminating assignment for every unit as well as part of the final. Student groups are assigned to create a poster that represents the big ideas of the unit and the relationships among them. Before beginning the poster, students complete an individual paper in which they identify and discuss the big ideas from that particular unit. The day the papers are turned in, students work together in small groups during class to create a group poster. The poster is to convey the majority of its information in graphic or metaphoric representation rather than through words, though labeling or keys are allowed.

Considering assignments as the boundary object around which classroom interactions occurred prompted me to video tape a class poster session during a semester final. My plan was to use the data from the tape to solidify my thinking about how assignments function as boundary objects in the classroom.

EXAMPLES
These examples are drawn from the transcriptions of a two-hour tape of the final exam session. The video camera was set in the corner of the room and left running. Unfortunately, this means that the level of activity at times prevented verbatim transcription. The process for the unit posters described above was used for the final poster but addressed the semester’s content rather than a single unit. These particular groups had typically been working together for the last half of the semester. The group used for this example was selected based on camera angle and interactions.

In the beginning of the tape I am doing typical classroom housekeeping activities as well as circulating around the room responding to questions. During that time I have passed the group of interest six times, sometimes looking at their work, speaking briefly to them, but never stopping for discussion. They also have not asked for my assistance, though many other groups have.

Fifteen minutes into the session, I stop at this table and watch the group’s work because I become interested in the response they are making to the assignment. It now becomes a boundary object crossing our two worlds. Student 1 stops and looks up at me and says, Do you want to know our metaphor? Student 2 says, Well what are we thinking about? I say, Yes. Student 1 responds to Student 2’s comment and then goes on to respond to me, Oh, right - we have two. One is like actually a car. Like there’s different things on different cars and there’s certain things that are the same on the inside and outside of all cars. The other one was… Appearing to not remember what the other idea was prompts me to think that the ideas are possibly boundary objects between student worlds. She turns to Student 2 who says, Zoo. I briefly discuss with them the possibilities present in each idea.

In response to this exchange, Student 1 says to the group, I didn’t think it was going to work and they all laugh.

Even though they had another idea, it appears that they had already selected the car as the way to present their ideas because they had drawn three vehicles—a sedan, a truck, and a van—on their poster. As I walk away, Student 1 turns to her group and says Car? She was apparently seeking, based on our exchange, the group’s agreement that they would use the car idea for the poster.

In viewing this sequence with Student 1 the semester following the final, she told me that though they had settled on the car idea, when I approached the table they wanted to run both ideas by me to determine which would be best for them to use. They put forward each idea and based their poster content on my reaction. Our exchange placed their ideas, rather than the assignment, in the role of boundary object. In these exchanges students and I negotiated meaning around their product instead of the assignment in an effort to manage the inconsistencies between our different worldviews. It was only after viewing the tape and visiting with the student that it occurs to me that their product, not around the assignment, was the real boundary object in the exchange.

Ten minutes later I approach the group again. At this point they have changed their poster and have only one car on it. I ask, So, is this about building a car or the car itself? Is the car representing development? Student 1 responds, We are kinda of trying to replicate this, and points to an open book. I did not respond to her reference to the book denying the book position as a boundary object even though texts often play a boundary object role in the classroom. I repeat my question, focusing on their product as the boundary object, Is the car representing development? Student 1 responds to me, I’m not sure, well yeah. She appeared uncertain as to how the interpretation I was making of their product connected to either the product or the content.
Seeing the connection as critical to expanding their understanding I say, Well I don’t know because if the car is representing development, is guided participation (which they had labeled as part of the car) part of it? Or is guided participation part of what produces the car/development? This exchange provided them a perspective from my world that allowed the possibility for reconsideration of how their work (now the boundary object crossing our two worlds) connected with course content. I provided a perspective about what they had drawn. I was not controlling what they drew and they were not controlling what I said about their ideas. This was the on-going negotiation centered on the boundary object that enriched both worlds.

Based on their lack of response I repeat my question, Guided participation...is it part of the car or part of what produces the car? Seeing that my perspective was not translating into their world, I searched for an approach that would cross our worlds more effectively—a connection with more shared meaning. I said, Like the gas. It’s not actually part of the car, but it does make the car go. So you could think of guided participation as part of the car or what powers the car. To use the metaphor effectively you want to make that clear, what input comes from outside of the car. You have lots to work with here, the gas, the battery, the oil, and the steering wheel. You want to use them effectively to show your understanding. They began talking animatedly with each other and I left their table.

**DISCUSSION**

Originally I conceived that the assignment I created was the boundary object in the classroom. I continue to see assignments in that role, but after the work reported here, I am not certain that the assignment is the most critical boundary object in the classroom if the goal is rich interactions and learning.

As the example in this paper clearly shows, the most meaningful interaction occurred around the students’ product. That product is linked to the assignment, but is not controlled by the assignment and originates in the student world. What students create embodies their translation of the assignment and in this case it is translated into content because that is what the assignment required. When I stopped and expressed interest in the product, the student work moved into the role of boundary object. This role was strengthened as we negotiated the meaning of their work and its connection to the course content. It was not a discussion of how their work did or did not meet the assignment, but one about how their product did or did not connect to content. It is these exchanges based in student understanding that potentially lead to deeper learning.

This work makes it clear, however, that assignments are important boundary objects when they are structured to and used to provoke students’ active negotiation of content. Assignments do not fill this role when they act as transmission or when teachers and/or students treat assignments as transmission with only exchanges of just-tell-me-what-I-have-to-do-to-get-the-grade sort. Student products graded and returned operate minimally if at all as boundary objects. Instructor written feedback may slightly increase the possibility of the product serving as a boundary object. Since such comments are a relatively one-way exchange (even though as instructors we often feel good or righteous about the level of feedback we provide to students) I would suggest that the learning from the assignment, for student and teacher, is less than it could be.

The level of exchange in the example is much richer and more engaging to both social worlds than transmission interactions. The example discussion connects deeply to the content, students’ understanding of or misconceptions about the content, and students’ and teachers’ real interest in the content. This is what Palmer (1998) meant when he described “subject centered classrooms” (p. 102). It is discussions of this nature that have the possibility of changing student’s mental models and result in useful learning (Bain, 2004).

This connection leads me to reframe my original perspectives to acknowledge that both assignments and student products can operate as effective boundary objects in the classroom if they lead to focus on content. When that happens, teacher and student negotiations connect directly to their understanding of the content and result in meaningful learning making the classroom vibrant. Without that level of exchange, assignments and student products remain at the level of transmission.

Boundary objects by definition are not based on consensus (Star & Griesmer, 1989). They are ideas around which the involved social worlds continually negotiate as they interact. When assignments, student products, and content are treated as banking transactions (Freire, 1993) there is no opportunity or invitation for negotiated meaning. That means that they cannot serve as boundary objects. This reduces learning and interest for teacher and student. When students and teachers negotiate and construct meaning together, learning and interest increase (Bain, 2004).

The exchange around the student products in the example demonstrates the kind of engagement that can be created when an assignment or student product becomes a boundary object. I was as engaged as the students in the consideration about how the car representing development. The students’ animated discussion suggests that their interest went beyond reproducing my idea and since the degree of student activity is related to their learning (Gardiner, 1998).

A boundary object has to have considerable meaning or robustness (Star & Griesmer, 1989). Without that, the interest for negotiation and renegotiation falters. When assignments and content are transmitted and student products are graded and returned with little or no opportunity for exchange, robustness is limited. Transmission implies that the meaning given by the instructor is the meaning and rewards students who replicate that meaning providing no negotiation around content. Related is the characteristic of the multiple access points of
boundary objects (Wilson, 2003). To have such access points requires assignments with a level of ambiguity. Often teachers and students attempt to reduce ambiguity in the classroom. While ambiguity may be uncomfortable for students (and teachers) it is necessary if we are to construct meaningful interpretations that allow us to alter our mental models of the content.

The assignment in the example has this level of ambiguity. While students find this difficult, especially the first few times they tackle it, their posters are often unique and interesting perspectives on development content that sometimes go well beyond my own. (For another example, see Holt-Reynolds & Johnson, 2002) The student product also has ambiguity as can be seen in our discussion regarding what the car represents. When I interact with students around their product I start where they are, but an eye toward moving us deeper into the content and making sense of the content. As I model my thinking using their interpretation as the boundary object, I induct them into the world of teacher discourse. It is a “reacculturative process that helps students become members of knowledge communities whose common property is different from the common property of the knowledge communities they already belong to” (Bruffee, 1983, p. 3).

For example, when I paused to ask a question and the student replied, We were trying to replicate this, and pointed at the book, I could have engaged in a discussion of replication or of the book content. Instead I refocused on their product to probe more deeply their understanding of the content and how they particularly were choosing to portray it. Each discussion is specific to the group of students and always begins with their product. “It is almost impossible to explain something effectively to a child without using an image that has come from the child” (Paley, 1990, p. 43). While I have ideas that I do want them to leave the course with, I am willing for them to take various paths to get to those ideas.

Considering this assignment through the concept of boundary objects has helped me reframe how I use assignments. Assignments provide the most learning when they invite students to their thinking rather than encouraging them to replicate the thinking of others.

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For over a decade now, a small, but expanding number of faculty at our midwestern US university has engaged in self-study. We experienced our most productive self-study work in groups, as expected from the perspective of collaboration as a fundamental requirement in self-study research (Bodone, Gudjonsdottir, & Dalmau, 2004; Loughran & Northfield, 1998). Hence, over time we have intently and intentionally built our self-study efforts around collaboration, which has exposed our thinking about our teaching to public scrutiny and critical review. In this way, together, we have reframed and improved our individual classroom practice (LaBoskey, 2001).

Since 1995, more than twenty different faculty members on our campus have participated in at least one of the eight, distinct groups on which we base this report. The large majority of participants were teacher educators from the College of Education; seven were not. Our earlier work identified the non-teacher-educator members as outliers and valued them for bringing alternative perspectives, disrupting our teacher education jargon and pressing us to explain concepts we took for granted (Fitzgerald, East, Heston, & Miller, 2002; Miller, East, Fitzgerald, Heston, & Veenstra, 2002).

Our groups have met for as little as an academic year to as long as three calendar years with some overlap in time and membership. The co-authors have participated in all of the groups. These groups have used a variety of formal and informal activities, including regular small group meetings, spontaneous one-on-one conversations, keeping and sharing personal teaching journals, modified practical argument (Boody, East, Fitzgerald, Heston, & Iverson, 1998; Fenstermacher, 1994), support for individual projects, shared projects (Miller et al., 2002), shared texts (Heston, East, & Farstad, 2000), and sharing of personal writing.

Explaining groups to those who have not experienced them is difficult. Even selecting artifacts, beyond papers presented or published, to share as representative of a group and its work is challenging. We have twelve two-inch binders filled with transcripts of group meetings, materials used for the meetings and personal notes taken during the discussions. For the current work, we sought a method that would allow us to deal with this large quantity of data and still capture the essence of what we have learned from this collaboration.

**METHOD**

In 2005, our amassed data were analyzed for intersections between collaboration and professional intimacy (Fitzgerald, et al., 2002; Miller, et al., 2002). The results were presented at the 2005 American Educational Research Association annual meeting by East. Encouraged by the feedback received from self-study colleagues in that session, we re-engaged with the data to further specify what we have learned from these ten years of collaboration. As we immersed ourselves in the data we were reminded that a wealth of information is contained in the stories a group claims. In fact, stories often explain more about a group than data can (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

To explore how collaboration has worked across the decade of our self-study of teaching practice, we have chosen to tell of one story our group claims—the story of the disembodied brain. We chose this story because it spans all of our groups and has come to represent our experience of moments when we feel productive synergy in a group. As a focal point, this story has helped us further specify the details of what we have learned from our collaboration.

To use the story for analysis, we first identified the conditions that existed in those moments of synergy. Then we tested the conditions: If the conditions were present, did we feel the presence of what we called the disembodied brain? Did an absence of the conditions result in an absence of this experience? We posited that when we could not recognize the presence of the brain, the lack of necessary conditions resulted in barriers that prevented the group-thought that the brain represented. Clear identification of conditions may make it possible to predict when a group is moving toward productive work. If it is possible to create the conditions in a group, we may be able to increase effective collaboration.
THE BRAIN’S FIRST APPEARANCE
It was winter of 1997, and four of us were working together on our first group-written paper (Boody, et al., 1998). The sun had just gone down; the room glowed with light from an incandescent lamp and two computer screens. We had nearly completed our paper and were playing around looking for a metaphor that captured what we had experienced as we wrote together. We considered a soup/cooking metaphor, but reject it because the soup pieces remained too distinct to reflect our sense of becoming one big think. We considered the metaphor of gardening. It had the necessary organicity, but was far too utilitarian to encapsulate the elation we felt as we worked. The work we had done was in our midst, but not within any particular one of us. It was disembodied—that was it. It was a disembodied...brain! Our experience was appropriately symbolized by that vision: a brain that functioned in our midst, but did not belong to any one of us. We have carried this story with us since that evening and have used it to identify experiences of effective collaboration in a variety of settings.

NECESSARY CONDITIONS
Considering this group, we identified the conditions that allowed the brain’s appearance. Those conditions are considered necessary, but none of them seems to be sufficient. Each of those necessary conditions and the barriers that may prevent them are explained below.

Wanderfarthing was a term we invented to describe the loose, non-linear nature of our group work. Although wanderfarthing was coined later (Miller, et al., 2002), the practice was certainly present in the group in which the experience of the disembodied brain first appeared. This can be verified by reading the transcripts of that group’s work. While we were often intensely engaged in grappling with issues of practice we also strayed off topic or wandered off. We were very productive, but ironically not vigilantly task-oriented. We allowed ourselves to enjoy working together rather than being single-mindedly focused on completing a product. We found our digressions to be generative and refreshing. Thus, fluid and playful process is a condition necessary for experiencing the brain.

Barriers to wanderfarthing occur when a group or individual in the group is too task-oriented or if participants get nervous if there is not a direct connection between group activity and an end product that will be valued in the academy. Disallowing wanderfarthing blocks authentic discussion by prescribing what process is acceptable rather than letting the process emerge, thus prohibiting the synergy necessary for the disembodied brain experience.

Hoarding of time or prescribing how time in collaboration must be used is a barrier. An investment of time is imperative if a group is to create the conditions necessary for this kind of collaboration. We have observed that time has to be committed to being there or the group cannot function authentically. Time, however, also has to be treated as a fluid resource rather than one to be guarded. This is necessary to allow for wanderfarthing and the productive process that it supports.

Another necessary condition is vulnerability. Collaborators may have to sacrifice personal time to create group work time. They certainly have to give up self-protective stances and be willing to think of themselves in new ways, some of which may be unpleasant. They have to be willing to have their assumptions about practice questioned and even seriously disrupted as they face things about their practice and selves that they would prefer to ignore. Barriers to vulnerability include fishing for compliments or behaving in ways that encourage people to save or fix you. Approaching the work of examining practice as a mere intellectual exercise disrupts the needed productive engagement.

We have learned that our collaboration functions most effectively when trust is built among the collaborators. Trust is necessary if people are to be willing to expose their practice with all its warts. Academic discourse and professional positioning destroy the possibility of building trust and any chance of group thought. Trust in each other and the process is a necessary condition. Such trust creates the possibility of the authenticity and vulnerability the brain experience requires, and confidence that our collaboration, with the conditions we have identified, will lead to a useful end. This faith in process is related to wanderfarthing. It is faith that if we do our best to create the necessary conditions, good things will happen. Our work will be stimulating and productive and we can expect to have the brain experience.

Openness and respect for ideas is a necessary condition. Even folks who refuse to recognize the possibility of a disembodied brain recognize the need for open sharing. Hear what Colleague 2, who claims to not believe in the disembodied brain, has to say. Despite his disbelief, he uses the story of the disembodied brain, or “mind in the middle” as he calls it, to make his point about the need for openness.

COLLEAGUE 2: But you didn’t behave as if it were.
COLLEAGUE 1: I don’t know if we did or not.
COLLEAGUE 2: You never explicitly relayed it. “In your head” isn’t out there in the middle. This mind in the middle thing—you can’t do that implicitly. What you are saying is “I may well have thought about.” You have to do it explicitly. Your interpretation of what I’m saying is not contributed out there to the mind in the middle until you put it there explicitly. (Transcript, 10/30/98, p. 25)

The experience of thinking with a common brain can happen only when everyone is equally free to contribute, a condition that was violated in the group in which this exchange occurred.

Disrespect, for others or for their ideas, is a barrier that prevents the authentic exchange needed. In our
We have had two groups in which all of the necessary testing the conditions are those that also prevent vulnerability and trust. Personal and professional authenticity are necessary for shutting down of authentic discussion of practice prevents the full sharing needed for collaboration.

As alluded to in several of the previous conditions, personal and professional authenticity are necessary for the kind of collaboration we seek. Barriers to authenticity are those that also prevent vulnerability and trust.

**TESTING THE CONDITIONS**

We have had two groups in which all of the necessary conditions have been present and we claim the brain to have been present. In each of those groups, as members we have experienced the brain. Between the group that first recognized and named the brain and the next emergence of the brain were four years and four other groups. For the next occurrence, in the Metaphor Group (Miller et al., 2002), we do not have transcriptions of meetings, only materials brought to meetings and personal notes. In a review of those notes, naturally less complete than transcribed recordings, there is no specific mention of the disembodied brain. The closest the notes come to capturing the sense of the brain was the day that the phrase “you tell your story for you and we listen to it for us” came to life in that group. The phrase reverberated through the group because it so aptly captured how our group-think worked there.

Of the six other groups under consideration for this paper, the group immediately before the Metaphor Group failed to meet some of these conditions. It certainly did not meet the condition of time, having met for only eight months. This group did not have fluid process and spent lots of time discussing how the group would operate so as to produce a desired outcome. In contrast, the two groups that experienced the brain had fluid process that was lived and trusted rather than repeatedly discussed. Although this group did have members who invested in the group, who attended regularly and struggled to make the group work productive, the contentious discussion of process suggests lack of faith that the work would be productive if it was not clearly defined.

This group also had three new-to-collaborative-self-study members combined with four members from our very first group. In that mixture we discovered that a story, like the disembodied brain, could be divisive even though we told it to bring solidarity. The following exchange demonstrates that:

**WHY WE TELL BRAIN STORIES**

Our stories about the brain experience embody the specifics that we appreciate about our collaborative self-study groups. For us, the story captures what happens when we achieve collaboration that works. Telling the story unites us and reaffirms the importance of our work. Each telling gives us hope for our future work and reminds us of the working conditions we seek to recreate. Telling the story of the brain is intended as an invitation to outsiders. The story exposes the intimate history of the group and potentially motivates trust in the group and its experience. Our hope is that the story may encourage others that they too can have that collaborative experience, but we have discovered that sharing the story can be a barrier itself. When we name the brain, those who do not feel part of the disembodied brain story can be isolated, despite our sincere intention that the story draw them in rather than exclude them. Certainly, we have discovered that stories are double-edged swords and therefore must be used carefully.

**WHAT CHANGES BECAUSE WE COLLABORATE?**

Our collaboration has taught us to trust the authority of our experience. Our necessary conditions align with those identified by other authors, such as the promise in knowledge communities (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996), features associated with true collaboration (Cole & Knowles, 2000), and circumstances in which divergent perspectives can be aired (Bodone et al., 2004). This alignment builds support for the trustworthiness (LaBoskey, 2004) of our findings.

When we tell and retell the brain story, we are affirm each other professionally and personally. The necessary conditions we seek to establish are those that nurture particular dispositions and attitudes within and among collaborators. These dispositions are not usually called forth in the academy and may even be actively discouraged there. Thus, our collaboration provides rare opportunity for a “community in which we each are allowed to be both professional and personal” (Miller et al., 2002, p. 91).

We recognize that stories about our experience may vary and still be true. Data are always wiggly and the most we can do is to tell a story that is sensible and hopeful (Manke & Allender, 2005). Part of the wiggle is in the
fact that those of us who were present at the same event
tell the story in a different way or imbue the story with
different meaning. While every participant knew that we
were taping and transcribing with an intention to use the
data, this is our story of what happened. Each participant
in our groups would tell a somewhat different story and
certainly a story with different emphases. Nevertheless, if
we listen to the stories, they lead each of us into a deeper
understanding of our own teaching practice.

Our practice is different because of our collaboration.
Our classrooms and our students feel the impact of our
self-study when it leads us to closely inspect and reframe
what we believe about teaching. Interview and journal
data provide specific examples of the effect self-study
 collaboration has had on particular group members (East,
2005). Individuals testify to the effect of the collaborative
groups.

The group is helpful because it pushes me through
questions into areas which I might not be able or
inclined to push myself… The biggest outcome is that
it improves my teaching, encourages me to make
change in my teaching. (Personal journal, 11/13/2000)
Students have commented on our practice in unsolicited
e-mails stating that taking class from us was invaluable in
preparing them to be able to teach well.

Our intently and intentionally collaborative self-study
has affected our practice in many ways. Working with
trusted colleagues has expanded our understanding of
practice. We know that creating the identified conditions
does not guarantee an effective collaborative group, but
the conditions allow for the possibility of good work and
may prevent disastrous groups. As we continue mining
our artifacts, we will re-present the story and share our
findings with the larger self-study community.

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A Self-Study of the Intended and Unintended Consequences of an Institutional Accreditation Process

INTRODUCTION
In this paper we chronicle the purposeful and serendipitous paths of the often arduous journey of accreditation. We describe a relationship that evolved and flourished between three teacher educators charged with the responsibility of gathering and displaying artifacts to support the accreditation of five teacher education programs at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT) by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). Our relationship was characterized by genuine collaboration within a community that enabled us to successfully meet the accreditation criteria in a creative and fulfilling way while understanding our own journeys within our professional and personal landscapes.

In keeping with the tenets of self-study, we believe it is through the generation of a structured, reflective narrative that understandings and lessons are drawn. We chose to study our experience in order to reflect on our work and offer support and guidance for others taking a similar journey.

Our original mandate was to organize artifacts to be displayed in an exhibits room. However, a decision was made to develop a “digital exhibit” that became an innovative vehicle to bring data to life. It is here where our story begins and where the framing and re-framing of our experience allowed us to examine the intended and unintended consequences of our collaboration. Initially we would have described our task as purely professional. Simply put, we set out to demonstrate that our institution was meeting the accreditation requirements. However, as the process unfolded, it became increasingly clear to us that we had been brought together for a greater purpose. This unintended consequence lay in the dialectic of professional and personal reflection and growth. Our story explores the ways that synchronicity, flow and creativity enabled us, both personally and professionally, to achieve accreditation and to engage in meaningful dialogue about our journey together.

METHODOLOGY
If self-studies are to have some use for other teacher educators the representations of the researchers have to be substantively trustworthy and more than self-congratulatory insular stories we tell amongst ourselves. We concur with Cochran-Smith (2005) and Feldman (2003) that validity in self-study is enhanced when we are explicit about our research methods. This includes clear descriptions of how we collect the data and what counts as data in our work (Feldman, 2003).

In our case, the bulk of our data for our self-study was collected ex post facto. In fact, as we began the accreditation task we did not anticipate engaging in self-study. However, as we worked together and the project began to evolve we often paused and commented on our growing relationship and the quality of our creation. So, we started to look for ways to reflect upon the process we were experiencing in order to understand and learn from it. We collected data such as agendas, minutes from meetings and e-mail correspondence. Since our project was media intensive, we gathered photographic and video images that added a rich account of unfolding events. The digital exhibit provided vital documentation of the whole process. Additionally, we conducted a focus group to hear the voices of key institutional players and to have a chance to participate in authentic dialogue about our experience, challenges and lessons.

The formal duty for our committee was to submit a report summarizing the process and to make recommendations for future accreditations. This was a logical and practical summary that reflected our challenges and successes in all areas from coordination and planning, to artifact collection, design and production. It was a complete report and yet we realized there was more to share — something found below the surface analysis. We wanted to identify what it was and know if the experience could be replicated. For all of us, there was some inner knowing that we wanted to discover. It was here that we began in earnest to sift through the aforementioned data and to articulate our sense of unintended consequences.

We were nurturing a powerful and engaging relationship that enabled us to find many emergent understandings in our reflections, discussions and in literature.

We wanted to find theoretical sieves to identify and
develop our understanding about these unintended consequences. In important ways, we drew upon the narrative work of Connelly and Clandinin (1988) and Hollingsworth, Dybahl, and Minarik (1993) because it allowed us to get in touch with our “personal, practical knowledge” and to understand ourselves as “relational knowers.” It also allowed us to move beyond the purely professional aspects of our work and look to the personal for clarification about ourselves in relationship with each other and with the larger community with whom we work. Additionally, we found helpful insights in theories of synchronicity, flow and creativity. Ironically we found that much of what we understood to be unintended consequences was actually embedded in this literature. Synchronicity, flow and creativity informed our accreditation experience and enabled us to engage in self-study.

Finally, since we each brought somewhat diverse roles and experiences to our collective experience we began to explore these differences. This exploration was important for our self-study. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) insist that exemplary self-study should search for evidence of tension and disagreement in the collection and representation of data. Feldman (2003) aptly states that, “multiple representations that challenge one another can add to our reasons to believe and trust the self-study” (p. 28). Our focus group provided these congruous and dissonant voices of people in our institution who also played vital roles in the accreditation process.

CONTEXT

Anyone who is familiar with the accreditation process knows that many actors, teams and resources are drawn into the orbit of preparations (Alstete, 2004). Our committee was one of these teams. Our intended consequence of developing a digital exhibit was initially infused with pressure and uncertainty. We had only cursory knowledge of each other’s professional identities and abilities and we had a tight timeline to achieve our objectives. As we began, we were always mindful of time and, ultimately, the institutional prestige that was in large part contingent upon the quality of our execution of the task. This pressure had personal implications. One of us said, I was totally unaware of the monumental task that was ahead of me. I began to feel that I, too, was being accredited (Journal, Feb. 2006).

Remarkably, these feelings of anxiety quickly dissipated as we worked together and the digital exhibit began to take shape. We realized we were creating something innovative that would have value for our institution and others. Together we relished overcoming challenges such as missing video permission forms, last minute technical glitches, and illnesses of key contributors. Often, after long hours of intensive effort we remarked that we clicked. As time passed we also realized that a strong bond and friendship was growing between us. When engaged in reflective conversations about our work we often veered into our personal philosophies of life and the struggle we all had to be who we are. We talked about how our work nourishes us in ways that were not always shared by our respective life partners. We found we could talk about the broader context of our lives through this developing intimacy. Here, in the vortex of an endeavour to complete a project, there grew a climate of trust and caring for each other’s lives and personal circumstances. In turn, this growing relationship had a positive redounding effect on the nature and quality of our work. This dynamic was unforeseen in the beginning so we decided to explore the foundation of our relationship in the context of synchronicity, flow and creativity. Synchronistically, one of our team was simultaneously studying these topics in a course.

Carl Jung defined synchronicity as “meaningful coincidence that cannot be explained by cause and effect” (in Belitz & Lundstrom, 1998, p.281). He describes an “acausal connecting principle between ourselves (our inner world and events) to and from the universe (our outer world and events)” (p. 281). Synchronicity gives us a sense of being part of a greater whole. The three of us knew we were ourselves, a part of each other, a part of the institution and something more.

For us, synchronicity extended well beyond our professional landscapes, crossing into the personal in a very meaningful way. Daily, we shared our professional visions for the project. But this conversation also explored our personal identities. We realized that on some levels, these conversations were, perhaps, the most meaningful we had ever experienced. We came to rely on each other for advice, support and empathy. Our relationship mirrored Gottfried’s (2004) suggestion that relationships fit into three categories: ego-to-ego, soul-to-ego and soul-to-soul. In the first type egos vie for attention and conflict is almost certain. In the second situation one person is ego-centered while the other operates from a soul-base where nurturance and growth are encouraged. However, as this relationship continues the ego finds it difficult to refrain from attention, the soul-based partner becomes frustrated and conflicts arise. Our relationship was clearly the latter – a powerful and lasting soul-to-soul connection. Gottfried describes this connection as a “positive, warm relationship where [people] help and encourage each other…allowing the relationship to grow and develop” (p. 281). Our personal conversations contributed to the flow and synergy that we had in our professional lives. Indeed, our whole experience was a powerful indicator of the intersection of the personal and the professional.

Our synchronicity was so powerful that it led us to initiate this self-study. We had a hunch that we would be in a position to share our unintended consequences. Why do we write about this process? Fundamentally we wanted to understand our relationship and because we believe that our experience can inform complex team and/or community-driven creative endeavours. Belitz and Lundstrom (1998) echo this by uncovering the interconnectivity between synchronicity and Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of flow.

Flow is defined as the “optimal experience, a state of concentration so focused that it amounts to absolute
Csikszentmihalyi uses the term flow as a metaphor to describe an effortless type of action, like when athletes describe “being in the zone.” This does not mean that flow is devoid of challenges. On the contrary, flow seems to be a delicate balance of enough personal skill so that one is fully involved to overcome a challenge that is “just about manageable.” Flow occurs when there is a clear set of goals and “when high challenges are matched with high skills” (p. 30). Deep involvement is the likely outcome. As a team, we had the skills and the accompanying commitment to see the task through. One institutional voice captured this sentiment, commenting that our team was so involved that they actually owned the process – they made it their own (Notes, Feb. 2006).

The parameters of Csikszentmihalyi’s definition of flow were discovered in our working experience. For example, the idea of having enough personal skill was commented on by one administrator when she stated that she was so impressed with the expertise of our staff. She said she always knew it, but was blown out of the water when [I] saw what people were able to do (Notes, Feb. 2006). In addition, the pace of the project always meant that deadlines and completion were always “just about manageable.” Finally, a clear set of goals was developed by all of us through extensive storyboarding that was later orchestrated into a clear vision and plan for all to follow.

Other instances of Csikszentmihalyi’s notion of flow were present in our work. For example, one of us confided, The amount of time was not an issue with me because I was engaged, passionate and I was being nurtured (Journal, Feb. 2006). This statement is a by-product of flow, which is about an ultimate engagement with the present. We all commented on this same passion for the project. As other team members joined the project, they echoed this sentiment. Flow became contagious.

As the project gained momentum, administrators gradually became aware of the project’s intrinsic value. Though they were not directly involved, they became less resistant about requests for financial and personnel resources required to support an expanding project. Following their lead, a key technical staff member commented on how happy he was to rearrange work priorities to limit distraction and become involved to make a difference with his expertise and talents. This highlights a common issue around competing workplace demands. Distractions inhibit flow. Unnecessary distractions breed frustration.

Creative flow also fosters creative working relationships. Because we were so involved in what we were doing, ego was not an issue. Compton (2005) suggests that creativity affords this same characteristic. Creativity is an unconscious process that fosters an “ability to temporarily submerge the rational and control functions of the ego” (p. 145). We see our soul-to-soul connection as being the catalyst that allowed us to maintain flow. The result was that the three of us almost acted as one.

Working environments that encourage exploration and diversity of thinking also foster creativity. Some work spaces foster creativity more than others. We see the creativity generated through the flow experience as a key element that guided the success of this digital exhibit and the entire interconnected process of accreditation and our self-study. We would maintain that this is a key ingredient to consider during the planning of large projects. Can this spirit be replicated? Yes, as Belitz and Lundstrom (1998) insist, flow is attainable. We attained it through our collaboration.

It seems clear to us that our collective efforts and successes were a direct result of our synergy. Compton (2005) claims that, “a unique group of people together can create a special synergy that allows for greater creativity” (p. 147). “Creative activity involves a complex combination of controlled and non-controlled elements, unconscious as well conscious mental processes, non-directed as well as directed thought, intuitive as well as rational calculation” (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999).

When we reflected on our project we felt we could almost pinpoint where each of these elements of creativity appeared throughout our journey. For example, in the beginning we wrestled with controlled elements such as timelines and accreditation criteria. But in moving forward we encountered many non-controlled elements such as uncertainty of budget limits and institutional resistance around resource issues. Conscious mental processes were evident through endless planning notes, flowchart, databases and an array of photos and video footage so that future accreditations might be less laborious. However, our unconscious mental processes were, perhaps, among the most significant. We worked well together and we were able to flow through the stressful weeks of preparation. However, it was not until we reflected on our experiences that we realized the power of what we were experiencing.

In terms of directed and non-directed thought our vision was thoughtful and directed. On the other hand, freedom, creativity and intuition drove our work and were respected by each of us. One technical creator noted that everyone had an opinion, and everyone received others opinions (Notes, Feb. 2006). Throughout there were many intuitive moments where decisions had to be made on the spot and we trusted that each one of us would make the right one. Intuition was especially present in the final digital edits when time was running out and we had to chop hours of footage. We each worked independently to make the cuts. However, the final product looked as if we had been together at each juncture. It was as if we could read each other’s minds. When it came to instances where creative and supportive ideas or decisions had to be made, we trusted the process and each other (Journal, Feb. 2006).

Finally, there were numerous examples of rational calculation involved in the production of our project. One of the more salient examples came in the form of institutional resistance. For example, a program administrator described his role in the process as a wet blanket.
At various stages he expressed concern about the exponential growth in the scope of the project even though there were legitimate reasons behind this growth. Nonetheless, he was genuinely concerned that the scope and the resource demands were out of control. In his view, the digital was going far beyond the intended goal of just satisfying the technical requirements for accreditation (Notes, Feb. 2006). Another administrator disagreed, saying there were always adequate checks and balances to keep the project in perspective (Notes, Feb. 2006). In essence, there were rational calculations in the background as we built our project. Tensions and disagreements, framed in rational discourses, are often a feature of high profile projects in large institutions. Together we worked through these potential impediments to bring the project to a successful conclusion.

CONCLUSION
In the end our institution was accredited without stipulations. The panel was complimentary of the innovation and utility of the digital exhibit. We had achieved the intended consequences. For us, however, the unintended consequences of building a profound friendship and finding a means to explore the depths of understanding that we gained about the process, the collaboration for the project and for our self-study far outweighed the final determination of the OCT. In addition we witnessed how synchronicity, flow and creativity gave us insight into how we navigate our personal and professional knowledge landscapes and how we come to understand what it is that we do. We re-discovered the value of self-study for us and for our institution. Through self-study we realized that this accreditation process was for us – as a team and our larger OISE/UT community. It was not just about the College of Teachers. We learned what it took for us to be successful and what it was that allowed us to learn from our experience. While this particular journey may have come to an end we know we have developed a strong relationship that will carry us through any future projects we choose to undertake.

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CONTEXT
This collaborative self-study took place in two universities in the United States. During the spring semester of 2005, Fecho worked on issues in literacy with middle school preservice teachers at the University of Georgia, a large research university in the Southeast. Lassonde, taught issues in literacy with elementary preservice teachers at SUNY College at Oneonta, a small teaching university in the Northeast. Fecho and Lassonde formed a research collaborative along with graduate students Mallozzi, Mazaros, and McLean. We wanted to explore what happens when teacher educators embrace critical inquiry stances and enact such pedagogy in undergraduate classrooms.

We agreed to document our teaching practices and student responses to those practices. Fecho and McLean co-taught a course about integrating literacy across content areas. Lassonde taught a course that focused on language and emergent literacy development. Both professors sought to teach from and expect students to take a critical inquiry stance as a means for growing professionally and personally.

FOCUSBING THIS SELF-STUDY
This paper presents a range of challenged boundaries that emerged from this research collaborative. Looking at the same data through three perspectives, Lassonde asked how critical inquiry might influence the transformation of a teacher education professor’s philosophy and pedagogy. Fecho and McLean questioned what happens when the teaching stances of preservice teachers are placed into a state of wobble, how these students react, and what this means for teacher educators who teach from critical inquiry stances. Mallozzi and Mazaros inquired into how students negotiate discourses in an inquiry-based teacher education classroom.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES
The idea of taking a critical inquiry stance builds outwardly from the work of Freire (1970) and is made vital by the language theories of Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986). Key to our conception is the Freirian (1970) notion of problem-posing education, a pedagogy through which learners “perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (p. 71, italics in the original).

Dialogue was defined as a process in which understanding is active and filled with expressions, responses, agreements, and disagreements (Bakhtin, 1981). Meaning making involves the transaction of the intentions of the speaker and the listener. Bakhtin (1986) posited that making meaning is a continual process of becoming in the sense that a current response is dependent upon past responses, even as it positions future responses. For Bakhtin, there was no meaning making without response, as the two were irrevocably merged.

Within the dialogic process of meaning making, there are contesting tensions that continually transact with language. Bakhtin (1981) referred to these as heteroglossia. The idea of dialogue in the classroom is built upon the concept of a range of dialogic responses stemming from the engagement of centralizing and diversifying forces as individuals come to meaning. For heteroglossia to exist, there need to be diversifying and unifying forces. Heteroglossia is that “contradiction-ridden, tension-filled space of two embattled tendencies of the life of language” (p. 272).

Furthermore, Bakhtin (1981) saw authoritative discourse as “a prior discourse” with its authority “already fused to it” demanding we “acknowledge it, that we make it our own” and maintain it through “unconditional allegiance” (pp. 342-343). While authoritative discourse is assumed and maintained by various social institutions, an internally persuasive discourse is “backed up by no authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342). Instead, internally persuasive discourse is intensely personal and individual, responding to and dialoguing with authoritative discourse. A person operating according to this discourse may be marginalized. This frequently unacknowledged discourse never disappears but exists in tension with the authoritative discourse.
Significantly, Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) described what they call “identity in practice” (p. 271)—an open-ended, transactional process. Identities form within contexts of positionality within figured worlds, the space of authoring a response to those worlds, and an ability to make or remake those worlds through “serious play” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 272). In effect, learners acknowledge a historical figured world, determine their position, author or improvise a response, and re-conceive that world.

Holland and colleagues (1998) placed much importance on the idea of improvisations because “they tell us where…, how, and with what difficulties…groups are able to redirect themselves” (p. 278). It is through improvisation that humans enact agency. In doing so, one re-orient one’s behavior and helps to refigure a previously figured world. Such a space “remains, more often than not, a contested space, a space of struggle” (p. 282), particularly, we would add, as it applies to teachers.

METHODS
Researchers from both sites collected interviews of undergraduate preservice teacher participants, artifacts from their courses, and field notes. We also contributed weekly to reflective journals about practice that we regularly e-mailed to each other so ongoing analysis could take place. This data set was read several times for narrative themes that were identified and supported by the data. Member checking occurred as researchers reviewed each other’s findings.

REPRESENTING THREE PERSPECTIVES
As we shared our data, we looked at it from several perspectives. As Lassonde looked at it from the position of a novice teacher educator, she proposed that the positions we assume as teachers and learners influence the ease with which we take an inquiry stance. As Fecho and McLean analyzed the data, they concluded that we negotiate degrees of willingness to wobble that provide us with varying levels of comfort. Finally, as Mallozzi and Mazaros looked at the data, they took an etic view of how the authoritative and internally persuasive discourses are linked to the identities we practice. The following sections reflect each of these perspectives.

Teaching from a Critical Inquiry Stance
Several factors facilitated and hindered Lassonde’s ability to make meaning of ways to incorporate and promote critical inquiry in her classroom as she sought to transform by taking a critical look at herself as a learner and practitioner (Freire, 1970). Prominent factors were her constant questioning and re-alignment of perceptions through an information-seeking process, a sharpened recognition of critical inquiry episodes, and persistent tensions that indicated resistance from some students.

First, the information-seeking process took various shapes. After having read texts on inquiry-based instruction (i.e., Berghoff, Egawa, Harste, & Hoonan, 2000; Hill, Stremmel, & Fu, 2005), Lassonde perceived inquiry as an approach to engage and motivate students. She introduced it as a semester project. As she gathered more information through this collaborative study as well as self-study of classroom practices, her understanding of inquiry broadened to reflect a state of mind more than an individual project. By sharing journal entries weekly with Fecho, she became a fly on the wall of his classroom. This gave her opportunities to witness the ways Fecho, who was substantially more experienced at teaching through a critical inquiry stance, described the approaches he was using. This provided opportunities for her to reflect on the ways he contemplated his students’ responses, what was working or not, and why or why not. As a result, she began to experiment with approaches modeled by Fecho. This influenced the type of texts she used, introducing multiple views on issues for students to consider, and the frequency with which she provided opportunities for peers to discuss and voice their opinions on these issues. Part of the tension she expressed was that even though she believed wholeheartedly in the effectiveness of the theory of an inquiry-based classroom, she struggled with making it come alive.

In his e-mail journals, Fecho described how he was taking a critical inquiry stance in his classroom and about his own practice, and how he recognized students in his class were taking this stance. In a memo from Bob on February 10, he wrote,

…to me not having anecdotes is endemic [of] a class not fully engaged in inquiry. When we start getting richer and deeper anecdotes, it’s an indication that [students] are starting to operate from the inquiry framework, if not totally embracing it.

After considering this viewpoint, Lassonde began to listen mindfully to dialogues among the candidates. This led to a sharpened recognition of signs and language use indicating when candidates were exercising critical inquiry. Through Fecho’s descriptions, Lassonde conceptualized the contexts that encouraged and reflected critical inquiry. To add to this understanding, she drew from Lindfors’s (1999) description of what it looks like to take an inquiry stance, which lead to a re-positioning of what it meant to teach through this type of stance. Having an idea of what contexts indicated students were taking a critical inquiry stance helped Lassonde recognize, in her classroom as well as in Fecho’s data, how to shape her pedagogy to encourage these contexts. She recognized several dominant yet less conspicuous indicators of inquiry, such as:

• expressions of confusion, uncertainty, or wondering (I don’t understand why we teach phonics then);
• invitations to encourage someone to join in and help based on one’s perceived expertise or experience (What TV shows do your kids watch?);
• working through an issue through group talk, self-talk, or writing that shows transition in thinking (I used to think that reading was more important than writing, but now I’m not so sure.); and
• expressions of politeness, tentativeness, qualification,
or humor marked by phrases such as maybe, what if, perhaps, I believe, or joking to state one’s perspective (I believe his level of responsiveness is really strengthening as he has more practice.).

Along with her ability to identify when students were seeking information, clarifying and confirming expressions, and offering alternate or conflicting perspectives, recognizing these indicators encouraged her to repeat methods that prompted these expressions. She found that students were more likely to express inquiry when texts presented alternate or multiple perspectives, in small-group discussions, when their thinking was pushed by discussion and guided reflection, when given opportunities to re-discuss or re-write, and when they recognized the answers would not be provided for them but rather they were responsible for generating personal meanings. Applying this new understanding of how to promote critical inquiry through pedagogy created spaces for Lassonde to reshape her positions and re-conceive figured worlds as she transacted with colleagues, students, and self-reflections (Holland et al., 1998).

The third influential factor was the perceived resistance of some students to participate in class discussions and other activities beyond what they thought they needed to do to get the grade they wanted in the course. While some students responded to approaches, such as small-group discussions of articles representing various perspectives, others remained nonparticipatory through their silence as others in the group talked. We interpret this resistant silence as not only confronting the instructor’s attempts to include them and promote learning through the sharing of knowledge and perceptions but also as a resistance to taking an inquiry stance. Interviews indicate these students perceived teaching as instilling knowledge and learning as taking in knowledge. Taking this type of transmissive position, students expected the teacher to give them the knowledge rather than constructing personal understandings and form questions of inquiry to provoke their own thinking. What does this resistance represent?

Preservice Teachers and Critical Inquiry

Critical inquiry classrooms often resemble a row of seesaws all in full use and each independently going up and down. If one were to stand at one end and look down the row, each of these seesaws would appear at various stages of balance, a few of which might be at what some call perfect balance—their weight distributed evenly and the board level across the fulcrum. We think, however, that if you looked closely at those that were balanced, you might see a slight wavering of the board, as a child decided to sway his dangling legs or scrunch a tad forward. This attention to small movement, we argue, is engagement in a state of wobble (Fecho, Graham, & Ross, 2005), a time for paying attention to ourselves, others, and our contexts. We propose this state is important for all educators to realize, understand, and, in fact, seek because it is this critical interrogation of the work of others as well as our own stances that transforms education.

Fecho and McLean focused the course they co-taught on getting content area preservice teachers to imagine ways to use literacy to help students learn subjects such as math, science, and social studies. The instructors’ experience has been such that preservice teachers are somewhat unwilling to bring their stances under consideration for critique, so the instructors attempted to push students to wobble by engaging them in problem-posing activities to help unpack their perspectives on text, reading, and the complications of teaching in content area classes. The preservice teachers represented a range in terms of their willingness to seesaw in a state of wobble. Many students found uncomfortable or even threatening any context that questioned their belief systems and experiences.

Putting this concept into a teaching context, during the fifth of fifteen sessions, an incident occurred that Fecho, in his online journal, characterized this way: If ice were breaking last week, it cracked all the way through this week. Within an activity that had the class using a protocol developed by Katy Wood Ray (1999) that helps students read as writers to better understand genre, Fecho questioned if the preservice teachers would use this activity. After one or two lukewarm responses, Chloe offered that, as a science teacher, she would not use this activity every day in the classroom. Neither Fecho nor McLean had implied using it daily. Chloe eventually said she didn’t see her job as being a reading teacher, she had too many other things to do. Aubrey, another preservice science teacher, added that the science preservice teachers in the class weren’t saying they had more important things to do. It was here that Fecho arched his voice in mock outrage and said, But that’s exactly what you want to say. There was a moment of silence, then suddenly the conversation exploded.

This classroom event depicts a moment of wobble. Chloe and Aubrey had been nudged to consider other possibilities for their classrooms but were holding to previous conceptions of their practice. Wobble is the moment before grander actions occur, particularly actions that would transform the status quo in some large way. If we were to coach this discussion in Bakhtinian (1981) terms, wobble exists within heteroglossia, that intersection between the unifying and ultimately reifying tensions of language and those tensions that are diversifying, but ultimately anarchic. It is a moment for which attention must be paid, for it is a moment that signals change.

In a classroom event that occurred later in the year, Aubrey’s small group, in reporting out from an activity, had indicated, among other things, that teachers should give students choice in their reading and writing subject matter. Their responses were met with little comment or question by the rest of the group. However, when Kaye reported for her group, she suggested that students do best when they read material that matches their reading level and are expected to do developmentally appropriate tasks regarding that reading. After Bob indicated that Kaye’s assertion worked as a general rule of thumb, but
that if a student were properly motivated, she or he might be able to function well in text that was purportedly above her/his reading level, Kaye readily acknowledged the point. In fact, she noted, I was more concerned with student’s reading below their level and not challenging themselves.

It was here that Aubrey animatedly entered the discussion, seemingly defending one of the tenets her group had advocated—the right for students to choose their own education, seemingly defending one of the tenets her group had advocated. Shouldn’t students be able to choose below their abilities? she asked. Don’t we all opt to read things that are mindless at times? Kaye agreed that such might be the case, but that a steady diet of reading that doesn’t challenge the student reader won’t do much to move them forward as readers and Bob concurred that much of what might be done in such situations could depend on the student, the context, and the particulars of that situation. After a moment’s thought, Aubrey first asserted that she wasn’t advocating for student choice in all situations—I’m not saying always—but that such consideration be given at times and should, indeed, be decided on a one-to-one basis.

Meaningful classroom experiences will place students into a state of wobble regardless of whether the teachers and students intentionally seek such a state. Meaning, as Bakhtin (1981) reminds us, is built upon response. Such response requires that all that has come before transacts with all that is to come. The moment we respond, all future response is predicated upon that most recent response. So moving students into a state of wobble will happen. The question remains, however, what will occur if teacher educators purposefully try to move students into that wobble state and urge students to be willing to go there?

From our work, we are further investigating four understandings: (1) some student, like Kaye, are more predisposed to wobble, (2) some, like Aubrey and, to an extent Chloe, are more resistant to wobble but still open to entering that state, (3) some students openly refuse to enter a state of wobble, and (4) students might be better agents at inviting others to wobble than instructors.

Tensions of Authority in Preservice Classrooms

In the context of compulsory school education, the traditional role of the student according to the authoritative discourse is one of compliance. A student is expected to learn from teachers by accumulating knowledge in a traditionally transmission model of schooling. Teachers are the authority figures, and students are expected to follow their lead in thought and in deed. Individual classrooms may not necessarily adhere to this discourse at all times, but the dominant authoritative discourse of schooling is not absent from any classroom. The authoritative discourse exists in tension with the internally persuasive discourse of the classroom.

Because the focus of teacher education is on guiding preservice teachers, who are products of compulsory education themselves, to work in compulsory education, the authoritative discourse of education is always at work. Teacher educators have a level of expertise that preservice teachers do not have. Therefore, the set-up has the capacity for a transmission model. The workings of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses can get quite convoluted if a teacher education classroom does not practice a transmission model of education and calls on those involved to act in non-established ways.

Because inquiry classrooms are not the norm for teacher education classrooms, the preservice teachers in Fecho, McLean, and Lassonde’s classrooms had established contexts potentially in direct conflict to the ones proposed by these instructors. As one student said, …most of us, we’re students, and we do the things that students do and say the things that teachers want to hear…And we, we just do that role because we have for so many years now.

In this student’s view, there is a simultaneous entertaining of the role of the student as sanctioned by the dominant discourse of education as well as a student who may not always appear in an inquiry-based classroom.

Because every person in a teacher education classroom has experienced education, each creates a personal context in the classroom. Following Bakhtin’s (1981) position that different contexts yield variations, there may be differences in what will be termed authoritative or internally persuasive. Considering students are studying to be teachers, complexities arise in the negotiation of discourses as it pertains to the beliefs of the role of a student in an inquiry-based teacher education classroom.

OUR INTENTIONS

As teachers, teetering—or, as our title expresses—teaching on the brink in our shifts of thinking, we work to understand what sense learners make of the conceptual whole we try to create. We seek to provide opportunities to respond to their interests and knowledge by offering engagements with which they will connect. We work to arouse a sense of critical inquiry within preservice teachers so they, in turn, will spark inquiry within their students. By taking an inquiry stance, we develop as learners, reflective professionals, and people who make a difference in our world.

As teacher educators, we intend to move our students and ourselves into a state of wobble. Through self-study, questioning, and dialogue, we want all learners to look closely at their current stances, to call those stances into question, and to seek an informed and complex stance open to further dialogue. Our intent is not to send see-saws crashing to the ground, but neither do we intend that they remain perfectly still. Instead, we want them to enter into a rhythmic and systematic shifting and sifting of ideas, one that causes them to pay more attention to detail, nuance, and complexity. Teacher educators and their students, by assuming a critical inquiry stance, consider more possibilities than they have to date and develop substantive rationales for their beliefs.
REFERENCES


Let me tell you a story. I’d like to invite you to share in some of my experiences as a student and as a teacher, not merely as a personal indulgence, but in the hope that my story will help you to think about your own experiences as students and as teachers. In this study, I explored my own school memories to see if such an exploration would shed any light on the reasons for my consistent interest in the impact of traditional assessment practices in schools. Through systematic sociological introspection, and analysis and reflection on my own experiences, those of a ‘successful student’, I’ve discovered that our standard practices of assigning number and letter grade values to student performance can have a profoundly negative impact on all students.

Ellis and Bochner (2000) ask us to consider how the researcher’s own lives can be made a story worth telling. My aim is not to prompt a single, closed, convergent reading of my story, but to persuade you, the reader, to contribute answers to the dilemmas they pose (Barone, 1995).

HOW DO YOU SPELL APPLE?

When I think back to my elementary school years, there are only a few things I remember - naptime in kindergarten, the day I got to wear my blue velvet dress, a water evaporation experiment, sneaking tastes of dried glue from the LePages paste jar, hot dog days. The memories are pleasant ones. I’m pretty sure I loved elementary school. When I combed my childhood memories for examples of assessment practices I had experienced, I thought of grade two.

I can still remember how much I loved the feel of a new pencil in grade two. The shiny yellow paint of the pencil would glide under my finger, interrupted by the bump bump of the gold lettering and the ridges of brass that held in the fleshy pink eraser. I loved sitting cross-legged on the carpet to listen to stories, thrusting my hand in the air to answer questions, cleaning the dusty chalk board for the teacher after school, weekly spelling tests. In fact, that year I loved everything about school.

When it was time for the spelling test, I would make sure my pencil was good and sharp. The teacher handed out long pieces of foolscap and I would carefully line up the numbers, 1-10, alongside the faint pink line of the margin and print my name in big letters in the top right hand corner. I left lots of room for the big round sticker I’d get when the teacher marked the test.

The tests with red check marks, stickers, 10/10, and Good! written at the top got posted on the Stellar Speller’s bulletin board. Spelling tests were a piece of cake; the teacher called out the words, one at a time, and I knew exactly how to put each one on paper. The words flowed out of my pencil and sat there on the page looking just right. My test made it to the bulletin board every week.

On the day of grade two I remember most clearly, I was sitting at my desk writing the weekly spelling test. The words were flowing out of my pencil as the teacher called them out, “Table. There were flowers on my table this morning. Table” I wrote table on my paper … t-a-b-l-e. She walked back and forth at the front of the class, calling out the words in this familiar pattern; I swung my feet forward and back over the linoleum floor, swish, scuff, swish, scuff, happily writing each word down until she came to the last word. “Apple. An apple a day keeps the doctor away. Apple.”

“Apple.” I repeated the word inside my head. “apple.” It wouldn’t come out of my pencil. My mind went completely blank, as if by magic. I looked for it in there. It was gone, nowhere to be found. I was stunned, frozen, baffled. Where had that word gone? I had no ideas about where to retrieve it, no strategies to try, it had simply disappeared. A flurry of butterflies in my stomach madly beat their wings. A hot flush flooded up into my face. I just sat there, panicking inwardly, my eyes darting about the room. I wondered if I’d throw up all over my desk.

The teacher announced that it was time for gym class. A student came around to collect the spelling papers. I refused to give my paper to her. A small part of my mind was saying, “Just write something. Anything!” Drowning it out was a frantic voice, shrieking, “No! It’ll be wrong!”
"I just need a little more time," I whispered as tears pricked my eyes. She shrugged and moved on, placing the pile of white papers on the teacher’s desk. The class started lining up for gym and I was still rooted to my chair. The line-up went right down my row. Kids were standing next to me, trying to peek at my paper, muttering about wanting to go to gym, and I still wouldn’t relinquish my test. I kept my body hunched over, the long white paper covered up, my face turned away from the others as tears rolled down my cheeks and dripped off my chin. Some of them landed on the spelling test, puckering it up in spots, blurring the words I’d written.

One of my classmates leaned over and whispered in my ear, "a-p-p-l-e." I immediately recognized it as the right spelling of the word, but I was too embarrassed to write it down right away. I sniffled and wiped my face on my sleeve with everyone watching me. I breathed a few deep, catching breaths. Finally, slowly, reluctantly, I wrote out a-p-p-l-e, got up, and shakily placed my paper on the teacher’s desk with the others. Keeping my blotchy face turned away from the class, I shuffled to the end of the line-up.

We went off to gym and I got 10/10 and a sticker on my spelling test…. 

MY BROTHER’S REPORTS
I think I was about nine or ten, in grade three or four. For some reason that I don’t recall, my older brothers brought report cards home one day and I didn’t. Otherwise, after-school time on this day was pretty typical. My mom hustled back and forth between kitchen and dining room, putting the finishing touches on dinner and setting the table while I practiced piano in the living room. The rule was that I had to finish practicing before Dad got home from work so that he wouldn’t be disturbed. After struggling through scales and exercises for a half hour or so, I drifted towards the kitchen to see what was for dinner. As I passed the table, I noticed nothing unusual. The practical white plates sat waiting, flanked by knives and forks, which stood at attention in their appointed places; me and Geoff on one side, and Scott on the other. Mom at one end, Dad at the head of the table. Mom swooped into the dining room and carefully placed the two report cards alongside his fork and piling the chewed corners next to it. The line-up went right down my row. Kids were standing next to me, trying to peek at my paper, muttering about wanting to go to gym, and I still wouldn’t relinquish my test. I kept my body hunched over, the long white paper covered up, my face turned away from the others as tears rolled down my cheeks and dripped off my chin. Some of them landed on the spelling test, puckering it up in spots, blurring the words I’d written.

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I stood looking at the report cards in their places of honour, the table set and waiting for the family to sit down. They were printed on a thick sage-green paper which I noticed was oddly soft to the touch when I picked up the report closest to me – Geoff’s. I glanced around to see if my Mom could see me from the kitchen. She was busy at the stove, her back to me. Hesitatingly at first, then hastily, while my Mom’s back was still turned, I chewed a small piece off one corner of the report card. I can remember the feel of the thick paper, dry under my teeth at first, then slimy and pliable as my saliva soaked into it enough to allow me to twist the paper away from me, leaving a ragged corner clamped between my front teeth. I continued, neatly chewing and tearing a small piece off each corner of the report. I placed it back exact-
The next half hour goes on like this. Names are called; students and parents beam, hugs and handshakes and applause are repeated for every one. By the end, Denise has won 3 scholarships. Sarah and I have spent the whole time whispering and muttering to each other about how embarrassing it would be to be them, how useless it is to put effort into school, how meaningless good marks are, how great the party tonight is going to be.

Although Sarah and I are having a great time, our satirical tongues sharpening increasingly to the task, a disturbing thought has entered my mind. It could have been me up there. As much as I’m laughing at them, I know inside that I’m as capable as they are. There’s my Dad, sitting up on the stage, the Superintendent for God’s sake, and I haven’t done one thing to make him proud.

Wouldn’t it have been nice for him to be able to beam and smile and hug his daughter for winning a scholarship? I can hardly look at him. I turn in my seat to look for my Mom. I give her a little wave and she smiles and nods her head back. Is she thinking the same thing? Is she wondering where she went wrong?

Finally they start calling out the long list of names for the diplomas. We move along our rows, up the stairs, and across the stage, receiving handshakes and diplomas from the assembled dignitaries, one after another. When I get to my Dad, I’m suddenly shaky and tearful. I reach out and hug him, in front of the whole school. He hugs me back, surprised. I disengage and continue across the stage. I fight to suppress the choking feeling my tears bring. By the time I’ve gotten back to my seat, I’ve taken enough deep breaths to bring me back to normal.

As I flop down in the chair next to Sarah again, I loudly whisper, “Talk about boring. Let’s get the hell out of here!”

FIRST REPORTS
My first year of teaching was in a grade 6/7 classroom in Saskatchewan. The experience was transformative to say the least. I graduated with reams of confidence in my abilities and walked into a classroom that taught me how little I knew. The kids at this school scared the hell out of me. I had never realized what a sheltered life I’d led and what a brutal reality life was for so many people right in my community. The children I was teaching had intense emotional needs – many were from dysfunctional families. I had students who were withdrawn, students who were bullies, a student who was suicidal.

Alice stood out right away. It was obvious within the first hour that she was shunned by the other students. She was quiet, mousy and withdrawn. Academically, she was a below average student. I made up my mind very early on in that year to do what I could encourage her, to increase her self esteem, and help her to obtain some status in the classroom.

As I look along the row of marks I have for Alice, I see them neatly laid out, 5/10, 12/20, 4/10, 13/30 and so on. No matter how many times I add and average with my calculator, I end up with the same dismal averages – 52% in Math, 55% in Language Arts, 48% in Social Studies. I have to reassure myself that the numbers in the book don’t lie. If I’ve kept faithful records, and I have, then she’s earned these marks. Even though I’ve spent all term encouraging Alice, showing her the things she is learning to do, I have to enter C-, C-, and D on her report card.

The marks don’t lie. My colleagues would tell me to rely on my judgment. This student is a below average student, that’s all there is to it. I can’t help but feel sick about the whole process, literally. My palms are sweating, my stomach is churning, and I feel hot right up through the roots of my hair.

Reluctantly, I enter the marks and try to write encouraging comments on the back. I can’t get her face out of my mind, the look of disbelief I expect I’ll see when she looks at her marks. Or will it be a look of resignation? I sigh deeply, put her books away, and array everything I can find for the next student around me.

AN INVITATION
The utility of the stories presented here will be measured by the extent to which they allow you, the reader, to enter into my experiences from the perspective of your own life. The next chapter in my life-story-thus-far will include an active sharing of these stories with others in the hopes that our dialogue can lead to change. My hope is that these stories will be, ”used rather than analyzed; told and retold rather than theorized and settled, and offer lessons for further conversations” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.751). Consider this an invitation to join those conversations.

REFERENCES

In recent years, it has been acknowledged throughout the literature of teacher education that many traditional forms of professional development do not work. Transmission models, in which experts bring research findings into schools, tell teachers what to do, then leave, have failed to elicit lasting change. As a result, there has been a call for new models of professional development—models that can be documented as making a difference (Lieberman & Miller, 1991; Rust & Freidus, 2001; Borko, 2004).

This paper is a response to that call. It draws on and extends an earlier study by the Bank Street Reading and Literacy Study Group (Freidus, Baker, Feldman, Sayres, Sgouros & Wiles-Kettenmann, 2004). Documenting monthly meetings held between October 2004 and March 2006, it describes the ways in which a group of nine women have worked individually and collaboratively to extend their own learning and that of their colleagues.

In the following pages, we will share three mini-case studies. Through these, we will endeavor to demonstrate the intersections between the development of the individuals participating in the study group and the development of the group itself. We will explore this development through the lens of what Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) refer to as connected knowing. And, we will show how the process of giving voice over time enables teachers to develop vision by framing and reframing their professional roles in increasingly more complex ways.

METHODOLOGY
This study is longitudinal and qualitative in nature. It provides a set of narrative case studies that are also self-studies. The data is generated from field notes, e-mail correspondence, and reflections written by individual participants, as well as from minutes of meetings in which individuals shared their ongoing work with the study group (2003-2005). The self-studies are framed within the context of the ongoing work of the Bank Street Reading and Literacy Study Group. A cross case analysis, then, highlights commonalities, makes connections to earlier studies of the group (Freidus, et al., 2004; Freidus, Feldman, Sgouros, & Wiles-Kettenmann, 2005), and frames the work within the writings of others in the field of education and related disciplines.

Case Study 1: Charissa
I had finally landed a job in the New York City public school system that would allow me to collaborate with my peers and help affect change across a low-performing city district. However, I quickly came to realize that my perspectives, experience, and questions were not valued in this position. Instead of collaborating with my peers on pedagogy, I was given scripts to follow and told to sell a pre-determined program.

The constant silencing took its toll, and I began to question my knowledge and my ability to collaborate; I became increasingly critical about my own literacy beliefs. The situation was becoming untenable. All of this I poured out to our study group. Their responses were thoughtful, direct, and reflective—perhaps in fighting the dogma, I was being too dogmatic; perhaps I was not just discontent, but in an unsupportive environment; and most importantly, perhaps it was okay to say this was not the job for me, and, that in doing so, it did not denote professional failure.

The decision to leave that job and seek another was a loaded one for me. I was choosing to leave the public system and to re-enter the private one. I felt traitorous and downright guilty. I brought these more personal issues forth in our group, hoping for just an ear to listen to my conflicts. However, what ensued was a series of conversations focused on pedagogy, divergent beliefs, desires for educational improvement, and both global and personal experiences. Through these discussions, my concerns were examined in a broader context. It was in this process I realized that as I had changed, our group had changed—or, more precisely, grown. When our study group began, we were all so new in our respective careers that we supported each other in a more immediately practical way—How do I…? Was I right when…? What do I do for…? The need for support seemed on par with a need to remind ourselves that we were, indeed, professionals. Over time, immediate needs have evolved into long-term visions and we into friends.
In looking back over my difficulties of last year, I realize the group sustained me in an impossible situation. I was able to use the group to filter so much of my angst and confusion. I was encouraged to question my beliefs and practices, to look more globally at education, as well as to validate what I knew and do further research. In the end, instead of submitting to hopelessness and despair, I was able to let go of last year with my integrity, beliefs, and sense of self intact.

I have now begun anew in a fresh environment, one that has its own internal dissonance but with more than just a pretense at change and collaboration. I was hired as a learning specialist to affect change on a smaller level (identify and support specific children's academic difficulties) as well as on a larger level (to coordinate and examine existing curricula throughout the Lower School division).

My new job remains a challenge — happily a stimulating one. Each month I bring new fodder for the group on which to help me chew and reflect. And each month I leave the group refreshed in my knowledge, abilities, and potential direction. I am much more willing (and able) to celebrate small victories and to see what could lie ahead and so plot strategically. The group has given me a calmness, a patience, a shoulder on which to lean, and an earful when needed. Overall, our group has re-grouped and re-thought and re-evaluated what our purpose and goals are, as we all have separately within it. As more confident professionals in our fields, we use the group and each other as collaborative support in order that we may become individually more effective.

Case Study 2: Carole
I have been working as a learning specialist with Tom, a ten-year-old boy who is dealing with many difficult problems. His parents were killed in an airplane crash when he was a toddler; his grandmother, who is in a difficult custody battle with her ex-husband, is bringing him up. Tom is a constant behavior problem in school. He has been suspended once this year and was not allowed to return to school until he began therapy. However, I recently learned, informally from a colleague (and quite inadvertently), that the grandmother had stopped the therapy because the therapist had reported abuse.

With the accidental discovery that crucial information was not being shared with me, I began to feel frustrated. Since the information disclosed to me was confidential, with whom could I discuss it? How was I supposed to support this child in a vacuum? I felt angry, particularly at the institution for not allowing me critical information that was so relevant to my work with Tom. How could I make sure that I received similar information in the future? These were some of the concerns I brought to the Reading and Literacy Study group. Gratifyingly, they validated what I was feeling and gave me immediate advice to help me navigate the institutional barriers. My concerns also led to further discussions about my and our professional roles. Just what are our responsibilities to the child, the family, the institution? Learning of the grandmother’s decision to withdraw Tom from therapy, I wondered aloud to the group whether he was receiving the emotional support that he clearly needed, what the school was going to do about it, and whether I could or should try and pick up the slack. It was through those discussions that the issues of personal boundaries surfaced. How much was too much? What exactly were my responsibilities given my role as a professional? How do I maintain a professional stance when my feelings loom so large?

These questions are still on the table with our group.

We continue to return to them from differing perspectives. I am still working with Tom, but I feel more centered. I am learning how to keep my distance, even though I try to give him more individual attention at every opportunity. If I had not had the group to support me, I might still be weighed down with doubts about my teaching skills, my level of involvement, and my ability to make a difference with this child and the others with whom I work.

Case Study 3: Marilyn
In the spring of 2003, I was asked to begin to work with Imani, a four-year-old girl who was attending a private school in New York City. An engaging and exuberant child, Imani had been a presence in the school since her infancy, as her sisters were both students there. Everyone in the building knew her.

I began working with Imani confident that I could guide her to mastering the basic skills needed for literacy development. However, after several sessions I began to see that, as her teacher had said, Imani could not hold information in her memory from one session to another. I realized that she needed cueing from my nonverbal behavior to trigger her responses to phonemic and language activities.

Imani would not be able to learn as other children do, and I fell into the trap of worrying about her future. I had created a dilemma in my own mind based upon the false assumption that if she could not learn like everyone else then she would not be able to attain her future goals. Until I was able recognize that there are many paths into a bright future, I could not envision a way to help Imani based upon her strengths.

I brought my concerns to the Study Group. The discussion supported my perception that Imani needed more support than she was currently receiving. Susan Feleman offered to work with me to create teaching activities and to share instruction of Imani throughout the summer. We worked collaboratively meeting and sharing the results of our sessions via e-mail. Though Imani made real progress, when compared to children her own age, she still lagged at least a year behind.

It became clear that Imani would be counseled out of her school. I spoke with Imani’s mother on a bi-weekly basis. Together with Helen Friedus, I made visits to schools that described themselves as meeting the needs of children with learning styles like Imani’s. Each month I would bring news to our study group meetings. The
group members provided me with insightful reactions, recommendations, and support. I studied constantly, attempting to deepen my knowledge and understanding. I attended the International Conference on Dyslexia with Carole Baker and explored the spectrum of specialized programs for children with reading difficulties. I began to implement a more systematic approach to reading instruction. The study group was always available to me for clarification of my questions and concerns.

As my understanding of Imani’s needs increased, so did my ability to guide her family in choosing an appropriate school. The Study Group dialogue enabled me to believe that Imani and her family would adjust well to the new school environment and, consequently, support them more effectively.

It was initially very difficult for me to admit my angst to the Study Group, yet by doing so, the group’s analysis and recommendations enabled me to move beyond the limits of my own vision and embrace a new, more positive perspective. By allowing me to examine critically the universe of possibilities associated with my teaching role, the group enabled me to acknowledge my devotion to my student while working to identify objectively the dynamics of her learning.

**ANALYSIS**

In our previous work, we discussed ways in which the process of coming together as a group, sharing stories, and setting an agenda for learning contributed to our ongoing professional growth. We talked about the ways in which trust developed and how this trust and the ensuing feelings of safety promoted a willingness to accept cognitive dissonance. We described how this acceptance enabled participants “to revisit their practice, identify strengths, relinquish familiar practices that are ineffectual, and develop the language and self-confidence needed to enact the authentic standards in which they believe.” (Freidus, et al., 2004, p.120) And, we identified the willingness to generate questions rather than to give answers as an essential factor in this process.

In this set of case studies, we see ongoing development both in the individuals and the group. In 2004, we talked about the group as a forum to confront our own vulnerability. And yet, in retrospect that vulnerability was inevitable. And, if these feelings are not overwhelming and debilitating in and of themselves, a professional culture that is structurally isolating, a scientific research culture that has no place for that which is not measurable, and a popular culture that emphasizes achievement scores as a measure of success make it difficult to explore these thoughts and feelings in systematic, decentered ways.

These two data sets highlight the importance of groups where feelings can be seen not only as a legitimate component of professional development but also as a part of a self-study process that encourages individuals to frame, reframe, and share perspectives on an ongoing basis. There is a power in knowing that there are others like me. In these contexts, a potential discourse of blaming (me, self, other) can be interrupted as individuals work together to identify and develop needed personal and professional skills (Richert, 2002). The data also documents that such groups can become increasingly more effective, but that this process takes time. In professional development as in teaching, there is no quick fix—either cognitively or affectively.

What appears to be most powerful in supporting each member’s ongoing professional development is the changing, more complex nature of the collaboration. The 2006 data set documents how members of the group support and provide resources for each other, both within and beyond the formal context of group meetings. It portrays a culture of growth referred to as evocative of what Belenky et. al. (1986) call connected learning. In the 2004 paper report, members valued questioning as a way of eliciting information and resources for personal and professional growth. The new data set suggests a different kind of dynamic, one in which learning also begins with questioning and dialogue. However, the dialogue now moves beyond exchange of information to consensus in its original meaning, that is, feeling or sensing together (Holland, 1975). This definition of consensus does not necessarily imply agreement “but a crossing of the barrier between ego and ego” (Holland, in Belenky et. al., 1986, p. 223), bridging private and shared experiences. Connected knowing and connected learning are identified by Belenky and her colleagues (1986) as women’s ways of knowing. We cannot confirm nor deny the link to gender; however, the description does help us to understand the process of this group. By extension, it may be useful for identifying pathways for meaningful
professional development for others in a field that is still often referred to as women's work (Apple, 1986).

CODA: HELEN
As a teacher educator, I stand in awe of this process. I watch how the group has taken on a life of its own, how it enriches and nurtures each participant, myself included. I relearn many truisms of the field: trust is an essential component of learning, when content is relevant, learners will engage in powerful ways; change takes time. I have developed a new comfort with self-directed learning. There is ever-so-much more to say, but given the space allotted, let it suffice to report that I have learned that when the teachers build the field, teachers will come.

REFERENCES


INTRODUCTION
The origins of this study go back many years, probably to the beginning of our teaching careers. Unknown to each other, separated by the Pacific Ocean, we came together less than a year ago to discover similar interests, similar passions in teaching and teacher education. While we work in different systems, and under significantly different parameters of teacher preparation, we found more commonalities than differences. At the heart of our commonality was what Sachs (2003) calls “the activist teaching profession.” We saw Sachs’ activism in ourselves, and it was what we wanted to see in the teachers we prepared.

What began as a conversation about our respective institutions, governance, and approaches to teacher education became an ongoing dialogue about deeply held beliefs, philosophies, and how we strive to develop leaders in the field of special education. From these dialogues came three critical questions: 1) Do we model for our students the type of teaching and leadership qualities we want them to aspire to? 2) Given the nature of reform in special education policies and practices, can we prepare teachers to guide reform (as opposed to being guided by reform)? 3) In examining how the systems in our respective countries govern the delivery of services to students with exceptional needs, do our training programs and our own teaching practices promote resolution to the divergence we see between policy and practice?

At the urging of colleagues we decided to answer these questions through self-study. Being behaviorist by training, we both tended to the quantitative side of the spectrum. Self-study was a vaguely familiar term; after all we both used reflection as part of our own teaching, as well as a central feature of our preparation programs. But as we explored the nature of self-study (Dinkelman, 2000; Loughran & Gunstone, 1996; Northfield & Loughran, 1997) and the features of self-study (Lighthall, 2004), we found reflection was not necessarily synonymous with self-study. Indeed, what we understood as self-study in the current study appeared more comparative, and the context was so broad as to be of little contribution to the field. So what began as a journey to the middle earth of special education policies and practices between our respective countries and how we approached teacher education needed what Bailey and Russell called an “in-flight correction” (1998, p. 158).

In reviewing the scope, approaches, and features of self-study from those with much more experience than ourselves, we realized what we had was indeed worthwhile self-study. It simply needed our rethinking as to the nature of self-study research. We were particular struck by Northfield and Loughran’s assertion that “self-study defines the focus of the study not the way the study is carried out” (1997, p. 5). We, as novice self-study researchers, were caught up in the idea of self as being exclusively individually based. We needed to take what we had found through our reflections and discussions with students and each other, and reframe it in a more focused way. We discovered self-study could serve many different purposes; however, those purposes must be framed based on the approaches and features we employed in our study (Lighthall, 2004).

Based on this in-flight correction, our questions became more focused. Rather than addressing broader issues of policies and practices, and comparing delivery of services in our respective countries, we re-examined our data in terms of our first question: Do we model for our students the type of teaching and leadership qualities we want them to aspire to? We also asked: Do we provide the types of experiences, opportunities, and instruction that meet the needs of our students? After all, this is the essence of special education: meeting the needs of the individual.

With this new understanding, we reviewed self-study reports to add perspective. Abernathy and Agey (2002) described a self-study project targeting students’ with learning disabilities understanding of personal learning styles. This fit with our question of modeling for students at both the university and public school level. We read with interest Sandholtz’s account of using self-study to promote skills and knowledge, as well as examining one’s own teaching practices (2005). We also read Cochran-Smith et al.’s account of using self-study to examine the commitment of a teacher preparation
program to social justice issues (1999). We were particularly interested in this area since both programs are grounded in social justice and cultural competency. We also explored issues surrounding inclusion philosophy and practices based on the policies of our respective systems to promote these ideas (Lewis & Norwich, 2005).

Enlightened about how self-study can improve our practices, and consequently our preparation programs, and with a richer understanding thanks to those who have paved the way for us, we re-examined our data and offer these stories.

GAYE’S TRAVELS

As a teacher, my qualifications in special education were obtained after I had been teaching for four years and only then when I realised that I needed extra skills to work with students with special education needs. In 1994, I undertook a one-year specialty special education course (the diploma in the education of students with special teaching needs) on a Ministry of Education scholarship. In 1998, this scholarship was withdrawn. Now in New Zealand, the diploma is offered only in one university and one college as a one-year full-time course or a part-time graduate course taken over six years. Teachers are required to pay for this themselves. It is very rare for schools to pay part or all of the course fees for their teachers.

This has impacted my thinking about teacher education, in particular special education. I now see many teachers, both primary and secondary, who have students with special needs in their classrooms come to college to learn the skills they didn’t learn in their preservice teacher training just so they can work effectively with their students and families/whanau (Maori for family). Self-study has enabled me to understand the importance of my teaching and further understand my students’ needs as they struggle to meet the regulatory requirements of new policies and develop their knowledge and skills within the area of special education. The students are mostly experienced teachers with at least 15-20 years teaching experience, but a small number have just one year teaching experience. The students are typically female and hold the position of the special needs co-coordinator or have students in their class with learning and/or behaviour concerns that they want to have the position of the special needs co-coordinator or have students in their class with learning and/or behaviour concerns that they want to have the skills to address.

I needed to examine what I actually did in the lecture room and I asked myself, “Am I meeting the needs of my students?” I needed to understand myself as a teacher. I needed to examine what I did so that I could relate to the needs of the teachers and also the ongoing needs of the diverse range of students the these teachers served. Were my assessments appropriate to the teachers’ differing contexts? Were they practical so that the teachers could apply the theoretical principles of the course content to the practical nature of the classroom? Being out of the classroom for five years told me that I needed to visit the classroom more regularly to ensure that I understood the changing context of the classroom and, in turn, society. This was relatively easy to achieve as all the students’ assessments are applied in nature and therefore completed mostly in their own classrooms. It was much easier for me to supervise their work in their own settings and thus achieve two goals. Firstly, the students received feedback and guidance immediately on their work, and secondly, I was able to connect to the real environment – observe what teachers do everyday. As a consequence, I was able to relate to the classroom situation again in a meaningful and honest way and thus add credibility to walking the talk and not just talking the talk.

This simple change of action led to some interesting changes during our lectures. For example, discussion occurred in class around meeting the needs of all the students and how to acknowledge each student, particularly when classes had up to 35 students. The teachers acknowledged that getting around all the students was sometimes a problem and maintaining classroom management was also a concern. The assumption that I had was that teachers learned very early in their practice to focus on the positive behaviour of the students and provide positive feedback for appropriate behaviour. However, in our lecture discussions, the teachers informed me that they tended to focus on the students who were misbehaving and they left the good students to get on with what they had to do! As a consequence of these discussions, it was clear that the teachers were providing more negative comments than positive comments to their students. Previous to these discussions, the students had lectures on positive reinforcement - what it is, how to identify potential reinforcing stimuli, how to deliver reinforcement and how to thin reinforcement. Again an assumption I had made was that the students had generalised this new learning and practice to their work environment. Therefore, it was important that I visit the classroom and observe the students working with their students so I became aware of the number of positive versus negative comments they provided to their students. This also challenged some of my assumptions of what made up a positive classroom. From drawing on their classroom examples and my observations, we then took the concept of developing the positive classroom to the next level (and well supported by the research in this area). A task was devised where the students practiced increasing their level of positive comments to the students to a ratio of 5 positive comments given to 1 negative comment.

Having these shared experiences in the classroom led to a community being built within the lecture class where we all openly discussed the challenges and what went well on my visits (Freiberg & Waxman, 1990). Notes in diary form were kept and shared at these discussion times. Like Russell (see Hamilton, Laboskey, Loughran & Russell, 1998), I openly acknowledged and drew on my students’ extensive teaching experiences during these discussions and when I actively taught, I drew on their experiences as examples of good practice (and I observed plenty). These were shared experiences and when teaching new concepts I interwove new learning with well
grounded previous learning from these real classroom experiences – often taken from their diaries. Examples of good practice were discussed and students were encouraged with their own self-directed learning. This meant they read the literature around inclusion and the ecological model and we would then discuss the implications of this for the real classroom. Their critical analysis skills grew exponentially. In New Zealand, we use a Maori term, ako, which means reciprocal teaching where, as in this example, the lecturer learns just as much from her students as they learn from her (Pere, 1995). Through this interactive and reciprocal manner, the students became change agents within their own school context. They began to take professional development times at their schools; I would give them any support they required on special education philosophy, strategies or issues, but they took charge of their own learning and presentations, and therefore the learning of the other teachers in the school. Change was occurring through their membership of the group and it was not seen as coming from the outside (Fullan, 1993).

There were real outcomes for this self-study. The relationships built within this process did not finish at the end of the year when the paper finishes. Relationships continued with either other teachers from the schools enrolling in the papers and/or continuing relationships with the teachers and visits to each other’s schools. This allowed them to keep each other up-to-date on current practice and the literature.

GREGG’S TRAVELS
I coordinate a graduate level, one-year special education teacher training program. This program combines course work and field experiences in special education settings, resulting in an initial teaching license and a masters degree in education. Over the course of the past four years, a colleague and I have made substantial programmatic revisions to reflect new policies and guidelines, as well as professional standards for special educators (Council for Exceptional Children, 2005). Our revisions aligned course content with professional standards, policy guidelines, and practical applications from the field. This effort led me to consider a self-study of what our program had accomplished in terms of developing highly qualified teachers in terms of teaching and leadership. I found Northfield and Loughran’s (1997) notion that self-study should be both formal research and practical inquiry, and that “self-study outcomes demand immediate action” (p. 6), supported my intent to study both program elements and my own teaching practices. It was during my sabbatical to New Zealand that the third element of my study emerged: I found in Gaye a like-minded colleague with whom I could collaborate and share ideas, thoughts, and outcomes. This element was also supported by Northfield and Loughran’s contention that “valuable learning occurs when self-study is a shared task” (1997, p. 5). The extent of my full self-study is more expansive than the current paper allows. So the following is a sampling of my self-study examining the impact of my teaching on preservice teacher performance in field settings and how it has impacted my own teaching practices.

Part of my instructional responsibilities is to teach a course in action research. Students take the action research course at the beginning of their program, prior to entering the public schools because we believe all teaching should be viewed as research. Action research, according to Mills (2003), is any systematic inquiry on how teachers teach and how well students learn. We wanted our students to enter the schools with this mindset. Every instructional decision should be based on data - whatever forms the data may take - and the resulting instruction should be linked to measurable outcomes. Taking from my behaviorist indoctrination, I emphasized single subject studies. I also acknowledged, and increasingly encouraged the use of qualitative measures to gauge student engagement in the instruction. A major activity within the course was addressing the provision of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of using scientifically proven instructional practices. I wanted the students to understand use of such practices was simply good practice. The rub came when trying to determine which practice was scientifically proven. Because the notion of scientifically proven teaching practices was a relatively new concept from a legislative perspective, determining which were proven and how that proof was determined became a focus of our class discussions.

During the summer 2005 offering of action research, I had 19 students working on their initial teaching license enrolled in the four-week course. The course was structured to provide the students with foundation knowledge on the action research process, including a variety of methods for conducting research in the classroom. I emphasized a mixed methods approach in designing and evaluating instruction and learning. I found myself talking about best practices, research-based approaches, inquiry models, and evaluation methods that would result in authentic and reliable information on student learning. I took students through the process of critically reading the research, constructing rubrics to determine the worthiness of what the researchers were claiming, and using my own decisions on instructional approaches as illustration of the process. I was explicit in my modeling, telling students, “Here is what I am doing and why.” Given all of this, I wondered, “I believe I know what this means, but do my students?” I showed exemplars of what I was discussing. For example, I used a jigsaw activity to help students dissect and consume research. I emphasized I elected to use this strategy based on research I had read on the effects of jigsaw and the construction of preservice teacher’s knowledge (Wedman, Kuhlman, & Guenther, 1996).

I was confident in my expectations that students moved from knowledge and comprehension to analysis, synthesis and evaluation of these concepts as evidenced from their written work and presentations in class. The questions I came back to during the course of the year and their work in the field were: Have they built the
To help students understand the dilemma faced in using randomized clinical trials (RCTs) (What Works Clearinghouse, n.d.). This approach to validating practices is rift with pitfalls, especially when dealing with students with exceptional needs. Because my understanding of research and educational program evaluation was fairly extensive, I sought to help my students to understand the concerns with RCTs, and how other forms of validation would be as effective, if not more so. To help students understand the dilemma faced in using RCTs, I had them read an article by Odom et al. (2005) on the use of scientific methods in special education. This was a follow-up article after our course was over; hence we were not able to discuss it other than asynchronously through our Blackboard site. This depth of discussion was compounded by the fact that I was on sabbatical in New Zealand and only intermittently in contact with the students.

A major activity during the program is the construction of work samples that include the assessment of targeted students, production of present level of educational performance statements, and creation of instructional plans to address specific needs. Requirements in the instructional plans are to identify and implement validated practices of instruction and data based methods for evaluating instruction and learning outcomes. This was to be the application of the action research process. I told the students that it wasn’t necessary to follow the NCLB guidelines for the use of RCTs in validating the practices. I encouraged them to consider alternative means of validation. In reviewing the students’ work samples, I found 8 of the 19 designed plans using scientifically proven methods according to the NCLB guidelines; 10 of the 19 created evaluation plans that generated the types of data they could use to make valid and reliable decisions on their instruction and student learning as outlined by Odom et al. (2005), but not to validate practices prior to implementation. To follow up on their written plans, I talked with the students’ field supervisors to determine if the lack of validated practices was simply lack of attention to detail in the work sample. Surprisingly, the field supervisors indicated the majority of students could not articulate if their chosen method was evidence based or provide a rationale for why the particular instructional method was selected. Neither could they detail how they would reliably determine outcomes. Clearly, there was a major disconnect between the students’ acquisition of knowledge and the application to practice. The students who demonstrated the highest level of understanding in our class showed the least connection to practice. This was an unexpected result. Even though students had a resource file from the action research course of over 45 research-based methods in math and reading, they failed to see the link of the course work to the fieldwork.

I then selected a sample of students to interview. I was interested to find out what they took away from the action research course and how it merged with what they were doing in the field. Without pointing the finger at their disconnect in their work samples, I framed my questions in such a way that would generate the type of information that would help me understand why and where the breakdown occurred. Overall, the students retained the knowledge from the action research course. Their feedback indicated common themes of “being overwhelmed,” “not enough time to internalize,” and “not seeing the ‘ideal’ in the real.” This last theme came from my emphasis during the research (and other) courses on having the students understand our desire to strive for best practices, what should be happening, and the frequent dissonance between what we emphasize and what they might see in the field.

Reviewing my journal entries from the action research course and in my follow-up discussions with students, I made the following realization: My focus was on getting students to understand a method by which they could determine if a teaching practice met NCLB guidelines or how they could construct their own procedures for determining validation. I spent little time talking about the practices that would meet the standard. I had assumed by modeling several approaches and by discussing methodology, the students would be able to judge for themselves what were valid methods. This, I think, was a faulty assumption. Apparently, modeling without follow through was insufficient for acquiring the skills I wanted to instill in my students. Building the bridge between theory and practice takes much more than setting the foundation and providing exemplars. It requires the scaffolding, bricks, and mortar of applied practice with feedback.

This self-study has opened my eyes to another way of researching my own teaching and the ways I can create learning opportunities for my students. In many respects it has validated my practices. At the same time it has caused me to step back, and critically and systematically examine what I do, why I do it, and the implications for teacher training. At this point I have just begun my journey as a self-study researcher. I want to continue with my collaboration with Gaye - undoubtedly a paper for the next Castle Conference. I want to engage my colleagues at my institution in school-wide self-studies. While I will continue to be a recovering behaviorist, I have found a new way to explore and improve my own practices.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

It is clear to both of us that what we have created in our teacher preparation programs are in great part meeting the needs of our students. Through modeling, open discourse, and intentional linkage between course work and practical applications, we are producing teachers ready to meet the needs of exceptional learners. The use of
self-study research has given us the insights we need to improve our craft. For Gaye, it is drawing from a more holistic model to work with teachers so that the theory they learn can be applied in the real world of their classrooms. Also, that these interactions are meaningful and purposeful so that the needs of their individual students are met. This includes reviewing course content and instructional approaches, but most importantly listening and responding appropriately to the voices of the teachers. For Gregg, it is validating instructional approaches and course content, while determining that a vital component, theory to practice, has yet to be achieved within his program. For both of us, it is reflecting on what and how we teach, then actually listening to the students and responding to their needs. It has also made us (and our students) realize there is a difference between the theoretical world and the real world - making the links between is the key. Finally, self-study has become welcomed addition to our repertoire of research methods.

REFERENCES


The following comments convey the reactions of several colleagues when a newly mandated alternate route into teaching was introduced by the Dean of Teachers College. The comments, selected from discussions and meetings during the implementation stage of the new program, serve as vignettes that reflect particular ideological and epistemological positions as well as personal histories of several stakeholders involved in the implementation.

**Gatekeepers:**
Anyone interested in the Transition To Teaching (TTT) program is looking for an easy way into teaching. We don’t want candidates with questionable command of their content and weak pedagogical skills to apply for a teaching license through Ball State. With the stress on accountability and high standards, how could we ever endorse such a program?

**Urban teacher:**
I don’t believe in the program and refuse to have anyone from the TTT program in my classroom. I don’t want them to observe my teaching and I will not supervise a student teacher from that program.

In the following paper, I weave the voices of stakeholders through a self-study of my roles as collaborator, teacher, and coordinator in the Transition To Teaching (TTT) program at Ball State University (BSU). The vocal collage presents personal interpretations and reflections on comments overheard and read during committee meetings, class discussions, informal conversations, student journals, my personal journals, notes of organizational meetings, and official documents related to the TTT program.

Self-study research is the systematic and intentional inquiry into one’s practice, beliefs, and actions within a particular working environment (Dinkleman, 2003; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2000; Louie, Drevdahl, Pundy, & Stackman, 2003) in order to improve that practice and to inform the practice of others. The problem driving the study was to develop a more nuanced understanding of my participation as instructor/coordinator in the numerous collaborative activities of the TTT program. Since I believe that teaching and learning are human experiences involving human relations, communication, and interpersonal interactions, it follows that the involvement of participants as well as the nature of the interpersonal and inter-institutional interactions, the patterns of communication, and the organizational structures influence the learning that occurs. I wanted to understand how my approach to situations enabled or constrained the learning of students and fostered or inhibited productive relationships with campus colleagues and school partners.

I begin by establishing the context for the TTT program, suggesting reasons for resistance to the program. I then situate this interpretation of resistance within the literature on educational reform and collaboration in order to reframe my interpretation. The final sections describe how I used the more nuanced interpretation to facilitate relationships with colleagues and students.

**CONTEXT—BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Many states, in an effort to attract and retain highly qualified individuals for schools that serve diverse populations, have enacted legislation allowing individuals to move into classrooms with limited pedagogical preparation. The Transition To Teaching Program-Secondary Education at Ball State University is a collaborative endeavor among the Department of Educational Studies, other colleges on campus, and an urban school. This collaborative arrangement matches the organizational structure of the teacher education program at BSU; content area specialists are housed in other colleges, clinical experiences occur either in Professional Development School sites (PDS) or in partner schools, and pedagogy courses are offered in Teachers College.

Such loosely coupled inter- and intra-institutional collaborative arrangements require both formal and informal organizational structures to foster the smooth running of events, ensure effective and clear communication among partners, and develop operational procedures that support and sustain the collaboration. Informal structures, such as ongoing personal interaction among members, require
time and effort to establish and sustain. Interpersonal relationships are often characterized by periods of tension followed by resolution or exacerbation of the tension (Achinstein, 2002). The fragility of informal structures becomes apparent when new partners join the dance or when expectations among participants change. The newly mandated TTT program not only interrupted campus norms but it also transformed the working partnership with our partner school.

**INTRA-INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES**

Gatekeepers affirm their faith in the rigor of traditional program requirements and certification by external agencies. They question whether professional expertise developed through practical experience in non-academic settings can be transformed into pedagogical knowledge. Naively, I believed collegial reluctance to the TTT program would dissipate with time and assumed campus administrators would ensure program implementation.

One of my first acts as coordinator of the TTT program was to invite colleagues from other colleges to assist in refining the TTT program, recruiting students, seeking funding opportunities, and forming an advisory board for TTT.

Critical friend (and internal voice):

*Did you really expect them to volunteer? You know how difficult it is to develop collegial arrangements; think back to your work as a school principal when you tried to introduce new ideas to staff. Did you consider your colleagues’ perspectives? Did you identify possible sources of resistance and uncertainty, the sub-text underneath their claims for academic and professional rigor?*

My usual tactic, when confronted by dilemmas, is to seek advice from trusted friends and colleagues, consult the literature, and reflect on what I had learned through previous experiences. The literature on change and collaboration (Chinn & Benne, 1969; Fullan, 1991; Gallego, Hollingsworth, & Whitenaek, 2001; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Sarason, 1991) indicates that new programs meet resistance, in part because knowledge and expertise, generated in other contexts, is privileged over the contextualized knowledge of those most closely involved. The state legislature had issued an unfunded mandate that affected the professional lives and working conditions of faculty. The Dean of Teachers College introduced the mandate on campus, expecting the cooperation of other colleges in developing the TTT program. Faculty uncertainty in the face of the proposed change coalesced into passive silence. How could my colleagues know that I would value their contribution to the process of developing the professional knowledge of pre-service teachers, that my invitation to collaborate could lead to opportunities in which all participants could benefit, and that my aim was really not to add more tasks to their busy lives?

Trimbur’s (in Hamilton, 1994) three patterns of collaborative learning helped me view collegial resistance as a reaction to the perceived loss of control over their professional interactions and decisions. Two of his patterns describe hierarchically determined interactions that often emerge in collaboration. In the postindustrialist model, a leader defines the tasks for the group and expects the group to comply. In the social constructivist model, a leader creates a discourse community that will work together to solve problems through collective understanding.

My initial approach to the development of the TTT program resembled the social constructivist pattern of collaborative interactions. Unfortunately, I had overlooked my colleagues’ reaction to the mandated TTT program, assumed a shared commitment to the program as well as a collective will to offer an excellent program, and viewed my colleagues as members of a professional community rather than as a group of individuals, all of whom were members of particular professional, disciplinary, and epistemological communities. The response of my colleagues forced me to confront the dark side of contrived collegiality. They attended meetings without feeling ownership for the program. Moreover, they did not perceive a need for the TTT program because most departments had developed alternate routes into teaching only a few years earlier.

Sensing that Trimbur’s popular democratic pattern of collaborative interaction, one predicated on difference, might provide a more successful approach for future interactions with colleagues, school partners, and students, I resolved to recognize differences in epistemological positions, personal and professional backgrounds, and motivation. I planned to use these differences as “catalysts for the making of meaning” (Hamilton, 1994, p. 97).

**INTER-INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES**

Urban school principal:

*We’re really excited that we can have the TTT cohort in our building. It’s a nice extension of the multicultural exchanges that we already have with your department. I know I had promised to find a space for the daily seminars but with the construction, it just isn’t possible … Can you teach on campus for several weeks until we get the year started?*

I agreed to delay our arrival at the high school. The needs of the high school students and teachers during the major renovation to the school trumped any pre-arranged classroom space and planned observations for the TTT program. The construction involved installing air-conditioning, upgrading wiring, removing walls, and reconfiguring classrooms, science labs, rehearsal halls, and the cafeteria. These renovations displaced teachers and students from classrooms, lockers, and meeting areas.

However, a second and perhaps greater challenge faced students, teachers, and administrators: the organizational restructuring for the small schools initiative.
Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and adopted by the Indianapolis Public Schools, the purpose of the initiative was to transform the culture of large high schools into more personal spaces where students and teachers could focus on learning. Each large urban school was divided into five autonomous academies. Each Academy had an Academic Dean responsible for the academic progress of students, curriculum, professional development, personnel decisions, as well as support services. A building manager would focus solely on the physical plant and grounds; two assistant principals handled student discipline. Complicating the situation was the elimination of the department structure. Teachers, who had relied on the department for professional and collegial support, distrusted the new organizational structure. Many doubted that the Academic Deans would provide materials and resources, purchase textbooks and equipment, or understand their pedagogical decisions.

Students not only experienced the discomfort of attending school in a construction zone but they also sensed the tension and unhappiness of teachers. The presence of the TTT cohort would stretch the adaptive capacities of teachers and students even more. These contextual factors would force all of us to negotiate new patterns of social and physical interaction.

The decision to situate the TTT program in an urban setting demonstrates an intention to prepare teachers who are equipped to teach in urban settings and who promote social justice. In addition, we expected that TTT students would develop close relationships with colleagues and mentors, and view both institutions—school and university—as partners in their professional development. We hoped that students would benefit from the professional backgrounds of the TTT candidates who brought experiences as social workers, biologists, veterinarians, engineers, and managers to the school.

The school fits the federal government descriptor of a failing school. Only 20% of the students pass the Indiana Standards Test of Educational Progress. At least 76% of the students receive free or reduced lunches. Some teachers do not acknowledge the talent and ability of students, mentioning cultural factors as contributing to the academic and social challenges students faced. The Academic Deans, for their part, describe the student demographic profile as shifting, focusing their remarks on the perceived successes of the few students who completed high school.

TEACHING THE PROGRAM

TTT students:

Where will we park, Barbara? Where should we keep our personal belongings? What will we be doing in the school? Once we get there, where should we go? My husband doesn’t think it’s safe for me to drive there.

These comments came tumbling from the mouths of the TTT students towards the end of our first two weeks together as a cohort. Most of them had read reports in the newspapers of violence, crime, and high dropout rates in urban neighborhoods. Their concerns were not unexpected. Most of us, before undertaking anything new, wonder not only about logistical details, but also about substantive issues, such as our ability to meet new challenges. My task was to help the TTT participants bridge the gap between their school and professional backgrounds and the context of the school and community. I began by excavating memories of school, distilling qualities of teachers and peers that had made an impact on their lives and then linking those qualities to current research. I wanted to make the familiar strange by examining the differences between their personal histories and academic background and those of the students in urban schools. I hoped these activities would foster their ability to bridge the differences when they worked in the school. We read and discussed articles that examined issues of race, class, and gender. Teachers and administrators from the school then provided more specific background information about the school and the changing context of the community.

WORKING IN THE SCHOOL

At first the TTT students recognized only a “culture of poverty” (Haberman, 1991) permeating the five academies. They soon discovered, however, that the history of each academy defined its cultural norms and determined its status in the building. Three academies, formerly strong magnet programs, attracted students who were interested in pursuing a particular content-related goal, such as business education, an arts-related field, or public service. Teachers in these academies celebrated the strengths and talents of the students. The remaining two academies did not have a clearly defined focus. Students had not chosen these academies but were placed there as the default choice. A higher percentage of students had been identified with special needs or placed in remedial classes.

TEACHING POSSIBILITIES

TTT student:

You told us that the TTT program would prepare us to teach yet you are expecting us to do our student teaching in a school that is considered failing? I can’t learn unless I have a model; there are no models of the kind of teaching you are advocating in this school.

The young man had raised an important issue, an issue that had been fomenting in the group for several weeks. His question hints at a critical dilemma: finding field placements that are congruent with ideas and approaches promoted in preservice programs or mentors who understand the developmental and professional needs of preservice teachers. In my travels around the school, I had observed students slumped over worksheets and sleeping at their desks. On the other hand, I had also observed classrooms where students and teachers were discussing content in ways that involved high-order thinking skills and that engaged students.

I knew his question could become a catalyst for
making meaning. I hesitated. Another student responded: 
Surely you have models from your own experiences; there is not one model to teach. Others added that they had observed many effective teachers in the school. A few mentioned exploiting the possibilities of the practicum by visiting as many classrooms as possible, interviewing teachers about classroom organization, effective approaches for interacting with students, setting and stating expectations, and instructing students. They planned to cull these experiences to develop strategies that they would then incorporate during the sheltered environment of their student teaching.

An opportunity for learning occurred during our third week in the school. The TTT cohort was to plan activities, based on change and building a sense of community, for the freshmen and senior students in the LEAPS Academy—Leadership, Education, and Public Service. TTT members planned and implemented various team-building and personal growth activities. Their journal entries described their growing appreciation for the intelligence, perseverance, and ambition of the students, many of whom are parents, the first member of their family to stay in high school, or responsible for the care of younger siblings. They also described how they had successfully used strategies we had discussed during our daily seminars to structure the activities. They viewed themselves as teachers. Subsequent opportunities to supervise field trips, assist with public service projects, tutor students, and establish academic clubs also helped the TTT group connect with the students and parents.

The theme of poor teaching continued to surface periodically in student journals, seminars, and conferences. The sticky issue has been penetrating the culture of the school to establish a shared vision of good teaching and learning. During the first year in the school, my focus has been to build relationships, crucial to the success of new initiatives. The concept of “relational knowing”—the braiding of knowledge of curriculum and instruction, knowledge of self and other in relationship, and knowledge of critical action (Gallego, Hollingsworth, & Whitenack, 2001, p. 261)—posits that changing cultures involves the development of new insights and shared understanding.

In seminars, the TTT students examine questions of what is worth knowing, how it should be taught, the purposes of schools, and how to determine whether students have learned. The TTT students leveraged my entry with teachers by sharing articles with their supervising teachers and Academic Deans. I received invitations to co-plan and facilitate professional development sessions. The challenge then became negotiating new ways of interaction, facilitating teachers’ development of shared understanding of teaching and learning. Some TTT students contributed their specialized knowledge by analyzing and interpreting achievement data for their academies. Others participated by developing and drafting the improvement plan that was later adopted by teachers. The teachers and deans began to include the TTT group in all academy events, consulting us about resource materials, computer technology, and issues related to curriculum and instruction.

BACK ON CAMPUS
The gatekeepers still focus on credentials, credit hours, and application criteria. They attribute the classroom success of the TTT group to the rigor of their courses. Other colleagues, however, have invited the TTT cohort to comment on the content and effectiveness of the methods courses. A few have agreed to participate more actively in recruiting and selecting potential students. Walls are coming down; collaboration might follow.

LEARNING
After several months observing, participating, and teaching in the school, the TTT cohort still has questions about urban schools but now their focus is directed at the effectiveness of school policies that are not consistently enforced, at disciplinary practices that emphasize issues of power and control, and at a state funding formula that fosters inequities and penalizes students in urban settings. They deplore the physical condition of the school, having suffered through construction noise, dust, and disruption. They worry that students who do not have textbooks or access to technology during their high school years will be seriously disadvantaged when they leave high school. They take pride in the successes of their students and admire the commitment, professional judgment, and conviction of teachers who have chosen to teach in urban settings throughout their careers. They are able to see islands of thoughtful and productive learning.

High School student:
At first we didn’t know why your group was in our school. I was angry that I had four student teachers and no one had talked to me about why they were teaching me. Now that I know them I understand that they are learning to teach. They took time to talk with us about our kids, about our plans. They expected us to do our work but helped us when we needed it; that was way cool. They even came to the prom!

TTT student:
This school is my sanctuary… what did I just say? Remember how scared I was just a few short months ago? The students need what I have to offer; they have welcomed me into their lives.

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Developing a Course on Inclusive Education for Graduate Students: Praxis Inquiry in Teacher Education

CONTEXT

Following the Salamanca statement (Mayor, 1994) many nations, including Iceland, made a commitment to the development of inclusive regular schools as “the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all…” (p. 9).

Although this idea regulates the curricula and education systems in many countries, the meaning of inclusion is interpreted differently in different countries. One of the main goals of inclusion is to put into action values based on equity, entitlement, community, participation, and respect for diversity. Although commonly associated with disabled students or those identified as having special needs, others, including myself as the author of this paper, believe it is also about reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students (Booth, Nes & Strömstad, 2003). Medical and remedial models of specialist education for special populations are being replaced with reconstructionist, socio-cultural and pedagogical approaches that are responsive to schools as diverse communities of learners that support all students within their localities. Inclusive practice serves all students and responds to their needs by reflective practice, collaborative problem solving, creative teaching and authentic assessment. The American Educational Research Association highlighted the need for research into the preparation of teachers to work with students with a spectrum of disabilities, and the importance of collecting data on the effects of preparing teachers for cultural diversity (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005).

The primary focus of my teaching and research is the formation of inclusive educators. My research seeks to understand how I as a teacher educator can respond to the challenge of inclusive practice (in schools and universities) and how I can prepare and support student teachers (undergraduate program or Bachelor of Education) and experienced teachers (graduate program) to develop inclusive practice in schools. My work continues in a context of a strong change agenda across the university as Iceland University of Education (IUE) is revising and developing its undergraduate and graduate courses in line with the Bologna Process, incorporating three interwoven threads in their educational courses: a) research connected, b) practiced based, and c) an emphasis on creativity and communication (Confederation of EU Rectors’ Conferences & Association of European Universities, 1999).

IGNITING INNOVATION

In the second half of 2004, I spent my sabbatical at Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia. On arrival in late July, I was invited to join a teaching and research (self-study) team of five faculty engaged in the preparation of preservice teachers to work with diverse groups of students in inclusive settings. We worked with approximately 130 preservice teachers (PSTs) across two campuses. These young teachers were in the 3rd year of a 4-year Bachelor of Education degree which prepared them to teach in both primary and secondary settings.

The preliminary findings from our study of this experience suggest that the attainment of inclusive pedagogies is situated in a public-private dialectic between the transformation of personal values, worldviews, ethics and pedagogical approaches, and socio-cultural and structural factors related to equity, access and opportunity in educational systems (Cacciattolo, Dakich, Dalmau, Guðjónsdóttir, & Perselli, 2004).

Three elements of this experience in Australia contributed significantly to my understanding and my work on my return to Iceland.

Diversity

Melbourne is a large multicultural city situated in the south east of Australia. Australia…one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse nations in the world,…has always been embedded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and has been broadened over the last two hundred years with the arrival of people from over one hundred and fifty distinct cultures from around the world. While English is the dominant language, … Over two hundred languages other than English are spoken in Australia today. (South New Wales Department of Education and Training, 2006)
My daily life in Melbourne, including my work with students, was continually framed by this experience. It was important that we developed the critically reflective discourse that enabled us to learn about the ecology and the possibilities of inclusiveness from within our experience.

Partnerships
Our teaching in the university classrooms was closely aligned to preservice teachers’ regular weekly engagement with students and schools. As described below this engagement went well beyond the teaching practice often associated with practicum placements to include curriculum and program development, and inquiry.

In Year 3 curriculum inquiry is usually undertaken in secondary schools and involves initiated projects, investigation of integrated and inclusive curriculum and teaching practice in Science, Social Education and Technology... Student teachers in Year 3 spend approx 35 days in Partnerships, normally in a secondary school, including teaching practice, curriculum development and inquiry. (Victoria University School of Education, 2006)

According to Cherednichenko and Kruger (2005), “professional teacher learning occurs through investigation of the social practices of learning and teaching, most often situated in classrooms and schools” (p. 1). This learning and action unites preservice teachers’ experience in schools and university classrooms through a process of praxis inquiry, which forms the basis of the BEd course on Inclusive practices.

Paradigm Shift in Teacher Education: Praxis Inquiry
We aimed to use praxis inquiry as the basis of our learning and teaching in inclusive education in 2004. Kruger (2006) described this semi-structured questioning framework we used:

The Victoria University preservice education program is based on practice-theory, i.e. praxis. …challenges the practitioner to take responsibility for generating personal theoretical perspectives on which to build morally sustainable and effective practice... the School of Education has developed a Praxis Inquiry Protocol to guide preservice teacher’s practical theory making. …a semi-structured questioning framework. [where] preservice teachers present evidence for assertions about the best ways to teach from their own practice, justified by analysis of that practice and by support from the research and policy literature. (Kruger, 2006, pp. 1-2)

The adoption of this process represented a paradigm shift for us, the lecturers — rather than presenting students with our answers to the questions, methods and issues they faced, we were expected to base our teaching on the students questions and create learning situations which would support their inquiry.

One of the steps the team took as we introduced the preservice teachers to this semi-structured framework of inquiry was the writing and analysis of cases of their practice (Cacciattolo, Dakich, Dalmau, Guðjónsdóttir & Perselli, 2005). In light of our finding that using the praxis inquiry approach to Case Commentary writing assisted students to analyze their practice, connect with theory and plan an action, I decided to incorporate this process into my teaching on my return to Iceland.

Returning to Iceland, I continued the collaborative self-study of teaching inclusive education, but now my focus was more on the preparation of student teachers and graduate students at the Iceland University of Education. As one of the main teachers of inclusive practices at the IUE, I asked myself how I could extend and expand the emphasis on the pedagogy of inclusive practices and open up inquiry based practice. This section of the paper provides an overview of this process and my struggles with the restructure of the pedagogical approaches and the change of emphasis.

AIM
The aim of the research is to better understand how I can redevelop my courses on inclusive practice and education and increase the use of approaches related to social constructivism and critical inquiry. Related to the goals of IUE, I wanted to give all my students more opportunities to explore their practice, knowledge and ethics in a critical way and to share their findings with each other. My intention was to adapt the Case Commentary Protocol and use it as the lens through which the students could relook at their practice and develop new understandings.

For the purposes of this paper I will focus on data from my graduate course with practicing teachers called, The Role, Responsibility and Field of the Classroom Teacher (RRC). We used the Praxis Inquiry Protocol (Cherednichenko & Kruger, 2005; Kruger, 2006) to initiate and sustain their inquiry into their practice and plan responsive action (Guðjónsdóttir, 2000).

METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION
As part of my self-study research I reviewed my preparation for teaching, my actual teaching, and students’ projects and work. I collected data for five months during 2005, and collection will continue during the year of 2006.

In addition to ongoing data collection, I shared critical reflection on my practice and continuous action for change with a critical colleague in Australia. After each lesson, I wrote cases of my teaching, describing what happened in detail, analysing and interpreting the cases. I tried to make sense of what was happening by studying the literature and relating my practice to theory. My last step was to write some suggestions, ideas or thoughts for further development and changes. At the end of the semester 2005, I analyzed the whole section, the presentations (teachers), students’ tasks, and the outcome in light of the data I collected with the research team from Australia. During this process my colleague from Australia, also reviewed with me the changes they were...
incorporating into their teaching in 2005 as a result of our shared research — this third dialogue contributed to our shared self-study and practice in both countries.

**CLASSROOM TEACHERS (GRADUATE COURSE)**

I introduced my graduate students to case and commentary analysis based on the praxis inquiry protocol. The process consisted of five iterative stages: case writing and four dimensions of praxis inquiry (practice described, practice explained, practice theorized and practice changed). We initially worked through these five stages together.

**Case Writing**

Each participant wrote a case about an issue or event in their current practice and then they read their stories aloud to the group (seven experienced teachers).

We worked through the four dimensions of the Praxis Inquiry Protocol so they could collaboratively outline their initial reflections.

1) Practice Described: What else do I need to know? What do I wonder about when I think about this case?
2) Practice Explained: What professional explanations can I find to assist me to understand what is happening?
3) Practice Theorized: As I incorporate these understandings who am I becoming as a professional? What are my significant professional practices, beliefs and theories?
4) Practice Changed: How can I change and improve my practice? How can I assist this student in particular ways?

The first time we used the protocol together, participants worked on their own cases and listened to each others’ commentaries. After reflecting together on the cases, participants were asked to write two cases, reflect on, and question their experience. To help readers understand the task, below is my own case and commentary.

**Case 1: My Case**

I put enough desks together for my seven graduate students to sit around and then I introduced the Case and Commentary protocol. I asked them to think of a case from their own experience and write it down. They looked at me and asked: What ever? Cases where some-thing had gone wrong or they are not happy with? I said: Just write an incident that you would like to reflect on. Was this useful to them? Did they come to class to listen to the teacher’s presentations students had to write, talk, discuss, explain, and reflect on their practice

We spent a lot of time just writing. Some of them were quick to write their case when others took a much longer time and I became very unsure of the activity in my mind. Was this worthwhile? Did they feel it a waste of time? Something they could do by themselves?

When trying to analyze the case together some wanted to tell their own stories (I could feel an excitement as we began to reflect and analyze) instead of listening to others and reflecting on the case in collaboration.

It felt both relaxing and active to be in the classroom. At the same time I kept wondering if I was doing the right thing. Will they understand their learning? Will they capture it?

**1. Practice Described**

What are my questions/ issues/observations in relation to inclusive education for all?

• Instead of coming to class listening to the teacher’s presentations students had to write, talk, discuss, explain, and reflect on their practice

• Some were not teaching this year and felt it was hard to find a case to write about. They asked me to clarify the task. (I felt as often before that students no matter who they are want to be sure to please their teacher) I asked them to think of an incident from their work that they would like to reflect on, understand better, and clarify.

• Others have not been teaching for some time and although I told them to write a case from their work they found it hard to do because the questions are teaching oriented.

• We spent a lot of time just writing. Some of them were

**2. Practice Explained**

How can I understand and explain this event/issue/ dilemma?

• I had a lot to reflect on as I was teaching but also after my teaching.

• Was I spending a valuable time from their learning? Was this useful to them? Did they come to class to hear from me about the truth and how to do things? I wonder and I am not too sure of myself

• I know that I am a good presenter and people have commented on that but I do not believe in teaching that way. It is almost the only strategy that is used at many Universities.

• I want to open up my classroom for discussions, inquiry, active learning… Create a community of active, thoughtful and critical learning. But was this a way to do that?

• I believe in teacher research. As a student myself I did not have these opportunities so I have not learned it by my own experience.

was quiet again and I began filling in the gaps of my own case. Half an hour later we stopped and two others read their cases and their description of their practice. We discussed their descriptions and how they felt doing this before we continued. During the day we went through all the four dimensions, discussing both the activity itself as well as the different cases the teachers wrote and reflected on.
Although these are graduate students I am the one who is deciding the teaching! I would like to involve the students in decision making. I believe in active learning, learning by doing, inquiry based learning, relating practice to theory. Is this it?

3. Practice Theorized
What is my personal theory of action?
(Why do I do what I do?)
• I am learning that going through the Case Commentary protocol with students is helping them write cases and reflect on them in a critical but positive way.
• By doing this in collaboration with a group is helping us all to see things from different perspectives. Reading the cases to others is very challenging and hard to do if there is not enough trust in the group.

4. Practice Changed
What have I learned & what could I do?
• As I go through my teaching, reflect in and on my practice and work with my students I am learning that this CC are very useful to teachers to actually understand what is going on in their teaching, to analyze their teaching and relate to theory before they come to conclusions.
• I would like to use the protocol more in my teaching.
• Going through it together is helpful.
• I am sure that giving the grad students the whole day to work on the task was helpful to them and I will do the same next time I teach this course.
• I would like to use this with the Bed students also, but I don’t know how to embed that into my teaching. Will try to modify and begin the inclusive education section by having students collect data (cases) and analyze.

Case 2: Initial Student Reflection
The following is a second example from one of the participants, an experienced teacher. It is a mathematics lesson and the students, eight years old, are working in their mathematics books. I am at the blackboard explaining the problems to them. The students have a hard time understanding and in the end I have gone through the whole page with them and that was something I did not intend to do.

1. Practice Described
What are my questions/issues/observations in relation to inclusive education for all?
• All students were working on their mathematics, they were all participating but their attention varied. Each student worked in his or her own book and participated by answering the questions or by asking questions.
• The teaching strategy I was using was demonstrating what to do at the blackboard and then the students were supposed to work individually.
• My concerns are that my students are dependent of me in mathematics, that they are afraid to try themselves or that they feel it takes too much time to try by themselves.

2. Practice Explained
How can I understand and explain this event/issue/dilemma?
• I believe that the teacher needs to be skillful to work with the students in making them independent in all subjects.
• I (teacher) have the power to change this and believe that the students will gain more if I change my teaching style.
• However, I feel that I am coping with teaching material in Mathematics that is very challenging for many of my students and therefore they need me to go through it with them.
• My opinion is changing though as I become more familiar with the material but it takes time.

3. Practice Theorized
What is my personal theory of action?
(Why do I do what I do?)
• I am going to continue to be aware of this problem because it is a problem that is necessary to solve so my students will all be successful in their future education.
• I am going to strengthen my students to become independent by having them work more by themselves, solving the problems, and discover Mathematics.
• I intend to stop them from depending too much on me. To change this I need to set myself goals and introduce them to the students.

4. Practice Changed
What have I learned & what could I do?
• To change my teaching I can work purposefully at solving the problem.
• I know how important it is for my students to be able to work independently and therefore I intend to keep my goal.
• To be able to change and develop my teaching I need to critically reflect on my teaching and be open to new ideas.

IN CONCLUSION
At this stage of our research I will highlight four areas of learning that are significant to both Icelandic and Australian researchers.

Student Perspective
We learned that it was not easy to write a case that was without quick (non-reflective) judgments, personal views, and solutions. Moreover, we learned that the collaboration helped us to look at the cases from different perspectives. Although struggling with the four dimensions and wanting to conclude without relating to theory or supporting our understanding and action with arguments, as they worked through the process participants began to recognize how helpful it is to look at their practice from these critical and active dimensions. This group commented that although teachers often feel they think as researchers when they look at their practice, and respond
to their findings they don’t often do that systematically by recording, analyzing, relating to theory or make arguments by connecting theory and practice.

**Paradigm Shift as Teacher Educator and Researcher**

In parallel ways, we as teachers of teachers found the transition from teacher to facilitator and participant in the learning inquiry was challenging. Even though most of us had espoused inquiry based approaches to teaching and learning for many years, we found that the systematic use of the praxis inquiry protocol revealed to us how much we had to learn, how much we needed to change.

**Implications of PI protocol for Self-Study**

The PI Protocol reinforced our own self-study — in particular the third dimension (practice theorized) offered us the opportunity to reflect on (and base our action on) our emerging identity as teacher educators.

**Becoming Inclusive Educators**

Finally this approach to teaching and learning became a powerful way of supporting educators to break free from the deficit model. In Iceland, as in many other countries, we are coping with the transition from the deficit model to a more inclusive pedagogical model. For students teachers or experienced teachers to unveil deficit-oriented ways of thinking it is essential to give them time to and encourage them to practice more critical reflections, to critically analyze their language and to study cultural diversity (et al., 2003). One of my suggestions is to work on embedding that into the courses I teach in a more effective way. My next step is to embed the case and commentary protocol into more courses.

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Teacher push back the desk and come outside!  
I’ll race you to the swings!  
Don’t be afraid teacher.  
Just grab my hand and follow me.  
You can learn all over again!  
(Cullum, 1971/1999)

Active Group Practice (AGP) is a praxis-inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning collaborative work with teachers. Over a decade of shared self-study of our work with teachers in Iceland, Australia, the US, and Latvia we have come to understand that skilful collaborative groups incorporate diversity, respect individual perspectives, and embed their work in reiterative cycles of learning and action and the shared reflection through which theory and practice are integrated. We also found that when we engaged with teachers in authentic inquiry, and modelled and conceptually analysed AGP with them — rather than didactically presenting rationales, methods and skills — there was a marked improvement in the ability of school teams to work collaboratively during university programs and to extend that practice in their schools. This process required that both we and the teachers let go of familiar understandings and expectations about how teachers work together to learn all over again. A critical factor in this relearning has been the reframing of our experience made possible by our partnership in habits of international self-study.

AN INTERNALIZED HABIT OF SELF-STUDY

When we began to work together in the US, far from teachers in our own countries (Iceland and Australia), we recognised in each other a shared passion for the work of teachers and collaborative and inclusive approaches to education. At that time, two significant connections became (and remain) important forums for international reflection, discernment, challenge, and support. The first connection arose from International Women and Leadership in Education, an international group of women who studied and worked in Oregon during the 1990s, shared their lives and learning, and carried out life history research together. These women spoke seven different first languages and came from nine countries and all the continents except Antarctica (Bodone et al., 1997). The second connection developed when we joined the Self-study of Teacher Education Practices Special Interest Group (S-STEP) within the American Educational Research Association (AERA). We now recognise the significance to our work of ongoing international engagement and deeply internalised habits of self-study mediated practice and inquiry based learning.

Self-study research is situated within the discourses of the social construction of knowledge, reflective practice and action for social change. The strong presence of collaboration in the practice of self-study … is a natural response to this ethical and theoretical location. Collaborative agency … best expressed the way we saw educators using collaboration to make a difference to the outcomes and understanding at all stages of self-study research. (Bodone, Guðjónsdóttir, & Dalmau, 2004, p. 743)

As the years have progressed, we have developed multiple ways of working together internationally that scaffold a constant habit of shared self-study and praxis inquiry that has brought to life a dialogue that we have defined as truly sharing practice and being present in one another’s work despite differences of space, time and language (Guðjónsdóttir & Dalmau, 2002).

TECHNOCRATIC AND AUTHORITARIAN APPROACHES DO NOT RECOGNISE OR ELICIT THE ACTIVE PROFESSIONALISM OF TEACHERS

As we struggled with data that showed little evidence that teachers were incorporating what we were teaching about collaborative practice into their busy working lives, a critical event occurred that we have reported in another forum:

One day some of the teacher learners said to us, “It’s no use talking to us about group practice and collaboration… we know it doesn’t work… teachers are too busy… you can get things done quicker on your own… besides, it’s just something we have to do to please the administrators.” It felt like our enthusiasm
and energy were colliding with a thick wall of indifference. After much anguish and soul searching, we realized we were just another pair of enthusiasts in a long line of people telling teachers that we knew the answer, that we were the ones who could tell them what to do. (Dalmau & Guðjónsdóttir, 2002, pp. 112-113)

This moment of truth set us on a new journey that allowed us and the teachers we worked with to identify problems and issues in existing approaches and reconstruct our shared learning and action.

At the heart of the teachers’ resistance was their perception that group (as opposed to individual) practices were being imposed on them in schools and universities in order to achieve a plethora of externally driven tasks. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) critiqued such technical conceptualizations of teachers as “consumers and receivers of curriculum and teaching materials grounded in university-based research,” and “skilled transmitters of information developed by others” (summarized by Guðjónsdóttir, 2000, p. 67).

Hargreaves (1992) used the term, contrived collegiality, to describe forms of collaboration that are imposed by authority within a context of hierarchical power, role relationships, and the accomplishment of predetermined and externally driven tasks (p. 235). The difficulties we faced in teaching and learning collaboration with teachers stemmed from three factors: (a) their experience of collaboration as an imposed tool for the implementation of administratively driven tasks, (b) the discrepancy between expected forms of collaboration and their real work with students, and (c) a culture of individualism that associated professional collaboration with personal characteristics, compatibility, and empathetic relationships.

What did this look like for teachers?

Teachers’ experience of collaboration in schools and university classes was often negative — the assertion that “collaboration doesn’t work” usually led to a discussion of the nature of the tasks around which collaboration was mandated. Educators told us: “Collaboration around centrally driven school priorities diverts teachers from their real work with students,” and “In universities collaborative assessment tasks waste time and potentially diminish the quality of (and grade for) submitted work.”

Teachers often based their idea of collaboration on similarity and consensus using a metaphor of friendship, rather than shared purpose and improved outcomes for students. “Our group worked well because we all get on so well together” was a constant refrain in program evaluations. Thus framed, differences of role (special vs. general educator, administrator vs. classroom teacher), culture, race, gender, or ability were seen as barriers to be overcome, and difference was viewed as a problem rather than a resource (Lambert, Collay, Dietz, Kent, & Richert, 1996; Rendón & Hope, 1996; Richert, 1997).

Teaching and learning collaborative practice were often primarily focused on the acquisition of discrete interpersonal communication or organisational skills, with the assumption that these skills were equal to effective group practice. Overemphasis on this aspect of group practice often diverted teacher groups from the task at hand.

This displacement of goals and strategies is one more example of the lack of understanding of active contribution of teacher professionalism (Kristjánsson, 1989; Sigurðgeirsson, 1992). Guðjónsdóttir (2000) used the term, responsive professionalism, to describe the professional practice of teachers who work collaboratively with all members of the school community — students, colleagues, administrators, parents, and community members — to articulate and create effective and innovative educational programs that lead to positive learning and life outcomes for students (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004).

**AUTHENTIC AND PURPOSEFUL PRACTICE: A PRAXIS-INQUIRY-BASED APPROACH TO AGP**

“Professional teacher learning occurs through investigation of the social practices of learning and teaching, most often situated in classrooms and schools” (Cherednichenko & Kruger, 2005, p. 1). When teachers are expected to be competent and professional educators who seek out answers to their questions, they also seek out opportunities for collaboration as they deal with complex problems. The steady progress towards recreating truly collaborative practice made by a number of Icelandic and Australian schools when they were able to identify and work with issues of student learning and school improvement led us to believe that it was critical to pay attention to inherent issues of authenticity, purpose, power, and control when teaching and learning group practice (Baird & Northfield, 1993; Petschack et al., 1993).

Active Group Practice typically includes five dimensions enriched by a number of guiding principles that inform the journey:

**Dimension 1: Strong questions, authentic tasks and diverse colleagues.** Effective teaching and learning of collaboration is more likely to occur when integrated with an authentic and purposeful challenge, for example, the opportunity to make a difference in teaching and learning for a group of school students. When working with preservice teachers, we ensure that they have genuine opportunities to respond to important questions. We also typically ensure that these learners are randomly selected into diverse inquiry teams that will work together over time. In school situations, teachers often work in year level or discipline planning groups as decided by the group.

**Dimension 2: Authentic collaboration — “real” people engaged in “real” life.** Figure 1 (see below) is an example of a simple profile that has proved effective in supporting educators to situate their collaboration in authentic tasks. Individuals are asked to respond to these simple questions which are later compiled into a group profile. As the group profile is
created, the discoveries become apparent in the conversation, we noticed many *Aha* reactions. One group found that they had one member who was extremely organized and confessed to feeling extremely nervous if group projects were not organized early; another member admitted that she only felt her adrenaline running as the deadline loomed. A second group discovered that they had a student from overseas who felt in need of support with his English, and a verbal and apparently extremely confident student who asked for support in listening to others. The examples abounded. The important data for us was the recognition that people with very different abilities and working styles were working together to support and enrich the group, rather than acting out their conflicts.

**Dimension 3: Holistic iterative review of project and collaboration: Recording action—recording learning.** As the real work of the team progressed, the integrated and opportunistic education in collaborative learning also continued. Guided by the principles of AGP (see below) and issues raised by students, we integrated reflection and teaching into the ongoing activities of the group. More recently, we have encouraged participants to keep a Praxis Inquiry Log where they record questions, research, and learning, thus reinforcing sustained habits of reflective practice.

**Dimension 4: Meta-Reflection: Recording learning.** Mindful of the importance of learners recognising and taking responsibility for their own learning, we made space for times of meta-reflection about collegial collaboration. We asked groups to identify knowledge, understandings, and skills they saw themselves using and wished to learn more about. Examples of their responses included: *knowledge* (What does a balanced classroom (between teacher led and student led) look like? How does AGP relate to school-wide change?); *understanding* (How do you change the dynamics of a group when one person dominates and does not represent the group? How do you approach a supervisor about a problem you are having with him/her in a professional way?); and *skills* (How do you “free” responses and “bind” responses?).

**Dimension 5: Integrating Praxis Inquiry.** Increasingly, we are using the praxis inquiry protocol developed at Victoria University as the basis of our learning and teaching. Kruger (2006) described the “semi-structured questioning framework” we use: Praxis Inquiry names the process through which preservice teachers at Victoria University will learn about teaching from the standpoint of their own practice. Being in practice, however, is no guarantee that a practitioner has a well founded and convincing understanding of practice. To impart Stenhouse’s systematic and public qualities to the informing of practitioner understanding, the School of Education has developed a Praxis Inquiry Protocol to guide preservice teacher’s (sic) practical theory making.

The Praxis Inquiry Protocol is nothing more than a semi-structured questioning framework. In itself it does not show a preservice teacher how to teach. Its strength is likely to be found in its demand that preservice teachers present evidence for assertions about the best ways to teach from their own practice, justified by analysis of that practice and by support from the research and policy literature.

The four dimensions of the protocol continually reinforce educators’ professional practice, knowledge, understanding, and action. Typical questions answered by students fall into four categories:

- **Practice Described:** What is happening for students? How are schools responding? What happened at our meeting with students today? What do I wonder about?
- **Practice Explained:** Why is it like this? How can I explain students’ experience in this project? How can I explain the way we are working together?
- **Practice Theorized:** Who am I becoming as an educator as I work in this way? What will I believe and do?
- **Practice Changed:** What can I do to improve the learning for this student? What can I do to improve my working as a member of a professional team?

These dimensions of activity with teachers and students continue to develop as we continue to learn with the learners and to face these questions in our practice. The Praxis Inquiry Protocol continues to excite us with the enthusiastic response of our students.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES THAT INFORM THE JOURNEY**

We have endeavoured to internalize these principles of teaching and learning AGP into our thinking and work. We articulate them with students as the opportunity arises. Active Group Practice:

1) Seeks out and welcomes diversity.

Lambert (1995) wrote that openness to diversity
makes available to groups the opportunity to think and act in more complex and creative ways because of the multiple perspectives, resources and talent that can be found in heterogeneously composed group of people. Active Group Practice occurs when groups seek and use each individual’s unique knowledge, understanding, and skills in order for the group to create new understanding and new action.

2) Is purposeful and action-oriented.

Authentic action that makes a difference in student lives is the best protection from the gradual displacement of group goals with individualistic objectives of friendship and personal support.

3) Is based on the principle of multiplication.

Working in groups is not necessarily a positive or productive experience. We aim to provide groups with an understanding of the creative potential of active groups through the presentation of three descriptors: subtraction (when group work undermines goals because of factors such as unresolved conflict, goal displacement, contrived purpose); addition (when the action of a group equals the sum of the individual actions of the members); and multiplication (when the action of the group creates something new; i.e., it exceeds the sum of the individual contributions).

4) Using data to open doors.

Teacher learners bring to professional development about group practice many years of learning and experience in group work. This very experience may lead to judgmental statements about working together that can undermine AGP. The use of a meaning statement, “Data opens doors—Judgments closes doors,” helps educators to become aware of (and move away from) judgment statements (e.g., “I know the best way to facilitate groups,” or “Group work wastes time,” or “Our group would work OK if xxx would leave.”) to the data statements (e.g., “When we share tasks we can make more complete products,” or “I like to work to deadline,” or “I like to organize well in advance.”).

Loughran (1997) expressed strongly the absolute necessity that teachers model the message of their teaching and that the relationship between theory and practice should be apparent within the teaching and learning. Mindful of this message, we integrate into each session practical examples of collaboration, inquiry into the lives and experiences of the participants, respect for the unique knowledge and skills of each participant in the class, and the collaborative building of new conceptual understandings.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT AGP?

Students quickly began to use the idea of building AGP through the diverse abilities of heterogeneously constructed groups and to use that information to plan and work together more effectively in the university classroom. One reason for this change was our deeper understanding and fluency with the material we were introducing. As we reflected together on our data at the end of the year, we identified a number of issues for further work.

We have introduced AGP to many groups of teacher/learners. We learned (not surprisingly) that time is an important factor—short terms and one-off sessions of professional development do not allow time to build that strong conceptual knowledge and understanding, and the skilful practice that will enable people to feel the confident in their ability to transfer their learning and experience into new environments. Praxis inquiry is extending our understanding of possibilities.

Freire (cited in Gadotti, 1996) used the term, ingenuous dialogue, to describe dialogue that remains pleasant and warm by not acknowledging the serious and divisive issues that face partners in the dialogue. It is our belief that teaching and learning AGP without seriously working with teacher learners to situate their practice in these serious contexts could be ingenious group practice.

We also found that our international collaborative self-study was not a method by which we improved our teaching, but rather intrinsic to the teaching and learning. Our parallel engagement in self-study and the teacher-learners’ active inquiry into improved learning and life outcomes for students, enabled us face their dilemmas with them and model a strong collaborative commitment to embracing international and intercultural perspectives and action.

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In a sleepy Midwestern community in the central part of the United States there can be found a respectable university with an extended teacher education program. Set between the green hills and the yellow prairie, smart young people, and their much, much older instructors, delight in the exploration of knowledge necessary to successfully engage in the profession of teaching.

Into this dreamy landscape, insert the cruel reality of high-stakes testing, rote-scripts for teachers, and the call for teacher educators to engage in broad studies that quantify teaching into some sacred formula. Preparing smart, young people for a profession that seeks (or so it seems) to smother their brightness and restrain their passion, is no easy task. In the face of expectations for conformity, attempts to foster creativity while maintaining a modicum of personal integrity and self worth sometimes require stamina beyond description. Rather than provide only a formulaic version of teaching, instructors must inform their students about the realities of teaching as well as the possibilities (we hope). This, too, offers no simple path because the formulaic versions within academia are many. As instructors with commitment to students and students’ students we find our way through this gnarly forest (or attempt to) so that we can hold the light for those at our side. Perhaps an auto-, that is, auto-biography, auto-ethnography, auto-logy (self-study) will provide greater light.

PURPOSE
Delineating our methodological approaches in self-study research more clearly will help those with whom we engage do their work more easily, carefully, and critically. More importantly, by exploring these methodological issues we can help those people who question our work better understand the work we do – if they care to engage in that process. This paper considers three methodological approaches – auto-biography (a look at a story of self), auto-ethnography (a look at self within a larger context), and auto-logy (self-study - a look at self in action, usually within educational context) – to the examination of teachers/teacher educators’ professional knowledge and the development of teacher/teacher educator identity in relation to the ways the methodological choices reveal (or does not reveal) identity. Specifically, I address one question: What is the relation of inquiry to the revelation of professional identity and knowledge of teachers/teacher educators? Situating self contextually and methodologically may be critical to the development of teacher knowledge and practice.

Importantly, the work upon which this paper focuses serves only as a sidebar to the larger study. The larger study looks at the development of professional knowledge in teachers and teacher educators. This sidebar looks at the methodological approaches and how those approaches may or may not influence the work and reveal knowledge and identity. Because my smart young students have been raised in a place that accepts faith as fact, science as blasphemy and self as a tool, it has been remarkably easy to promote different ways to explore their understandings of the profession because they seek to question rather than simply accept the world around them. As I have been engaged in this work for some time, I delighted in their easy acceptance of different ways to explore. Over time we have begun to unearth ways to reveal the embryos of their professional thought and more.

For this particular work I will turn toward my own work for examples of the ways I have fit or not with the methodological approaches we explore. Because this is a five year endeavor we have reached no conclusions, continuing to delve into our understandings and develop our knowledge as teachers. I select myself as the main focus on this work because I can speak best for myself and I can use my students’ ideas as echoes of my own.

BEGINNINGS
Our study involves twelve students (all young, all female, all smart, all high GPAs, most from Kansas, with some diversity of color and ethnicity) engaged in the early stages of their teacher education program. As their instructor and a researcher, I am a teacher educator with many years experience (older, female, well-educated, white). We came together within the last year during course work and developed a relationship based on their
desire to be the best teachers they can be and my desire to support them. In fall of last year we met three times a week for our class sessions (Curriculum and the Learner in Elementary School) as well as in one-on-one office visits. This spring we chat via e-mail, meet privately, and have grand dinner meetings to discuss experiences. They have been saving their work and journaling from time to time. I have been journaling and keeping track of their e-mails. Together we have established a Blackboard site to maintain on-going discussions and to document relevant information.

As we proceed in our work together, my students look at their growth as novice teachers, I look at them engaged in the early stages of their teacher education program, and I look at myself as a teacher and a teacher educator. There are elements of auto-biographical work, auto-ethnographic work, and self-study work within our activities and conversations. They push me to look beyond my traditional notions about the learning-to-teach process and I push them to articulate their experiences. It seems that these methodological possibilities mesh together rather than stand apart, and it seems that the strategies or methods within the methodological approaches can support any of the auto-s. I will consider that in another section of this paper.

EXPLORING TEACHING, KNOWLEDGE, AND THE PROFESSION

First, let me briefly look at literature regarding the professional knowledge of teachers to consider issues that might be relevant to its exploration. Then, I will ponder which methodological approaches might be appropriate for a study with my students.

There is an uncertainty to teaching. Its complexities seem to defy easy definition and understanding. For Clandinin and Connelly (1996), the context of professional knowledge “shapes effective teaching, what teachers know, what knowledge is seen as essential for teaching” (p. 24). In the current climate some attempts to standardize this knowledge seem odd, as if teacher knowledge were something static with finite possibility. In fact, professional knowledge includes a “wide variety of components and [is] influenced by a wide variety of people, places, and things” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 4); “it is broad and diverse” (Christensen, 1996, p. 38). Cochransmith and Lytle (1994) suggests that wisdom, “language, critiques and theoretical frameworks of school-based teachers” (p. 151) are critical to teachers’ knowledge, anchoring social, moral, political, personal, and emotional aspects. Emotions affect teachers’ knowledge (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004), imposing upon peoples’ understandings (Reason, 1994). Teacher identities are expressed in the acts of teaching, sometimes through emotion, words, actions, and bodies (Zembylas, 2003). For example, when teachers experience living contradictions as they teach, they reveal their vulnerabili ties (Kelchtermans, 1996). These uncertainties and personal perspectives contest the notion of providing a standardized knowledge that fits most experiences (Hamilton, 2004). What has been lost in the energy devoted to this hotly contested issue is a focus on the development of teaching and teachers. What we know about the extent of teacher development from preparation through the fifth year of teaching is sketchy (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

According to Bullough (1997), a teacher’s education begins an exploration of “the teaching self” (p. 19). Each self is defined both individually and in interactions with others (Danielewicz, 2001). The continual shift and adjustment of borders around the self is laden with emotions as well as “new ideas” (Zembylas, 2003, p. 108). This development pushes assumptions about a “singular ‘teacher-self’ or an essential ‘teacher identity’ hidden beneath the surface of teachers’ experiences” (Zembylas, 2003, p. 108). At this juncture the experiential and theoretical understandings, notions about reflection, the authority given to self and others can interrupt tacit notions. Understanding the impact of experiences on teacher identity development affect knowledge, types of knowledge, and the use of that knowledge (Hamilton, 2004).

These are global concerns, not issues found simply in the United States. For example, Hoban (2003), of Australia, states that understanding the complexities of the learning-to-teach process and teacher identity contribute to improved teacher education programs. Korthagen (2003), of the Netherlands, asserts that researchers neglect issues of teacher identity. Clearly, wherever (in the world) we focus on teacher education, tensions exist among definitions of professional knowledge, teachers’ identity as teachers, and how we probe these issues. Investigating elements related to professional knowledge development will be as important as the examination of the less explicit elements of teacher identity. And how does one explore these issues? Stories and information become touchstones for young teachers as they critically reflect upon their classrooms and their students. When examining one’s identity and knowledge base from a socially just stance, the approach must be expansive rather than rigid. The appropriate form of inquiry seems crucial.

METHODOLOGICAL WONDERINGS

As my years of experience nudge me into this study side-bar, I wonder, are these methodological approaches one and the same or are the distinctions worth more careful consideration? I delve into this space, along the margins of our other work, because my curiosity and desire to understand the greater process propel me into the deep pages of our work. While an exploration of methodological issues is a simple sidebar to the larger study of the exploration of the development of professional knowledge, it is worthwhile to clarify similarities and differences among the auto-s: auto-biography, auto-ethnography, auto-logy (self-study) - as researchers tend to stumble over the labels and issues inadvertently during their work.
Originally, as a scholar familiar with self-study, I considered this study to be a collaborative self-study, but as I read the literature about auto-biography, auto-ethnography, and auto-logy (self-study) I found myself less certain. Having moved now into the seventh, eighth, and ninth moments (advances in) of research (Lincoln & Denzin, 2005), some acceptability of this work exists whether it is called auto-ethnography, auto-biography or self-study. With this acceptance we need to hope that current researchers catch up to the good work that self-study scholars have been doing for quite some time. With the proclamation that these later moments in research have reached postmodern complexity, our focus can be on doing the best work possible rather than attempting to justify what we knew was the way to go in the first place. The advent of the Santiago theory of cognition (Maturana & Varela, 1992), the translation of the varieties of postmodern/poststructural texts, the continued search for strong research strategies allow us now to begin to hone our good work, rather than spend time focused on justification.

Lincoln and Denzin (2005) do suggest we are in the “methodologically contested present” (p. 1116) where tensions and “methodological retrenchment” (p. 1116) simmer, yet in this present researchers push against borders, boundaries, and margins. In our self-study work, we know those tensions, retrenchments, and contestations intimately. This paper will not revisit those issues. Instead, this paper explores the strengths of auto-biography, auto-ethnography, and self-study to make explicit the power of these methodological approaches.

Simply stated these methodological approaches blend together at many points. Key distinctions rest in the depth of the reflexive exploration and if and how social and cultural issues emerge. I get ahead of myself.

According to Russell (1999) auto-biography and ethnography share a “commitment to the actual” (p. 1) and can be used as tools to critique culture looking at both created objectivities and false subjectivities. Auto-ethnography can be used as an opposition to more traditional approaches to research (Pratt, 1992), not unlike the use of the identifier self-study. Coia and Taylor (2005) view auto-biography as a way to focus on the I. They distinguish auto-biography and auto-ethnography by suggesting that unlike auto-biography which focuses simply on self, auto-ethnography brings forward the shifting aspects of self and creates ways to write about experiences in a broader social context.

Reed-Danahay (1997), an early proponent of auto-ethnography, called it a postmodern ethnography that questions the notion of the single self while discarding false beliefs in objectivity and custom. From a postmodern view, there is no one way to capture experience; instead, questions and perspectives can be gathered to question perceived realities. Auto-ethnography refers to writing about the personal and its relationship to culture. It is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness (Ellis, 2004). In this work, the writers gaze differently at themselves and at their world. Auto-ethnographers take a broad view including cultural elements of personal experience and they situate themselves, contest and resist what they see. Like autobiography often written in first person voice, auto-ethnographic text appears in a variety of forms – short stories, poetry, novels, photograph, journals, fragmented and layered writing.

Originally used to describe cultural studies of one’s own people (Hayano, 1979), now auto-ethnography refers to! stories that feature the self or include the researcher as a characters (Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Jones (2005) suggests that auto-ethnography is a balancing act between the research and the writing. From Jones’ perspective, researchers doing this work must agitate and disrupt and contest views of the world, others suggest that auto-ethnography focuses on making a difference in the world (Renner, 2001). Auto-ethnography includes a self-reflexive way of knowing and attempts to break away from the confines of anthropological concerns and focus on making a difference in the world.

Considered blurred genres, of the sort referred to by Geertz (1983) and others, calling work auto-ethnography and auto-biography depends on who creates the form and who writes about it. Some researchers focus on literary genre issues to distinguish auto-biography and auto-ethnography (Ellis, 2004). According to Ham and Kane (2004) definitions of auto-ethnography, autobiography, and self-study vary. They suggest that self-study research may be insider research or it may provide some biographical elements. Or it may take a sociological tact that brings it into the realm of auto-ethnography. Meyer-Mork (2004) called her work both self-study and auto-ethnography.

It seems that auto-biography, auto-ethnography, and self-study might be interchangeable methodological approaches with attention to stretching boundaries and contesting realities. While auto-biography may be used in all three approaches, not all auto-biographies or self-studies are auto-ethnographic in nature. I say this because not all self-studies, for example, focus on the greater cultural impact of the work in focus. And they do not have to do that. When a self-study considers social or cultural issues, it might fit the definition of auto-ethnography. The commitment to self as an element of the work exists in all three approaches, and that self can select the approach most fitting at the time.

**RESEARCH WONDERINGS**

As a five year study, students and I are in the preliminary stages of examining our work for the larger study. This means that over in the margins, I am still unearthing information that will support my ultimate exclamation regarding the superiority of one methodology over another. Seriously, for this paper I explore the methodological approaches behind them to consider value. For example,
in self-study we might (as I often do) employ narrative and autobiography as a strategy to draw certain ideas out of hiding. In the case of our larger study, students selected critical moments from their lives to explore the beliefs that underpin their current thinking about teaching. I did the same thing. They did not write an entire autobiography, nor did I. For the moment, it seems that an incomplete autobiography, but a completed narrative (story) of a moment in their lives helps to light momentarily the pathway in front of them. My story, powerful for me, helped me see the relevance of this strategy for the work we do.

If I were considering a recreation of a Thrice-told Tale by Wolf (1992), I might offer three different ways to consider one passage; but in Wolf’s case she distinguished among fact, fiction, and interpretation. In this work, I see the use of narrative as a strategy for all approaches. A distinction might be that the auto-ethnographers tend to embed a story within a story providing a meta-narrative, if you will. As a self-study researcher I will share a snippet from my narrative about my students included in another work (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2006):

From my perspective as an instructor, I had accomplished my desired goal – to contribute to their preparation to become the best possible teachers. The students understood the strands of ideas that I presented – curriculum, personal exploration of beliefs, and their relationships to classroom observations. They demonstrated that understanding in the ways that they wove these ideas together as they talked about teaching. By the end of the semester I knew that the students (most of them, anyway) had a strong grasp of the initial information needed in the early stages of the learning-to-teach process – how did you know this? This is not to say that they all had processed the information in the same ways; they had not. I had distinct evidence from student work that some students had a deeper understanding of issues or views different than others, but each student had become more thoughtful about the process of understanding of curriculum and the learner in elementary school.

This segment of narrative captures my perspective on the end of the semester. It reveals my evidence for student success, my location within the class, my understanding of the students’ location with the learning-to-teach process. From a methodological perspective it does not delve into cultural issues, nor does it need to do that for my purposes. So, in this moment, this narrative is part of a self-study of my teaching and could be included as one part of my teaching auto-biography. If, in the larger study I push up against broader social or cultural issues, I could choose to label my work auto-ethnography. It seems that all auto- are useful, some (possibly) just cover more territory.

SIGNIFICANCE
The current research climate underscores the importance of careful, critical thoughtful methodology as we undertake our work in self-study. We may not wish to justify our research as we recognize its power. However, a clearly articulated and developed methodology may be our best approach to contesting and interrupting those who question our research endeavors.

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Alternative Representations of Collaboration and Community

As scholars from very different places and experiences, we have known each other for a long time. Having graduated from the same institution, we had similar backgrounds in educational preparation as well as similar notions of collaboration and community. In the torrent of academia, we provide shelter when needed or a good push if appropriate. We encourage each other to stand outside the expectations of that academic world to look with unshaded eyes at the traditions that might blind us. Across time we developed ways to challenge ourselves, each other, and colleagues in an examination of academic life and theoretical perspectives using representations beyond traditional writing. These alternative representations of our work through visual/tactile artistry provide nonverbal conduits to our written/verbal work. These representations serve to propel our written work beyond conventional expectations. For us, we have created a collaborative team and sought a strong community of support.

PURPOSE
This current study returns to our previous work (The Arizona Group, 1994, 1996, 2000) to explore how it did or did not contribute to the development of self-study research. Further, as we return to our work, we explore the value of revising one’s life history and one’s representation of that history. We ask ourselves several questions – how does (or does not) the use of collage affect our teaching? And how does (or does not) the use of collage affect the development of our scholarly ideas? We want to bring our scholarship to our teaching and we want to explore how our notions of alternative representations strengthen our research. Our paper and our representations illustrate our findings.

EXPLORING ONTOLOGICAL BOUNDARIES, CREATING REPRESENTATIONS
Within self-study research we find three different conversations, among many, important to our own work – dialogue, trust and ontology. Having previously addressed dialogue and trust (The Arizona Group 2004, 2005; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2000), this work centers our attention on ontology because we believe that ontology is a way to establish value in self-study work. We find that while researchers (including ourselves) have focused on epistemology, making claims and externally seeking validity, we fail to see that “what captures the imagination, the heart and the convictions of the readers and users of educational research is attention to ontology: what is” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2006, p. 4).

Early in our work together we have engaged in the alternative representations of our work as teacher educators, as women, as scholars, as collaborators, and as people interested in thinking beyond borders. We wrote papers and contemplated ideas (The Arizona Group 1997, 2000, for example). We used poetry, color and text as the critical friends we lacked at our academic institutions. We attempted to create, without prose, the explanation and “feel” of the work we did. We recognized the importance of stepping beyond the veil of tradition to see what was absent and important to the text, as well as what might be overbearing or unimportant to our work. Furthermore, we e-mailed and journaled about our experiences as we developed our ideas. These works have been documented in our publications and on our websites.

For this study we return to our early work with a critical eye, taking notes and developing ideas individually and serving as critical listeners when we collaboratively explored possibilities. We looked at our previous work for ourselves and the others with whom we write and think. We challenged our stereotypes and the privileges we possess. We identified absent perspectives. As before, we developed our ideas before we created alternative representations with color, text, and dimension.

Our understandings of what is real have evolved as we worked in academia. We have turned our gaze from epistemic questions to ontological ones. This turn helps us explore the construction and reconstruction of ontology, where we look to see what reality is, according to our representation, theme, or something else and we think, “that’s what I’ve created, now where am I?” Certainty is not a part of this work. From our ontological approach we see that our work is never finished; a sense of uncertainty accompanies us, as nothing is ever static.
LITERATURE INFORMING OUR THINKING

We find that narrative often has linearity to it, as that seems to be the nature of conveying story. As readers we often seek that structure to aid in the sense-making process. Collage and other art forms, like poetry and painting, often offer some level of non-linearity that facilitates a simultaneous understanding through deeper, implicit cultural models and imagery (Weber & Mitchell, 2004). Collage forces the viewer and the creator to think beyond the boundaries of tradition. It can be seen as symbolic narrative (Jones, 2002).

Generally art can be recognized as a way of knowing or a way to capture cultural imagery (Eisner, 1997, 2002). As an art form collage has been for some time, including the works of Picasso and others. For a much shorter time it has been discussed by researchers as a counterpoint to positivist approaches to research (for example, Butler-Kisber, 2002a; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Richardson, 2001). It has also been identified as a post-modern epistemology ( Vaughan, 2005) and an epistemology pushes on the margins and borders of ideas (Harding, 1996). For example, Harding (1996) asserted that collage provides ways of valuing multiple understandings of cultures and ways of knowing, thus broadening traditionally western perspectives on knowledge(s). Lincoln and Denzin (2005) see qualitative research as creative forms to pursue important questions. For Davis and Butler-Kisber (1999) collage is a way to enhance educational research. Further, the works of Finley (1994, 2001), Knowles (Knowles & Thomas, 2001, 2002), andCole (2001) provide the rich textures that art brings to research. Finley (2001) sees the interdependency of artistry and scholarship, each informs the other. In fact, the combining of alternative representation with scholarship has been called “scholartistry” by some (Cole, 2004, for example). Mullen (1999, 2003) recognizes that the artist/researcher takes an active role in cultural critiques and critical practice.

Synthesizing images in this work requires that the artist be open-minded and intuitive (Abbey, 2004; Butler-Kisber, 2002a, 2002b). According to Abbey,

Often such emotional experiences cannot be reduced to words. Words, in fact, can distort the meaning of experiences and result in an overgeneralized or insufficient understanding. Words often lose their power to represent subtle variations of meaning. Translating feelings into images rather than words can be less threatening and help make an inner impression more visible and tangible. Because most of our waking thoughts appear in images, image making is also a familiar process. Like intuitive and metaphorical thinking, image-making must be practiced in order tap into the endless stream of messages that are available to us every day. (p. 12)

More than the knowledge (Freire, 1998; McDermott, 2002) we work to foster critical consideration of ideas. McDermott suggests that aesthetic knowledge and collage can be dangerous to those who seek to avoid looking closely at lives in the world. Collage is not simply a glued set of images where an individual artist presents a view. Rather, it is an initiation of a dialogue with self and viewers, inviting all to disrupt and de-center traditional understandings.

We use collage to break through traditional, bounded ways of knowing. To do this we need to step back and consider ontology. More than a way of knowing (epistemology), creation of collage addresses what is (ontology). As creators select and compose their work, they expose their view of reality. We find that when researchers attempt to construct factual, accurate (from their perspective), plausible accounts of what is that resonate with colleagues and readers, helping us envision ideas, their virtuosity as scholars and their trustworthiness are established (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2006). We assert that research attentive to the anchoring of ontology (what is) with evidence naturally addresses epistemology. Epistemologically driven research can center on the establishment of truth claims, failing to invite us to explore the academic (and other) worlds we inhabit.

PERSPECTIVES

While understanding how writing a manuscript might be straightforward, creating a collage may not be. Individually when we sat down to design our alternative representations, our selection processes of those pictures or words or representations that we might include, followed similar yet distinct steps. We each engaged in a winnowing process, looking initially for eye-candy that called us to it. We would (a) select something; (b) ask ourselves, “How does this represent our notion in size, symbol?” and so on; and then (c) we would begin to consider the structure of the work. Yet, there is no one way to do this. For Stefinnee, looking for big ideas seems paramount. She asks herself, “What I can find? What form can I construct? What do I use to fit the form? What do I use to fit the ideas?” Her interests center on the form as a representation of ideas. For ML, approach to the work seems far more intuitive. She looks and looks at pictures and imagery, depending on her unconscious knowing from which something (usually) emerges. Recognizing that there is no one right way to create their representations, we note the differences as a point of interest. Perhaps the one critical element here is the reflexive nature of the process as choices are made about presence and absence.

As we explored our earlier works, both written and alternative, we looked at our texts and held our alternative representations against them to find relationships, if they existed. While we found our writing captured our experiences, to a certain degree, we found that our initial graphic work, rather simply depicted our experiences. That is to say that a lack of sophistication existed in the expression of our ideas. One could find idea kernels in the alternative work but depth of understanding and presentation seemed absent. Few metaphors and little symbology emerged in our viewings. Although heartfelt, our work could be taken at face value, a superficial representation that lacked the complexity of our lives and our
thinking. Issues of privilege, justice and culture, important in our writings, appeared absent in translation.

In our later work, we saw a developing sophistication and symbology. For example, in this later work Stefinee created three-dimensional shapes that figuratively and literally represented her writings. The selected form itself conveyed cultural and personal perspectives both implicitly and explicitly. With the pictures and images mounted on the form, a complexity of ideas emerged. ML created a triptych of experiences that reached from the inner to the public self and depicted a revelation of soul. The choices of icons and symbols and the placement of the imagery on the form offered views and insights into one person’s understandings of academia.

As we examined our works, we found the emergence of certain perspectives:

**From confusion to clarity**

In some ways our original work reveals our levels of confusion or clarity, depending upon how you examine the work. What seems confusing now was as clear as we could be at that time. Initially how we responded to students and colleagues or how we dealt with academic processes seemed confused, a little angry and sometimes disorganized. Over time and through discussions we gained greater understandings and found at least some level of clarity. At first glance at our works suggests clutter and lack of clarity. There seems to be more confusion about topic and point and conclusion. The whats and whys are not always explicit. While art is art – with broad permission for interpretation – looking at our work now makes visible our own lack of clarity. (We will bring examples.) We have returned to examine our work three times so far in our careers. Each time we see a movement toward clarity of purpose, or maybe the development of our own thinking about issues. This movement toward clarity seems to be a part of process. Our pieces represent perspectives of the time, a symbology. Our artistic creations have lives of their own, representing the confusion and bewilderment of our early careers, the experience of obfuscation as we developed as scholars and teachers, and our desires to represent thoughts in process. In our artistic choices we attempted to make the familiar strange, the strange familiar, inviting ourselves, as well as others, to go to different places in our/their brains. We will present examples during our session.

**Same themes**

As we examined our work we saw that the questions that we had then, the themes that we had then, continue to be the issues we reveal and explore now. These themes included development of teaching, pressures of scholarship and the tensions found with the academic environment. Even though the issues are same over time, we do not want our older works to represent where we are now. We find the maturity of thought better presented now. We would like viewers to understand our historical development as thinkers and artists. What we did early in our careers may deal with the same symbols but now we understand them differently. Rather than remaining static, our ideas and our representations offer a peek at the shifting realities around them. We will provide specific examples of our work in our session.

**Holism**

Story, narrative text, often follows a linearity. In contrast, collage avoids linearity and includes both simultaneity and sequentiality. In one holistic moment you can see a life (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). We see in a moment where we are in our perception of an object and its dimensions, even if all the dimensions are not present in the scene. Even if the creation is only two dimensional, there is a dimensionality to it. In our written texts we had detailed particular beliefs about integrity, social justice, trustworthiness as well as identified the influences of philosophical and cultural ideas. When we turn to our collages, we see those issues conveyed – differently and sometimes more powerfully. Holding an artistic representation against a written text offers a compelling juxtaposition of word and image.

**Learning from seeing**

Learning from seeing involves a process of choice. As creators we look at our work, ask questions and invite ourselves to questions what we see. As viewers ask questions and invite ourselves to explore answers, perhaps seeing, for a moment, the perspective of the creator. Looking at the work occurs in a zone of inconclusivity and a zone of maximal contact (Bakhtin, 1981) with self. The creator/viewer drops her facade(s). The tacit symbology emerges. Layers of self are exposed – private, public, institutional self, academic self, and more – and we see our ideas more clearly, see our selves more distinctly. The audience/viewer catches a glimpse into an other’s world. Learning from seeing is an ongoing process. What we choose by juxtaposing pieces against each other, looking at the edges of things and wondering whether and why those pictures, words, images work against each other, offers insight into and disruption of our ideas.

Importantly, the question remains as to whether or not the use of alternative representations supports the research of the scholar. From our perspective, in the absence of critical friends and strong community, the hard work of alternative representations can push ideas forward. Yet, while we find that this process supports us, there are few others currently engaged in this practice.

**SIGNIFICANCE**

While no easy task, returning again to examine our development as people, as teachers, and as scholars, offers a worthy arena to consider possibility. As we each explored our work in critically reflexive fashion we contested our ideas and disputed our purposes as individuals and in collaboration. For us this strengthened our ontological understandings and made explicit our living contradictions. Although cause for considerable internal struggle, use of alternative representations deepens our understandings and perspectives. The hard work of identifying
contradictions, culling integrity imbalances, and uncovering weak theoretical links can potentially undermine the strongest scholar. Yet it must be done to best serve as a model for our colleagues and students in the ways to strengthen both our research and our practice.

More to the point, in the work of alternative representations we walk in the zone of inconclusivity. Intensely in the now, back in historical moments, we anticipate truth, but are jarringly in the now, asking, “What have I done? And don’t I like how I’ve created my future?” We see that in our work the arrows go both ways – viewing what we have done and seen in different ways. Collage provides scholars, teachers, artists, humans the opportunity to de-center views and re-consider claims of reality – ontological claims – and consciously (as much as possible) consider the next steps on their path.

REFERENCES


Collaborative Oral Inquiry: A Self-Study on the Founding of an Early Childhood Educators’ Descriptive Review Group

CONTEXT
Descriptive Review (DR) is a form of narrative teacher inquiry that is oral and collaborative in nature (Carini, 2001; Himley, 2000). I use the practice in my graduate coursework because it provides a form of deep and systematic analysis of qualitative classroom data that does not prioritize the written form. The inquiry takes place as an intense structured conversation among a group of participating teachers. Most Descriptive Reviews focus on a child, although teachers can select a particular example of work, a portfolio of a child’s work over time, or an issue that affects education. As teacher research, DR can expand teachers’ understanding of educational practices and how these practices affect children and families.

Descriptive Process was developed through the work of The Prospect School, a small independent elementary school in Vermont (Himley, 2000), which operated from the mid-1960s until the early 1990s. The Prospect Foundation still maintains extensive archives of children’s work, and the practices of Descriptive Review have spread through a number of teacher networks in North America as a grassroots tool for school reform and social justice (Abu El-Haj, 2003). Within the Descriptive Review of the Child, teachers speak respectfully of the focal child, avoiding judgment of the child, family, or home community. Teachers monitor their language to avoid labels or diagnoses. Instead, the conversation seeks to uncover particulars of a child’s behavior, speech, connections to others, modes of learning, and emotional response to reveal strengths and complexity within the child’s identity. Teachers seek answers for how the teacher, curriculum, assessment practices, and school should change to better support children’s learning and development.

Much of the inquiry happens through the group’s conversation, although prior to the meeting, the Presenting Teacher and a designated Chair have prepared. First, the Presenting Teacher has identified a focal child and a potential path for inquiry. Then the Presenting Teacher documents a set of observations on the child, organizing them to address five categories laid out by the process. These data seek to illustrate a sense of the child and may include observational notes, examples of the child’s work, photos, and excerpts from conversations — either jotted down, or taken from audiotape. The Presenting Teacher rehearses this documentation with the Chair, who takes notes and asks questions until they negotiate a focusing question for the review.

The Review values the wisdom each teacher brings to the conversation, and so ends with all participants making a recommendation to the Presenting Teacher. Therefore, this form of teacher research takes a pragmatic stance by directly addressing daily teaching practice. Yet the goal of the Descriptive Reviews is never to provide right answers for a situation or fixes to a child. Instead, the detailed conversation of a particular example serves all participants as a lens on teaching, learning, institutional constraints, and the role of education in the society. Participants see different facets of the Presenting Teacher’s descriptions and come to different conclusions. Oftentimes participants make suggestions that contradict one another. Such negotiation of perspectives is valued in this narrative inquiry approach. This indeterminate outcome makes sense to experienced educators, who realize the complexity of teaching and learning. That the DR is not primarily a written approach to teacher research is another reason I have adopted it into our program, where many of our students struggle with writing, which blocks them from sharpening their analytic skills.

AIM
The goal of this paper is to examine my role as a teacher educator supporting teachers to learn reflection in- and on-practice (Schön, 1983) using the collaborative inquiry approach of the Descriptive Review (Carini, 2001; Himley, 2000). While studying for their graduate degrees, our students report feeling energized by the challenge of doing research, supported throughout the research process, and recognized for their efforts at undertaking self-directed inquiry (Henderson, 2005). Yet after graduation, educators find it difficult to remain involved in teacher research. Because the Descriptive Review is oral and collaborative, it provides a way for educators to maintain an inquiry stance outside of the bounds of academic research.
6TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON S-STEP | COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY: PUSHING BOUNDARIES

An earlier analysis of leadership and participation patterns in the DR had revealed some inequity of access and engagement within the process. However, I intended that the DR would increase all of our graduate students’ competence and ownership of teacher inquiry. Therefore, the two elements to this inquiry evaluate: (a) the success of the student-run DR group in the Spring 2006 semester; and (b) my role as a teacher educator to facilitate use of the Descriptive Review.

**METHOD**

To reflect on and document the changes from using Descriptive Review in our program and the effectiveness of my role, I used observational field notes on class meetings; notes from advising individuals; collaborative student products that included a pamphlet, display board, and reflective paper; the final course calendar; and the students’ self and peer evaluations. Working through grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I identified and documented three themes central to the project: (a) accountability to course goals, (b) membership, and (c) leadership. In conclusion, I returned to my study proposal to compare findings with my expectations, providing me another self-check on my process.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Findings show that the first semester-long Descriptive Review class met the students’ goals for deepening their understanding of the DR process, building leadership skills, and providing opportunities for collaboration outside of normal courses. Students also met many of their course objectives, including writing an informational pamphlet on the Descriptive Review, creating a display board for the College of Education, and conducting a range of DRs with group members taking on a variety of roles. They also presented one DR in a graduate class, with the other students acting as the participating teachers. The students were not successful with some of their objectives: they did not expand membership of the group, nor did they find a school site that welcomed them in to present a DR. Nonetheless, looking forward, the three students who have not yet graduated are committed to continue the project. They plan to extend the experience through the next academic year as a student-run graduate class, and as a student club. Self and peer evaluations reported an overall positive experience with the class. One student commented in the reflective paper, I have never wanted to be so successful in a college class, and I believe that is because the class was run by us.

Early planning and goal setting

One year prior to this class, and throughout the next fall semester, I met with Frances (pseudonym), the student who spearheaded the Descriptive Review class. We discussed whether our graduate program could support a DR class. We settled on an independent study that would require enrolled students to meet regularly, that is, a student-run class. I offered to help set course expectations, occasionally attend class meetings, advise individually, and evaluate the final products. Frances was committed to making collaborative products and participation in DRs as the means to evaluate student performance.

**Membership**

From the start of these planning meetings and throughout Spring 2006, membership in the group was a recurring theme. When Frances and I planned, an early topic was how many participants the group would need to function effectively. Frances’s major concern was managing a group of too many, wondering how she would provide leadership, and if they could remain focused at a level of sufficient sophistication. Therefore, we advertised the course for students who had some experience with DR, typically through a course they would have taken with me. To our surprise, when Spring semester began, only 4 students attended the first meeting. These students felt anxious that so few had chosen to take the class, and the initial two meetings included a good deal of discussion on how they might expand membership.

Membership also had emotional significance. By being members of such a small group, students were aware that the input of every person was crucial to success. As they met with me individually, and as they wrote in their final reflective paper and course assessments, students described feeling energized and recognized because of the intensity. For example, one student wrote, I found a small group of educators who came together because of DP [Descriptive Process], but will stay connected because of the class (Course Assessment, Evaluation of the Group). In the same part of the evaluation, another student wrote,

I felt important, like what I had to say was being listened to and even sometimes implemented. […] I have never had the experience of being part of a small group that had so much value and so much potential. In the final reflective paper, a third student wrote, This mutual relationship is something I hoped I would find at SFSU. And Frances wrote, It takes people who are passionate about learning and doing DR. A small group, as we had, is fine as long as people are able to take on a lot of responsibility.

Trying to engage others in the group was a project throughout the semester. The students tried to draw in early childhood education professionals from outside the university. They were eager that these experts attend some of the DRs, and provide feedback on their pamphlet. They also invited graduate school colleagues to attend their first DR. No one else attended this first DR, and no one other than I attended any of the other regularly scheduled DRs. We did recruit one other class member who attended about six classes in the middle of the semester. Frances wrote in the reflective paper, Somehow there needs to be a plan to “initiate” new people to the DR group experience.

The group was successful in presenting one of the DRs in a graduate course. I could not attend this DR, but my TA, the substitute instructor, and the DR class members
concurred that it was a powerful presentation. My TA, who had been Presenting Teacher in one DR, and participated in a several others, said it was the best DR she had experienced, and that it provided an excellent model and many insights. The group listed the class presentation on their final course calendar, yet surprisingly, this one clear success of outreach did not factor centrally in the reflective paper or the assessment.

Planning and goal setting by the group
The first class meeting helped clarify my role in providing leadership and accountability. At least one of the students expected a more traditional professor-led class. They discovered I would not be setting readings, assignments, or the class structure. I would attend only occasionally during the semester, and would evaluate their final projects, whatever these turned out to be.

Led by Frances, the students outlined and agreed upon 3 goals: to become experts in the Descriptive Review process, to provide opportunities for collaboration, and to build leadership skills. The group also developed some of their objectives during this first meeting. As described above, they hoped to expand membership. They also would conduct a number of DRs with group members taking on the leadership roles of Chair and Presenting Teacher, and trying a variety of ways to focus the reviews. One student suggested a pamphlet as an outreach tool. The display board, collaborative paper, and the course/peer/self-assessment would come later.

The student-led class met weekly and focus shifted over the semester. Their earliest classes used readings to learn how to conduct meetings and to deepen their expertise on the Descriptive Process. Next, they addressed doing Descriptive Reviews together, using class time to plan and present DRs. At the end of the semester, they spent more time planning and creating products to demonstrate their accountability. The pamphlet, the display board, collaborative work, and they did to establish the group as a student club served the pragmatic goals of sustaining the group through the next academic year. There were two issues concerning these products. One student wrote about the need to formalize a grading policy, especially if future classes are large, or members do not pull together as they did this Spring. I agreed, and will put a more structured system in place for Fall.

Leadership
Leadership within this group was the third important theme. The class demanded shared leadership, but also required direction. Frances began the semester as the leader. In our early meetings, we had discussed how she would need to share leadership, so that all could participate fully. Frances wrote, I learned how to let go of control this semester, to allow other group members to take on responsibilities [...] I cannot do this kind of advocacy work alone. [...] good leaders show others how to lead (Course Assessment, Self Evaluation).

The other central aspect of leadership within the group was developing rapport, while remaining professional. Within normal courses, the presence of a professor and the formal structure of a class keep discussion respectful and focused. The student-led class opened up new challenges. Students were aware of the expectation to speak professionally during the Descriptive Reviews; I noticed the same challenge within segments of meetings not part of a DR. For example, in the second meeting, I observed them criticizing a colleague. In reviewing my field notes, I wondered why I hadn’t raised the point. Perhaps I had been working to hold back and let them assume leadership. Additional aspects of leadership overlap with other sections of this paper, including goal setting, membership, individual accountability for tasks and attendance, and the coordinated responsibility of the group to complete the final collaborative products, which were of solid quality.

CONCLUSION: ASSESSMENT OF MY ROLE AND IMPLICATIONS
As I proposed this paper, I saw how this study would help me critically examine five aspects of my practice: 1) How and why I introduced Descriptive Review into our program, 2) Who participated in the Descriptive Reviews, 3) How I supported a new student-run course on the Descriptive Review, 4) How I participated in this student-run class, and 5) An examination of student leadership within the class.

Four of these are represented in what I’ve written. I also found some unexpected facets with respect to the themes of membership and goal setting. The only missing aspect deals with who participated in the DRs and whether that participation represented inequity of access. My Fall 2005 experience with Descriptive Review in a graduate class provided me further opportunity to see how our students engaged with leadership in the Descriptive Process. I stepped back and offered the students the roles of both Presenting Teacher and Chair, and explicitly provided an option for credit through participation in DR. It was a surprising departure that twelve students who represented the diversity of our graduate student population stepped forward. The students who volunteered to be Presenting Teachers met outside of class with other students who volunteered as Chairs, then each group presented in class. My stepping back, not expecting that I needed to be Chair for each DR, significantly opened the floor to students’ participation. Even though the students had to arrange their schedules to meet outside of class — a difficult feat given the professional, family, and school responsibilities our students juggled — all of them did it, meeting for a minimum of two hours to prepare for the class presentations. The course schedule and other factors provided space for eight of them to present for the class, and the quality of these student-run inquiries was remarkable.

My work with DR over the past academic year, including but not limited to the DR class of Spring 2006 that is the focus of this paper, showed that like Frances, I had to
learn to step back, cede control to the process, and trust that the students could do it – indeed far better than I could ever do alone. This semester-long class — even though (or maybe because?) it included a seven-week period when I was ill and not present at school — provided an opportunity that worked for four of the five students who participated, and for all four who enrolled at the start of the semester. Students not previously friends, with different profiles as students, as professionals, and from a range of family backgrounds, found ways to form a cohesive group. They bonded with each other, and met many of their goals, even though they faced significant challenges: the small number participating in what should be a collaborative group inquiry negotiating across multiple perspectives, and that they could convince no one else to join them.

In conclusion, the group ended the semester feeling supremely successful, either ready to continue, or sorry that they could not because of graduation and relocation. As I reflect on my use of the Descriptive Process, I wonder how I can extend my use of it, while keeping it fresh. At the same time, a major concern arising from these findings is how to increase students’ ability to keep discourse professional in student-led settings. The students may not have been aware that they sometimes spoke in non-professional ways during segments of their class meetings, yet in the final assessment, all commented on this problem within some of the DRs. Their consensus was that it was hard for all members, except the one man in the group, to take the Chair’s role of stepping in to redirect conversation, and that this lack compromised the value of some inquiries.

Frances also talked about the need for straight talk in other aspects of the meetings. She writes, *I have not yet learned how to objectively express my needs […]. Usually I avoid the entire situation, and ignore behavior that makes me upset* (Course Assessment, Self Evaluation).

A graduate student I had five years ago made a related comment, noting dismay that her colleagues rarely debated points raised by the readings, which made seminar discussions disappointing for her. As that class considered her point, we agreed that within the profession of early childhood education, people prefer to get along rather than confront. Implications of these related findings show that I need to change my teaching to support students to state points strongly, speak up against bias and judgment in informal settings, and speak honestly about their needs with respect to work within a group.

As a final point, I also wonder how my interaction with students may unintentionally reify societal inequities of race and primarily language, even as I mean to work in ways that oppose bias. Implications from my Fall class and the Spring student-run class suggest that students need time built into graduate work where they are expected to meet outside of normal class structures to develop their own capacity to collaborate and lead.

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Self-Study... So What?
Self through SITE as Innovative Wedge Informs Program Development

INTRODUCTION
This paper will focus on how a research project examining ways in which undergraduate school integrated teacher education (SITE) courses created communities of practice. In this teacher education community, student teachers and teacher educators “were always simultaneously dealing with specific situations, participating in the histories of certain practices, and involved in becoming certain persons” (Wenger, 1998, p. 155). In this paper we will offer insights as to how the SITE project influenced two teacher educators and five student teachers.

In this study, SITE courses included a Language Arts (LA) methods course, two sections of a Physical Education (PE) methods course and two school based seminar classes. In SITE courses, preservice teachers participated in lessons taught in local schools as a fundamental part of learning course content. In PE methods courses the university instructors taught 8 of 44 classes to school children, with preservice teachers gradually taking over the teaching of two lessons in the school; in Language Arts methods classes, classroom teachers modeled their practice in three lessons before giving preservice teachers an opportunity to teach their classes of children on their own. In the seminar classes, preservice teachers visited schools five times as part of the course requirements to observe how schools and classrooms functioned and to assist teachers.

We advocate that a critical component of self-study should be to shift from a focus on the individualistic ideas of self-improvement, attempting to become the ideal teacher or the innovative champion of new approaches, to notions of reframing self within communities that seek to continually define and redefine the role of teacher. In this way, communities of practice in teaching, as articulated by Wenger (1998), frame learning as becoming a teacher/teacher educator in the practice of being a teacher in a context that acknowledges both university learning and school learning about teaching.

Similar to Samaras’ (2002) notions of self-study and situated learning, the SITE project created time and space for a collaborative mutually-informing community to develop practice. Drawing on our previous work (Hopper & Sanford, 2004a, 2004b), we reflect in this paper on how collaborative self-study enriched our own practice and understandings, at the same time raising our fears that this knowledge can become isolated and resisted within organizing structures that perpetuates traditional values, individual achievement, hierarchical control, and maintenance of a patriarchal status quo. We continually seek to bridge the gaps that exist between teacher education research projects and traditionally constructed teacher education programs that perpetuate fragmented courses and subject area content. To address this challenge we have sought alternative ways of connecting with a range of colleagues and students. In this paper we have tried to provide ways to represent our findings in a poetic form that speaks directly to participants and non-participants, to actively engage appreciative and resistant readers, to initiate discussion on a self-study perspective to teacher education, and ultimately to inform how we learn knowledge to teach.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY
The SITE courses were taught to a cohort of student teachers. The SITE project created opportunities for self-study communities of teachers, university instructors, and preservice teachers that invited each participant, individually and collectively, to critically reflect on his or her own developing and ongoing understanding of teaching and learning. The research team met biweekly over the course of three years, and regular retreats were held with school staff, student teachers and principals, providing ongoing spaces for genuine conversation that drew on reflections of teaching and learning and offered beneficial perspectives on those reflections and actions.

Our previous reporting of the SITE project consistently showed personal growth for all participants (Sanford & Hopper, 2005) and allowed “teacherly conversations” that inspired learning about teaching ideas (Hopper & Sanford, 2005), the most notable being the Children’s Global Arts project where connections were made via art with children in Canada, and children in Afghanistan, Iraq, South Africa and India, around the theme “The World We Want” (Sanford & Hopper, in press). However,
CONFIDENCE in teaching: Things I think I learned

One of the things learned
I really was worried about
I was a little bit confused
BUT
I was holding on to what I have inside
I thought that’s okay
that’s just who I am
that’s not going to change
I am more expressive
more open
more willing to explore
that has changed

Being in the classroom
having a chance to see what really works

I’ve learned to hold on to what I have inside
Developing confidence
learning how I will react

I felt uncomfortable at first

To invite colleagues into the SITE experience and to present insights from student teachers who have reflected back on the SITE experience, we have draw on poetic representations. Richardson (1992) notes that poetic representation lends itself to how people actually speak; it can reflect their pauses, tone and attitude. Poetry evokes emotion, imagery and response from readers as they engage in the text, the gaps and the possibilities created by the spaces. Similarly, Sparkes (2002) says, “Poetic representation can engage the reader emotionally; reflect the ethnopoetics of everyday life and use the individuals’ voices in sensitive and meaningful ways; touch us where we live, in our bodies; allow the researcher and reader to step into the shoes of the other; and see, feel and analyze the familiar in new ways (p. 135).” Such a promise seemed like an ideal way to draw colleagues and student teachers into a lived sense of SITE courses.

ANALYSIS

Five student teachers were interviewed as they advanced through the teacher education program. They were asked questions that focused on identifying how they learned, differences in the SITE experience from their typical preparation in the program and how those differences influenced their development as teachers. Two teacher educators were interviewed, and were asked to reflect on their experiences with the SITE program and how these experiences influenced their understanding of teacher education. Transcripts from student teachers and teacher educators were coded by three researchers. Clusters of recurring patterns of data associated with the SITE experience were identified. Focusing on the organizing theme of confidence for the student teachers and learning about teacher education for the teacher educators, patterns of meaning were represented as key words and sentences out of the participants’ transcripts. In a form of found poem, participants’ original words were identified and then arranged into a poetic form representing the collective voices of the participants. The visual representation at times emphasizes the I of the participant and then the text slides to the we or the shared experience and then shifts back again. The poems offer a thematic playback of participants’ own words edited purposefully to engage the reader with emotions, images and responses related to participants’ development.

FINDINGS

The first poem represents the voices of five student teachers reflecting on SITE courses.
I’ve grown immensely as a teacher
started out as someone with no experience
now able to go to a classroom
feel comfortable
I know how to take care of the curriculum
I know how to manage kids
I really felt like
I was a student teacher
I was practicing, developing
Now
I could be a teacher
I was a teacher in the schools
I am a teacher
I’ve learned the necessary tools
to continue to develop
SITE courses helpful
Oh absolutely,
more than anything,
just feeling comfortable being there
more and more
I can take over as a teacher now
Just walking into a classroom feeling
comfortable
being there
the first time I went to teach PE
I was just terrified of them
I don’t know why.
I don’t know why I was so terrified.
I wasn’t terrified of the kids
just of the whole school
the teachers at the school.
I had the impression that I would be a good teacher
I derived validation
from the marks in class
I still had that mind set . . .
high achiever kind of thing
didn’t take very long to figure out
I had to be competent
learn the things
I needed to learn
much more important
was to take those things and apply them
when we started to go into
little PE classes
all the time
a light was going on in my head
oh yeah…
we are supposed to be doing this
oh yeah…
this is what we learned.
actually seeing it
an environment that was safe
I wasn’t the centre
of the teaching show
was a safe place to start
having the things
that would prove me
to be a good teacher
how to be involved in the school with the staff
everyday running
of the school
I think being flexible is huge
you really have to be flexible
because of the programs
for the kids
I remember
    I had a breakthrough
    teaching our PE dance lesson.
There was a point when I caught myself,
I was teaching,
    watching the cute little things
    wondering if they were getting it,
then realizing... they were learning.
    It was really quite neat.
I knew the routine of the lesson so well
    I could actually focus my attention
    on the kids!
It seems so selfish
    when you realize how much time
    I’ve been thinking about myself!

So many things I’m learning...

The poem reflects how the student teachers existed in-between the university contentness based notion of learning to teach and the school practicalness of being a teacher. Opportunities to observe lessons, teach peers and then teach children, be teachers in the eyes of children, talk with teachers, share stories with instructors and peers about teaching and learning all allowed the student teachers to learn to be teachers as they learned content knowledge for teaching. They learned to contextualize knowledge as they came to own it and connect ideas to theories taught at the university.

The second poem represents the combined voices of the authors as teacher educators, reflecting on their experiences with the SITE project as they grappled with the continued separateness between their knowledge gained through research and the ongoing practices within the program in which they work.

SITE as collaborative stories of learning to teach
So, the concept is that teacher education works best if
    it is located in schools
    connecting... university with what teachers and schools are doing
two separate worlds trying to do the same thing --
    preparing people to become teachers
    but
    they never talked...

    antagonism between the two
    never went away or got resolved...nothing happened
I was told...spending too much time in schools
    I was told...it’s not worth it...too hard work
I wanted an experience...authentic
    learn by going to school.
    See children learning
    with the methods you are taught
I wanted to start the way
    I want to do it my whole career

Teachers themselves need to be part of the teacher education process
talking to student teachers
    supporting their teaching of children,
supporting our teaching of student teachers
    a reciprocal kind of thing
our student teachers are learning about students’ learning as an integral part of making it happen. In the schools they were more receptive to theorizing about teacher education they were nervous then got excited…the whole thought of teaching mentally preparing themselves in a different way learning how to talk to kids…to stand…to dress, what teaching feels like natural progression as they thought about what they were teaching why they were teaching why it’s important learning

Student teachers see kids in gymnasiums…outside classrooms saw differences saw kids that suddenly had personalities very different in classroom or gym. they could write a story about a kid

When I first started…very much being at the centre wanted me to perform show my work I was letting go of having to be THE person that taught discussion moved in a different kind of direction not about whether we knew more, or whether they knew more but about how we could all work together develop teachers who have a sustained and successful career teaching recognizing that you can’t do teacher education without the schools what changed things was that we could all see the same agenda

I was teaching…inviting student teachers in
maximising student learning teachers letting go of making me the expert more about how we together create an environment where students learn

student teachers working one on one did things I can’t do conversation…focuses on student learning

worked with me in school then did their preplanning practice at the University then taught in schools. combination so rich

everything comes from many stories that they tell experiences of teaching

teachers tell me… parents clapping on the stage boys enjoying dance doing gymnastics now readers’ theatre we’re having many more conversations in isolation you don’t have those kinds of conversations

people in a profession need people they can share with the good and the bad better prepared to address the complexities it takes a lot of time consultation and coordination with teachers you have to be flexible, accommodating of other people and the way they see things student teachers can never be top priority on teachers’ list
sustainability of school integrated teacher education is difficult
requires on-going self-examination
but
there’s a belief from the whole community involved
support
commitment
desire
try different things
network
make connections

I am amazed…
what we are achieving in SITE

Understand practice
improve situation where it take places.
create communities that allow people
to make a difference
Tell stories of children’s global arts
dodgeball to handball
creative dance year three and year five
LA and PE together
and rest of career

you give people who want to teach
opportunities to do something special
they grab hold of it and do it.
everybody wants to be a good teacher
react badly if they feel that they are not

not about me teaching better
about what is around the classes that I teach
School lessons didn’t work the way I thought
I needed to change it…at the University let’s try this
suddenly got that intimate knowledge
professional and contextual coming together

a lot of stepping back
if I say “no way, it’s my way” or “forget it”
we will lose the whole essence of what we are trying to attain
if you solidify any part of this program…it isn’t what we are actually advocating

working with other people, opened up all kinds of possibilities
they had a way of seeing the project work
not necessarily accommodate my needs
needed to look at teacher education from different perspectives
To understand where each other is coming from
Continually re-shifting

 Broadening my understanding

SITE community gave me language system
describe what I see, what we do
causes the transformation
Rhizomatic…very rich
…then it starts to spread
more and more buy-in
becomes supporting structure
environment now about learning

I think learning to teach is creating a reflective base
an aptitude
I changed
seeing this mechanism comes from what people see,
do…
how they can record that…pass it on.
stories of learning

Like a weaving
The more I am in school
The more I get a sense of the context and teaching
the more they have exposure to me and the way I think teach and believe
It makes things stand out when you hear their voices
Synergy of all of us learning here
Shapes how you understand teacher education
I remember vividly
It’s really about connecting, talking, sharing knowledge
Everybody knows important things
Needs to be opportunities for everybody to share what they know well
Have successes
Power and potential for acknowledging people as worthwhile
we have retreats—teachers, students and instructors, able to speak this collective language
rather than “I”, more talk on the basis of “we”
taking a step back from being cast the hero
realizing you do it within a group...the narrative they create...on going
we keep
making stories that people can’t divide
The project is
Pushing on the structures
Break down barriers
between institutions between people between isolated knowledge

Overcome those barriers in peoples’ minds

DISCUSSION
As we analyzed the SITE experience we noted there is a lack of hierarchy. We share our own stories, interweave them, and talk. It is through these exchanges that, as individuals, we come to realize our analysis, develop new ideas, and articulate goals. The view that we are ourselves living contradictions continually nudge us to question our actions, motives, and beliefs (Whitehead, 1993). Self-study begins with self-reflection, but must involve community—a caring community where we can openly examine our actions in relation to our practice (LaBoskey, 2001). As we share stories we co-construct meanings around a joint adventure, one that draws us to meet, share, reflect and act again with renewed insights and additional perspectives. Each member of the group, through stories, shares their own vulnerabilities, concerns, frustrations, but also joys, success and growth as problems become challenges, as anxieties become a self-narrative of learning, and as group understanding becomes a place to energize our efforts and see progress in our struggles.

The vision for teacher education that continues to develop from the SITE meetings has reinforced a commitment to the practice of creating situated learning experiences, where we share practices, ideas, and check understandings with peers who are connected to the trajectory of the practices and the history of initiatives (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The SITE meetings were only possible with the support of external funding, and now we often find ourselves too busy to meet; however, we are still connected by a common insight. We wish we could reproduce the SITE community within the infrastructure of the teacher education program; progress is slow. We feel that self-study in teacher education needs to be grounded in shared lived experiences that are committed to creating contexts of productive learning whose trajectories are linked to the role of being a teacher in a school.

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INTRODUCTION
In this paper we begin to explore a concept that we have found of value in considering our professional development as teacher educators: we have termed this dialogue in self-study. The context for our preliminary exploration of dialogue is the development of an initial teacher education course in the field of special educational needs (SEN). One of the authors, Joy, was engaged in a project to develop this course, drawing on new ways of teaching, learning and assessment. We describe how the two authors, Joy and Helen came together to engage with a particular issue that was central to the further development of the course. To understand what happened as we talked together about this issue, we found ourselves reflecting on the nature of our communication, using concepts such as conversation, discussion and dialogue. We set out our current understanding of the difference between these later in the paper. We examine how moving towards dialogue in self-study enabled Joy to develop a clearer perspective on her role as a teacher educator in relation to this course and its students.

CONTEXT
Joy
I had been working for over three years on a project designed to support student teachers’ understanding of the experiences of children with SEN in mainstream classrooms. This project was a personal inquiry into my practice, and over time involved a number of staff and several cohorts of students. The project developed from my dissatisfaction with teaching a module about children with SEN that focused on giving information about disabilities. I identified that many students had stereotypical views about children with SEN which focused on giving information about disabilities. I realised that many students had stereotypical views about children with SEN which a teaching approach involving lectures about different aspects of SEN did not challenge. If these views were to change, I realised I needed to help students identify their perspectives and provide a way of challenging them. Traditional teaching approaches did not seem to provide these opportunities, so I decided to make a radical change to my way of working and to teach the module through narrative. I used stories to engage students emotionally as well as intellectually. The assessment of the module outcomes involved students writing stories, poems, or developing images to reflect the voice of the child with SEN. Additionally, students kept reflective logs to document the process of researching and developing their assignments. The assessment focused on students’ perceptions of children with SEN and their ability to convey these through story and image.

I was aware that self-study in teacher education requires practitioners to “systematically collect evidence from their practice...” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p.2). My inquiry had involved collecting evidence through interviews, questionnaires, focus groups with students, and through analysis students’ reflective logs. The student data indicated many students had shifted their perceptions in three major ways: a) from making negative comments to making more positive statements about children; b) from seeing problems to identifying teachers’ responsibilities; and c) exploring issues of social justice. I also sought the views of others, including colleagues, visiting teachers and external examiners, all of whom concurred with the opinion that this narrative approach was an effective way of working. Despite this apparent positive effect, I realised that my methods were open to challenge and that I needed to look more deeply at what I was doing in order to be able to articulate the processes involved. Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) argue that the purpose of the systematic data collection is to allow practitioners to “rethink and potentially open themselves to new interpretations” (p. 2). Had this been the case with this project?

The area where I had particularly expected challenge from colleagues had been in relation to the end of module assignment, which involved students producing a story or poem written as if in the voice of a child with an identified SEN. This was a different form of assessment from the usual essay or presentation, but staff and external examiners had agreed with the marking process and outcomes. I wanted to explore the issues around narrative assignments with people outside the university, and an opportunity to present a conference paper on this topic provided the impetus for me to work with Helen.
Joy and Helen
In raising the issues around assessment of narrative assignments with those who would attend the conference, Joy was opening up an area of her practice to examination. She was also opening it up to a colleague, Helen, who was to co-author the conference paper. As we came together to talk about assessment of narrative assignments we faced this question: How do we open ourselves to new interpretations of what constitutes valid assessment in higher education? This seemed a necessary area for inquiry given the innovative nature of the teaching and assessment in this project.

Loughran and Northfield (1998) argue the importance of the role of the other in self-study. If the process is to involve reframing of perceptions, beliefs and understandings, then it cannot be undertaken alone. Helen’s expertise and experience in the field of assessment seemed particularly relevant in developing this aspect of the course. While having some knowledge of the SEN project, she had not been involved in it to any great extent. Initially, we saw our way of working together to write the paper as unproblematic. We were going to talk about the issues and decide what to say at the conference. However, we became aware in talking about the issues and developing our ideas that we needed to take notice of the process we were engaged in and question how far this enabled us to open ourselves to new interpretations.

CONVERSATION, DISCUSSION, DIALOGUE?
In the literature of self-study (e.g., Guilfoyle, Placier, Hamilton, & Pinnegr, 2002; Russell & Bullock, 1999) and more generally, the terms, conversation, discussion, and dialogue, have all been linked with professional learning. The terms themselves are sometimes used interchangeably, but here we shall draw some distinctions between them. We have found it useful to examine the nature of each of these forms of interaction, in order to understand our experience in working together. The word, conversation, is used to describe a range of exchanges with different purposes. On the one hand it refers to our everyday casual exchanges and on the other hand is given a particular role in learning (e.g., Haigh, 2005; Senge, 1994). Haigh (2005) identifies a number of features of conversations that have relevance for us including their improvisatory quality, equality of status of participants, and the fact that they are generally perceived as non-threatening. In contrast, discussion is more likely to be planned for, to have an identified focus, and to involve participants in stating their own views and perspectives. Bohm (1996) describes discussion as involving analysis of ideas, describing and explaining different points of view, whereas dialogue is defined by its capacity to create new meanings through participants’ willingness to question their underlying assumptions and what lies behind them. In our account of working together we identify how we saw ourselves as engaging in conversation, discussion and dialogue and how these contributed to our learning.

DEVELOPING THE CONFERENCE PAPER: DIFFERENT WAYS OF TALKING
Our first meeting was at Joy’s house and we spent much of the day talking more about our interests than the conference presentation. Stories and anecdotes of what we had read or experienced were exchanged. In some ways this was a surprising start for both of us, but seemed an important part of the process. On later reflection we saw the important role that conversation can play in laying the foundations for other forms of interaction. Pearce (1994) has noted that when we come to an interaction we bring not just our linguistic skills but also our understanding of the context, our understanding of our own and the other’s roles, our history and our cultural context. Participants in interaction, therefore, are not just exchanging linguistic meaning; they are establishing their own and each other’s identities. While we were not consciously attending to the process of conversation, it would seem that we tacitly understood the need to engage in this way before we could move on.

The second meeting did involve discussion of the course and the conference presentation. At this meeting we each talked about our perspective on the assessment of narrative assignments. Joy advocated the importance of recognizing the role of students’ tacit knowledge and valuing this in the assessment process. Helen put forward a view of the importance of students being able to articulate their knowledge and understanding more explicitly. At this point we were identifying our differences, our separate perspectives. For each of us the creation of a space in which we could articulate our perspective was important, acknowledging the significance of surfacing (Schon, 1983) tacit understandings and implicit meanings. In giving voice to our views in the presence of someone else who was attending to what we said we were making them clearer and more visible to ourselves. In another context Helen had experienced the power of making one’s own practice, experience and values explicit through interviews (Burchell & Dyson 2005).

The third meeting focused on developing the conference presentation on the assessment of narrative assignments. Joy described herself as holding her position less strongly and being willing to seek other ways of thinking about the issues. Helen recognized that pressing too soon for an agreed position regarding assessment of narrative assignments would be counterproductive. In Bohm’s (1996) terms, we had moved on to negotiation, which he sees as a preliminary stage in dialogue. What further steps would we need to take to participate in dialogue? We recognized that we would each need to identify and suspend assumptions and in so doing step back from the positions we had taken so that a space was created for something new. Bohm (1996) uses Krishnamurti’s analogy of a cup needing to be empty before anything can be put in it. To create this empty space is a real challenge when collaborating in self-study: it makes significant emotional and intellectual demands on each participant. It also begs the question as to whether it is actually possible to empty the cup. Moreover, trying to understand
what it might mean to begin the emptying seems important.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Joy
I have found engaging in conversation, discussion and dialogue provided significant opportunity for challenging my own perspectives. It complemented the data collection and analysis that I had already undertaken. I am now more able to articulate my understanding of the project and how it may achieve its goals. I am also more open to considering changes in the assessment process and potentially in other aspects of this work. Appreciating the value of the talk we engaged in, I would like students to have opportunities for learning in this way, and aim to structure learning opportunities for students to engage in conversations in the field of SEN with the possibility of moving to discussion and even dialogue.

Joy and Helen
We have both learned that talking with a colleague as part of self-study needs careful attention. If working with others is seen as important in self-study in order to help teacher educators reframe the way they think about and undertake their work, we need to identify what will enable us to do this. We recognise that shared dialogue requires risk taking (Russell & Bullock, 1999) and that a context of safety, trust and care for authentic conversation and professional learning is important (Clark, 2001). By considering more carefully what we mean by words such as conversation, discussion, and dialogue, we hope we will be better able to identify and take the steps we need to open ourselves to new interpretations.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of one’s teaching is a curious and emotional paradox. Often, one does not know where or how to begin. Do I start with my own impressions? Do I leave my impressions aside and resort solely to data collected? Or, do I rely on the reflections of my own teaching based on data collected, and thus hope for an impartial analysis of both? Or, is self-study near impossible because when all is said and done, you are simply writing about yourself?

Obviously, I would not be writing this paper or participating in this conference if I thought that self-study were an impossible task. If I thought that self-study were simply an exercise in scholarly narcissism, I would not take the time to examine a field that is so contextually rich with informative and engaging understandings of what it means to teach. The core of self-study is the self-examination of one’s own pedagogical beliefs as evidenced in one’s own teaching and scholarship and thus, I believe, a most worthwhile and productive endeavor. I believe that knowing thyself is the ultimate goal of any educator, and thus, self-study becomes the perfect and logical vehicle to explore this most intriguing of all academic questions: How do I teach and given what I learn, how can I improve my teaching?

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

For considerable time, I have always been intrigued with the notion of affective education. As I define affective education, I mean the intersection of pedagogy and knowledge whereby all participants engage in their instruction through an examination of self. Individuals learn who they are – their values, beliefs, identities – as they study the material in question. Hence, teaching and learning are intimately connected to a very personal self-examination of one’s feelings and ideas as they simultaneously explore the subject matter at hand.

This task, the personal self-examination one’s feelings and ideas in regards to one’s teaching, is by no means easy and certainly not meant as academic shorthand for applying a less rigorous and engaging approach to scholarly research. I am not doing self-study to avoid doing true academic research. Instead, I am doing self-study because I believe that when self-study is done right, it is academic research. Moreover, I believe that my self-study of my teaching can help me understand what it means to be an effective teacher and how my analysis can relate to my own understanding of affective education.

The affective education movement began essentially with the work of Abraham Maslow. In the 1950s, Maslow (1987) began his studies of peak experiences whereby instead of studying problems, Maslow studied successes. He wanted to know what human beings who were happy and content seemed to be doing right. His emphasis on well-being instead of illness and failure, revolutionized the field of educational psychology and has since shaped a generation of educational leaders, thinkers and practitioners.

Maslow’s (1987) work led to the development of the stages of a hierarchical development, which are the stages all individuals must proceed through to become a fully realized and engaged human being. Beginning by establishing a secure relationship with one’s guardians and environment, Maslow defined the developmental steps that led to an eventual self-actualization of one’s cognitive and psychological understanding of self. Knowing who you truly are meant an implicit understanding of what it means to transcend oneself so that one may ultimately and profoundly give to others. Maslow’s belief that self-actualization is possible is, like all developmental theories, based on the assumption that one’s attainment of self-actualization is always a constant striving towards a desired goal, and not an end in and of itself.

Maslow’s seminal work in human development was quickly followed by Carl Rogers’s (1969) landmark text, Freedom to Learn, a work centered on his client-centered approach to therapy. Clearly concerned with an individual’s feelings, Rogers asked those who want to help others to concentrate solely on a person’s emotional well-being. His emphasis was on how a person’s feelings and beliefs shape their own perceptions of self and more importantly, how their perceptions influence and shape their actions. Revolutionary for his time, Rogers helped usher into study a movement whereby raw emotional
content became the leading indicating educational data for examining one’s beliefs and practices.

Until the 1970s, though, there were no formal curricula — school-based or otherwise — designed to enhance self-concepts, emotional and/or social growth. Not until the University of Massachusetts began to recognize the significance of Maslow’s and Rogers’s work and its influence on curriculum decision-making did humanistic educational practices come into their own. At that institution, seminal work was begun in the designing and implementing curriculum methodology for the study of self-concept, values clarification and conflict resolution.

The result was the transition from a more subject-centered approach to learning to a more student-centered approach. Instead of asking students to adjust to understanding the subject matter or the teacher’s style for imparting knowledge about the subject matter, curriculum specialists asked teachers to examine how best students learn. Adapting to individual learner differences became the penultimate goal of classroom instruction.

Slowly but surely, the work of leading educational and psychological thinkers began to take hold in the designing of curriculum for elementary and secondary instruction. Dewey’s (1938) work on participatory democracy in the classroom, Kohlberg’s (1981) work on moral development, Gardner’s (1983) theory on multiple intelligences, Goleman’s (1995) effort on behalf of emotional intelligence and Greene (1995) and Eisner’s (2002) work on art education, all began to play an intricate part in defining what has come to be called humanistic or affective education. The emphasis was on studying the whole child.

AIM/OBJECTIVE
My own reading of Brookfield’s (1995) book, Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher, initiated for me my own sense of what it means to be a true reflective practitioner. Always intrigued by the notion of self and how self-identity relates to classroom instruction, I began to ask myself and my colleagues hard questions about what it truly means to be an effective and affective educational leader. I also began to reassess, or at least place a greater emphasis on, the meaning of a reflective thinker. “To put it briefly,” writes Brookfield (1995), reflection becomes critical when it has two distinctive purposes. The first is to understand how consideration of power undergirds, frames and distorts educational processes and interaction. The second is to question assumptions and practices that seem to make our teaching life easier, but actually work against our own long term interests. (p. 8)

With this in mind, I have made my life’s work the continual self-examination of my own teaching. Having always asked my students to examine their own lives in relationship to the curriculum decision-making choices that they are or will eventually make, I, too, ask myself to do the same. Thus, this paper’s purpose is to examine how my teaching has been shaped by the works and teachings of humanistic educators, and how best, I can convey my beliefs and understandings of this approach to teaching and learning to my own students.

METHOD
Consistent with the notion that self-study is the “natural direction of all us who seek ways to improve” (Feldman, 2003, p.27) their teaching practices, I used self-study methods to examine my own instructional methodology. I teach preservice and inservice teachers at a large metropolitan university in central Florida. Primarily, I teach undergraduate and graduate classes in instructional methodology for both elementary and secondary students. Each academic year, I teach close to 300 students.

This study is my examination of my classroom methodology for one particular undergraduate methods course in teaching instructional practices for engaging students in their own learning. This class had 45 students, all preservice teachers, either becoming elementary or secondary teachers. By gathering data from this one class, I was able to examine my own teaching and how such a collaborative perception of the data – mine, my students’ and my colleagues’ observations — of what occurs during my classroom instruction better informs and articulates my teaching beliefs, values and methodology.

Following the Cole & Knowles (1998, 2000) definition of self-study as qualitative research turned inward, I followed the naturalistic research design of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Schon (1987), which allows for foci, groupings, and assumptions to emerge as the study evolves. Relying on multiple sources of data – personal observations and recollections, student perceptions and formal evaluations of my teaching, and my colleagues’ observations and analysis of my teaching – I collected a stream of data that helped me shape and inform my analysis of my classroom instructional design choices, and thus define the results of my self-study analysis.

My self-examination of my teaching practices follows a classic format for analyzing my information for patterns of words, ideas and perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) as filtered through my own lens of the participant observer (Schon, 1983). This work in self-study is shaped and defined by the work of other self-study researchers (Allender, 2001; Bass, Anderson-Patton, & Allender, 2002; Berry & Loughran, 2002; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Loughran, 2002; Munby & Russell, 1995; Pollard, 2002; Schuck, 2002; Snow, 2001; Whitehead, 2000) who further defined my framework analysis with the knowledge that instead of I, the teacher, being the expert, the group within the context of the learning experience becomes the collective expert. Thus, to paraphrase Vygotsky (1978), my zone of proximal development became the oral and written perceptions of the students and colleagues involved in the self-study and development of my own teaching practices.

QUESTIONS
My study of my teacher education practices has concentrated on three significant questions. They are:

What has my self-study taught me about my teaching?
What have my students taught me about my self-study research?

How can I improve my teaching as a result of my self-study?

These questions directed my study and shaped my analysis of my data. Moreover, these questions cautioned me to examine the assumptions and understandings implicit in my own classroom methodology so as to better inform my educational practices. Implicit in any sets of research questions is the knowledge that the researcher has some idea of where they are going prior to beginning their journey. Thus, I can safely say that a close examination of the data gathered revealed a smart and knowing observation of what I generally thought to be true about my own classroom instruction. Yet, closer examination of my collected data revealed some surprising analysis of my own teaching in this higher education setting.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

No educational study professes to be the sole and definitive answer to educational thought. Each additional study in the body of work known as academic research adds considerable depth and understanding to what it means to be an effective and engaging teacher. My study is no different. With the analysis of each piece of evidence, I have become more intrigued with my own teaching. I continually want to know more about why I teach the way I do.

Learning about my own teaching

First, I learned that my teaching involves classroom discussion often, to the exclusion of the presentation of factual information. At least, my formal classroom teaching does. I do ask my students to use factual information in their own writings and observations about teaching and learning, but during actual classroom instruction, I present to my students very little in the form of hard data. This class relies considerably on one’s own feelings and emotions wrote one student in reflection of my teaching style. I got to express my feelings more than any other class revealed another student in response to the same. This class made me think in a style that I was not accustomed to asserted another, all in an attempt to categorize a pedagogical style that reinforces my own personal belief system that teaching is ultimately a grand conversation whereby nurturing and cultivating each others observations becomes the responsibility of all participants involved.

You ask us to share our feelings a lot in this class, wrote one student in response to what they liked most about the way the class was taught. I did not expect to share as much as I did, reported another. I enjoyed listening to everyone share their stories journaled another student in response to the many classroom interactions that occur during my instruction. I also enjoyed when the teacher shared their feelings. And finally, listening to the teacher share at the end of each class, I always wished it was more.
teaching. These combined observations - my colleagues, students, and myself - imbues my understanding of teaching and scholarship with a defined sense of purpose and engagement that I would never have been able to achieve independently. Employing the voices of others enriches my own understanding.

**Improving my teaching as a result of my self-study**

All research aims to inform and improves one’s practice. Self-study is no different. Good teaching continually asks the question how can I do something better. Similarly, good research asks a similar question. What can I learn from my teaching and my learning that will help to improve my classroom practice? The answer, simply, is much.

The classroom observations of my teaching taught me the continual respect for the use of affective education to help personalize and define the curriculum for teachers working with young people. Student remarks such as, I like share feelings in this class, I feel I have come to know each and everyone of the students in this class, and Our continual sharing allows me to come out my shell and tell people who I really am reinforce the notion that teaching becomes highly effective and personalized when directed towards the emotions and perceptions of the students doing the learning.

When teaching children and adolescents, I am always intrigued by how little teachers really need to say to involve and engage their students in true learning. Often, educators believe that a subject-centered curriculum — one that relies heavily on a teacher imparting knowledge so that their students may absorb a plethora of information — is essential to good teaching. Yet, a close examination of what students want - more discussion and less dissemination - is the real essential to good teaching.

For my first teaching assignments - both secondary and college - I was overly didactic. I have known this and self-corrected for quite some time. What I did not know as well, though, as I do now, is how valid stillness is to good teaching. Simply, asking a question and letting the thought sink into my students’ consciousness is in and of itself an engaging and viable instructional strategy. By asking students, “What do you think?” and then waiting patiently, quietly, and respectfully for their answers, I am learning to validate the findings of collective observations to define and redefine one’s teaching. I have learned to shape one’s classroom instruction based on the recollections and recommendations of one’s students and colleagues. Finally, I have learned to ask myself the hard questions about one’s own teaching, questions that are often ignored in favor of more mundane tasks like grading papers and gathering materials for classroom instruction. These might seem like small findings, but in practice, the process to seek such answers is often arduous and painful, yet always worthwhile and necessary.

**IMPLICATIONS**

The implications of my self-study are manifold. I have learned to validate the findings of collective observations to define and redefine one’s teaching. I have learned to shape one’s classroom instruction based on the recollections and recommendations of one’s students and colleagues. Finally, I have learned to ask myself the hard questions about one’s own teaching, questions that are often ignored in favor of more mundane tasks like grading papers and gathering materials for classroom instruction. These might seem like small findings, but in practice, the process to seek such answers is often arduous and painful, yet always worthwhile and necessary.

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To Be or Not To Be Highly Qualified:
A Self-Study into National Board Certification

ABSTRACT
As a new university professor and educator of secondary teachers, I wanted to take a closer look at how the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) strengthens teachers and, in particular, what my own preservice teachers were expected to accomplish in order to be deemed highly qualified in their future classrooms. The NBPTS believes that the single most important action the U.S.A. can take to improve schools and student learning is to strengthen teaching. Its literature suggests that it is leading the way in making teaching a profession dedicated to student learning and upholding high standards for professional performance. For the purposes of this self-study, I wanted to practice what I preach. This self-study poses the question, “What have I learned about myself in trying to obtain National Board Certification that has impacted me as a college professor of preservice teachers?”

BACKGROUND
The challenges I faced as a new college professor of preservice teachers were being driven by certain aspects of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). In 2002, NCLB was “the most sweeping reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) since it was enacted in 1965” (No Child Left Behind, 2005). I was teaching high school when this legislation was passed. Because I moved to the university level, I never really felt competent in my knowledge of this legislation. As a classroom teacher when NCLB was enacted, I had adopted the mentality that I would be considered highly qualified due to my advanced degrees. As far as student success was concerned, I always felt competent in my teaching and just believed my students would perform well on mandated tests. But I never looked into the actual meaning of highly qualified. No Child Left Behind “requires local school districts to ensure that all teachers hired to teach core academic subjects be highly qualified by the end of school year 2005-2006” (No Child Left Behind, 2005). According to NCLB (2005), highly qualified teachers possess the following qualifications: 1) A bachelor’s degree; 2) full state certification or licensure; and 3) know well each subject they teach. I definitely did not fit the definition, as I did not have any graduate courses in my content field. All of my advanced degrees related to educational leadership and development.

The problem for me was that I wasn’t deemed highly qualified, and in my current role as an educator of preservice teachers, I felt it was necessary to understand what it would take for a teacher to meet the demands of highly qualified status. The answer for me was the pursuit of National Board Certification from the NBPTS. The vision of the NBPTS is to establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do, to develop and operate a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet these standards, and to advance related education reforms for the purpose of improving student learning in American Schools (NBPTS, 2005). The NBPTS identifies five core propositions for accomplished teaching:

1) Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2) Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach these subjects to students.
3) Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4) Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5) Teachers are members of the learning communities.

The second and fourth propositions provided the bridge for me, a college professor, to obtain highly qualified status as a high school social studies teacher. If I could achieve National Board Certification, I could, in essence, practice what I preach.

QUESTION FOR STUDY
For the purposes of this self-study I proposed the question: What have I learned about myself by trying to achieve National Board Certification that has impacted me as a college professor of preservice teachers?

METHOD OF STUDY
Self-study is employed as the orienting theory of this...
research in order to make the process of National Board Certification more apparent. According to Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), “The questions that inspire the imagination of those who engage in self-study work revolve around how their practice as teacher educators could be improved” (p.14). With this idea in mind, I spent eight weeks teaching high school world history in my endeavor to achieve National Board Certification. This paper chronicles my successes and, sometimes, my struggles in returning to the high school classroom, walking in the shoes of my own university students. My reflection also interrogates the high standards of performance that I had been asking my students (and was now asking myself) to achieve.

“Self-study points to a simple truth, that to study a practice is simultaneously to study self: a study of self-in-relation to other” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 14). This self-study developed from several sources over the course of the last year. To apply for National Board Certification, applicants must participate in a two-part assessment. The first part is a school-site portfolio consisting of reflections on your teaching, written commentaries, video tapes, and samples of student work. The second part is a computer-based assessment to measure knowledge in a chosen content area. For the purpose of this study, I revisited the data collected for my portfolio as well as my own reflections partnered with outside professional readings. The data included qualitative analysis often reflected in phenomenological research. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) state that in a phenomenological study, “The researcher is intimately connected with the phenomena being studied and comes to know himself within his experiencing of these phenomena” (p. 600). Unlike a true phenomenological study, I blended concepts from this tradition with reflective analysis to study the phenomena of National Board Certification and highly qualified status as outlined in NCLB. By becoming intimately connected to these phenomena, I could use my reflections and analyses to develop insights about my own growth as a teacher and the impact of that growth in my teaching of preservice teachers.

As I embarked on the journey of National Board Certification, I noticed how I began to validate and challenge my own beliefs as a college professor. In returning to the tenth grade world history classroom, I used my beliefs about good teaching to construct not only my daily lesson plans, but also my long-range plans and the portfolio to submit to NBPTS. I monitored my own growth and reactions through journal writing, artifacts from the portfolio, and conversations with other high school teachers, students, and other university professors.

FINDINGS

Flexibility: The first theme

*Flexibility is the state or quality of being flexible. To be flexible, one should not be invincibly rigid or obstinate.* This concept was the first apparent theme to emerge from my research. I may have forgotten how flexible a teacher needs to be when I moved to the college level where my classes are scheduled for the same day and time every week. If students do not show up, class still goes on. There are no assemblies, field trips, fire drills, or personal issues to disrupt class. It is my time, my class, and my inflexibility. And, wow, what I learned when I walked back through the doors of a public high school shocked me.

My reintroduction to the concept of flexibility began with me needing to readjust my teaching schedule and lesson plans. Upon review of the guidelines and requirements for National Board Certification, it was decided I would have to increase my teaching time to five or six weeks. This would be in addition to two weeks of general immersion into the school to accommodate three different units. I would also have to get creative with the establishment of two-way communication with parents.

Reflecting on my first day of actual teaching, I again was taught the lesson of flexibility. The bell rang and students stumbled to class. My heartbeat was rising, my hands were shaking, and I was sweating like a pig. And all at once I was a high school teacher again. Kids started to rush the front of the room with requests and questions: “I need make up work”; “I need to use the bathroom”; “What was for homework?” So here I was — supposed to be in control — and I was trying to find my footing.

I could respond to my high school students with my college answer, “Stop by during office hours,” but I had to handle these things, and to some students these types of situations were emergencies. Immediately reverting to a mode of flexibility allowed me to establish control, maintain my composure, and deal with these student issues. And, most importantly, it showed my new students that I valued them.

This reminder of the importance of flexibility would walk with me for the remainder of my tenure as a tenth grade world history teacher. There were days when we had assemblies, and class schedules were changed; there were days when major testing would rearrange students’ schedules; and there were times when we had the unexpected fire drill. Maintaining flexibility was my equalizer in being able to maintain composure.

Planning: The second theme

The second theme to appear in my research involved the idea of taking expectations I had established for my preservice teachers and applying them to myself as I taught high school social studies. In this respect, the second theme provided an opportunity to explore self-imposed expectations and test them on myself. I refer to the second theme as planning.

In November of 2004, I had almost finished outlining my units for teaching. I had spent several hours putting my ideas down on paper, and in so doing I now realize I was being a bit pompous.

As a requirement for my college course, I ask my preservice teachers to create a social studies unit plan. As part of their assignment they have to consider national and state standards; they need to identify learner out-
comes; they must define an overall big question for the unit and individual lessons within the unit; and they need to create summative and formative assessments. So did I practice what I preach? Not initially. I simply completed a skeletal outline for my unit plan.

Let’s just start with a discussion of my lesson plan for day one. What lesson plan? I felt my unit outline would work fine. I could not have been more wrong. Just on the first day alone my timing was off. I forgot to do my closing activity, and I never bothered to identify my learner outcomes. I thought, “I am a professional teacher. I spend half a semester, at least, doing lesson plans with my preservice teachers. How could I let this happen?” In defense of my teaching, however, it was hard for my new students to tell I was unprepared. My teaching experience did allow me to cover up for my lack of planning, but this was not acceptable to me: “I am a better teacher than this.”

While lesson planning was not required for National Board Certification, I found it to be essential to the process. By constructing detailed daily lesson plans, I was able to better track my required data for each of the four portfolio entries. When looking at the big picture, forcing myself to revisit my former teaching practices helped me apply many of the standards set forth by the NBPTS.

So what?

Once I was able to categorize my data into two major themes, the next step was to demonstrate a link between obtaining National Board Certification and teaching preservice teachers at the University level. The question I was asking myself was, “So what?” I also was wondering how this process would affect me as a university professor.

When a person (even with prior teaching experience) walks in the shoes of a schoolteacher, only then can that person truly appreciate what the job requires. My experience in returning to the classroom reminded me that teachers do more than teach. According to Kellough and Carjuzaa (2006), “Students need teachers who are well organized and who know how to establish and manage an active and supportive learning environment” (p. 14). Based on this assumption, it has become my primary focus to develop these characteristics in my preservice teachers. I found that there were two essential ways to do this. First, I needed to demonstrate qualities of a good K-12 teacher in my university classes; second, I needed to incorporate the two themes identified in this study into my college teaching.

In recognizing the importance of flexibility (the first theme identified from the data) to my existence and success as a high school teacher, I realized how much I needed to adopt this concept into my college teaching repertoire. Remembering how I set the stage with my high school students on the first day of class by allowing myself to be flexible and adjust to their needs, I recognized the significance of teaching with flexibility in my college classes as well. “Students respond best to teachers who provide leadership and who enjoy their function as role models, advisors, mentors, and reflective decision makers” (Kellough & Corjuzaa, 2005, p. 14). In understanding the theme of flexibility in my self-study, I also found that when I practiced flexibility, I found myself displaying compassion for my students.

Compassion can be seen as a disposition associated with the profession of teaching. Wenzlaff (1998) states that colleges of teacher education should help preservice teachers “realize their beliefs about teaching and dispositions desired for effective teaching” (p. 566). Richardson and Onwuegbuzie (2003) go on to say, “By understanding the beliefs, skills, and dispositions of teacher candidates, teacher educators are able to guide the candidates through the teacher education program and foster positive dispositions that will be productive in teaching and learning” (p. 14). In my quest for National Board Certification, I was forced to revisit good teaching dispositions. By doing this, I was able to carry good teaching from the high school level to my college classroom. By actually performing in this fashion, my college level preservice teachers could see how far flexibility and compassion could impact a positive classroom environment.

Incorporating the second theme, planning, into my college coursework came on two fronts. First, I needed to look at the process I was using at the college level for my own plans; and second, I needed to re-evaluate my expectations for my preservice teachers when it came time to develop lesson plans and unit plans.

The biggest lesson I have learned from the theme of planning was related to how I actually teach my preservice teachers to plan. In the beginning, I had a set of requirements for the students in my social studies methods course. My required projects for the course included stringent guidelines for lesson plans and a unit plan. The funny thing was I expected my future teachers to pop out these detailed lesson plans in less than nine weeks time for the first one lesson plan and two weeks later for the second plan. Just two weeks after the preservice teachers finished their second lesson plan, the unit plan was due.

To make the concept of planning more realistic, I decided, as a result of my own reflection on teaching, to change how I taught lesson and unit planning to my preservice teachers. I decided to use the concept of chunking to teach planning and preparation.

I began my discussion of lesson planning by setting the stage for my preservice teachers. I distribute to my students a scenario describing the students in a class. We discuss the elements that must be considered when deciding how and what to teach. My students must identify the learner outcomes, standards being taught, and lesson assessment. During the next class, we break into small groups to discuss these elements. I ask my students to make sure the learner outcomes relate to the selected topic and to make sure the assessment piece connects directly to these outcomes. Once we have clarity on these aspects of lesson planning, we move into the development of a warm-up/motivational activity. We come back together in small groups to share these activities—again
making sure they link to the learner outcomes and remain consistent with the topic and assessment piece. We then work on creating teacher-directed and student-directed activities and then finalize the plan with the inclusion of a closing activity.

I want my preservice teachers to understand that one size does not fit all when it comes to teaching. As teachers, they will need to adjust their plans to meet the diverse needs of their students and classes. This new process for creating lesson plans takes half of a semester in my college methods course. We develop the lessons in conjunction with learning about classroom strategies, classroom management, and student diversity. Instead of teaching planning in isolation, I weave it into each class.

CONCLUSION
This self-study began as just an attempt to obtain National Board Certification. What I found was that I could use the same techniques I used as a high school teacher to not only teach my preservice teachers, but also to show them some examples of sound teaching practices. Applying for National Board Certification taught me, an 11-year veteran of high school teaching, how to be highly qualified in my profession. As a professor of future teachers, this process of National Board Certification reminded me of my mission: To help prepare highly qualified teachers for their own classrooms and hopefully teach them the necessary tools needed to become National Board Certified teachers.

Epilogue
On November 18, 2005, I was awarded National Board Certification in Adolescence and Young Adulthood/Social Studies-History. As a college professor with a doctorate degree, I am now deemed highly qualified under No Child Left Behind.

REFERENCES


Reflecting on the Feedback Loop in Reflective Practice: A Teacher Educator Responds to Reflective Writing by Preservice Teachers

PURPOSE
Reflective practice has become widely recognized as an important component of preservice teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Loughran & Russell, 1997). In addition to enhancing classroom practice, early proponents of reflective teaching sought to increase teacher autonomy and enhance “democratic participation in the system of school governance” (Zeichner & Liston, 1987). While many teacher educators now identify reflective practice as a priority, they generally have limited time to devote to reflection in tightly packed teacher education programs (Mueller, 2003). Paradoxically, this suggests that while reflective practice has become more commonplace, it has also become less reflective and critical in nature.

Since reflective writing is “demanding and time-consuming for both students and educators...it is important to ensure that the outcome of such an expenditure of energy is effective learning” (Thorpe, 2004, p. 339). Therefore, it is critical that teacher educators carve out time in the schedule, provide specific guidelines (Francis, 1995), assign marks in courses, and engage in dialogue with preservice teachers (Mather & Hanley, 1998).

In this study, I examine my responses to the reflections of preservice teachers over five years in order to better understand my teacher education practices and to identify characteristics of effective feedback on reflective practice.

RESEARCH ON PRESERVICE TEACHER REFLECTIONS
There are many forms of writing that are identified with reflective practice. These include response journals (Mather & Hanley, 1998), personal narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), critical incidents (Tripp, 1993) and dialogue journals (Mather & Hanley, 1998).

Also, the responses of teacher educators are quite varied in both depth and form. Some use rubrics and short responses, while others engage more actively in the reflective process. Some provide written feedback (e.g., Mather & Hanley, 1998), while others conference with preservice teacher (e.g., Weiss & Weiss, 2001).

While conferencing as part of a reflective supervision process is more consistent with Schon’s (1983) conception of reflection-in-action, the structure of most teacher education programs makes this problematic, if not impossible, for many instructors. Thus written responses are more common. If written comments are to be substituted for the reflective conversations Schon proposes, it is essential that they be both supportive and critical.

While there are numerous studies of reflective practice in education, there are considerably fewer on effective feedback. The response-oriented literature tends to focus on dialogue journals (e.g., Roe & Stallman, 1994), which form only a small portion of all reflective practice in teacher education. How does one respond to other forms of reflective writing? How does one respond to writing that is less immediate and, perhaps, more polished in nature?

METHODOLOGY
Over the past seven years, I have engaged preservice teachers in reflective practice. A narrative inquiry portfolio and a critical incident portfolio have been important course components each year. In narrative inquiry portfolios, preservice teachers recall and reflect on formative experiences in their development as learners and teachers. Critical incident portfolios offer them opportunities to reflect on events occurring during their teacher education program. In polished portfolio entries, preservice teachers describe experiences in detail before engaging in reflection and analysis.

I respond in writing for two reasons: there is little time for supervision conferences and responding in writing helps me to respond more reflectively. My responses are layered and multidimensional as I join with them in the struggle to make meaning from experience.

Looking back on my written responses to 150 preservice teachers over five years, I decided to code and quantify my 300 pages of comments in order to identify patterns in my responses. This is a qualitative study as defined by Punch (1998), in which information serves primarily an interpretive and reflective purpose. While identifying eight types of responses, conducting a
comprehensive coding of the results from one class, and compiling examples provided baseline data, it is my reflections on these findings that is the focus of this self-study of my teacher education practices.

FINDINGS

In reviewing my written feedback to the reflective portfolios of preservice teachers, I identified eight categories of response. In some responses, only three or four emerged in the coding, while up to seven or eight categories were listed in the coding of others. In many cases, my responses were multidimensional with the interplay between types of response creating a layered effect. In this section, I identify, describe and illustrate the eight categories of response.

Overall, there were a total of 28 students in the class in this particular year. Validating and analyzing, the two most common categories of response, were present in my feedback to all preservice teachers. I commented on how to improve their reflective practice skills in 26 cases, and echoing was featured in 23 responses. The other categories of response ranked as follows: exploring possibilities (16), sharing (14), questioning (12) and cautioning (12).

Validating

The most basic level of response, and one that occurred in all cases, was the validating of preservice teacher reflections. Validation involved recognizing their personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) and their capacity to use reflection to work through situations.

For example, in my response to Student #1, I wrote: "Overall, I noticed a recognition that schools are institutions in which the actions of students and teachers take place within a context bounded by rules and procedures. You accept this, as well as the fact that these rules are there to protect everyone. I also noticed that, while committed to standards and discipline, you work with students and colleagues in a very sensitive and respectful manner. In short, you come across as professional AND caring."

Echoing

In each of these portfolios, I read five reflections. This provided me with an opportunity to stand back from the individual incidents and notice broader patterns across accounts. I use the term “echoing” to refer to comments in which I reflected back the patterns I observed.

Sometimes I echoed back connections between individual stories. For example, I linked together three life experiences in this response to Student #7. Mr. K is your anti-Mrs. X: He helped you develop your self-discipline without her harshness. Yet he was more traditional than the alternative school teachers in the 2nd story.

In other cases, I noted patterns across reflections. For example, in responding to Student #14, I wrote: "One theme that emerged, particularly in the library, African literature and living museum stories, is your commitment to making curriculum engaging and meaningful to students; your enthusiasm for students and curriculum oozes through the page...Another important theme is your sensitivity to the individual and to the impact a teacher can have (positively or negatively) on identity formation and openness to learning."

Questioning

The purpose of reflective practice is to help preservice teachers to develop the reflective skills of expert practitioners. As Schon (1983) states, reflective practice involves negotiating “complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict” (p. 18). While I did offer my perspective on their accounts, I mainly attempted to help them examine their accounts in more depth. Probing questions designed to elicit deeper consideration of practice were one way in which I sought to help them become more skilled in reflective practice.

For example, in responding to a critical incident from Student #24, I wrote: "You have learned a series of important lessons from this richly observed event. You could probe more deeply into the tensions that make schools such difficult places in which to learn and teach. Why is the teacher so frustrated? What must it be like for this student in an assembly-line school? Keep your cool while understanding (not condoning) why others keep losing theirs."

Analyzing

Through the three types of responses listed above I encouraged preservice teachers to value their perspectives and probe more deeply. It also seemed important to model critical analysis of personal experiences and critical incidents. I attempted to do this by providing my reading of situations outlined in their portfolios, as well as by offering cautions and possibilities. One example of analysis is my response to a narrative written by Student #25:

"Your math story is a powerful one, as the incident led to a breakthrough in the subject. This is how I read the story:

Mr. Ford realized that teachers were not getting through to you. He studied your file and considered a couple of possibilities. He tested a hypothesis about your self-efficacy as a learner and, as it happens, he was right. More surprisingly, the simple fact of discovering that you were smart had a profound impact on you.

The good news, if I am not completely off-base, is that Mr. Ford’s success was not miracle-work but good pedagogy: understand how students learn, collect information, try different techniques, discuss learning with students. You can have the same impact...though not all students will respond as quickly as you did."

While analysis was part of my responses to all students, it was generally couched in language that celebrated their understanding, provided cautions or explored possibilities.
Cautioning
While it is important to guide preservice teachers towards effective practice, it is also important to warn them of some of the pitfalls that may await them. Thus, in many of the letters, I cautioned them about how to proceed in difficult situations. For example, I wrote to Student #13:

You do a good job of writing about the issue of verbal abuse. I think your understanding is right on the mark. Still, I think you need to work more on developing how you would respond; perhaps, you should develop a sequence of procedures under different scenarios. Also, you may want to consider how to do so in a manner that does not escalate issues and can help the transgressor to leave with some dignity (e.g., talk after class but demand a public apology; class discussion of verbal abuse, etc.).

In this case, I sought to support the preservice teacher’s perspective but was also aware of the complexity of the issue. I was drawing on my practitioner knowledge to anticipate possible scenarios and cautioning Student #13 from acting too hastily.

Similarly, in other cases, I warn preservice teachers from reacting out of emotion. For example, I urged Student #25 to “sleep on it” before speaking to a teacher about a sensitive issue and, later, urge her to check with the principal before inviting a controversial speaker into her classroom.

Exploring possibilities
Exploring possibilities for extending ideas into future practice is as important as analysis and cautions. In the majority of cases, I was able to find ways of encouraging them to extend their practice in meaningful ways. For example, I proposed to Student #19 that the best proactive response to the issue of plagiarism is to construct original assignments that diminish the chances of copy-and-paste. In this case, I sought to support the preservice teacher in drama and history, I wrote:

I urge you to read more about participatory democracy in classroom and strategies for gentle discipline so that you can better balance your ideals with the day-to-day wear-and-tear of teaching. The more effective your techniques, the less you have to grapple painfully with each situation.

Sharing
In order to model reflective practice, I speak from my experiences as a teacher. Often this is evident in my framing of analysis, cautions and possibilities. In other cases, I explicitly draw on my experiences to demonstrate empathy, model practice or guide their practice. Sometimes I connect my personal rules of practice to their stories. For example, I responded to a painful account of a classroom management issue by Student #8 by writing, I make mistakes every day as a teacher, but my commitment and sensitivity to students generally more than offsets those mistakes. In other cases, I draw on specific experiences introducing new curriculum, responding to tensions with colleagues and grappling with my own biases as a teacher.

Improving reflective practice
While the seven types of responses noted above are designed to implicitly improve reflective practice, I also made explicit comments about preservice teachers’ reflection on their narratives of experience and critical incidents. For example, in an interim assessment, I indicated to Student #7 that you did not reflect sufficiently on the implications for your understanding of teaching and/or learning... I would suggest elaborating on how you would organize your class to promote a lover of learning. In her final portfolio, she had elaborated much more and explained how these understandings would inform her classroom practice. With others, I explicitly identified and celebrated their reflective abilities. For example, I commended Student #15 for providing rich detail and contextual information accompanied by deep level puzzling about the meaning or meanings of the experiences described.

These categories and examples do not provide evidence to show that my responses generally or any of the eight categories of response in particular were effective in enhancing reflective practice among preservice teachers or preparing them to be effective reflective practitioners as classroom teachers. They do, however, serve as a prompt for reflection and dialogue about how to enhance written responses to reflective writing by preservice teachers.

DISCUSSION
Critical reflection has always been one of my priorities as a teacher, educational researcher and teacher educator. As a teacher educator, I have worked to develop authentic relationships with my students while celebrating and developing the personal and professional qualities they bring to teaching (Kitchen, 2005a, 2005b). Psychologist Carl Rogers (1961) wrote, “This book is about me, as I sit there with that client, facing him, participating in that struggle as deeply and sensitively as I am able” (p. 4). As I sat at my desk reading the portfolios of preservice teachers, I sought to respond with similar empathy, respect and critical insight:

I seek to engage with you and your writing in order to help you explore your experiences more fully and find patterns in your experiences. I will also seek to validate your experiences and, at times, draw links with my experiences as a learner and teacher. In my opinion, it is through reflection—real reflection, not just going through the motions—that you learn to put theory into practice and tap into your deep well of experiences...Keep in mind that others learn differently from you. Think about how you use power in your classroom positively (as you cannot relinquish it entirely). (Note to Class, December 2000)
Over the years, preservice teachers have responded positively to the personal and professional engagement demonstrated in my written feedback. My commitment to validating their preservice teachers’ experiences is demonstrated by the emphasis on validation in all 28 responses. This is reinforced by my use of echoing in 23 responses. While echoing often validates experiences, it also offers how the scene appears to a different pair of eyes. In this respect, echoing prepares the preservice teacher for questioning and analysis, which are designed to help them probe more deeply into their experiences and to consider different constructions of experience. While questioning was explicitly present as a bridge in only twelve responses, the combination of echoing and analysis were often intended to raise questions.

In responding as thoughtfully as I was able, my perspectives were informed by both my professional knowledge and classroom experiences. Also, I intended to model the level and nature of reflection that I was encouraging among them. Engaging authentically from experience, which occurred explicitly in half the responses, also contributed to my growth as a teacher educator. As I approached the reading of portfolios as a shared growth opportunity, I was able to better understand myself as a teacher through my responses. Some entries provoked strong reactions, which I had to examine before responding. For example, unexamined assumptions about class privilege and judgements about lazy students raised my ire. Reflecting on my reactions became part of my own rigorous self-study process.

While personal and professional self-examination and growth were important dimensions of the reflective portfolios, I viewed these as crucial processes rather than the end result of our work together. Since “education is development from within” (Dewey, 1938, p. 17) and teachers play a crucial role in fostering “experiences that lead to growth” (Dewey, 1938, p. 40), critical reflection on experience can have a profound impact on student learning in classrooms. Efforts to improve reflective practice also stem from my commitment to fostering ongoing practitioner reflection. Also, being more familiar with the ethical terrain of teaching, I often cautioned preservice teachers about the potential pitfalls in lines of reasoning or plans for action.

Studying my feedback on reflective portfolios made explicit the tension I experience as I seek to balance personally validating preservice teachers with criticism of their professional practice. Also, looking over my responses in the year studied in depth, I was surprised that I did not make more of these dimensions explicit in my feedback. For example, the questioning process was not made explicit before turning to analysis. I was also surprised that I shared experiences only half the time.

One of the implications for my practice in the future is that I will now use the eight categories of response as a checklist to review as I prepare written feedback. I do not propose this in a prescriptive manner, as they would not all be appropriate in each case. Still each seems to merit consideration as a prompt for consistent quality feedback. Also, since I prepare my responses electronically, I could review these characteristics during the editing stage.

**CONCLUSION**

Reflective practice is important in the development of self-reflective teachers who are able to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of students in classrooms. Therefore, it is crucial that teacher educators employ reflective practice in meaningful ways. One way to maximize the impact of reflection is to enhance the quality of feedback provided by teacher educators. In this study, I identified eight characteristics that were present in my responses to reflective practice portfolios.

I invite teacher educators to employ these characteristics as prompts in their responses to preservice teachers’ reflective writing. Also, I encourage other teacher educators to share the ways in which they respond to reflective writing by preservice teachers.

**REFERENCES**


Beginning with Trusted Friends: Venturing Out to Work Collaboratively in Our Institutions

A self-study community encourages the sharing of experiences and new insights, both positive and negative. The building of knowledge develops through dialogue in a personal-constructivist-collaborative approach (Beck, Freese, & Kosnik, 2004). Loughran and Northfield (1998) note that the individual perspective may be a significant paradox in self-study terminology. The term, self-study, suggests that the individual is the focus of the study, yet self-study is a collective task (Elijah, 2004; Ham & Kane, 2004). Samaras & Freese (2006) write of this paradox of self-study as both personal and interpersonal. It is as if the community leads (Vygotsky, 1978) or completes (Newman & Holzman, 1993) development.

Collaboration does not mean harmony. Interactions may cause the individual to question his/her position or those of others as they develop new understandings. Beyond the cognitive level, self-study scholars have the emotional support of self-study colleagues who are invested in improving learning and teaching through self-study. Kosnik, Beck, and Freese (2004) state that an inclusive and equitable self-study community fosters personal and professional growth which impacts program development. LaBoskey (2004) affirms the need for a supportive and interactive community in the knowledge building process. This paper addresses the impact of our collaborative experiences in the self-study community. We discuss how it has supported and influenced our personal and professional thinking as well as our work in our home institutions.

**CONTEXT**

We have witnessed the influence and significance of self-study for enhancing teachers’ professional development and life-long learning in the preservice and inservice teacher education programs we directed (e.g., Beck & Kosnik, 2005; Freese, 1999, 2002, 2006; Kosnik & Beck, 2005, 2006; Kosnik & Beck, 2005; Samaras, 2002; Samaras & Gismondi, 1998; Samaras et al., 2006). Although we work at three different universities, Stanford University, George Mason University, and University of Hawaii, respectively, we have engaged in numerous collaborative projects over the years to also study our practice as teacher educators. Two notable joint endeavors were: program co-chairs and co-editors of the Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Self-study of Teacher Education Practices (2002); and co-editors of Making a Difference in Teacher Education Through Self-Study: Personal, Professional, and Program Renewal (2006). As we worked on each project, we commented regularly (and enthusiastically) that we truly enjoyed our collaborations and wondered why we worked so well together. We are connected by our interest and research in program development. We were painfully honest about our respective challenges as directors. We all agreed that self-study as a component was sorely missing in the preservice and inservice teacher education programs at our institutions, and we supported each other in our efforts to include it in our curriculum. We were all committed to self-study as a legitimate and powerful methodology to reform teacher education.

Our e-mails, self-study meetings, and gatherings at the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) Castle Conference and the America Education Research Association (AERA) conference allowed us to engage in continuous dialogue and gave us new perspectives and suggestions for addressing the various challenges and professional responsibilities we faced. Three questions kept surfacing in our discussions and frame this study: 1) Why did our collaboration work? 2) What were its limitations? 3) How have our collaborations influenced our work at our home universities?

**METHODS**

We used a range of methods for this study:

a) We reread our e-mails to identify common themes and examples that illustrated them.

b) We each wrote an individual piece in response to questions we raised which were sent to the other two members of the group for their responses.

c) We each identified a project on our home university and asked ourselves, “What did we learn from our self-study collaborations that we applied to our collaboration at our home university? Our collaborative analysis led us to five major themes:
1) learning to dialogue in virtual communities; 2) sharing common values; 3) appreciating the social in the professional; 4) linking leadership and partnership; and 5) making a mutual commitment.

**FINDINGS**

**Learning to dialogue in virtual communities**

Although it was difficult for us to have face-to-face collaboration, given that we are in three different parts of the county, distance was not a barrier for us. We recognized the value of regular communication and kept in contact through e-mail and phone. E-mail made correspondence instantly accessible and we all noted that when we received an e-mail from one another, we looked forward to reading it and responding to it immediately. This quick responding ensured that we did not have silences or time to read into the silences as so often happens. E-mail had the benefit that we had time to respond at our convenience, whereas at work, in face-to-face meetings you often have to respond on the spot. We set the terms for our collaborations and worked on projects of our choosing. In contrast, at our universities, the Dean (or someone else) often assigns work to us. In our collaboration, we could shut out external demands and approach our dialogue not as an obligation but as an opportunity to stretch and expand our understandings.

The interpersonal exchanges via e-mail allowed us to grow and expand our thinking by opening our minds to other perspectives and issues. We found ourselves constructing our learning together, probing one another’s ideas, and reviewing and reframing our ideas collaboratively. Through collaboration our roles kept shifting and we found we were teachers to each other, and learners at the same time. Although the e-mail and phone kept us connected, we had opportunities to meet and continue our dialogue through face-to-face communication at AERA and the biannual Castle Conference. These meetings ensured that we would have face-to-face communication time at least once a year.

**Sharing common values**

Care is bi-directional and necessary in collaborative research. We found that we blurred the lines between the personal and professional. Our personal friendship initially led us to collaborate, and this friendship served as a foundation for extending our work. Knowing each other fairly well allowed us to give feedback beyond the superficial. Each of us was willing to compromise while humor has allowed us to negotiate through tensions. As we reread our e-mails for this research, we noted that in addition to the business at hand, there were always comments about the personal – new babies, upcoming weddings, and even family hardships. Bringing the personal into our collaborations contributed to our ongoing dialogue and to the strength of our professional relationship. Our professional work has been enhanced by knowing we can discuss professional challenges we encounter in our institutions and receive honest and supportive feedback. In addition, our writing and research has taken on a new dimension in that we can discuss and re-examine our ideas, inquire into and probe our teaching, and gain new insights through our dialogue.

Our paths to academia and S-STEP followed similar patterns. We each have been classroom teachers, researchers, and practitioners. We each entered academia with the hope of finding and contributing to a supportive and collaborative culture. Much to our surprise this did not happen. We sought out others who shared a common philosophy about work and its place in our lives. In our e-mails, we talked about our shared values, which included trust, responsibility, hard work, caring, and humor. In an e-mail correspondence, Anastasia suggested that we dialogue about trust. She noted in one e-mail, “I find it so interesting that I can’t wait to get back to writing with my trusted friends. Why is that I wonder? What makes them my trusted friends?” Anne responded:

> Because we all experience a sense of vulnerability in our profession, as well as in our personal lives, it is key to have a feeling of safety with other people before we can let down our guard. With you and Clare I feel a deep sense of intellectual and personal safety. The trust revolves around our shared understanding that we are supportive of one another in all aspects of our lives.

**Appreciating the social in the professional**

As noted above, we blurred the lines between the personal and profession. This led each of us to be more intentional about connecting the social and professional in our work settings. We all realized that the three of us are very task-oriented and our life and work histories have fed into our strict work habits. We also learned from each other that it is essential to slow down and meet with folks in social settings. Clare did this by having lunch with her colleagues as opposed to eating lunch in front of her computer. These interludes which included discussion of work allowed her to get to know her team and others beyond the team in a way that formal meetings do not allow. Clare discussed how she applied her learnings to the university setting and addressed the importance of the personal aspects of self-study:

> When I moved to Stanford to assume the Directorship of the Teachers for a New Era (TNE) project, I knew this was going to be a steep learning curve: a new project, a new role, a new university, a new state and a new country. Despite all this newness, one common element from my previous work at the University of Toronto would remain, I would be leading a team and would be a member of a larger community. The TNE team was composed of a number of individuals with a wide range of backgrounds ranging from Xiaoxia the stats expert, to Ruth Ann the expert on local school districts, to Nancy the expert in financial matters. I realized there needed to be ongoing communication and that the personal and the professional would have to be part of their work. (This had been central to my work with Anne and Anastasia.) To address the per-
sonal side at the first TNE team meeting I asked each person to talk about a strength, a personal interest, preferred working style, and a pet peeve about working on a team. This exercise allowed folks to reveal who they were both as professionals and individuals which has been built upon in many different ways. This got the team off to a good start and the blurring of the two worlds has continued.

After listening to Clare’s experiences in TNE, Anastasia explained how the social was also central to her relationships with her students and administrative staff although she had to make time to apply that in her work with faculty. Anne found the same thing in her experience co-teaching a course at her institution. She recognized the importance of giving time and space to get to know her colleague on a personal level. Anne stated:

From Clare and Anastasia, I learned the value of creating spaces to discuss personal issues, interests, and strengths as a teacher before my colleague and I negotiated our roles and responsibilities. I found the value of honoring and paying attention to the personal aspect of collaboration.

Linking leadership and partnership

One of the things that we all found was that it was critically important for one person to take the lead in each collaboration. Clare considered how this reduced time figuring out who had to do what and where the boundaries lay. She wrote:

We have been steadily working on joint projects for years and as we are winding up a project, we started to plan our next collaboration. Having a project to work on focused our energies, provided deadlines and external expectations which forced us to move forward when we could easily have gotten bogged down in process.

Anastasia noted how this learning applied in her institution. She noted:

Clare is a model leader who always invited further discussion on any ideas she generated and is sure to keep things open-ended until she hears from others. I’m more aware of the messages within the statements which faculty make at faculty committee meetings. I listen more without responding so quickly.

The three of us also honored the importance of partnership in leadership. Anne and Anastasia talked often about their amazing writing experience in co-authoring a self-study for teaching practices primer. They each took the lead for writing certain chapters and yet each contributed to each other’s writing to the point where they credited each other for the same ideas. Anastasia considered how that partnership influenced her current and necessary collaboration with the secondary education coordinator. They are combining their efforts in order to design a higher quality program.

Making a mutual commitment

Our collaboration was intentional: not by circumstance, but by a mutual commitment to the work at hand, to each other. When we said we would do something together, we did it. We all learned to be more deliberate in making choices in our collaborations. Anastasia commented that:

I shouldn’t rush into collaborative self-study research projects. The collaboration shouldn’t be because self-study matters only to me. Although my intention may be to support someone else’s need to research and move towards tenure and promotion, I now more carefully consider working with others who care about and are interested in learning about self-study. I am currently working with doctoral students in a seminar on self-study for teacher leaders. We are committed to supporting and learning from each other in our small collaborative circle of self-study.

Anne stated:

In my co-teaching, my partner and I identified conditions that we felt were critical for successful collaboration, such as intellectual safety, trust, and shared values. I learned from my relationship with Clare and Anastasia that trust and intellectual safety were critical elements in establishing the conditions for constructing new knowledge.

We also learned there needs to be a reciprocal relationship in which both participants benefit from the collaboration. Anne noted:

I experienced a reciprocal relationship with Anastasia and Clare, which made me open to learning from my teaching partner. The give and take that developed with my partner was an excellent example of how the roles shifted and we were teachers and learners at the same time.

IMPLICATIONS

Self-study has immersed us in a culture that has allowed us to analyze and better understand our beliefs, our practices, and our teaching. The S-STEP Special Interest Group (AERA) has fostered a sense of intellectual safety in a non-competitive and highly supportive culture, much like what we encourage teachers to do in their classrooms. It is a culture that professes that individuals can make a larger impact on advancing teacher education when they work together in a trusting, supportive, and inclusive environment. Self-study has lead to transformations in our thinking and practices. We were encouraged by the process and fluidity of self-study in our meaning making. In this paper, we identified a number of characteristics that contributed to our successful collaboration together. We discussed how our experiences have helped us reframe our perspectives about collaboration and apply them in our university settings. However, as we analyzed our successful collaborative experiences, we saw how our collaboration seemed like a counterculture to the culture of academia. As we analyzed our collaboration, we gained new insights into how our collaborative experiences were in stark contrast to some of our experiences at our universities, and how the culture of academia
hinders/challenges the kind of positive collaboration we have experienced.

Our collaboration required *letting go, taking risks*, exposing one’s thinking, asking probing questions, and voicing our different perspectives. In academia one must be careful about *revealing too much* to colleagues who will be conducting peer review or who are in competition with one another. The culture of peer review can bleed into a culture of finding fault and the resulting critique is not always constructive. The university culture of solitary pursuit for credit and independence is in contrast to our collaborative experience of interdependence. In the mandatory world of the university, there are more possibilities for clashes and differences of opinions. In our collaboration outside the university, we are not required to address many of the issues that are a part of a regular faculty’s work: teaching schedules, committee membership, budget decisions, and so on. We might miss out on the day-to-day interactions, but we also avoid the competitive nature of university relationships within departments. Does our collaboration represent a counterculture to the culture of academia? In self-study our experiences are not competitive and peer review takes the form of *critical friends* who are supportive and encouraging. We experienced hard work, shared the workload, offered encouragement, and remained supportive when life’s events (good and bad) competed with our deadlines for proposals, papers, books, and chapters. Through our shared enthusiasm and support, we have been there to lift one another up personally and professionally.

In summary, our collaboration and self-study of that process has allowed us to come to a better understanding of:

- the role of dialogue in creating multiple perspectives useful to each other’s program development and teaching;
- the importance of cultivating a culture that encourages and supports personal and professional development;
- the role that S-STEP and the Castle Conference serve in developing a safe, supportive, and productive hub for self-study scholars to construct new understandings of their work and its impact;
- the essentialness of collaboration outside one’s university.

**REFERENCES**


INTRODUCTION TO SELF-STUDY AND REFLECTION
My first full encounter with higher education teaching began in 1995. I entered New York University’s doctoral program in Educational Administration after having been an early childhood teacher and preschool director for nearly forty years. At NYU, I taught a very unusual course, Inquiries Into Teaching and Learning, developed by a professor in the English Education program. This course dramatically changed how I looked at teaching and learning. Its impact on me was as great as it was on the students. The course emphasized reflection about practice, self-assessment, planning with other professors, team teaching, and faculty working together to develop and review the direction that the course was moving. The result was a course that was exciting and responsive to student and professor reflection, with course content and activities that were continually recast.

The teaching methods that I experienced at NYU were not available at Bloomfield College for two reasons. First, Bloomfield College is very small compared to NYU. Second, the education program at Bloomfield College is very new with three full-time faculty members, each of us representing a slice of experience across the K-12 spectrum. When it came time to plan syllabi, I did not have other faculty members with whom I could collaborate in planning courses. I also realized that the environment of NYU and later Rowan University were a far cry from that of Bloomfield. At NYU and Rowan University, students fit the picture of the traditional student who devotes all their energy to their learning and graduates in four years.

SELF-EVALUATION AS A TOOL FOR REFLECTION
I began to use the annual portfolio rehiring review process at Bloomfield College as a way to assess my own teaching, the challenges in my teaching situation, and to understand and tackle dilemmas that I was experiencing. My portfolio self-assessments became the place where, as Russell and Pinnegar (1995) point out, I examined the living contradictions of my teaching: A space where I could document the dissonance that I was feeling between my students preparation for college work and their classroom performance, and a place to examine ethical responsibilities to the early childhood education field. Soon after I embarked on my first year of teaching at Bloomfield College, I wrote in my self-evaluation for rehiring:

As the only full-time early childhood education faculty member, I have the principal responsibility for planning and teaching the full range of courses that pre-service early childhood education majors need in order to be “ready” to enter an early childhood classroom... (Self-Evaluation Essay for Reappointment, Fall 2002)

I laid out my working philosophy, which guided my teaching:

I believe that all students can learn. This belief is not just about young children’s ability to learn but adults as well. My philosophy of teaching is two pronged. The first prong has to do with knowledge and skills that students need to become teachers. The second prong has to do with the way that knowledge is acquired. I believe that just as in a good early childhood classroom the teacher begins instruction where the children are, a teacher of adults must do the same thing. I also strongly believe that all intellectual growth and development takes place within the context of “caring” relationships (as Vygotsky and Noddings define caring relationships). In addition, all learning has to take into account prior experiences of students, whether they are adults or young children. We have to take into account the experiences they have had with schooling and learning, including their cultural and family characteristics, and their beliefs and values. From that vantage, we can begin to look at best practices and theory supporting these practices, and begin a journey to expand our understanding of young children and teaching. (Self-Evaluation Essay for Reappointment, 2002)

THE CHALLENGES OF MY NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS
I realized very early that my students presented many challenges. I wrote about my first semester students. The major difference between them and the students I subse-
quently taught was that the first groups of students all had BA degrees in fields other than education. They were working in early childhood centers with 3 and 4 year old children, and they were now taking mandatory courses for New Jersey Preschool through Third Grade Certification. I wrote, All of the students were second language learners who had varying degrees of difficulty expressing themselves in English (2002, Self-Evaluation Essay). I also anguished that I was asking too much of the students, that they were not able to do the amount of reading and writing that I was requiring.

From my second year on, as the early childhood teacher education program grew, my classes were mostly filled with undergraduates who in some cases had been working in early childhood centers or public schools as teacher assistants. Many of these undergraduates were not the age of traditional undergraduate students. The challenges grew. For my third year self-evaluation, I wrote:

I had to adjust to working with this larger undergraduate population, many of whom lead complicated lives, trying to do too much at once. Many of them are working full time, going to school full time, and parenting in a single parent family structure. The combination of these circumstances compromises their ability to do well in their college work. When I see this, I see students who are in a “race” and who are trying to just “get through” the requirements for a teaching certificate. To many of the students, the connection between what they are learning in their college classes and providing children with high quality learning experiences when they become full classroom teachers is not clear. (Self-Evaluation Essay, Fall 2004)

IDENTIFYING THE DILEMMAS

The students’ issues presented several dilemmas for me in my teaching. I needed to figure out what my role in their teacher education process would be. My experiences and my dilemma arise from similar situations that were captured by Bernheimer (2004), who stated that many of her students, all women, who were just beginning their college education at a community college, were “rising from the ashes of a shattered life to become future teachers who would, in turn, lead other troubled children to find their way to a happier life” (p. 47). My students’ issues and characteristics presented several dilemmas for me in my teaching. In my third year self-evaluation essay (2004), I asked myself a number of questions:

Do I cut down on the amount that they should be learning in a particular class? Do I lower standards for what is expected of the students? Do I structure the syllabus to reflect the way they have structured their lives knowing that this may compromise their preparation and success in teaching? Do I keep the syllabus basically the way it is based on what teacher preparation students need to know and understand, and then self-consciously discuss these connections in class throughout the semester? Do I structure the syllabus to reflect what teacher preparation students need to know and understand and then leave it up to the students to decide what their priorities will be – how they will handle the requirements of the class and their outside responsibilities? Everyday, I have had to and still have to grapple with these questions.

ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The teacher educator’s ethical responsibilities are based on our role as stewards who ensure the quality of our teacher education graduates and our commitment to the children and families with whom our graduates will work. Our student body includes many students who are the first members of their families to attend college. In addition, most of our students grew up in urban, inner city, low-income neighborhoods, and attended substandard schools. They are used to and expect to be told how to teach, instead of experiencing “opportunities for meaningful learning” about teaching (Loughran, 2005, p. 11). Many of my colleagues experienced what I pondered in my self-assessments. Our responsibility in preparing students to be teachers not only involves providing learning opportunities in our classes for students to develop the knowledge and skills that they need, but also dictates that we must continue to mentor and promote their development as they enter their professional lives. I must fulfill this role. Again, in my Self-Evaluation Essay (2004), I wrote:

It is my responsibility to ensure that students who finish the [Bloomfield College] program will provide children with excellent learning experiences, not only because they have the basic skills and academic content, and methodological knowledge to do so, but because they see their roles as questioners and inquirers into their teaching and the instructional practices of the schools where they will be teaching. And, in addition, in their role as questioners and inquirers, they must understand the necessity of taking into account their knowledge of the local characteristics of their students and the contexts in which their students live and learn. If I can fulfill this responsibility, then we will begin to end the cycle of inadequately prepared teachers teaching our most vulnerable children, a system of which many of our students are products.

Cochran-Smith (2004) stated that during the 1980s “the focus of teacher education shifted away from training and toward teacher thinking, teacher knowledge, and teacher learning” (p. 8), and then in the late 1990s, there was “a shift away from assessing prospective teachers according to their knowledge and skill and [instead] assessing their teacher education programs according to their coherence and alignment with the knowledge base [of teacher education and various academic disciplines]” (p. 8). We now must ensure that we tie the intellectual and practical aspects of teaching together and help our students perceive these connections – an experience that many of my nontraditional students are not used to doing.
as a result of their educational histories, which precluded a questioning and inquiring stance.

Some might say that I did a foolish thing using my rehiring self-assessment essays to examine my work. But I found this space provided a chance to reflect on my life as a college teacher. As Russell and Pinnegar (1995) point out, “We have become interested in capturing our experiences and our teaching endeavors, trying to see how we enact our practice and the conflicts that arise (both in ourselves and in our students) . . .” (p. 7). I was lucky. What I wrote as part of my portfolio did not reverberate in the public space of the college, and it provided me a way to reflect on my practice.

INCLUDING OTHERS IN MY INQUIRY

Much has changed since Russell and Pinnegar (1995) stated “there is little research on teacher education as an enterprise” (p.6). As the press for accountability broadens, the lens is shifting to teacher education programs, their effectiveness judged by the effectiveness in the classroom of the teachers who graduate from the various programs. This has led to teacher educators examining their practice. As a faculty member in a small college and a Division with only a small number of full-time faculty members, I felt the need to search out opportunities to connect with colleagues by attending conferences and joining professional associations such as New Jersey Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NJAECTE) and National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE). I joined American Educational Research Association (AERA) and, in so doing, found the Self-Study of Teacher Education SIG.

I decided to use the space provided through conferences at NJAECTE (and its national parent NAECTE) to bring out in the open what I felt were experiences that many of the members of the Association, although not all, were experiencing in their professional lives. I realized, as Guilfoyle (1995) did, that “my history influences ... my interpretations” (p. 14) and that my history is always present in my reflections and interpretations of events. But I also believe, as Samaras (2002) does, in the Vygotskian principle that social interaction leads to learning, and that is why I began a series of dialogues with other early childhood education faculty about how we could more effectively work with our nontraditional and first generation college students pursuing teacher certification.

DIALOGUE OUTCOMES

From the dialogues held at three different conferences, early childhood faculty who attended developed a list of characteristics of nontraditional students, the challenges that they present, and the strengths they bring with them to our classes. We concluded with a brainstormed list of ideas for support system strategies to help students to progress through the various teacher preparation programs.

Characteristics of nontraditional students

Nontraditional students are not just undergraduates but include graduate students and both groups attended school on a full- or part-time basis. Many were older than the average, traditional undergraduate. Many are parents who come from lower income backgrounds, and continue to live in poor, urban communities with all the problems characteristic of those contexts – drugs, crime, underfinanced schools, with overwhelming economic, social, and/or psychological pressures within their families. In addition, many nontraditional students are working full-time while attempting to attend college full time. As Bernheimer (2004) stated:

In addition to their daily challenges for survival, [nontraditional students] now needed time for attending classes, and studying, developing new academic and language skills, adjusting to an aloof academic institution, facing dramatic social changes, and balancing work and family responsibilities along with added financial costs. (p. 56)

Also, the educational achievements of nontraditional students tend to be below average and many of them are second language learners who do not have a strong command of English. Many appear to have undiagnosed and diagnosed learning problems (sometimes physical problems) that make it hard for them to meet the demands of college-level work. A further complication is the fact that some do not have the motivation and initiative necessary to master college level work and are taking classes because of state mandates that require them to further their educational and professional preparation.

Challenges of nontraditional students

The challenges and strengths that nontraditional students have are generally related to their characteristics. Among the challenges for higher education faculty are that some students do not meet our expectations about what a college student should know prior to entering college. Some of them have difficulty being as reflective as expected and are reluctant to give their opinions and engage in dialogue about what they are learning. Some are not used to listening to the perspectives of others and working cooperatively with others to review information or develop ideas. The support services and resources for nontraditional students are often inadequate.

There are also challenges in terms of nontraditional students’ skill levels. Many of the nontraditional students tend to have writing skills that are insufficiently developed, which affects their ability to reflect using writing. In addition, many have reading skills that are not adequately developed, which makes it difficult to nearly impossible for some of them to comprehend college textbooks, utilize information in analytical discussions, or to apply academic concepts to practical learning experiences. Complicating this is the fact that many nontraditional students tend to have limited time and opportunity to study. Many are inexperienced in and do not have the interaction styles of the larger education and political community in order to become effective advocates for children and their families.
**Strengths of nontraditional students**

In spite of the aforementioned challenges, nontraditional students have some important strengths. They are very persistent in the face of odds. Their backgrounds help them to be more understanding and sensitive to the students whom they will teach. Some of them have learned to *code switch* — change interaction styles that enable them to work effectively within the communities in which they will teach. And many nontraditional students are aware of and committed to *righting* societal inequalities by working for social justice in their communities.

**Strategies to support the successful completion of our programs by nontraditional students**

We need a support system for nontraditional students as they progress through our programs, a system, which should emulate the comprehensive care model that the National Association for the Education of Young Children advocates for children and families. Focus should be on developing an individualized approach to students’ progress, listening to and paying attention to students’ lives inside and outside school and incorporating “caring” teaching into our practice (Goldstein, 2002).

One strategy would necessitate coordination across Divisions and Departments – to design curriculum experiences with the individual needs of students in mind, which incorporates academic and life skill support based on the format of the Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP). Another strategy, which could be part of the IPDP, would be to pair developmental courses with early childhood education professional courses or infuse professional courses with experiences that develop students’ reading, writing, math, science and computer competencies along with activities and experiences that develop students’ knowledge and understanding of professional preparation course content. We can approach the design and planning of curriculum experiences that take into account the diversity of learning styles and multiple intelligences of our students and use these to help students reach high levels of literacy, a prerequisite for high quality teaching.

**HOW DO WE GET THERE FROM HERE?**

Daily, early childhood faculty confront the challenges from and benefit from the strengths of nontraditional students. Colleagues, especially in teacher education programs, need to look at how we carry out our work within the Academy and recognize the importance of this inquiry in order for us to graduate students, particularly nontraditional students, who can ensure better outcomes for children than they themselves experienced.

I have shared the outcomes of my attempts to include the broader community of early childhood teacher educators in my journey of self-reflection. But it has been difficult harnessing the power from those conferences and move forward toward fully developing the ideas from these interactive workshops.

We must develop an integrated, systematic approach to providing structured support to nontraditional students. Our research agenda needs to be focused inward, not just outward to researching best practices in the early childhood classroom. We must focus research on the best practices for helping nontraditional students succeed in our higher education teacher preparation programs and in all the disciplines in which our students are involved at the college/university as part of a systemic approach to preparing high quality teachers.

**QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY**

- Can we build programs that give nontraditional students the individualized support that some need in order to succeed?
- What indicators tell us which students with individualized support will eventually succeed?
- What indicators tell us which students are not acquiring the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that we know are essential for high quality teachers to have?
- What principles, policies, and guidelines should be followed when we need to ease students out of our programs and at what point should we intervene?
- How do we meet with all faculty to discuss the status of each student and plan appropriately to help them succeed?
- What considerations must be made to acknowledge regional, cultural, racial, and ethnic differences of nontraditional students?
- Should each faculty member be assigned a cohort to guide through the program and how does extra advise-ment affect our ability to carry a full teaching load?

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Learning to Teach Reading: Preparing Teachers for Urban Contexts

Teaching children to be literate is arguably one of the most important jobs of an elementary teacher. Learning to read has been the subject of much research. For the past 10 years, how to teach children to become literate has been the subject of much political debate, as well as scientific discussion nationally and particularly in California (Flippo, 2001; Ohanian, 1999; Routman, 1996). In this study our goal was to document how elementary credential candidates learn to teach reading, writing, listening and speaking in the college classroom where we co-teach a course on the teaching of literacy. Of particular concern was documenting how we teach our students to teach well to all students, in spite of the mitigating circumstances of a society in which racism and prejudice often interfere with some children’s academic achievement.

The objective of this study is to take a close look at what we teach in this graduate level class with regard to how we are preparing our students to teach all students well in a society that is by and large racist in its orientation toward who is expected to succeed and fail. The goal of the class is that students will develop an understanding and some clarity in how to do this well. We talk about the connections between theory and practice, and present examples of good practice. We ask the students to think about the context for that practice, especially in an inherently unjust situation. In this study, we will examine how our students are thinking about this question and look at what we do to promote understanding about how to teach all children well in the context of our society.

THEORETICAL AND LITERATURE CONSIDERATIONS

Our theoretical perspective on becoming literate is well articulated in our syllabus, and our assigned readings reflect this perspective. First, learning in general is a developmental and constructivist process (Duckworth, 1996; Von Glasersfeld, 2005) and literacy learning is no exception to this. Thus, learning to read and write is the result of a student’s own action and construction, in conjunction with fellow students, with his or her teacher(s) and family. In addition, we recognize that literacy has multiple purposes and that each student will come to school with a culturally shared and individual literary background (Rogoff, 2003) .

Given this understanding of how people learn (process and context), we teach a literacy learning curriculum that is based on the developmental, social, and constructive nature of learning. Such an instructional stance includes...
promoting a balanced language and literacy curriculum (Pressley, 2002; National Reading Panel, 2000) focused on comprehension and composition as the purpose and end goals of learning to be literate. While student teachers are exposed to a variety of curricula, including scripted ones, we teach them to consider specifically how different aspects of the curriculum must support the varying components of learning to be a literate person. Such teaching will include explicit direct instruction, as well as having children practice and reflect on a variety of literacy processes. Ultimately, our student teachers must understand the importance of each child’s voice, different cultural perspectives on the uses of literacy, the importance of academic language for each discipline, and for each student whether s/he be an English learner or native speaker; all of these components will contribute to helping their students become fluent in the language and literacy they need in order to succeed in the mainstream culture. These beliefs underlie our teaching. Making them pragmatic and applicable is our challenge.

METHODS

Data Collection
We documented this self-study in several ways. Most class sessions were videotaped in part, and transcripts of small group and whole group discussions were made. We focused on transcribing the small group discussions to see what students discussed in independent but structured talk. The small group discussions involved one of several topics: discussing shared literature or jigsawing (Johnson, Hohnoson & Holubec, 1986) different assigned research articles or textbook readings, enacting methods such as literature study circles or writing conferences, assessing student work according to methods demonstrated in class, or collaborating on shared written assignments. Whole group discussions tended to be summations and sharing back with the whole group of what had occurred in the small groups.

In addition to the videotapes, student written work was collected and analyzed. Of greatest interest for this self-study was a series of freewrite responses to the question “What have I learned today about teaching all students well in a racist nation?” Once we had identified themes, we analyzed the transcripts of the small group discussions for similar themes and ideas. We also looked at the questions we asked the students to address in these small group discussions to see how these questions might have provoked particular responses. We looked at the readings to see if these readings provoked the same sorts of discussions and to see how the readings they did related to the discussions. Finally, we looked for these themes in the position papers that were the final assignment for the year long class.

FINDINGS

In the analysis we identified nine different themes that could be divided into three major categories.

Category 1: We called this category know yourself. We identified themes which included how hard it is to recognize racism in oneself and how hard it is to fight racism that is institutionalized (theme 1: self-knowledge); how important it is to name racism when one observes it or experiences it, and to discuss it with one’s students; that it is important to challenge racism and teach for social justice (theme 2: challenge racism). In response to the freewrite prompt, one student wrote,

That teaching is a great responsibility, a position too easily abused! To have such influence over impressionable minds is scary. In order to foster equity and social justice in my classroom (of the near future) I have to be mindful of my own personal viewpoint, my perspective. (2/22/05).

Category 2: We called this category know your learners. We identified themes that included valuing the funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) that students bring to the classroom, having high expectations for all students, respecting students (theme 3: valuing and respecting what your students bring with them and using that knowledge to create high expectations); and creating a safe space for learning in your classroom, allowing for the voices of all students (theme 4). For example, one student wrote,

In our group we talked a lot about knowing your learners individually, and knowing who they are as writers. We also talked about being explicit with our instruction and our reasoning on what we want to work on with our students, and setting high expectations. (2/22/05).

Category 3: The third and largest category involved how to use curriculum and instruction to achieve excellent outcomes for all students. We identified themes which included using culturally relevant materials in teaching and celebrating all cultures (theme 5), employing critical thinking, critical teaching and multiple perspectives (theme 6), teaching explicitly (theme 7), teaching academic language not only to English learners but to all children (theme 8), and connecting assessment with curriculum (theme 9). One student wrote,

Today during this class I learned (1) methods to make
the writing process accessible to all children, (2) the importance of creating an atmosphere where students begin to take risks, and come from behind the masked writing of ‘silly’ things and move into discussing their true feelings and expanding their ideas.

During our group discussion it was confirmed for me how certain methods are not taught to poor students and minority students who are not a part of the culture of power. Often we found that tools such as those in Writers workshop were not introduced to us until our senior year of high school. (2/8/05)

The overwhelming number of responses fell into the third category, which is understandable given that the question directly asked them to address the issue of teaching all children well. However, the other two categories, knowing one’s learners and oneself, are presented in our program as essential to good teaching, so their appearance should not have been surprising.

Identifying these themes stunned us. While we knew we had been trying to address the issues of racism directly, we had no idea that the students had processed our teaching in this way. Having found these themes in the freewrites, we examined the conversations the students had both in small groups and again in the larger groups, keeping in mind what they were supposed to be talking about.

What we found was that in nearly every class session these three categories and relevant themes were addressed or introduced into the small group conversations. How directly related to issues of teaching children well in the context of racism and lack of equity did depend somewhat on the nature of the reading. For example, during our discussion of how to conduct a running record, a method of reading assessment used in the primary grades (Clay, 1993), there were no specific references to considering inequities. However, even in this context, students did consider having English learners who could read in their first language do a running record in that language. Themes that reoccurred repeatedly in conversations were the importance of culturally relevant literature and curriculum methods, referring to students’ funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005) for designing curriculum, explicit instruction and an emphasis on making sure all students learned appropriate academic language, whether or not they were English learners.

Certain readings highlighted the issues of teaching in ways that allowed for access to all and appreciation for all children. For example, in October, when students read Katherine Au’s (1993) chapter about sharing time in classrooms, they were surprised to learn of the different ways that allowed for access to all and appreciation for that voice is valuable. Their writing has that value of representing who they are and that voice is valuable. (2/22/05)

By the second semester, all categories were discussed in every class session. As we began to teach about writers’ workshops, students related how such curriculum could be culturally relevant, developmentally appropriate, and used to explicitly teach children specific skills that would be essential to their success in school. In one conversation one student made clear how you would connect explicit teaching to the process of writing and the context of the writing workshop. These students were responding to another chapter by Au (1993). The instructions for the discussion asked them, among other things, to think explicitly about how writers workshop would support the development of English learners and non-standard English speakers as excellent writers. The students turned in a list of instructional strategies they proposed to use.

Which leads to another thing this article is talking about, teaching writing to all learners and teaching explicitly the skills and then the next step connecting the skills to the writing process, so if you’re presenting a skill in a minilesson, they can directly connect it to and use it in their writing. (2/22/05)

Later on the same student said, I like the point this author (Au) made about multicultural literature and how, being familiarized with literature written by different types of people with different perspectives that it sort of validates their own perspective in writing; that their writing has that value of representing who they are and that voice is valuable. (2/22/05)

And still later, another student in the same group said, I was talking about, like for English language learners, or even African American writers, you need to encourage them to include their personal experiences, to write about them. (2/22/05)

A different student responded, Writing is, I think, one of the easiest potentials in our curriculum to be really explicitly culturally relevant to our students’ lives. They get to incorporate their experience into their learning. (2/22/05)

This extended example is not unique. There were many occasions when such explicit addressing of the issue of teaching all children effectively was raised. Students seemed to have lots of ideas on how to do this, ideas that were drawn from what we did in class, what they read about and what they were seeing in their student teaching placements. Such discussions occurred more frequently when we gave explicit instructions to consider the dilemmas posed by educating a diverse population, but students seemed to have it on their minds whether or not we asked them about it.

Finally, in examining the position papers, we found that students considered all nine of the themes identified in the freewrites. In their discussions about their position papers and in the posters they created for everyone to view they emphasized the importance of taking into account the political climate of the outside world, and focusing on achieving social justice and excellent outcomes for all students with regard to learning to be...
literate. They focused on the use of culturally relevant materials, creating a safe space for student voices and understanding their learners well as a basis for creating curriculum that would allow students access to learning academic language. They presented the use of workshop teaching as well as explicit instruction, encouraging critical thinking and multiple perspectives in their teaching.

CONCLUSION
In conducting this self-study we did not expect to find that our students were problem-solving about how to teach all children well in a racist society in such an explicit way. Examining all of our artifacts systematically reinforced for us the value of self-study in helping us to think deeply about what we are trying to do in our teaching and how we are accomplishing our goals. Each week we met to reflect on the immediately preceding class session and plan for the next one, keeping in mind our overall goals for the students over the year. Because we were teaching together, as students worked in small groups and we circulated, we also pointed out to one another interesting conversations and important points to follow up on in the whole group discussion that would follow small group work. Thus, we continually reflected, problem-solved and challenged each other to ensure that we were meeting our goals. This is not to say that we always felt successful. We often felt frustrated by issues such as trying to tell too much, expecting students to take in everything we were reading about and discussing so that they could effectively apply it immediately. Keeping our focus on teaching all children well was not difficult, but incorporating the racist nature of society was challenging.

Looking back over the artifacts of this year helped us realize how important it is to explicitly and repeatedly name the dilemma and problems. Every week, we asked them to think about the practices we were teaching in relation to a diverse population of students, whether or not we asked them to respond in writing to our question. In addition, in many of the writings and discussions, students mentioned readings or activities or content from other courses in the program. Thus, it was not simply our focus in this class on issues of institutional racism and the achievement gap in becoming literate that spurred them on to consider this dilemma. Rather, the program emphasis seems to have supported their development of specific ideas about the teaching of literacy for all children. This is encouraging for all of us at Mills College, as we strive to work collaboratively, toward mutual goals, to improve the educational experience for the children our students will teach.

A final caveat seems necessary, however. While our students go out with the best of intentions, well-versed in what they can do to help all students become literate, we know that they encounter obstacles that good planning and deep understanding of the problems of inequity can not overcome. Systemic changes in our society as well in the schools are required to really overcome the problems of institutional racism and to erase the achievement gap.

Nevertheless, it is better to go prepared into a difficult situation, no matter how challenging it may turn out to be.

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I feel like I’m back teaching in high school again. Chad and Melissa not only openly questioned the need to take the class (they talked about the challenges of just trying to survive as first year teachers, the lack of value of research in general, and that to do what I was asking seemed hard to imagine) but they chatted with each other throughout the entire class. I even had to go back and stand next to them at one point. Will I have to separate them? It is true that I invited some of their harsher comments when I asked them what they thought of the course, readings, assignments etc., after we went through the syllabus. But the eye rolling and writing of comments on each others notebooks!?! What does this say about their understandings of what it means to be a professional? Their comments seemed infectious with the rest of the class as well. I don’t think any of us walked out of class feeling hopeful or optimistic tonight. It will be interesting to see the outcome of our “why bother doing teacher research” discussion next week. (My Research Journal, 1/4/2005)

Chad, on a final note—I want to let you know I appreciate your comments toward the end of the quarter about resistance and transformation in terms of your thinking about teacher research. Perhaps because this resistance was noticeable it offered some validation to me as an instructor and to the course. Still, even as I write this I’m struggling to understand why this was important to both of us, what this means in terms of the course, and what this might mean for our programs and teacher education more generally. (Written feedback on Chad’s Final Paper)

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS: SELF-STUDY, RESISTANCE, PROFESSIONALISM AND LIFE IN THE PANOPTICON

These two comments—written about Chad, at the beginning of the quarter, and to Chad, at the end of the quarter—serve as bookends that capture the complex interplay between myself and the teachers that take my class, between resistance and professionalism, and our challenge in trying to re/define our understandings of what it means to be a professional. What makes this all the more difficult is that the challenge is not of our own construction. Rather our discussions of what it means to be a professional, taken up in part as these teachers re/define their roles as teachers to include the hyphenated self of teacher-research, are embedded within historically situated, socially constructed, politically charged, and conflicting ideological formulations of teacher professionalism (Bushnell, 2003; Gitlin & Labaree, 1996; Hargreaves, 1984; Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Kincheloe, 2004; Labaree, 1992; Labaree, 1993; Robertson, 1996; Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1996). As a result of this self-study several things have emerged in terms of my understanding of how student resistance to my course is embedded in hegemonic constructions of professionalism, notions that the studying of and doing of teacher research has the potential to challenge.

SURVEILLANCE, RESISTANCE AND PROFESSIONALISM

The daily activities of teachers, principals, and other school workers remain under close monitoring by school and nonschool-based persons and institutions. State education agencies, unions, parents, and citizens are only some of the groups who oversee the work of teachers in particular. The monitoring of teachers occurs...within a panopticon of surveillance—an image of a system of power presented by Foucault (1979). The panopticon of surveillance has not been acknowledged as a problematic outcome of the current climate of accountability operating in schools. Educators and researchers need to consider how surveillance restricts the power of school workers and constructs teaching as a semiprofession. (Bushnell, 2003, p. 252)

While Foucault’s notion of surveillance has a significant impact on what teachers can do and shapes the conditions under which they work, it is Bushnell’s statement about how this constructs teachers’ understandings of what it means to be a professional that lies at the heart of my understanding of student resistance. In particular, this quotation captures how our understandings of what it means to be a professional are socially constructed,
mediated within/through systems of power, situated in time and place, and likely to contain not a single, but multiple, competing, and oftentimes conflicting ideological stances. Professionalism, from my perspective, represents a particular stance one takes toward one’s work. This stance not only dictates what one does, but also entails an acknowledgement of and engagement with others about the knowledge, history, issues, and policies that impact ones particular stance in a way that seeks to unite professional practice with professional engagement, a professional self with a professional community, and personal knowledge with professional knowledge. Resistance to a class on doing teacher-research for beginning teachers, has to be understood within the dominance of a particularly narrow and disempowering form of professionalism, what I term hegemonic professionalism.

Resistance to teaching and one’s own learning has been addressed extensively within the literature on teaching, learning, and education (e.g., Ellsworth, 1989; Giroux 2001; Kohl, 1994; Willis, 1977) focusing on the lack of meaning and connection to students lives and the social-structural foundations that contribute to definitions of education, educational practices, and relations of power that contribute to these. While I have asked myself and the teachers in my classes numerous times and in seemingly countless ways “What is it they/you are resisting?” this paper is my attempt to understand students’ resistance, my reaction to this, and its impact on my teaching and their learning through self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). Based on a self-study undertaken within a course taught during the Winter of 2005—T&L 612: Critical Reflection on Teaching and Classroom Practices—I seek to explore the ways in which my own conceptions of teaching, teacher education, research and schooling as well as the experiences and perspectives of these beginning teachers intersect in ways that potentially contribute to their resistance to a course on teacher-research that is intended to support their continuing professional development and improve their understanding of their teaching. Drawing on interviews with students, curricular documents, field notes of class discussions, a reflective journal, course evaluations, and students’ work from the course, I examine the ways in which my discourse and practice as a teacher educator serves to both empower and discipline teachers, at once challenging and reinforcing the existing relationships of power at work in our classroom, their classrooms and schools, our educational system, and society at large, particularly in relationship to teachers’ understandings of what it means to be a professional.

DOING VERSUS UNDERSTANDING: STRUGGLING WITH ONE’S DESKILLING

Based on end-of-the-course evaluations, I have always understood student resistance to be a result of the frustration the teacher/students feel about having to take this course to complete their Master’s degree while teaching, the way in which this adds to and complicates their already complex lives, the overwhelming challenges of doing research while struggling to survive as a beginning teacher (Bullough, 1989), and even their lack of comfort with and understanding of research (Kuzmic, 2002). I have contented myself with the fact that while student resistance is oftentimes quite noticeable at the beginning of the quarter, it tends to become less so as the quarter progresses. I have even come to anticipate this, addressing this in terms of the structure and expectations for the course and in my practice.

However, while not denying these or other possibilities, I have come to recognize that asking students to redefine themselves as teacher-researchers challenges the hegemonic constructions of who and what teachers are. Student’s initial resistance — in the form of challenges to the value and worth of doing teacher research, to the course, and even to me — is in part, a response to asking teachers to think of themselves differently and how others have defined them. As beginning teachers, the students in my class are confronted with the reality of hegemonic discourses, institutional structures, and practices where definitions of professionalism foster the deskilling of teachers (Apple, 1982, 1993), the devaluing of professional autonomy (Bushnell, 2001), and the deprofessionalization of teachers’ work (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996). In conflict with many of their own values teachers resist, yet embrace these narrowly defined hegemonic constructions of what it means to be a professional. Confronted with the rhetoric of reprofessionalization (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996)—involvement in broader tasks, greater complexity, more sophisticated judgment, and collective decision-making among colleagues—it is not surprising that they are suspicious of, and perhaps even resist those (like myself) who ask them to do more in the name of professionalism, while in reality giving them more to do with little in terms of professional autonomy or greater decision making powers.

INDIVIDUALISM AND COMMUNITY

There is a significant and diverse body of scholarship that has sought to explore the challenges of attending to the need for collaborative understandings, collective action, and shared responsibilities (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton, 1985; Dewey, 1927; Goodman, 1992; Kuzmic, 1993; Lasch, 1979; Yeatman, 1994) in a society and a world characterized by individualism. My own efforts at the beginning of the course, in concert with the arguments of Donald Freeman (author of Doing Teacher Research, the primary text for the course), to engage the students/teachers in T&L 612 in thinking about professionalism in terms that extend beyond themselves and to see themselves as part of a broader professional community, also accounts for some of the initial resistance I have experienced. In discussing Freeman’s (1998) suggestion that thinking of ourselves differently unites the doing of teaching—“doing the job of managing students and delivering the content”—with the other side of teaching—“the wondering the speculating, the doubting and having hunches, the puzzling and questioning” (p. 2)—
students mostly see the linking, uniting, and hyphenating of their roles as teachers and researchers as problematic, undoable, and overwhelming. They often argue that I, the course, and Freeman have unrealistic expectations for what teachers can do. As teachers, they also think that they have little to contribute to our understanding of teaching, and equally as frustrating, that the research and scholarship on teaching rarely has anything meaningful to contribute to their work as teachers. There are, of course, a small minority of students in these early classes for whom the idea of teacher research has some appeal. Picking up on Freeman’s argument that “teachers are seen—and principally see themselves—as consumers rather than producers of knowledge” and whose very work conditions are embedded in a structural isolation, they counter and even challenge their peers to think about their work and roles as teachers as something more and their identities as teachers as more than simply working with students. While oftentimes powerful and articulate, their comments speak to, but seldom refer to notions of professionalism or of the linking of their understandings of themselves as professionals with engagement in the discourses of a professional community.

TEACHER-RESEARCH AS A COUNTER HEGEMONIC PROFESSIONAL NARRATIVE

Lastly, and related to both of the above points, I have further affirmation that learning about and doing teacher research as a means for thinking about one’s teaching and students’ learning provides a powerful avenue for teachers to begin to think about themselves in substantially different ways. As a counter-hegemonic discourse about teacher professionalism, teacher-research provides a means to challenge hegemonic discourses that ultimately support structures, policies and practices that serve in the deskilling, the devaluing of professional autonomy, and the deprofessionalization of teachers. Taking a closer look at the projects and discussions that emerge in T&L 612 not in terms of what they say about teacher-research (how I oftentimes think about them as the instructor), but what they say about the professionalism of the teachers engaged in them, emphasizes the possibilities of penetrating, at least partially, the hegemonic discourses that seek to define for teachers what professionalism means. While space does not allow me to capture the depth and breadth of this in terms of students’ comments, the following statement by Aaron provides a sense of this:

This teacher-research study was challenging, and temporarily relieved me of the minutiae, logistics and daily routine of the classroom, providing time for me to reflect on the larger pedagogical and institutional structures and assumptions about teaching and learning. How can I build a competent and culturally literate classroom, without racism, sexism, and ethnic profiling? I teach the American value system of justice, freedom and equality to a group of students who have not experienced the best of our system. Many will linger in the poverty that has marked their lives, with a destination at McJob or in the military, which recruits the young, poor, uneducated and rural youth, with the carrot that this is the route to a better life [Aaron had had several heated discussions with colleagues about his concern that the military was allowed to recruit on the high school campus]. I feel the hypocrisy they confront me with that I don’t live in their community. Each day I realize how complex K [a disruptive student and the focus of Aaron’s teacher-research project] is, and how little I know about her and my other students. I must know who they are, before I can effectively teach them. Teacher-research has helped me understand at least this. (Aaron, Final Paper)

I doubt that Aaron’s thoughts about his teaching, his students, our educational system, and our society suddenly emerged as a result of my class, my teaching, or his study of and doing teacher-research. I do believe that teacher-research provided Aaron with a counter-hegemonic forum, an emerging set of skills to begin to see himself differently as a teacher, and to place his own understandings of what it means to be a professional in sharper contrast to those that are being defined for him through hegemonic discourses. Kreisberg (1992) argues that, “While the mechanisms of hegemony are powerful, they are not all-encompassing, and they are always characterized by contradictions and conflict. The dominated rarely consent fully to their own domination” (pp. 16-17). For Aaron and for many (but not all) of the students in T&L 612 being “forced” (in this case resistance is futile) to define their roles as teachers in broader terms provides them an opportunity to think about their teaching in more complex ways, to recognize that they can take control over what they know and use this as a basis for what they do, and that they can not only share this with others, but learn from/with them. It is in this sense that teacher-research serves as a counter-hegemonic discourse that enables teachers to begin to challenge hegemonic discourses about professionalism (Britzman, 2003).

REREADING RESISTANCE, PROFESSIONALISM, AND TEACHER EDUCATION

Student resistance in T&L 612 is often directed at me, the course, and teacher-research. While I find this frustrating, and, like my comments at the start of this paper, occasionally see this as a sign of a lack of professionalism on the part of the student, I have come to see this more as a result of their struggles to understand and define for themselves what professionalism means in the face of conflicting ideological discourses. These two perspectives differ radically in terms of what we see as the problem, and as such, how we seek to address this. The former is viewed as a personal/professional limitation, whereas the latter is viewed as a structural critique and a possibility for engagement. It is all too common for those of us in teacher education to dismiss, ignore, remEDIATE, silence, or chastise those who resist in the name of anti-intellectualism, conservative political beliefs, and/or technical rationality when it comes to thinking about teaching and learning. While each of these may have
some merit, I have come to think of these less as deficiencies, and more as opportunities to challenge not only hegemonic constructions of professionalism, but how I negotiate this in terms of my teaching. In this regard, I have begun to consider the way(s) in which I/we, as teacher educators, might be complicit in maintaining hegemonic discourses of professionalism that serve to regulate, deskill, and narrowly define teachers’ conceptions of themselves as professionals.

While I believe the teachers in T&L 612, through the process of studying and doing teacher-research, redefine their personal identities as teachers in ways that validate counter hegemonic professional discourses, I believe this is less the case when it comes to seeing themselves as engaged in a discourse that validates one’s involvement and participation in a professional community. The difference here is embedded in the ways in which we support what I am referring to as a form of individual professionalism rather than collective professionalism. The former tends to contribute to definitions of professionalism that are defined by what teachers do as individuals, whereas the latter encourages definitions of professionalism that are defined by what teachers can contribute, learn, and become with/through engagement with others. Even when it seeks to be critical, empowering, and counter-hegemonic, individual professionalism, I believe, falls short of creating the kinds of professional communities that would allow students/teachers to meaningfully resist hegemonic constructions of professionalism. Like Bushnell (2001), I believe that while “professionalism can be measured by relative salary, social prestige, or entry requirements, teachers’ professionalism reveals itself through teachers opportunities to reflect and act with intellectual autonomy, on their presence within a collegial community, and on the trust they enjoy from peers, clients, and supervisors” (p. 255).

In order to assist teachers in developing the more complex understandings of their professional identities required to accomplish this, I believe we need to rethink the curriculum and structures of teacher education programs and our practices as teacher educators. We need to create more substantive opportunities for pre- and in-service teachers not only to examine systems of power and constructions of professionalism in order to enhance their individual identities as professionals, but to see themselves as part of a collective professional community taking part in a public discourse that cuts across relationships of power in order to discuss and act on educational problems.

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BACKGROUND
Not all mothers are the same, but the perceived role of mothering shares these goals in common with teachers: to protect, train, and care for children. Ribbens (1994) said that mothers’ beliefs about family strongly influenced their mothering actions. Mothers with strongly held beliefs about mothering were more likely to be authoritative and loving as well as able to seek out better ways of parenting. This blend of parenting also seems to benefit the parent. According to Rogers and White (1998), mothers who were clearly in authority, yet gentle and nurturing, felt more satisfied with their parenting and closer to their children.

In the task of protecting, training, and caring for children comes an element of accountability. Oberman and Josselson (1996) reported that mothers negotiated their numerous roles, including disciplinarian, teacher, and caregiver, with a daily interplay of both “maternal power and an immense burden of responsibility” (p. 344). Mothers’ definitions of who they are emerge from this daily interplay. Another study showed that the moral influence of parents, especially mothers, did not end at childhood but rather continued into adulthood (Dickie, Ajega, Kobylak, & Nixon, 2006). Mothering then is a lifelong action.

Since an action, from a narrative perspective, is understood in the context of a story, these actions can be seen as a part of a story. A study of the stories as records of our beliefs takes the narrative from the mundane to expressions of beliefs. Witherell and Noddings (1991) recognize narrative as a tool to explore aspects of caring and teaching. In this way, narratives can reveal metaphors and themes.

Metaphor research (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) describes an underlying system of metaphorical concepts that influence every person’s ways of thinking. Recognizing these metaphors provides greater understanding of the assumptions and reasoning that guide an individual’s actions. In Emerging as a Teacher, Bullough, Knowles, and Crow (1991) demonstrated that the depth of metaphors for teaching actually predicted failure and success, how important it must be for mothers to develop deep metaphors for mothering.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (1994), story may most accurately reflect personal experience. It is useful to explore how to give a personal account, make meaning, and maintain relationships in a written form. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) further explain that people are “becoming” rather than “being.” Therefore, the process of collecting the field texts and then analyzing them is a back-and-forth process where the stories of the present, past, and future work together. They call this way of thinking a “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” (p. 60).

This self-study investigated further the findings of our previous mothering research on the relationship between mothering and teaching (see Lay, Bigham, Dulude, & Pinnegar, 2004). We further explore the nature of caring for children, especially our own. In particular, we revisited the theme of vulnerability in mothering and sought to better understand the nature and impact of vulnerability on our individual lives, families, and communities.

METHOD
For this study, we built a dark blog in order to collect our mothering stories and responses in a central location. A dark blog is a non-public personal web page, and we used it to organize and archive our conversations on mothering. We wondered if, as Mortensen and Walker (2002) posited in their study of blogging, our writing and the way we expressed thoughts would change because the format has changed.

In our weblog, we posted our stories and comments in an accessible and chronological format. We were not confined to a number of responses but were free to read, post, and respond to any story and any comment. Since we live far apart, we were interested to see that having a “location” for our stories was a way of creating community — still private and for people who know each other, unlike public cyber communities. We recorded our shortcomings as well as successes. In our own three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, we reflected on past and current experiences and made connections in our responses to each other.
We feel vulnerable as mothers because we want to protect our children and we know that we do not always have the power to do this. B described this fear in her post, Panic. She says,

Last Thursday we got a notice on our door that a level-three sex offender has moved into our neighborhood… On Friday I made keys for everyone, and we practiced unlocking and locking the door. I gave my word that I would be home before they got off the bus. Today we are going to meet with my four friends in the neighborhood that they can count on to keep them safe. I don’t know what else to do. (B, Panic)

Here B reveals her feelings of vulnerability. We can tell from her list that she is trying to do every possible thing that she has control over to help keep her children safe. Yet she knows it is not all in her control. Because we love our children, we are also vulnerable to worry for their safety. L agreed, I wonder why the nightmares of my childhood and the nightmares of now are about my fear that someone I love will be hurt instead of about myself. Maybe it’s because I’m so selfless. Ha (L, comment on Lessons on Safety).

We also want to protect our children from their own vulnerabilities. When L’s daughter moved to a new school, part of her concern is not that her daughter will make her look bad if she throws a fit or refuses to talk but that they won’t understand why she’s doing it. We don’t want our children’s vulnerability revealed. L says, It made me wonder about the girl I see and the girl she is at school (L, Going a little nutso).

As mothers we do everything we can, trying to think of every way to protect and help. But ultimately, we know we must live with that fragile feeling of knowing that our children are not always safe from all of life’s hurt.

FINDINGS
The task of mothering and teaching puts us in situations where we feel exposed. As we deal with the care for children, we also carry that burden of responsibility. In our stories, we explore the responsibility we feel as mothers. It is challenging work to help our own children in their development and to help ourselves in ours. We used our stories to explore our own weaknesses and power. We noticed at least six dimensions of vulnerability that we include in our definition. Vulnerability in mothering means:

1. Wanting to protect our children.
2. Being at a new stage and not knowing how to proceed.
3. Seeing our own weaknesses.
4. Still needing our own mothers.
5. Knowing that our children stand as a witness to our parenting.
6. Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable as a teaching and mothering tool.

A bit of biography
The four of us are teachers and mothers. S is a teacher educator and mother of two children, one teenage boy and one young adult daughter. B is a working mother of five who span from age one to age 16. Her family recently moved to a new state. C is an early childhood and parent educator, mother of four and grandmother of three. Her oldest daughter, L, is another author. L has one four-year-old daughter and recently moved from the U.S. to a different country. All of us are Mormon women and often teach in our professions, homes, and church.

We can’t always protect them
We feel vulnerable as mothers because we want to protect our children and we know that we do not always have the power to do this. B described this fear in her post, Panic. She says,

Last Thursday we got a notice on our door that a level-three sex offender has moved into our neighborhood… On Friday I made keys for everyone, and we practiced unlocking and locking the door. I gave my word that I would be home before they got off the bus. Today we are going to meet with my four friends in the neighborhood that they can count on to keep them safe. I don’t know what else to do. (B, Panic)

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As mothers we do everything we can, trying to think of every way to protect and help. But ultimately, we know we must live with that fragile feeling of knowing that our children are not always safe from all of life’s hurt.

New stages and wondering how to proceed
We are also vulnerable because we love our children and yet we do not always know how to proceed. S described it another way. Even when we think we know what to do, we may not know how to do it (S, Vulnerability).

When we experience something new, we are vulnerable. L’s daughter started school and when she posted about it, the other more experienced mothers reflected back on their children’s school days, reminiscing about mismatched clothes, cups of Cheerios in the car, and leaving the house in the early dark. While school was new and worrisome, it helped L to have the support of those who had experienced it. L said,

I know very little about the school, the students, the teachers, the staff, how things work, etc. I have a book with phone numbers and so on but everything is in Dutch and I don’t even know what questions to ask. I prayed that I could appear at ease and confident when I took Esther there because it’s just as new to me as it is to her.

There is a collective sigh of relief among the mothers too when she writes, Esther hung up her coat on a hook that had a sticker with her name on it. She saw the E for Esther and knew that she belonged. (L, Lessons on School).

When we come to new paths as mothers, we feel unsure at first. This kind of vulnerability perhaps passes until the next new and unknown experience where it surfaces again.

Seeing our own weaknesses
There are also times when we see ourselves living out a self that is in conflict with our ideal self, acting in one way and yet, “I was NEVER going to do THAT.” B shared how she teaches such difficult children all day and puts so much energy into responding them with kindness and love that she has no more energy for her own children. S identified this frustrating predicament as vulnerability. “She comes home and she cannot stand her
own children to fight and when they do she just wants to yell at them. When they whine she wants to slap instead of comfort—she feels vulnerable. (S, Vulnerability)

We are vulnerable because we make mistakes. Just being in a family exposes our weaknesses. Our children see our weakness and can be critical too. As mothers, we persist even though we know we will continue to make mistakes.

**Needing some mothering of our own**

Perhaps it is in these moments that we still need our mothers. Our mothers are always ahead of us on the continuum and we sometimes need help.

L told about needing her mother. She says,

*As usual, I get some mothering from my mother at the same time that I'm doing mothering for Esther. This week I had to teach a lesson in church and I had not prepared in advance... I just got busy on it and luckily, talked to my mom. We went over some of the points I had studied and also how to engage the class. It helped me focus...It's nice to have that kind of constant love and support. (L, RS lesson)*

L finds strength to teach by getting a little mentoring from her teacher-mother. S also goes to her mother for help. She says,

*When my own life gets out of whack I call my mother to commune with her. I think of it as getting back to basics. When I go to commune, although I get comfort, I might also get critique and I can never be sure or certain which it will be. (S, comment on In the Beginning)*

In a way, we go back to the beginning, looking for support from our mothers, and it can help us turn around and do more mothering. This is the kind of vulnerability that is really just recognition that we do not have to have all the answers and we still have lessons to learn. Also, we can remember that like us, our children may still need a mother even after they are grown.

**Our children stand as a witness to our parenting**

Sometimes others judge us from a small slice of what they see, and much of this out of our hands. Others look at our children to find evidence of how we parent. When our children are not doing well, then that can make us feel inadequate. Unfortunately, like in teaching, it is hard not to feel that our value as a teacher or a mother rests in the performances of our children.

S says,

*I have often realized that I stand as a witness to my mother’s mothering. My good choices and the life I live stand as a witness that she was a good parent. As my own children grow old enough to make their own choices-like not going to church any more or living a particular lifestyle-I feel that vulnerability. (S, Vulnerability)*

C also talks about this vulnerability with an adult child.

*You would think that one would be over that when children are grown, but no. It concerns me to have my daughter in my parent education classes because she is pretty critical of my parenting. But my conviction to learning wins over my vulnerability. I want my grandson to have experiences with other children and my daughter to be with other mothers so both can see their important jobs. (C, comment on Vulnerability)*

We are vulnerable because our children will act as individuals. Sometimes their choices will be different from what they have been taught. This can be very painful. S describes this vulnerability,

*Recent experiences have made me realize that often as a mother we have many experiences grieving the death of a child that have nothing to do with actual physical death... We imagine reaching certain crossroads with that child. We imagine a future with that child and our role in that future and then when they choose otherwise in ways that mean that opportunity is dead, there is a mourning attached to that. This is particularly true when decisions involve things that we hold dear. It is not so much that a child chooses a life but that the child chooses a life in opposition to the life we had hoped for them. (S, Grieving)*

**Choosing vulnerability as a mothering tool**

This was one of our deepest insights into how we see vulnerability in our mothering. In mothering we have to be vulnerable in our relationships with our children. We know that they need us to be open, honest, and connected, both emotionally and spiritually, in our relationships with them in order for them to be socially and emotionally healthy adults. This is not easy work, because in the relationship we must be the adult. S says,

*We must be the first to forgive, the first to try to work things out and the first to upset them when they need that to learn. The balance of loving and teaching is so hard...Our kindness and love, even our humility in our relationship with them may be viewed by them as unkindness, meanness, or even weakness.*

In another story, S was able to help some young women look at their mothers in different ways in her role as a Sunday School teacher. She says,

*I had asked the young women what mothers did. Of course we got cleaning, cooking, etc. But not much more. So I turned to this girl and said, “Well what does your mother do?” She looked completely blank and said, “Well just what we said.” I said, “Do you not know what your mother does?”*

Then S invited the adult women in the class to list the skills of this girl’s mother. S says, I could see as we talked that this young woman’s consciousness about what mothers do and the value of her own mother was being completely re-written.

In this same lesson, S shared a story of learning to care
for her daughter to help the women think about their mothers differently.

Then I said to them, “That is what each of your mothers did for you. They didn’t just change your diapers. They did it with love so that every time they touched you they touched you in love.” It was quiet and I saw that they were thinking of that and I saw their hearts soften and they were, it seemed, suddenly thinking of their mothers in different and new ways. (S, Young Women)

C remembered back to this time with her children. She says, Somehow I felt vision too that everything I did mattered because of the responsibility that I felt as a mother (C, comment on Young Women).

Being vulnerable means being willing to put ourselves in a humble position. The parent must be the first to forgive. The parent must be the example. Our stories reveal that we believe these statements. Mothers need to be in a position of humility, actually choosing to be vulnerable, as a way to help our children grow. S says, Pride, defiance, arrogance are all attempts by us to escape vulnerability in relationships (S, Vulnerability 2). We recognize that making this choice, to be willing to be vulnerable, is an important thing for the growth of our children and, we cannot control how they will judge our vulnerability. S likens these mothering choices to teaching. S says, In teaching, all my efforts to manage a class, to teach content, to be kind, if judged by student’s responses can look like a failure (S, Vulnerability). C says, When I am willing to be vulnerable, I can be creative in thinking of possible solutions. I am a visionary woman! I don’t mean solutions for my children but just: “What can I do to help?” Or even “What would help?” (C, comment on Vulnerability)

CONCLUSION

Perhaps because of the nature of our mothering at this time, issues of vulnerability surfaced in many of our stories. One of the greatest difficulties we encounter as mothers is that vulnerability is at the heart of mothering and can also be the destruction of mothering. By looking at these six dimensions of vulnerability, we saw how we deal with the sometimes-fragile feelings of mothering and also how we often act in confidence, knowing that we have an influence for good. We experience varying degrees of vulnerability in our teaching but it is with our own children that we are most laid bare. By exploring our stories of vulnerability in our mothering, we may be able to learn more about our identities as teachers and better understand the choices we make. Loving all children puts us in a position of vulnerability to them but still, we find strength in making the choice to mother them anyway.

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Evaluation and Self-Study: Not Such Strange Bedfellows

BACKGROUND
A review of the proceedings of past Castle Conferences illustrates that many educators conducting self-study take a critical and introspective stance on their own teaching, situating much of self-study research at the micro level. There is no doubt that the vast majority of these teacher educators are enormously concerned with becoming better teacher educators. According to Loughran (2004) the aim of self-study is to provide for enhanced learning outcomes for both teacher educators and their students. The proceedings further illustrate that, as a whole, educators who conduct self-study are reflective practitioners. They continuously examine the process of their work and take action. Schon (1983) maintained that professionals know much more than they articulate. By reflection and examination of their practice, they situate themselves in a loop of continuous improvement. Teacher research is unique because does not come from either a solely practitioner framework or from an entirely theoretical framework, but rather it is created at an intersection of the two (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Judith Johnson, one of the original S-STEP members, always taught her graduate students that “you teach who you are.” The act of teaching is caught up in the educator’s self-image and values making self-study a difficult reflection at times. The fifth Castle Conference offered many sessions focused on the complex issue of reflection. For example, Whitehead (2004) explicitly involved his embodied values, and Kitchen (2004) was concerned with finding himself in his study. Indeed, for many educators who conduct self-study, this intricate type of reflection is the part and parcel of what they do and who they are.

PURPOSE
Our purpose is to widen the lens of self-study and study of the self and broaden the scale through the use of formative evaluation. Contrary to summative evaluation, which looks at the goals achieved at the end of the project, formative evaluation allows for changes both to the structure and the implementation of the program while it is underway (Frechtling, Sharp, & Westat, 1997). The role of the evaluator is to work closely with program staff and to provide data to help them reflect and determine their best course of action. Thus, formative evaluation encourages reflective practice. This type of self-study differs from the micro level because the educational practice being studied is usually embedded in an educational program of some sort. However, directors of educational programs can be just as concerned with the study of educational practices related to the program as with their educational practices in the courses they teach. In larger programs, an evaluator facilitates and supports the directors’ study of their practices. The synergy of their interactions deepens the self-study and takes it to a new level.

Many Colleges of Education across America are concerned with securing grant funding to extend educational work and research. Historically, a disconnect existed between academic knowledge secured at institutions of higher learning and practical knowledge used in classrooms. Private and public foundations actively facilitate partnerships between academic institutions and schools through their funding endeavors. Teacher educators are offered unique opportunities to work with schools and classroom teachers, and many teacher educators find themselves in the position of running programs attempting to improve education. In such a situation, the teacher educator’s sphere of influence is expanded beyond college classrooms and publications; she can have a direct impact on a larger audience of teachers and schools. The self-study of teacher education practices at this macro level is critical to understanding and improving the impact of programs on participants, just as most of the micro level self-studies aim to improve educational practice and outcomes on a smaller scale.

CONTEXT AND DESIGN
We will examine ways in which evaluations for two externally funded programs facilitated the self-study of these particular program directors. The authors are all connected by evaluation. Nancy Lewis is the evaluator for Vicky Zygouris-Coe’s Florida Online Reading Professional Development program (FOR-PD). Carine Strebel is the evaluator for Nancy Lewis’ Transition to

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Mathematics and Science Teaching program (TMAST). In this paper we first describe context of the macro self-study. Second, we provide brief descriptions of our two programs. Finally, we discuss ways in which evaluation furthered the understandings of the two project directors.

A mixed-method evaluation design that featured both quantitative and qualitative data collections and analysis was used for both TMAST and FOR-PD. The stories of these two programs differ, but they are linked by the critical role that evaluation plays in the reflection-in-action process and both have implications for a new, macro level of self-study.

FOR-PD is an online reading course aimed at improving teaching methods for reading instruction. It has served over 19,000 teachers in the state of Florida since January 2003. In an effort to ensure that all students in Florida are taught by “highly qualified” teachers, the State requires all under-certified reading teachers in secondary schools obtain Florida’s Add-on Reading Endorsement. Of the six required competencies, FOR-PD meets Competency 2: scientifically based reading research. Because of its size a typical micro level self-study was not useful for the program director, who relied on formative evaluation to support the study of her practices regarding FOR-PD.

TMAST differs substantially from FOR-PD. It is a complex and highly involved program that transitions people from industry into education in a 36-credit fast track Master of Arts program. TMAST features a mentored, paid, on-the-job internship and serves small groups of teachers, typically cohorts of about 20. After completion of one summer (nine semester hours) the participants are hired in an urban school district where they teach full time while they complete the program. Because their teaching position is an internship, it is supervised by university personnel; the TMAST students have no experience teaching and require multiple-layered mentoring at the school.

The directors of FOR-PD and TMAST were intimately involved with their programs since their inception. They both participated in writing the original proposals that resulted in funding. They designed the program components, built partnerships, and dedicated much time and energy to the creation of TMAST and FOR-PD. Because the programs were the directors’ creations and they were deeply involved in every aspect of them, evaluation was particularly valuable in helping the directors consider their programs through different lenses.

TRANSITION TO MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE TEACHING

Since TMAST uses an existing degree course of study, relatively little had to be done in ways of administrative functions to implement the program and the coursework ran smoothly. The school-based mentoring component, however, presented a major challenge right from the start. Wanting to avoid an unproductive gripping session, the evaluator decided to use Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Preskill & Coghlan, 2003) as the framework to evaluate the TMAST mentoring component at the end of the first year of operation. AI represents a major paradigm shift in the way evaluators approach program evaluation. Rather than approaching evaluation from the traditional deficit point of view that tears down and then rebuilds the program, AI allows to build on successes, without turning a blind eye to areas of weakness.

During the AI process, the TMAST students first described a successful mentoring experience during the prior school year. They then expanded that notion to a vision of what could be. While the evaluator had anticipated hearing concrete procedures that ideally would be put in place right at the beginning of the year, several participants described ideals of a mentoring relationship between the mentor and themselves, which allowed them to grow as educators. A typical vision articulated by a TMAST student was,

An ideal mentoring relationship would combine the experience, support and knowledge of a veteran teacher who has the same values and passion for education and continuous learning shared by the TMAST student. Through this joining effort, there would be reciprocal observations, curriculum support and shared knowledge of both classrooms and administrative management resources in which both individuals would find value and growth in this mutual relationship.

This critical insight forced the director to see the program, and her practice, through the lens of the students. Mentoring is much more than a required program component; it involves people and their interactions. The evaluator and director raised questions such as:

• What could the director expect, control, and structure so that this rich relationships can evolve?
• How could she improve the interaction with the school-based mentors?
• How could she facilitate the mentors’ buy-in to such a relationship?

TMAST students used their visions to develop concrete suggestions of how this relationship building could be facilitated by the program. For example, they proposed that the program personnel increase the principals’ understanding of the importance of the mentoring component of the program, inviting them to make mentor-mentee assignments right at the beginning of pre-planning. Furthermore, they wanted to see the program facilitate an informal first meeting between the mentors and the mentees, so that they could start the relationship in a neutral manner. As a result the program director initiated several changes in her practice. She increased interactions with the principals during the hiring process of the TMAST students. Her goal was to inform the principals in face-to-face meetings about the high needs for quality mentoring on the part of TMAST students, who had little formal educational training and had never taught middle school. She believed that face-to-face meetings would help the principals see the TMAST students, although accomplished professionals in their own
fields, as novice and needy first year teachers. Meeting
principals represented a substantial shift in the director’s
work and surprised her by the inordinate amounts of time
it took. Because each school had its own mentoring sys-
tem, streamlining the process was virtually impossible.
Some principals did not assign mentors until pre-plan-
ning; others helped her meet with mentors over the
summer and before school began. Little by little many
relationships were established with busy school principals
who traditionally have little time to interact with
university personnel.

We also found that TMAST students were inclined to
be passive if problems arose in their new roles as teach-
ers. They were not inclined to let themselves be seen as
unsuccessful, as most had been quite accomplished in
their previous careers. The director tried to empower
these students to take initial charge of their mentoring,
encouraging them to ask for what they needed at their
schools and be active in building a relationship with their
mentor from day one. The director had many opportuni-
ties to explicitly talk about this problem with the TMAST
students since she was the instructor of one of their
TMAST courses at the university.

Doctoral students provided university supervision of
the internship for the second TMAST cohort. Once again,
the director and the evaluator learned quickly that school-
based mentoring was not happening as envisioned.
Formative evaluation data brought forth surprising
results: the students and many of their school-based men-
tors had a better understanding of expectations and roles,
which was good. The evaluation seemed to be creating a
better program. However, the evaluator found that doc-
toral students who supervised the TMAST students were
uncertain of how to handle their duties. Being unfamiliar
with their new role as university personnel, the doctoral
students suddenly found themselves at a different place
in the hierarchy of school culture as they supervised
TMAST students. Many felt uneasy approaching the
principal or the school-based mentors to talk with them
about the TMAST mentoring model when, just a year
prior, they reported to a principal themselves. It was a
duty some were not ready to assume, so they basically
interacted with TMAST students, and to differing degrees
neglected mentors and principals. This was frustrating for
the director, who had worked hard to create relationships
with the schools. In her words, “One step forward and
two steps back.”

From the ongoing formative evaluation, the director
learned that everyone in the mentoring process had his or
her own perception of how to mentor, and a shared under-
standing was needed. She developed a notebook of
guidelines outlining the expectations for the mentors and
the university supervisors, basing many of the expecta-
tions on the suggestions from the AI process. Additional-
ly, the director ensured that either she or the supervisors
met with each mentor and TMAST student to review the
guidelines in order to build a collaborative relationship
with these educators. She naively believed that if she
worked hard enough, she could make the TMAST
program become what she had envisioned upon its
inception.

However, ongoing conversations with the evaluator
helped the director understand that control must be
shared, and that her vision for the program was not
always congruent with the TMAST students’, the school-
based mentors’ and the principals’ visions. Coming to see
how various stakeholders both are burdened by and bene-
fit from the program in distinct ways has had an impact
on the design and expectations in regards to mentoring.
The director realized that visions are wonderful, as they
help teacher educators know what to reach for. Reality of
day-to-day business, however, often requires comprom-
ise while steadily moving towards the vision. The
director learned the limits of her strong personality,
sphere of influence, power, and control over a program
that she helped originate.

FLORIDA ONLINE READING PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

The story of FOR-PD illustrates the difficulty of a junior
faculty member in the middle of working toward tenure
while running a large-scale program as both the PI and
the project director. This story is linked to TMAST as the
director of TMAST was the evaluator of FOR-PD. The
director and PI of FOR-PD shouldered the planning and
vision, budget and maintenance, staff supervision,
progress monitoring of the course that serves 1,500+
teachers per semester, decision-making at different lev-
els, establishing and supporting collaborative
relationships with other key reading projects at the state
and national level, writing proposals for state and nation-
al presentations, working with the evaluation team and
conducting research. She was involved in all daily
aspects of the project, from personnel issues and invoic-
ing, to budget decisions, conducting staff evaluations,
writing reports for different stakeholders, and participat-
ing in meetings as they related to the mission of FOR-PD.

As a tenure-earning teacher educator, the director had
numerous responsibilities outside of FOR-PD. Typical of
junior faculty members she actively engaged in research
and provided service for the university, college, depart-
ment, professional organizations, K-12 schools, and the
profession in general. She was also expected to pursue
scholarship in addition to serving on dissertation commit-
tees and advising about 50 students per semester. The list
of duties indeed represented a lot of fine print for an
assistant professor to manage. No wonder she exclaimed,
“I think I have been wearing the entire hat rack!” when
asked if she had been wearing many hats. Her journey as
a teacher educator was a love-hate one. With the pres-
sures and demands of multiple responsibilities she
questioned her role, her purpose, her strength and will-
ingness to continue, and even how all of these
responsibilities were assisting or impeding her profes-
sional growth as an educator numerous times.

How have all or any of these responsibilities improved
her instructional practice? Has she learned anything from
all of these experiences that benefited her as a teacher
educator and also her students? She believes that ongoing exchanges with the evaluator gave her “a sense of accomplishment and also vision” as the two met, reflected upon data, talked about decisions, and planned for next steps. Their critical discussions habitually centered on significant incidences, thus giving the evaluation a strong formative component.

The project director feels as though she had been stuck in the third chapter of a dissertation for four years. Evaluation helped to situate her in a loop of continuous improvement and reflection. As a result, she made many changes to her practice of educating teachers about reading in the FOR-PD project. She evaluated the updated course content, quizzes, supplementary assignments; collected resources and video-taped lesson introductions; studied books that could use for the professional development of facilitators, just to name a few. The entwined reflection and evaluation helped her connect practice to outcomes and perceptions of the project’s stakeholders and assisted her in massaging her own practice, thus keeping this large-scale initiative fresh and meaningful for the teachers.

CONCLUSION
Evaluation supported the metamorphosis of this junior faculty member who took on more than maybe was prudent, thus creating a substantive amount of change within her. She is now a strong tenured professor who effectively deals with a range of stakeholders, from politicians to teachers. In her words, “I am still learning to swim with the sharks and try not to get eaten…”

The evaluators for both projects maintained close proximity to the TMAST and FOR-PD directors in terms of office space and shared time, while working part-time on the projects. This proximity proved to be a strong component in relationship building. Oftentimes evaluators are seen as outsiders and must work hard at establishing friendly, non-threatening interactions with program staff. By being able to attend weekly staff meetings and have impromptu conversations related to the evaluation findings, the project staff came to know the evaluator in a non-threatening way. Both project directors have commented that this proximity allowed for the information exchange between the evaluator and project director to become seamless. “Evaluation has never been something we do at the end of the year; instead, it is ongoing and cyclical and has helped us maintain quality in all we do,” proclaimed the director of FOR-PD recently.

For many educators it is hard to separate one’s self from one’s work. However, the ability for educators to look critically at their work is the hallmark of a reflective practitioner. This type of self-study can be problematic when the work on which the educator reflects is a program that she developed from the ground up. Like a fish in water, project directors who create the programs they ultimately direct can be so closely tied to the work that it is difficult to see clearly. As we have shown, formative evaluation, couched in good relationships, can support project directors in the self-study of their teacher education practices at the macro level.

REFERENCES


Self-Study in a Community of Learning Researchers: What Can We Do To Support Teachers and Teacher Educators To Benefit From Our Research?

A Mediterranean island, a research question and twenty researchers...

INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

In recent times there has been growing support for the notion that teachers and teacher educators should be familiar with outcomes of research that are relevant to, and helpful in, guiding their students to become active consumers of public (academic) knowledge. Despite this groundswell, there is less support for the view that teachers and teacher educators themselves seriously figure as producers of such knowledge. However, since the early 1990s, in the field of teacher education a visible shift has been noticeable as a movement toward better valuing the work and knowledge of teacher educators has emerged. Yet, there are still many teacher educators excluded from this production process, because they:

… are part-time, adjunct, temporary, and/or clinical faculty and fieldwork supervisors; graduate students who supervise as part of financial assistantships or part-time jobs; and school-based personnel who work as site-based supervisors, coordinators and school-university liaisons. (Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 22)

One way of responding to this situation is to think about ways of challenging the status quo by forming communities of knowledge producers where researchers and teacher educators together can produce the knowledge integral to their very practice and context (Lunenberg & Willemse, 2006). Clearly, to do so requires an overt support for, or coaching of, novice researchers in the field of teaching and teacher education. From our own experiences we know that young researchers often wrestle with the inherent difficulties of communicating with experienced and (often) much older teachers and teacher educators, with whom they might collaborate and study. These difficulties are partly based around complications associated with sharing and discussing expectations, ideas and results with colleagues often more experienced in, and tied to, a practice context. For some, this can be a power relationship (even unwittingly so) that is difficult to address.

With these experiences in mind, in the spring of 2005, at Cyprus, three teaching and teacher education academics (3 of the authors) met with 17 Ph. D. students in the field of education (one of the authors) in the context of a short, intensive international summer course on teaching and teaching education. Most Ph. D. students did not have any experience as a teacher or teacher educator. The goal of this summer course was to connect new learning approaches with new insights in educational research and to support the participating Ph. D. students in reflecting on, and learning through, the consequences of these developments for their own research projects.

With respect to new approaches to learning the major focus was on inquiry learning, especially that of communities of learners. Learning in such a community is neither teacher-oriented nor student-oriented, but originates from an interaction among all participants. The teacher facilitates this interaction by being an expert, as well as a model and a coach. Because modelling proves to be a powerful way to support the development of student teachers, in the summer course we were keen to elaborate on this aspect of our own practice. This approach clearly represents that which is a strong perspective of teacher education, to genuinely “walk the talk” (e.g., Guilfoyle, 1995; Schiller & Streitmatter, 1994).

As Grossman (2005) made clear, self-study research offers a promising new track in educational research because it integrates reflection on the teaching practice of teacher education and research and therefore bridges the gap between experiences and the theory and its development. With this research perspective in mind, we decided to apply a self-study research methodology to the summer course so that together, as a community of learners, we might be able to create a living example of how the development of new insights in educational research might not only emerge, but also be purposefully developed. In the context of this summer course, we defined our community of learners as consisting of both the professors and the students.

The leading questions for the situation and this subsequent article then are two-layered: “What can we do to support teachers/teacher educators to benefit from our research and what can be learned through this research on research?”
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There has been a growing interest in self-study of teaching and teacher education practices culminating in the recent publication of the International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004). Self-study can contribute both to the private theory of individual teacher educators, and to the public theory of teacher education more generally. In a recent article, Cochran-Smith (2005) elaborated on these twofold goals of self-study. According to Cochran-Smith (2005) inquiry communities can function as important learning spaces for prospective teachers, experienced teachers and teacher educators to learn together and generate knowledge; both local knowledge and knowledge that is useful in more public spheres. The effects of self-evaluation can be enhanced by taking into account the perspective of the students and by collaboration through self-study.

Therefore, the notion of a community of learners (CoL) in which all participants (with special attention to students) are considered as partners in the process of knowledge development becomes an important complement to the methodology of self-study (Beishuizen, 2004). Brown and Campione (1996) laid out a framework for the educational concept of the CoL. They described the process of inquiry learning as a cycle of (1) conducting research; (2) sharing the outcomes; and (3) completing a consequential task (often a new research project). And, in this regard, working to bring such a process to fruition in teaching and learning situations is not only important for developing quality in teaching and learning but also offers new ways of conceptualizing researching pedagogy more generally.

A community of learners often consists of participants with different backgrounds and experiences in research. Through this paper, but especially through the associated presentation, we will elaborate on this aspect and especially on what this means for carrying out a collective self-study. In essence, this study pushes further the suggestion by Bashiruddin in press) about the need to teach (and associated difficulties of so doing) about self-study through doing self-study and in this particular case, realizing a CoL approach created a strong environment in which to do just that.

METHOD

As described in the introduction to this paper, the methods used to collect and analyze the data needed to answer the leading question of our study were structured around the way in which, together, the participants structured the teaching and learning environment and curriculum of the summer course. Two distinct aspects of this can be distinguished: the theoretical framework (self-study and CoL); and data collection, examination, portrayal and meta-analysis. In this section we briefly outline each of these. Also, data about that which was learned from the participating students were provided after the course through the standard course evaluation provided by an independent evaluator.

1. Learning about the theoretical framework

In the first part of the course, an introduction to working as a community of learners as an example of new learning and in self-study research as an example of new research approaches was fully outlined and explored. To illustrate the literature on community of learners, which the participating Ph. D. students had studied previous to the course, a case study was presented. Based on the literature and the case study, structured reflection took place. In small groups the Ph. D. students re-analyzed the study and conducted a meta-analysis so that as a community of learners their findings became the basis of a plenary to discuss the functioning nature of a CoL in practice.

In order to further support this approach, a literature study was simultaneously conducted and subsequently workshoped in order to develop effective modelling of self-study as a way to enhance professionalism and to contribute to the knowledge base of effective teaching and teacher education. Important topics from the workshop included, amongst others: recognizing the contradiction between what is “preached” and what is “done;” seeking alternative perspectives for looking into, and for interpretations of, the teaching practice; and shifting from a focus on successful teaching or carrying out research to a focus on learning.

2. Studying own research projects

The second part of the course required a shift in focus to the work of the participating Ph. D. students. The first step was to challenge them to reflect on whether or not persons involved in their research projects learned from this involvement and what could be done to enhance this learning. Therefore, each Ph. D. student received a sheet with two questions:

a) Does your Ph. D. study contribute to the learning of the pupils, students, teachers or teacher educators involved in your study? If so, how? If not, why not?

b) What possibilities are there to enhance the learning of the participants in the next stage of your study?

Through this second step, participants discussed their individual answers in groups of three or four in order to help each other to refine or to add new elements to their individual responses developed in the first step. Almost all Ph. D. students made use of this opportunity. An oral plenary report from the groups formed the closure of the first and second steps.

The third step involved consolidating and summarizing these outcomes in order to create a preliminary list of guidelines to support teachers/teacher educators in ways that might be beneficial for the incorporation of research learnings into practice. At this stage, inter-coder reliability checking was conducted to ensure that that which was presented as the consolidated outcomes had been confirmed.

Fourth and finally, these outcomes were presented back to the whole group for discussion and consideration about the consequences for research practices. This last step resulted in a final list of fifteen guidelines.
3. Course evaluation
As indicated above data about that which was learned by the participating students were also provided after the course by the standard course evaluation provided by an independent evaluator.

RESULTS
In this section we briefly summarize the results. In our presentation we will elaborate on this information.

Fifteen guidelines
Based on the theoretical framework and the four steps (described in the previous section) our community of learners used to analyze and discuss their own studies (with respect to the question about how these contributed to the learning of the participants in the study and how this learning could be enhanced), a list of fifteen guidelines was articulated. We offer a few examples:
- Be clear (to teachers and students) about what to expect from the teachers in the context of your study. (If you expect them to be experts – on a specific subject, on supporting collaboration between students, on supporting research by students – do check this and, if necessary train them).
- Take into account in the design of your study that the teachers may need “space” with regard to their own style, motivation, ability to handle emotions, and so on.
- Expect from your coach that he/she models how to discuss results with teachers in an interactive way.
- Be clear about your own ambitions: who do you want to benefit from your research? Know your boundaries!

The participating Ph. D. students were enthusiastic about such a concrete result of learnings from the course. Of course, the list is not intended as an all inclusive, generalizable and applicable set of propositions to apply to all studies, rather they are guidelines helpful in conceptualizing the nature of studies involving the complex interactions of teachers/teacher educators and their learners and the interplay of this with the research process itself. Nevertheless, it is interesting to ponder the value of developing such guidelines for reconsidering such research and doing so in the short period of time that was this summer school. Central to this is the realization that a CoL can construct a useful list of such learnings through their own collective self-study.

The learning of the Ph. D. students
An important question, germane to this whole process is, “What did the students learn from this course?”
As described in the Introduction, the learning of the Ph. D. students can be studied from two perspectives:
- The perspective of teacher education: did the professors succeed in “walking their talk” and creating a community of learners?; and,
- The perspective of research: we already saw that the students were able to formulate suggestive guidelines as one way of answering the leading question. In so doing, however, did they learn about bridging the gap between theory and practice, between teachers/teacher educators and researchers?

To start with, the evaluation results showed that the students judged the quality of the course highly (4.4 on a five point scale) and learned a lot (3.7). The evaluation outcomes also indicated that the professors might have succeeded in creating a community of learners (scores 4.0 and 4.8), in connecting theory and practice (scores 3.9, 3.8 and 4.2) and teaching as you preach, “walking the talk” (score 4.6). The Ph. D. students were also positive about the relevance of the course in relation to their own research (score 3.2).

The individual sheets, plenary reports and notes from the discussion (see steps 1, 2 and 4 as described in the previous section) offer some insight into the learning of the Ph. D. students.
An example:
I am researching the use and effects of a self-evaluation instrument for primary schools. During the course, I became more conscious about a tension in my study between being an independent researcher and establishing a community of learners by working together with teachers involved in my research. On the one hand, as an independent researcher I want to obtain valid and reliable results that can be generalized. On the other hand, I intervene in my own research by trying to persuade schools to make more use of the results obtained by using the self-evaluation instrument. I believe that schools can profit from the use and improve the quality of education by using these self-evaluation results. Furthermore I do not want to end up with the conclusion after four years of research that schools did not use the self-evaluation results, and that therefore the use of the self-evaluation results did not have any effects. By intervening in my own research I am becoming a less independent researcher. I think it is important to be conscious about this tension and to try to learn from it.

The core of the final discussion (step 4), that naturally developed into an evaluation, was that the study had helped the Ph. D. students to think more carefully about the kind of knowledge that they wanted to develop (theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, or both), that it had helped them to develop as researchers and that they had become more confident about their ability to help teachers and teacher educators to benefit from their research.

CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION
The results of the course were threefold. In the first place, our community of learning researchers conducted a collective self-study on the research projects of its members to find out the extent to which these research projects contributed to the learning of the pupils, students, teachers and teacher educators involved and to discuss the
possibilities to enhance this learning. Together, a list of 15 guidelines to support the learning of participants in a research study was conducted. The Ph. D. students were pleased with the concreteness of these particular results.

Secondly, the evaluation outcomes indicated that we succeeded in teaching as we preached: the students functioned as a community of learners and carried out a research project. This also seems to be an important conclusion, especially because the theme of this summer course for Ph. D. students was concerned with understanding the context and nature of researching teaching and teaching education. The fact that the two layers in this course — a community of learners studying the possibilities of creating communities of learning in research projects — became explicit is, in itself, an important outcome.

Thirdly and finally, the results showed that most Ph. D. students were positive about the relevance of the course for their own research, especially with respect to working and communicating with the students, teachers and teacher educators with whom they work. Taking into account the limitations of such a short summer course, this may be the most important outcome of the quest of this particular community of learners.

We suggest that this approach to helping the next generation of researchers come to better understand the complex nature of researching teaching and teacher education is crucial in helping them to better grasp the inherent difficulties of their work. Through such an approach, we contend that researchers are more likely to begin to be cognizant of, and capable of addressing, some of the persistent problems germane to the interplay of theory and practice so that there is less likelihood that they remain as separate and distinct endeavours.

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I am fairly new to the field of self-study in teacher education. After a doctoral program that involved the use primarily of quantitative methods (see Livingstone & Mangan, 1996), I began working with Ivor Goodson in 1989. Goodson was strongly committed to a qualitative approach to educational research, and especially to the notion of teachers’ life histories as a fundamental part of any study of life in schools (see Goodson, 1992). In the process of conducting a large school-based research project in the early 1990s, Goodson and I used a number of different methods, including life history. We published a series of papers and edited collections discussing the use of such methods (Goodson & Mangan, 1991a; 1991b; 1995), and our collaboration continues today (see Goodson, Knobel, Lankshear, & Mangan, 2002).

In part due to this continuing engagement with issues in qualitative methodology, and in part due to my own teaching experiences in a Canadian faculty of education, I have recently been led to reflect upon the value of an autobiographical approach to understanding the practice of teaching and teacher education. I have also been led to undertake a preliminary exploration of my own biography in an attempt to better understand my own teaching practice. In this paper, I will offer some justifications for my approach to the use of self-study in teacher education, offer some observations about where I think the field should be going, and relate as briefly as possible (given the limitations of this forum) an illustration and theorization of my own recent attempts at self-study.

The central rationale for self-study as a part of teacher education arises, in my view, from some of the fundamental quandaries of the undertaking. In any profession, there is a tension, sometimes productive, sometimes antagonistic, between the academic theoreticians of the discipline and the working practitioners. As any teacher educator knows, the central ongoing tension in the preparation of teachers is between the desire for workable solutions to everyday problems, and the desire for a more broadly based, theorized and generalized understanding of the phenomena of schooling. In the case of preservice teachers, this often takes the form of students wanting the right answer from their professors, of asking for, and expecting, a formula for good teaching based on both the accumulated findings of educational research and the accumulated experience of seasoned teachers. This quest for the one right answer is not restricted to students, however. It is often implicit in the goals of both educational researchers and policy makers, who routinely refer to what research shows and to established best practices. Enforceable policies and even legislation affecting the destinies of schools, teachers, and students have been enacted on the implicit assumption that we already know, or can determine, which are the best ways of teaching, and of evaluating the teaching and learning that is done.

Qualitative educational researchers make up the main body of informed opinion opposing this outlook. In general, I think, we share an understanding of the immense subtlety and complexity of the teaching-learning process, and of the difficulties of assessing that process scientifically. It is this appreciation that drives qualitative researchers to continually re-examine their own practice, and to continue to search for new and better ways to comprehend the rich texture of classroom interaction. I believe that at its core, the interest in teacher self-study partakes of this appreciation, and represents some exciting new possibilities in educational research. However, I sense that the new methodological paradigm of self-study is at risk of falling into some of the same traps that have snared other approaches, and I wish to suggest an alternative. First, however, I need to lay out the basics of my own approach to teacher education.

I teach educational foundations. In teaching about the historical, social, philosophical, and legal context of schooling, in my experience in practicum liaison, and in fielding questions and comments from students about the problems they face in the classroom, I frequently encounter the explicit or implicit request for the one right answer. What I have gradually come to realize in responding to such questions is that the reason there is no one right answer is actually pretty simple: it is because the teaching-learning relationship is a profoundly and fundamentally personal one. In many ways, it is the fundamental form of human interaction. Because of this, I am convinced that good teaching cannot be reduced to a...
formula, cannot even be made a pure science. It must always be a genuine expression of the teacher’s personality, of the ideas, values, commitments, and worldview s/he holds. Among good teachers, these qualities include commitments to clarity, relevance, and fairness, but these are not elements of teaching drawn from a handy cookbook. Rather, they arise from the teacher’s ongoing reflexive understanding of what works best for them, and from their constant self-scrutiny and self-criticism in a quest to become a better practitioner.

This, in my view, is the reason to do self-study. The quintessentially personal nature of great teaching demands of every teacher that we make a serious effort to understand not only our own ideals, motivations, goals, and commitments, but also our strengths, weaknesses, abilities and talents as they relate to our professional practice. In pursuing these deeper understandings, self-study offers some fascinating and powerful advantages. Many of us have been drawn to self-study because we have felt alienated, restricted, or oppressed by other methodological approaches. In pursuing self-study research, however, we must be on guard against the pitfalls that have beset most of the flawed methods that have gone before. We must not expect self-study to overthrow all previous approaches, nor to produce new generalizations that will point the way to a reliable catalogue of best practices where other less sensitive approaches have failed or only partially succeeded.

What I would like to suggest instead is that self-study should be, not a better method intended to yield a better set of conclusions, but rather that the method itself is the conclusion. That is, if my premise above is correct, no theorist, no pundit, regardless of their methodology, will ever be able to describe a concise theory, or prescribe a fixed set of desirable practices and techniques, guaranteed to produce teaching success for everyone. There is no magic formula; there is no reliable recipe for producing a great teacher, and there never will be. There may be, however, a process that can be specified, much as Zen monks teach not enlightenment, but a set of exercises for breathing, arranging flowers, shooting arrows, and so on. These practices, if followed in good faith, tend to produce individual forms of enlightenment (Herrigel, 1971). Every person’s satori is different, and ineffably personal, yet all who achieve it can recognize it and share the joy of its realization.

I am not suggesting that faculties of education should be structured like Zen monasteries. Nor am I suggesting that all self-studies must remain merely idiosyncratic. There is much to be learned from reading others’ self-studies, and by emulating them. I am only concerned that the focus of self-study be kept on drawing out the qualities that will make each individual the best educator s/he can be, without falling into the scientistic traps of overgeneralization and overprescription. Like other professions, teaching is a calling, and it requires not only expertise and experience, but the same devotion to self-examination and contemplation as other demanding callings. It is from this conviction that my interest in self-study arises.

With the foregoing position statement in place, I will now tell a story from my own self-study, about how I came to appreciate the role of American western movies in my own life and teaching practice. I will then close with some speculations as to what others might learn from my experience.

Prior to 2001, I had done a fair bit of traveling in North America, but for a number of reasons, I had never explored what is generally referred to as the Desert Southwest, that is, the states of Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and parts of Texas and California. I finally got a chance to visit this area during a sabbatical leave in the fall of 2001, and I found myself strongly drawn to the dramatic landscapes, semi-arid climate, and beautiful colors I found there. However, I also experienced a strange kind of feeling that, even though I saw a lot of the desert southwest, there was something still missing. For whatever reason, just about the last stop on my journey was at Canyonlands National Park, near the town of Moab, Utah. Somewhat to my surprise, I found that not only was I overwhelmed by the beauty of the place, but that the dramatic red rock landscape produced a sense that at last I had found the true west. I promised myself to try to come back to this area and spend more time there.

During my second sabbatical leave, which began in July 2005, I decided that spending the entire winter in Moab would be a great way to satisfy my curiosity about the area, and to provide myself with an opportunity to complete the autobiographical volume I had decided to write. I admit that my reasons for this choice, and indeed the outcomes of the process, were not entirely clear to me when I began, but I felt that the purpose of my self-study was not to pursue a set of predefined objectives, but to discover my destination by undertaking the journey. Consciousness, I felt it that it was the extraordinary natural beauty of the area that drew me back to the Canyonlands area, and the mood of contemplation evoked by that setting.

As I made my way toward Moab, my journey took me through areas, and through experiences, that were partly planned, but also mysteriously serendipitous. As had happened during a couple of earlier, formative periods of my life, apparent accidents of time, space, and circumstance began once again to generate a sense of fatefulness at work. For instance, someone I met along the way, after getting to know me for only a couple of days, said to me as we parted, “Be sure to visit Monument Valley. You’ll be impressed.” I already intended to go to Monument Valley, located on Navajo land along the Arizona-Utah border, but I hadn’t mentioned it to this new friend. Why had he mentioned it to me?

Whatever the reason for such occurrences, when I did visit Monument Valley in late September 2005, I was indeed impressed. It was like nothing I had ever seen before except in photos, yet it had a strangely familiar aspect that generated again that satisfying feeling that, “This is really it.” After arriving in Moab a couple of days later, my sense of fate came to a peak when, on what had begun as a loosely-organized ramble along some
local roads, I found myself in the remote location that houses the recently opened Museum of the Moab to Monument Valley Film Commission, at the Red Rock Inn in Castle Valley, Utah. Drawn initially by a casual curiosity, I discovered within the museum a series of images and narratives that evoked in me a shocking sense of recognition. Essentially, I discovered that not only my most cherished images of the American West, but my foundational images of masculinity and morality all shared some common sources in the western movies and super-hero TV shows I had watched as a child. In particular, I began to recognize how important the iconic films of John Ford, set in the area I was visiting, and the dominant persona of his chief star, John Wayne, had been. I began to recognize that these media images, as much as any direct appreciation of the natural landscape, were what had drawn me unconsciously to this area.

The influence of media in shaping formative images of teachers and teaching has been explored in works such as those by Weber and Mitchell (1995), and also in my own students’ work (e.g., Rosen, 2004). However, this work has concentrated mostly on explicit depictions of teachers and schools in film and television. What I was discovering was a much broader and deeper set of influences. I began to see that my images of the American West and of desirable male role models, as depicted in these films, were so strong that I had identified with the heroes and their stories, and modeled much of my image of an ideal self upon them. In particular, the characters usually portrayed by John Wayne embody an enormous inner strength, strongly held convictions and the willingness to act upon them, and an abhorrence of casual talk and frivolous action. Like other heroes of television and film, Wayne’s characters are usually men of action, whose willingness to act arises from unshakable self-confidence and a solid set of beliefs and values.

My contemplation of these characters and their importance brought forth memories of the media theories of Pierre Baudrillard (e.g., 1994). Baudrillard posited that, prior to coming to Moab and discovering the film museum there, I had been vaguely aware of Ford as a director, and of Wayne as an archetypal star. I had not, however, realized how many of the films I had loved as a boy (usually by seeing them on TV rather than in theatres) had come from these two men. I took advantage of the Moab library to re-view many of these films, and I began to recognize how Ford’s movies comprised some of the first adult westerns, evoking not just the simple heroism of good guys versus bad guys or cowboys versus Indians, but an intelligent examination of moral ambiguity and personal responsibility. Wayne’s characters are multidimensional and often flawed, but their dedication to doing the right thing never wavers.

As I reviewed the films, I began to recognize how my identification with figures like Wayne had been part of what led me to become a teacher in the first place. I chose teaching because I saw it as a place to lead, to influence young lives, and ultimately, to change society for the better. Having made that choice, the character qualities of the Fordian hero also provided me with the determination to stick it out through years of graduate study and academic apprenticeship. I also began to recognize some of the negative aspects of the western hero which I may have adopted along the way: the stubbornness, brusqueness, and egotism which can also characterize the man of action. In what ways have those qualities hampered my effectiveness as a teacher? I now see a need to reflect more fully on that question.

I could say a great deal more about what my encounter with Moab and Monument Valley did for me in helping me to understand the sources and consequences of my images of strength and conviction. But in closing, I want to return to my main theme: that the consequences of my self-study for my own self-understanding are not as important as the process that led to them. In trying to encourage teachers and teacher candidates to reflect upon their motivations and their practice, it may be worthwhile to probe more deeply the primary personalities and images with which they identify, and to then explore the sources and consequences of those identifications. The power of mass media as the source of modern myths and archetypes needs more attention. It may also be possible to identify some of the conditions under which loosely structured itineraries and processes of making oneself available to fateful experiences can lead to new insights.
into self and identity. Primarily, however, what we should be promoting is the attitudes and practices that will encourage teachers throughout their careers to undertake periods of serious self-examination and reflection in order to discover and rediscover their fundamental value commitments and the implications for their professional practice.

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Lost in Teachers’ College—Deconstructing the Teacher Education Façade:
A Case Study of Collegial Self-Study

Program reform and adjustment has been a way of life in our faculty since a major reconstruction of the preservice program in 1997-1998. The restructuring encompassed every feature of the program, from length and timing of the practicum to types of courses offered. Since 1998 we have collaborated to collect systematically a range of data related to practicum experiences and overall program experiences. These data and our personal experiences as teachers in teacher education classrooms and as practicum supervisors in schools have made self-study inevitable as we worked to understand not only our personal roles within the program but also the responses of those learning to teach. Almost 10 years later, we must address one of the potential risks of self-study: We now see our environments and practices quite differently as a result of our shared self-study. We find ourselves distanced from our colleagues by the experiences of creating new, more productive ways of thinking about how individuals learn in a preservice teacher education program. We struggle to create a dialogue with colleagues whose discourse, in our view, is limited by what appear to be circumscribed and instrumental perceptions of teacher education.

OBJECTIVE
In this case study we document and interpret the interaction between significant incidents and innovations in our preservice teaching and our discussion, with colleagues and each other, of issues associated with developing a more coherent preservice teacher education program. Particularly significant in this case of collegial self-study is the crystallizing effect of Nuthall’s (2005) conclusions in a retrospective account of his career as teacher and researcher:

Through nearly 45 years of research on teaching and learning in school classrooms, I have slowly become aware of how much of what we do in schools and what we believe about teaching and learning is a matter of cultural routines and myths. What is more, much of the research on teaching and learning in classrooms is itself caught up in the same rituals and myths and sustains rather than challenges these prevailing beliefs.

The underlying theme, which the reader should keep constantly in mind, is that so long as we remain unaware of the extent to which our hidden culture determines how we practice, think about, and do research on teaching, attempts at reform are likely to be ineffective. (p. 896)

These words stimulated substantial re-thinking of our own practices, enabling us to create links among our efforts to listen to students, our efforts to create the most productive learning possible in practicum placements and our own classrooms, and our efforts to understand the complexities of achieving coherence within an 8-month preservice program. As we embrace Nuthall’s words and recognize their direct links to Sarason’s (1971) characterization of the school as a culture, we also face the further challenge of determining how we might help others adopt a perspective that we find not only profoundly fundamental, but also essential to improving teacher education.

METHOD
We are examining both our own teaching and our participation in a collegial affinity group from a number of perspectives that have become important to us in recent years. Our method is self-study. We use data that reveal the positive and negative effects of program reform through the voices of our teacher candidates. Such voices are heard infrequently and candidates’ perspectives are often unauthorized (Cook-Sather, 2002). We see the literature on conceptual change and development (Duschl & Hamilton, 1998) linking with the literature on reflective practice, as changes in thinking and changes in practice go hand in hand with the development of new understandings. We draw on Sarason’s (1998) discussion of contexts of productive learning as a powerful way to think about educational experiences. Additionally, we explicate how Nuthall’s (2005) account of his own personal journey inspired an image of lost in school has helped us to see more clearly both what we want to avoid and what we want to achieve in our teaching and in teacher education.
We draw illustrative data from end-of-program focus groups conducted over the last 8 years. Groups of 5 to 8 candidates, selected at random, spend about 2 hours responding to a set of six broad questions:

1) If a friend of yours asked you about the B.Ed. Program at Queen’s University, what would you say were the highlights of the program?
2) If you were explaining to someone how you learned to teach this year, what would you include in your account?
3) What kinds of questions did you formulate during the practicum?
4) How did subsequent classes help you to address these questions?
5) In the future, what steps will you take to ensure that you continue to grow as a teacher?
6) Are there any other comments that you would like to add?

In an overview of much of the focus group data, Martin (2004) drew the following summarizing statements about the gaps the focus groups revealed between what we hoped a new program structure would do and what several groups of candidates told us they experienced:

We thought we had a coherent program where practice and theory could be neatly interwoven; candidates said otherwise. We thought we had a program that provided multiple opportunities for self-directed learning; candidates countered this. We thought we had a program that consistently supported the development of reflective practitioners; for many, this was not so. We thought we had a program where grades would not drive the quality of learning; instead, candidates cited diminished accountability.

We illustrate these generalizations with a selection of data illustrative of focus-group comments. The following statements concern the issues of program coherence and consolidation of program experiences. These data are drawn from the 1998 and 2000 focus groups; P/J designates an elementary or primary candidate, while I/S designates a secondary candidate.

Across all data sets, participants roundly criticized the absence of program coherence and of discussions that addressed broad-based educational issues and principles of practice. They described the program as disjointed and having no continuity.

[I did not experience] framed discussion of things that transcend curriculum—like pedagogy, learning styles, assessment, evaluation... Once THOSE things are in place, then you can plug any curriculum into [them]... If I understand the whole notion of assessment and evaluation, then I can plug in a Grade 4 assignment in science or math... That’s easy—way more than trying to do it the other way around. (1998, P/J)

One individual was looking for common ground, some-
thing that’s bringing it together and having a focus (1998, I/S). They wanted discourse that addressed substantive questions like What do we mean by education? and Who is education really for? (2000, P/J).

Candidates explicitly asked for a period of consolidation where they could weave together what they had learned. They felt that their year was in bits and pieces, where some of the larger issues only come in and out on a piecemeal basis. For example, they wanted to understand what anchors teachers’ pedagogical decisions about curriculum.

It becomes very much a “here’s the curriculum and you can do this, this, and this for this grade level,” but where are the bases for this? There’s not enough study... if I’m going to go into this, I want to have a big picture. (2000, P/J)

Knowing how to teach curriculum [with] no handle on the history, no consideration of political stance or challenge of the status quo left them feeling herded through (2000, P/J). They wanted to pursue the contextual and situated nature of learning more deeply: In an inner city setting, ... do you spend your time teaching the provinces of Canada or how to say please and thank you? (2000, P/J). They wondered about communication: Teachers need to know how to communicate with their students, and never has anyone brought up communication (1998, I/S). “They wanted a forum for their questions and recommended building workshops into the year that could address some of these issues, using the common time already earmarked” (Martin, 2004, pp. 20-21).

The following illustrative statements refer to two very important groups of people in a preservice program—associate teachers and professors.

Associate teachers. When candidates received little in the way of ongoing support, feedback, and evaluation from their associate teachers, they described their practicum experience as “brutal,” “worrisome,” and negatively influencing their professional growth. The key role played by the associate was keenly recognized: “HOW you learn to teach has a lot to do with your associate, if they take the time to guide you or allow you to explore your own skills and techniques” (1998, P/J). When associates “wanted them to teach as they taught,” candidates felt “very restricted.” They recognized that there were limitations because they were in “someone else’s classroom” but wanted to feel as if “we’re able to contribute [and] to work as a team.” When there was dialogue about “teaching or different methods or what was O.K., what wasn’t O.K.” about curriculum, and about “finding their way in the system,” then “it was great!” (2000, I/S).

(Martin, 2004, p. 11)

Professors. Candidates valued professors who modeled good practice, engaged them, and were passionate. These professors were not about “the answer” but instead “developed the questions with us ... and sometimes you don’t leave the classroom with
an answer, but maybe more questions, and that’s leading you towards finding the answer” (2000, I/S). Conversely, professors who did not “genuinely care about what they’re doing and really [don’t] want to prepare you for next year … wiped out … everything that we learn [about] what a good teacher is and how to create a positive learning environment” (2000, I/S). Additionally, participants were frustrated by redundancies, “We did rubrics in every single class…. We did cooperative learning in every class” (2000, I/S). They thought “it would be nice if the professors talked to each other about what they were doing” (2000, I/S) to minimize repetition. (Martin, 2004, pp. 18-19)

After 8 years of listening to these and similar comments in end-of-program focus groups, is it any wonder that we extend the lost in school perspective to lost in teachers’ college? We, our colleagues, and those we teach all seem unable to recognize the many characteristics of our program that hold us back from the high quality of candidates’ learning to which we aspire.

DATA FROM PRACTICUM EXPERIENCES

We both supervise practicum cohorts assigned to local schools, making it possible for us to visit candidates and their associate teachers frequently. We believe strongly in the importance of learning from personal experiences of teaching and thus we accept and embrace the familiar reports that the practicum is the single most important element of a program preparing people to teach. For the most recent supervision period, we set ourselves the question, Can we help teacher candidates to see the relevance of lost in school as a perspective on their practicum experiences? Our initial answer is somewhere between “no” and “only with great difficulty.” Having this perspective in mind as a frame for thinking about our work simply reinforced our overall impression that, most of the time and for most teaching professionals, the many habits learned tacitly over many years in schools and universities. Studying our own teaching in contexts of productive learning needs to be the centrepiece of all our thinking about what and how we teach teacher candidates.

In making this statement, we readily apply it to ourselves. Being lost in school and inattentive to alternative possibilities happens to everyone, and simple awareness of such a profound perspective certainly does not break the many habits learned tacitly over many years in schools and universities. Studying our own teaching in terms of candidates’ comments has revealed the extent to which creating contexts of productive learning is not the central focus of planning. We are now far more inclined to make that goal the first and most important feature of our thinking about interactions with those learning to teach.

Our frequent visits with candidates in their practicum schools make it clear why so many so often appear to be lost in school. The vortex of daily life in schools seems to draw everyone deeper into the here and now. There is never enough time to teach, particularly given the strong pressures to cover an ever-more-complex curriculum. There are few opportunities to explore issues or problems in depth; it is so much easier to just go with the flow. At times we feel caught up in a lose-lose situation. In the Teacher Education Affinity Group meetings in our own faculty, discussions often seem to be consumed by day-to-day issues and challenges rather than the larger picture of teacher education that ultimately represents our reason for coming together.

TEACHING DILEMMAS

We return to Sarason’s (1998) idea of a context of productive learning. Sarason concludes that reform of education generally and of teacher education particularly has failed because reform efforts did not focus on fostering productive learning. It is from this perspective that significant teaching dilemmas readily arise.

Now that we find lost in school and lost in teacher’s college to be productive phrases that remind us of how much is usually taken for granted in classrooms, we need to invent and test ways to help others to see these perspectives as productive. We know that it is not productive simply to assert these phrases in familiar transmission style. We know that it is more likely to be productive to introduce these phrases after individuals have relevant experiences that can help them find meaning in the phrases. In a program as short as 8 months, the final 3 week period of classes seems to be the only opportunity to introduce this perspective as a way of bringing coherence and consolidation to candidates’ program experiences.

One of Sarason’s characteristics of a context of productive learning is that it encourages students to pursue a topic or issue further. Certainly, the lost in school perspective encourages us to explore matters further, but can it serve the same purpose for those who have limited teaching experience? If not, how and when can such a perspective be introduced productively?

OUTCOMES

to draw our argument to a close, we offer the following assertions relevant to deconstructing the teacher education façade:

1. Self-study has convinced us that creating contexts of productive learning needs to be the centrepiece of all our thinking about what and how we teach teacher candidates.

2. Conceptual change is increasingly recognized as a major goal of schooling; it is equally important in preservice teacher education. By creating low-risk environments in which we can identify, explore and challenge initial assumptions, beliefs and values, we hope to demonstrate the importance of conceptual change as we also model it.

3. Reflection and reflective practice continue to be overused and incompletely understood in our preservice program (Russell, 2005). Self-study has shown us that,
both for teacher candidates and for faculty, reflection is largely meaningless unless it focuses on how the interpretation of experiences leads to reconstructing personal understandings of teaching, learning, and learning to teach. This must then lead to new actions, both in school classrooms and in teacher education classrooms. Fear of losing control seems to prevent both teacher educators and teacher candidates from trusting the learning process and trusting themselves so that appropriate and productive risks can be taken.

4. Lost in school is as important a perspective for thinking about those who teach in a faculty of education as it is for thinking about teacher candidates immersed in the complexities of practicum experiences. As we struggle to find productive ways to share the insights inspired by Sarason’s (1998) and Nuthall’s (2005) attention to the invisible culture of school and university, we regard their points as reminders to regularly examine our own teaching and the contexts in which we teach. Peeling back layers of assumptions, asking potentially awkward and unexpected questions, and recognizing implicit challenges constitute a tricky enterprise that may not be regarded as productive by those we teach and with whom we work in the teacher education context.

How do we know and why do we believe that this is a productive line of thinking? We find it productive because it makes sense of so many puzzling aspects of the cultures of teaching, learning and learning to teach. So many well-trained and experienced professionals working in our schools and universities profess so many noble goals for their students and for future teachers, yet those who leave a pre-service program to begin a teaching career find little coherence in their preparatory program. If those beginning teachers are to survive, flourish and contribute to the improvement of education in our schools, then they need to see how the perspective of lost in school helps to explain the educational limitations apparent in today’s schools and universities.

Our shared experiences of focus groups, practicum supervision, and discussions with colleagues have powerfully driven our self-study of fundamental changes in our thinking about our teaching of future teachers. In closing, we return to Nuthall (2005):

It is important to search out independent evidence that the widely accepted routines of teaching are in fact serving the purposes for which they are enacted. We need to find a critical vantage point from outside the routines and their supporting myths. . . . The approach I have learned to take is to look at teaching through the eyes of students and to gather detailed data about the experiences of individual students. (p. 925)

The routines of teaching and the routines of teacher education are rarely questioned. Teaching and learning tend to proceed from invisible cultural assumptions. How does one make the culture of teaching visible to those who have never experienced an alternative culture? Self-study and listening to those learning to teach have taken us into an alternative culture that has helped us to look back and question our own assumptions and practices, both in classes and in practicum supervision. We continue to question whether familiar routines serve their intended purposes as we seek critical vantage points that will help to reveal the supporting myths of the teacher education façade to those learning to teach and to our colleagues within teacher education.

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What We’ve Learned About “Teaching For The Test” Through Collaborative Practice And Self-Study

THE TEACHING/LEARNING CONTEXT
In the current climate of educational accountability, preparing preservice teachers to pass high-stakes tests has become an additional component of teacher education programs. Currently, 44 states require tests for certification (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002). Idaho is one state that assesses preservice teachers’ knowledge of literacy and literacy instructional practices.

Beginning in 2002, all preservice teachers must pass the Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Assessment (ICLA) for licensure. Students are assessed on three standards: Structures of Language, Reading Comprehension, and Assessment. The content knowledge of each of these standards is complex. For example, in Standard 1 students must be able to understand and identify many terms specific to phonemic/phonological awareness, phonics, and morphology. Students must recognize and define a variety of instructional approaches ranging from explicit phonics instruction to Language Experience Approach. Furthermore, each exam contains two performance demonstrations in which students write short essay answers in response to various classroom scenarios. Students must utilize understandings of subject matter concepts and instructional practices in order to respond to these scenarios successfully. Many experienced educators would be hard-pressed to pass this assessment. Yet, due to external policies and pressures, our institution requires that our students pass these standards before entering student teaching. Thus, the Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Course, designed to aid students in passing Standards 1 and 3 for the ICLA, was added to the required coursework for preservice teachers. Unfortunately, this course was not an addition to existing literacy coursework, but in lieu of a basic methods course in literacy.

As new teacher educators, we were charged with teaching this course. Like others, we have had to face critical issues inherent to the dilemmas of preparing students to pass high-stakes tests in the context of teacher preparation programs (e.g., Luna, Solsken, & Kutz, 2000). In this paper we discuss the important role of collaboration in dealing with our situation, what we’ve learned about the challenges of teaching a course associated with a high-stakes assessment, what we’ve done to address these challenges. We begin with our stories.

INTO THE BELLY OF THE BEAST
Susan: After eighteen years as an elementary classroom teacher, I needed to move on in my career. I thus entered a doctoral program, with the hope that I could eventually teach again, but with prospective teachers. Six (long!) years later, with Ph. D. finally in hand and a year of adjunct teaching under my belt, I was elated to find my first position as an assistant professor at an institution that seemed to be a good fit for me. It offered the balances I was seeking between teaching, scholarship, and mentoring student teachers.

Although I was aware of the Idaho state assessment before I took the job, somehow I didn’t connect the dots. (Perhaps my thinking was clouded by the euphoria of getting my first tenure-track position.) I was assigned two sections of the comprehensive literacy course my first semester. I was expecting that I would be teaching a methods course, preparing students for effective classroom practices. Instead, it became clear that I’d been hired to teach to the test.

Even though I had experienced the standards movement and alignment of high-stakes testing in Oregon as an elementary teacher, I was blind-sided by the extent to which the high-stakes assessment pervaded both the content of the course and expectations of the stakeholders. State law, the university catalogue, harried administrators, and stressed-out students each made it quite clear that the singular purpose of this course was to prepare students for the ICLA. During this first semester, before any test scores revealed any evidence of student learning, I was confronted by student fears, concerns, and expectations. I was called into the office of a nervous administrator after some students complained to him about the course activities. He suggested a more a narrowed curriculum specific to the ICLA might be more appropriate for this course. As you can well imagine, my confidence in my teaching was shaken. When student
pass rates were quite high that first semester, we all breathed a sigh of relief. Mine was probably the loudest.

Despite the fact that I did have support that first year from another instructor who also taught the comprehensive literacy course, I felt I basically floundered around on my own. She generously shared her syllabus, gave me ideas for classroom activities when I asked, and answered questions, but dialogue was minimal. My sense of isolation was exacerbated both by the difficulties of teaching this course and by my previous experiences of collaborative work as an elementary teacher. I longed for a teaching partner, for the opportunity to deeply discuss the issues and problems of teaching this course. Luckily, Mary Ann began teaching this course in my second year with the university.

Mary Ann: I began my career as a kindergarten teacher, and during the next 13 years I had the opportunity to teach in three different states at every grade level up to fifth. During this time, I began providing professional development for teachers in the area of literacy. I found that I had skill in this area and enjoyed this facet of teaching. Later I decided to pursue my master’s degree with an eye toward teaching at the university level. As a graduate assistant at the University of Dayton, I supervised student teachers and taught at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.

Ohio, at this time, had recently mandated that all teachers must take three credit hours in phonics. I was required to take this course, and found myself resenting the mandate. I believed that I knew everything I needed to know about phonics, and it would be a complete waste of my time. It wasn’t long before it became clear to me that I knew very little about phonics in general, and less about effective teaching strategies for phonics. By the end of the course, I was sold on the necessity of this class, and eventually began teaching it.

A move to Idaho provided an excellent opportunity to pursue my doctorate. During the second year of my program, I was hired to teach the Comprehensive Literacy Course. I assumed, incorrectly, that teaching this course would not be much different from teaching the phonics course in Ohio. Although the content was similar, the connection of the comprehensive literacy course to a high stakes assessment made a significant difference. Four weeks into my first tenure with this course, I was told by another instructor that several of the students had come to her to discuss concerns about my ability to properly prepare them for the exam. They believed I was spending too much time relating the instruction to the classroom, and not doing direct instruction about what would be on the test.

I felt betrayed, but more importantly, I was faced with a crisis of intentionality. I believed that my primary role was to prepare these students to become competent teachers of literacy, and secondarily to prepare them to pass the exam. In theory, I hoped that preparing them to be teachers would, by default, prepare them to pass the exam. Was I wrong? I felt confused and alone, and began to doubt my own abilities to meet the demands of the class. I was receiving very little mentoring from my assigned mentor, and began to search for a collaborator and co-conspirator in my endeavor to uphold my standards for preparing teachers, while also grooming the students to pass the exam. Fortunately, I didn’t have to look very far. Two doors down from my office, I discovered Susan enmeshed in the same dilemma.

NATURE OF OUR COLLABORATION
Our work together began casually: sharing an idea here and there, commiserating about teaching the comprehensive literacy course. Through these interchanges we moved rapidly from coworkers to colleagues despite the differences in our roles at the university. Three weeks after the beginning of the semester Susan wrote: “I feel that I’ve had more fun interchanges with Mary Ann in the last three weeks than I’ve ever had [here].” These interchanges sparked recognition of the common vision with which we approached our work – understandings of the critical role collaboration can play in teacher practice.

Both of us had come from elementary teaching backgrounds in which we had worked collaboratively with others. We chose to carve out a community of collaborative practice with each other in our new situation as well.

For us, the heart of our collaborative efforts is rooted in strong individual reflective practices. Years of teaching had fostered strong reflective habits in each of us. Ongoing reflection has served as the foundation for the recursive actions inherent to participatory action research (Kemmis & MacTaggart, 2000) aimed at development and refinement of our teaching practices. Much of this intensive mental work is often only expressed outwardly in practice, though Susan used sporadic journaling to deal with problems and record thoughts for future reference as well.

Our collaborative work was not aimed at creation of a single joint product, but at a common goal—growth and enrichment of each of our practices. The opportunities for teacher-to-teacher sharing of ideas and discussion of problems interfaced with our individual efforts in ways that pushed our thinking and practices beyond what we might accomplish on our own. We talked and planned together at least weekly the first year, constructed a joint syllabus, and discussed various data from students to consider changes in our teacher practices. Importantly, while we worked together, we adhered to a common understanding that we would respect each other’s choices regarding practice.

Together we dealt with the emotional pitfalls of teaching this course. Creation of a safe space for dialogue to occur was a fundamental aspect of our work together. Each of us viewed teacher inquiry from a framework of a supportive learning environment in which uncertainty is valued and supported (Snow-Gerono, 2005). When uncertainty is supported, space is created for risk taking, revealing of one’s weaknesses and concerns. With risk-taking and revelation of self came opportunities to jointly delve deeper into concerns and issues. This safe space was particularly important in teaching a course where
We were determined that the course should prepare students explicitly to pass the ICLA. The true challenges came from interaction of the challenges of the course and the ways in which we dealt with those challenges.

RECOGNIZING OUR CHALLENGES
Caught in the proverbial cross hairs of scrutiny, we found the external contexts for teaching this course to be overwhelming at first. In addition to the pressures for student performance, high student anxiety is inherent to teaching this course. But, we have come to realize that the challenges of the situation did not solely reside in the external contexts. We could, after all, simply just have acquiesced to the demands of the stakeholders to narrowly define the content and learning opportunities in the comprehensive literacy course. The true challenges came from interaction of our knowledge and beliefs with the teaching/learning context.

Based on our understandings of such areas as effective teacher education and literacy instruction, we recognized that the primary issue for us was how to create meaningful learning opportunities for students in the face of the very narrow content focus of the assessments. We found ourselves struggling with our pedagogical practices to figure out how to help students learn this subject and effective literacy instruction. Our explicit critiques of the ICLA, however, fostered stronger student attitudes of anxiety and resentment towards the exam. Not surprisingly, this did little to develop our students’ abilities to thoughtfully critique issues of either teacher or student assessment for themselves. What became evident was that we had to move past critique of the ICLA to find the common ground between the content of the exam and what we perceived as important to effective literacy instruction. Through this process of intently searching for the common ground, we began to more clearly recognize an area of overlap that contained a large amount of information encompassing both the content of the exam and knowledge important to effective literacy instruction. We also determined what types of knowledge were being privileged, and what was missing that we deemed critical to understandings of the complexities of literacy instruction with students of diverse backgrounds and needs.

DEALING WITH THE CHALLENGES
Over time, through continued personal reflection, mutual reflection, and sharing of various ideas for organization and instruction, we have developed a complex course that we feel meets our dual objectives. We believe that we are more consciously competent in our practices because of the opportunities we have had to discuss dilemmas and seek solutions to them. Together we have learned four important lessons about our roles as instructors of this course. First, we have learned that we need to help students situate the content of the ICLA in relationship to theoretical and empirical understandings about the nature and purposes of literacy, reading processes, and effective teaching practices. Second, we have also learned that in order to achieve our objectives, we needed to plan for and utilize complex and varied instructional approaches in our course. For instance, we have taken a field experience, previously disconnected from coursework, and made it an integral part of our course. Third, we have had to reconsider that our role is not just to help...
students understand the content of the course in regard to the ICLA and teacher practice, but to help them consider the connections between each of these factors as well. In particular, we have learned how to seize the unique opportunity we have in this course to help our students make connections between what they are experiencing in preparing for the ICLA and what they can do to prepare their own students for high-stakes state testing. Finally, rather than just ignoring our students’ emotional states, we searched for ways to alleviate, as well we can, students’ stresses. Based on our observations and feedback from students, we have found several ways to help lessen student anxiety.

CONCLUSION
As teacher educators we have faced some difficult realities in this era of accountability. Working collaboratively to plan for and refine our practices has made all the difference for us. We felt constrained, pressured—full of doubts and fears when we first started with this course. By facing issues of teaching this course together, we have moved to a place where we can feel that we’re providing meaningful and relevant learning opportunities for our students—even though we continue to teach for the test. Data that we have collected and analyzed certainly suggest that we have been successful in our efforts. Furthermore, data from our students suggest that our students recognize that learning activities in the course not only prepare them for the ICLA, but for effective classroom practices.

Through mutual support we were able to empower ourselves—to work proactively towards taking control over course content that was designated by the demands of the state assessment.

We can only hope that we provide our students with similar understanding, and that they leave with the same thoughts as one student who wrote

Teaching to the test can be done without boring worksheets, rote learning and lecture AND without anyone being able to really tell. Thanks for letting me see this—it has truly changed my mind about teaching in today’s school.

REFERENCES


Given the history of the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada, since the time of European contact, and considering my settler-invader family history, it is impossible to ignore colonization as a political, social and cultural influence on my life as a teacher. Ann Laura Stoler (2002) writes, “The study of colonialism is the history of the present” (p.19). This is a notion I use to consider how the Pioneer Narrative informed my subjectivity, my literary education in elementary school and the English language arts curriculum in contemporary Saskatchewan. Finally, I discuss a reading autobiography assignment I use with pre-service teachers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHOD
As a theoretical framework, I use poststructuralist theories of subjectivity which reject the humanist notion of the essential self, but see “self” in “relation among a multiplicity of forces, both linguistic and material, as we struggle with desire, politics, and the plethora of codes produced by regulating discourse and practice” (St. Pierre, 2000, p.504). Poststructural theory does not advocate for change, but offers a way to see where restrictions and divisions in peoples’ lives originate, and the effects the restrictions and divisions have on real lives. Postcolonial perspectives answer the need in me to find justification for doing more than understand. I study subjectivity not to know myself, but to know how to remake myself to allow for meaningful change with other people.

Edward Said’s (1993) *Culture and Imperialism* examines the history and politics of Imperialism through a literary lens, to illuminate his ideas of Western domination, colonization and decolonisation and shows how literature is implicated in the production of imperial domination. I attempt the method of reading in my analysis of poetry I studied in elementary school and a favourite novel from my childhood. Postcolonial readings of literary and/or cultural texts are a way to reveal power relations and discursive social practices.

Ursula Kelly (1997), in *Schooling Desire: Literacy, Cultural Politics and Pedagogy*, describes an assignment called Looking Auto/Biographically, that requires students to “make problematic the notion of memory, inscription and meaning while also addressing the many texts out of which auto/biography and subjectivity are constituted” (p. 58). Using Kelly’s inter-textual method, I collected autobiographical data that included reflective journal writing about photographs of me in childhood and in my classroom to produce a research text.

MY WHITE SETTLER-INVADER HERITAGE
My grandfather Sidney told an unvarying story of his arrival in the prairie west of Canada, but my grandmother Chrissie embellished and rearranged her immigration story with impunity. The only consistent fact in her autobiography was that she was born in London, England. An urban, thoroughly English citizen until she was at least eleven years old, she embarked for Canada in 1910 never wavering in her devotion to the Empire. In contrast, Sidney was born to English-Canadian parents in Elmira, Ontario, in 1869, and migrated to Saskatchewan (Assiniboia/North West Territories) from Elmira, Ontario, as a young man. Growing up, I considered my grandfather a genuine pioneer because, as he said, there was nothing in Saskatchewan when he arrived after the 1885 Riel Rebellion. He saw himself as a builder, fortunate to have lived long enough to see an empty land be filled with people, railroads, highways, aircraft and colour television. Such progress!

Until recent years, it never occurred to me to think of either grandparent as an invader of this land. In my proud estimation, they were heroic pioneers who had struggled, suffered and prevailed despite enduring world wars and the Great Depression of the 1930s. In our family history, the prairie drought of the 1930s and the economic depression caused by the 1929 stock market crash were conflated as one seamless horrific event. My grandparents considered the lifestyle our family enjoyed as a triumph of the pioneer spirit. They made sense of the material changes they witnessed in their lifetime as evidence that hardworking, righteous people were naturally rewarded.

As encompassing, affirming and comforting as that view of the pioneer past can be, it is not adequate to understand the present. Despite my childish idealization,
My grandparents lived in, and had a part in creating, a settler-invader society “where their descendants have remained politically dominant over indigenous peoples, and where a heterogeneous society has developed in class, ethnic, and racial terms” (Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis, 1995, p. 3). I now understand that the myth of the barren land (Wetherell & Potter, 1992) is part of a racist discourse that facilitated appropriation and exploitation of land inhabited by complex Aboriginal societies, whose own histories were rewritten and supplanted by the heroic story of the white European settler.

MY READING AUTOBIOGRAPHY

My reading autobiography follows a predictable trajectory: I read early and incessantly. By the time I entered Miss Fern Grimes’ grade one class in Grenfell Public School, I had more than a healthy curiosity about books. Recently, when I discussed with my parents the fact that all of my teachers had English names, they were only mildly interested. They asked whether my research had made me obsessive about finding evidence of the influence of English imperialism. “No, I don’t think so,” I said. “Not now that I’ve found my old school readers.” In them, I discovered that the official curriculum of my school was no less concerned with questions of Empire and English superiority than was my grandmother Chrissie.

Leafing through the pages of my Copp-Clarke readers, I remembered the poetry, the stories, the illustrations, and even specific lessons of my teachers. The creators of my school’s English language arts curricula shared my early passion for the Pioneer Narrative. What I had read in school reinforced my family’s lessons about being English and white. How do I know these readers had an influence on me? In part, by the number of poems I can recite: *Abou Ben Adam*, *Frost*, *The Wreck of the Hesperus*, and *Indian Summer*, among others.

In grade four, I had handwritten a copy of *Indian Summer* by Wilfred Campbell (James, 1948). Perhaps I chose the poem because I thought it was about the Qu’Appelle Valley in Saskatchewan. Until I studied literature formally years later, I did not recognize that the nature in the literature I read in school was not to be confused with the natural world of Saskatchewan. In the poem nature is as beautiful and as dignified as an English garden. In Saskatchewan, as in most of the world I suspect, nature is vast, dangerous and largely indifferent. This is a minor discrepancy in the world constructed in the reader and the world in which I lived.

The school readers that I loved as a child offer a problematic version of history. In each anthology, the Pioneer Narrative and the British Empire are unabashedly celebrated. In the grade four text, *Up and Away*, (James, 1948), the table of contents includes *In Early Days and Children of the Empire*. In grade five, *Wide Open Windows* (Barrett, 1948) offers a collection of heroic pioneer stories and poems titled *So Well Remembered*, as well as *Under the Union Jack*. By grade six, patriotic young Canadian students who studied literature from the reader *All Sails Set* (Biehl, 1948) feasted on poems and stories from sections entitled *Pioneer Days* and *The Sun Never Sets*. The late Victorian-romantic Confederation Poets, so named because most of the major figures in the group, including Bliss Carmen, Archibald Lampman and Charles G.D. Roberts, were born in the 1860s, are heavily represented in the collection (New, 1989).

A minor Confederation poet, Isabelle Valency Crawford wrote a poem *Axe of the Pioneer*, which appears in the *Pioneer Days’ section of All Sails Set* (Biehl, 1948). I studied this poem in grade six. Echoes of the imperial project ring through virtually every line of Crawford’s poem; the personified axe promises “lives of Kings” (p.214) “Cities and palaces” (p.214) and “A nation strong” (p. 214) to hardworking settlers. Crawford’s poem repeats an essential element of the pioneer mythology: the pre-existence of the barren land, reminiscent of the wilderness romanticized in *Indian Summer*, waiting to be civilized by Europeans. Another poem in the section, *An Indian Arrow Head* by Arthur S. Bourinot, acknowledges that there were people in the barren land when Europeans arrived. Describing the discovery of an arrow head, the speaker says, “And Daddy says it fell there / Two centuries before” (p. 180). The poem repeats the notion that Native North Americans were a vanishing race, in the lines, “Where Indians whooped and died” (p. 180) and “Lost centuries ago” (p. 180). The arrow head’s quaint properties - “It makes a little spark” (p. 180) - suggests the people who used the technology lacked sophistication. The poem reflects widely held views of colonizers in 19th century Canada. Prominent historians of the Confederation period …looked at Indians and considered them a people without art, and looked at the Roman Catholic ancient regime of Quebec and considered it a stagnant civilization … and went on to justify British imperial expansion as a force of enlightenment that would bring progress to North America. (New, 1989, p. 92)

Oblique references in the poem to battles between the French and the Indians who fought “in the early days” (p. 180) confirm that the speaker is English.

In short, the poem tells a history of settlement where the French defeated the Indians in armed combat, and having defeated the French, the English were left to civilize the wilderness of Canada. And all is achieved within the confines of an a-b-a-b rhyme scheme suitable for memorization! I know very well that my analysis here was not taken up by my grade six teacher, Mr. Pinter, when we studied the poem. I am reading against the ideology of the poetry (and the anthologies) to construct a different story of settlement. What must my classmates from the nearby Sakimay First Nation have made of these words when we read them together so long ago?

While the series, published in 1948, is almost comical in its adherence to the ideology of the British Empire, it is sobering to recognize that the current secondary English Language Arts curriculum in Saskatchewan (1999) includes very similar themes such as *Frontiers*
and Marginal Voices. Within the latter category are the sub-themes Aboriginal Voices and Multicultural Voices. Guide questions are provided to support the teaching of other voices. Teachers are encouraged, for example, to ask students, “What Aboriginal or Indigenous voices are making their way into mainstream literature? How is the multicultural nature of Canada captured by her authors?” (Saskatchewan Learning, 1999, p. 317-318). In the fifty years that passed from the time the Copp-Clarke Canadian Reading Development series was published and the revised 1999 program of language arts study was implemented in Saskatchewan, it is possible to argue the sensibilities governing literature instruction seem to have changed in minor ways. The Pioneer Narrative prevails.

At the time I was studying literature in the Copp-Clarke readers, for pleasure I read Bess Streeter Aldrich’s (1970/1928) A Lantern in her Hand. At age ten, I found everything I loved to read in one book: a heroic pioneer epic, a sweeping multi-generational story with a sad, but uplifting ending. The hardships of pioneer life prevent the central character, Abbie Deal, from ever developing her talents; however, through sacrifice and struggle, her children fulfill her artistic ambitions, and many others of their own. Abbie Deal is the archetype of the ideal pioneer woman. Her youngest child Grace grows up to be a teacher educator at an Eastern college, surpassing all the goals Abbie ever imagined for herself. An unmarried career woman, Grace promises to take her mother on a trip to Europe, a tempting opportunity which Abbie ultimately refuses, saying she is too old, saying, “I’ll stay home and read about the trip. You write to me from all the places you stop. And I’ll just stay in my chair and read about the trip. You write to me from all the places you stop.” (Aldrich, 1970/1928, p. 250). Grace argues with her mother, suggesting that her life is too narrow, that the opportunity for growth is too good to miss. Abbie’s speech quells Grace’s argument:

You know, Grace, it’s queer but I don’t feel narrow. I feel broad. How can I explain to you so you would understand? I’ve seen everything … and I’ve hardly been away from this yard. I’ve seen cathedrals in the snow on the Lombardy poplars … I’ve seen the ocean billows in the rise and fall of the prairie grass … I’ve seen the feeble beginnings of a raw state and the civilization that developed there, and I’ve been part of the beginning and part of the growth. … When you’ve experienced all those things, Grace, the spirit has traveled although the body has been confined (Aldrich, 1970/1928, p. 250-51).

Abbie Deal continues to remind me of my grandmothers who I idealized as pioneer women. My postcolonial reading of the novel cannot ignore the frequent racist references to Indian savages and to the grand narrative of progress the novel advances which permits settler-invaders to occupy land belonging to others. It is possible to read Aldrich’s (1970/1928) novel as a text that inscribes historically accurate discourses that produce the idea of the ideal pioneer woman. I am not free of the pressure to perform woman as defined in the novel. I have come to see that my attraction to the pioneer woman as a role model was constructed in my recreational and school reading.

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

English studies has had the responsibility of civilizing people since becoming part of the curriculum in colonial schools (Viswanathan, 1989; Willinsky, 1998, 2000). “Creating ‘proper’ and moral families was an integral part of early-twentieth century Canadian nation building, a project that appeared to link social reformers’ efforts to domesticate and ‘civilize’ both the working class and Native peoples” (Sangster, 2005, p. 179). In my role as an English language arts teacher educator, it would be careless and dishonest to ignore postcolonial perspectives. Arun Mukherjee (1995) asks English teachers to consider, “the role and ideology of the patrons and the disseminators of literature, the role of literature as a social institution and, finally, the role of the teacher-critic of literature as a transmitter of the dominant social and cultural values” (p.451).

At the University of Regina, the great majority of my students in the secondary English language arts program have a similar cultural background. Like me, they are great-grandchildren of pioneers who for the most part embraced the Pioneer Narrative, the settler-invader mythology of the barren land. Despite the continued presence of First Nations people and cultures in the province, my students can accept the fantasy of originality and origination (Bhabha, 1994) that allows colonizers to believe that they are the first to live on this land, to build a civilization. Unpacking the legacy of settler-invader mythology has implications for teaching and teacher education.

To engage my third-year students and the Faculty of Education in considering the discourses that have produced their subjectivity and our shared white settler-invader histories, I ask them to write reading autobiographies similar to the abbreviated reading autobiography that I have included within this paper. They are asked to “explore who they are as readers both in the past and the present” (Wolfe, 2001, p. 206). Their autobiographies uncover stories of that enrich our understanding of literacy pedagogies, but also uncover systems of privilege that benefit the majority of us who are white and middle-class. As future teachers, they are challenged to consider how their role as transmitter of dominant social and cultural values is constructed by how they read themselves and the world.

A number of powerful discourses produced the history of the province where I live and teach. Gayatri Spivak’s (1985) reference to privilege as loss resonates with me: I can forgive myself for being emotionally affected by sentimental pioneer stories, but I cannot excuse my complicity in reproducing the discourses that continue to oppress and restrict the lives of others.
REFERENCES


When I began my doctoral research in 1998, I was a literacy consultant for a very large district school board. I was interested in finding a way to articulate the tensions teachers lived between the theory and practice of literacy teaching and learning and of their own personal literacy stories in and out of their classrooms. New curriculum expectations, coupled with new literacy board initiatives left countless teachers wondering how they could ever meet current standards of practice that were being fed down a pipeline of curriculum theory. This left me wondering how I could contribute significantly to teachers’ place of literacy learning and teaching. I reflected inward and my aim as a teacher educator moved forward to “engage in self-study [t]o better understand, facilitate, and articulate the teaching-learning process” (LaBoskey, 2004, p.857) in relationship to others.

This paper arises from my four year doctoral study, “Literacy narratives: Writing and relating letters and stories of teacher knowledge, identity and development,” (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2004) which used my experience with reflective writing to incorporate the writing of teachers’ personal literacy experiences and practice. As we studied our practice, we also studied ourselves. Consequently, this paper represents a self-study that “points to a simple truth, that to study a practice is simultaneously to study self: a study of self-in-relation to other” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p.14). The use of collegial letter writing became both the phenomenon and methodology of my project and a “self-study of narrative teacher knowledge” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 579). This paper illustrates components of this phenomenon and methodology by focusing on letter writing with Jeannette, a Grade 6 teacher, over a four year span as I examined literacy teaching and learning as a product of a caring collaborative relationship with emphasis on the need for trust, commitment, affirmation and validation in teacher education practices.

Advocates of letter writing have shown that the written response of a colleague can indeed make correspondence in writing a powerful tool for professional growth (e.g., Ciuffetelli Parker & Kitchen, 2004; Kitchen & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2003; Knowles & Cole, 1994; Olson & Dhanborvorn, 1996). This study combined letter writing over a significant period of time which showed not only growth and reflection of practice over time but also an awareness of change of practice in literacy and teacher education. I draw on these letters to convey my shifting identity as a teacher educator/researcher and to reflect on the importance of caring collaborative relationships in settings of practice where self-study methodology, as LaBoskey (2004) contends, focuses on “teacher educators in relation to others.”

The letters generated two themes that I categorize under the following headings: a) reconciling tensions through stories of who they are and who their students are on their educational landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). I focused on learning about self through a caring relationship because it “is important not for what it shows about the self but [also] because of its potential to reveal knowledge of the educational landscape” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 579).

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) concede that “a correspondence that takes place over years brings additional advantages of depth and richness and that [t]he promise to readers is that something special will be revealed” (p.19). Jeanette and I wrote collegial letters to one another beginning in 1998, the year my dissertation research began, to 2002. We wrote lengthy letters, approximately 800 words or more each, to one another once per week for the first two years of study and every few weeks for the concluding two years.

DISCUSSION
The letters generated two themes that I categorize under the following headings: a) reconciling tensions through trust and commitment to practice; and b) affirmation in relationships of care. I have chosen a select number of letter excerpts that illuminate recurrent themes in numerous other letters written throughout the four year period.
Reconciling tensions through trust and commitment to practice

Dear Jeanette,

Last year gave me the chance to be a part of Mosaic Park staff and students through the early literacy work I have done here. But, I have never had the chance to be immersed completely in the “culture” of the school, as it were, until now...The feeling is almost mystical in a sense. Maybe because you are there too, to work alongside with me, I don’t know. Maybe it’s the combination of the staff and students. Maybe it’s just the place.

Darlene (Letter, September 28, 1998)

Dear Darlene,

One of my frustrations as a teacher is the lack of feedback we get once we’re in the classroom...I was glad to hear that you felt good with last week. Your guidance was much appreciated. Please do not hesitate to “step in”. My goal for this year is to provide my students with a richer literacy program that is reflective of their academic and social needs. Such a program will increase my confidence. It meant a lot to me when you worked with the students on the creation of the editing checklist. Now that they’ve had some time to use it, I’m going to work with them on a strategy checklist. What do you think?

Jeanette (Letter, October 5, 1998)

These early letters depicted both our fears and trepidation in coming into the research study together. I struggled with letting go of my consultant role, the only role Jeanette knew me by in years previous. I later began to understand that Jeanette was not entirely clear about my role Jeanette knew me by in years previous. I later began to struggle with letting go of my consultant role, the only role in coming into the research study together. I

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The values of commitment and trust to practice led me to regard our written stories as a moral contribution to literacy educational practices and to forming bridges between the theory-practice story of school and how we were united in that story. Thus, as Jeanette acknowledges as a literacy teacher that “it’s critically important that we trust our students.” I conclude that our writing “holds the secret to establishing time, commitment, patience and respect for each other’s places and stories of teaching and learning.”

Affirmation in relationships of care

Dear Darlene,

...It’s amazing just how sometimes things come together...Honestly, anyone with a pulse is caught up in the literacy focus...Initially I thought having you there would give me lots of great ideas about coming up with an authentic literacy program...Although you were very encouraging, you never pushed things on me—this is why it works at Mosaic Park—things are not pushed on people...What I’m valuing most is how you validate and “invite” me to be what I’m most comfortable with.

Thanks for listening,

Jeanette (Letter, February 16, 1999)

Dear Jeanette,

What was discovered throughout our four years of correspondence was that our letters moved our thinking and reconciled our tensions of practice. I sought and discovered that trust and commitment were critical to our respective roles as literacy educators in relationship to each other. Jeanette writes about trust and commitment a year into the research project:

I believe that it’s critically important that we TRUST our students. I always hated when people would use the term “earn my trust”. You shouldn’t have to earn trust, although there are times when our level of trust is diminished...I think COMMITMENT sums up all the factors. Our faith in what the students can do is often the only encouragement they have. Although there are times when I feel like I’m losing my sense of commitment to my students, something always happens to remind me of the value... (Letter, August 30, 1999)

One year later, the theme of commitment still echoed in one of my letters to Jeanette:

You speak of the desire to teach your students based on what you know now as a teacher and teaching of literacy...I feel the desire, the commitment, to keep on with this business of teacher education...perhaps this writing of ours holds the secret to what we search for in establishing time, commitment, patience and respect for each other’s...stories of teaching and learning. (Letter, March 22, 2000).

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Jeanette (Letter, February 16, 1999)

Dear Jeanette,
Jeanette revealed unremittingly her need for validation and her desire for confidence in her teaching. I revealed the cover story (Crites, 1971) of my sustaining fixation on my role as a consultant for her and as a researcher to the project. As I began to study myself in the letter writing process, I noticed clearly that I had not given up my role as teacher consultant. My writing about it allowed me to come to terms with this role and I admitted, “I know that part of my identity for you is that [consultant] role itself. It is what has brought us together in the first place.” I felt less anxious about myself as a teacher mentor for Jeanette and I began to articulate further what I thought our writing had captured. In a sense, like Jeanette, I too needed affirmation that what I was doing was “legitimate in narrative research.” Thus, in saying that I was “free in my inquiry,” I meant that I was vulnerable enough to be myself not only as I was in my past role to Jeanette as her literacy consultant, but also to move forward with my new role as educational researcher in her class. The revelation that I could be in both roles became a benefit, not an impediment, to my research. Our caring relationship allowed both of us to become mutually vulnerable and to share our inner most concerns of practice. This enabled us to reflect at a deeper level into our own identity as practicing literacy educators.

The letters captured shifting identity as time passed. For example, Jeanette made known in many letters that what she valued most was when I affirmed and respected her for her work. This was a discovery for me in how I was shaping my own role as teacher educator/researcher and in how affirmations became a theme throughout the literacy teaching learning process.

As Jeanette and I continued our writings, the stories we lived by (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) became stories we wrote about in our letters, and in so doing, a secret and cover story (Crites, 1971) was revealed regarding, yet again, the need for validation and affirmation in teacher practice.

Dear Darlene,
...I wanted to share an incident with you. After school, approximately 5:15, I'm leaving school and notice another teacher is in her room. I drop in and compliment her on how wonderful her room is looking and how obvious it is that things are happening. She was so surprised with my comment. Sounding familiar? I guess it goes back to what I feel has influenced me so much throughout this year...

Jeanette (Letter, March 2, 1999)

Dear Jeanette,
...you describe your visit into another teacher's class as a type of revelation of your own self and the success that you have journeyed this year so far. I suppose, no matter how much good work we think we're doing, we really don't know if it's "good enough" or if we're really on the right track until we begin receiving feedback, especially by teachers and educators we deem exemplary...

Darlene (Letter, March 3, 1999)

My own comment back to Jeanette, coincidentally enough, began a journey into my own issue of validation and where my own research was going. As a teacher turned researcher, I began to understand through the letter writing that, if the teacher was expected to grow in the profession, there needed to be a call for affirmation before transformation. I began to realize that Jeanette's need for affirmation was not unique to herself, but rather common to many educators I worked with. This revelation became a key incident in my own self-knowledge as a researcher and later became a prominent topic throughout much of my work and research with other literacy educators. My literacy narrative relationship with Jeanette helped to reveal the critical issue of affirmation and validation in teacher education practice.

CONCLUSION
Following are final letter excerpts from our project. They illustrate the growth of our relationship of community and care built over four years of collegial letter writing and how we both transformed through that relationship.

Dear Darlene,
The writing and sharing of our stories through these letters...have been so important and have become much more powerful with the passage of time...I have come to also realize that we must also feel "invited". Creating such an environment is key. For many it may be the daily reflections shared with oneself. But for others it will involve the sharing of one's pen. I can never express the true impact you had on my life. But I do make one promise, that I too will search out the "Jeanettes" and allow them the writing opportunities to be all that they need and want to be.

Jeanette (Letter, September 18, 2002)

Dear Jeanette,
I truly hope I have shown ourselves, and now to others...
who read this thesis, that our writing and the awareness of teaching writing to students have captured a revolutionary story of theory and practice. Our writing has formed a new story of theory and practice in what I have termed our related literacy narratives. Our stories have hopefully shown the educational potential through reflective and related stories … Darlene (Letter, September 23, 2002)

Writing, Elbaz (2002) says, is “a space of change and growth for teachers: a space where the diversity of teachers’ voices can find expression” (p.3). Yet, Elbaz further suggests that the use of writing for teacher education has not been widely researched or written about. Jeanette and I were two educators who “learned to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships [went] deeper than [our] masks of composure, and who [have] developed a commitment to rejoice together, to delight in each other, and to make others’ conditions their own” (Larrivee, 2005).

This paper offers promise to the possibilities that a relationship with another teacher educator, through insightful written communication, can bring by focusing on listening to another in order to hear oneself better. Collegial letters allowed for relational knowing (Hollingsworth et al., 1993) towards understanding one’s narrative better in relation to another. My study examined letter writing as a narrative form of inquiry as well as a forum for collaborative self-study (Bullough & Pinnergar, 2001).

I ultimately have learned through this project that establishing relationships with an ethic of care (Noddings, 1992) is at the crux of my current practice as a teacher educator today. This is evidenced through my letters with Jeanette in themes of: a) reconciling tensions on trust and commitment to practice; and b) affirmation in relationships of care. My values in teacher education have shifted due to writing literacy narratives with Jeanette. I no longer look at programs of study, like literacy, as something I simply need to impart knowledge of. Rather, I blend my role as a curriculum expert with my role as a caring educator whose course foundation is built on trust, commitment and affirmation as its primary focus.

I have moved my research further in my role as Assistant Professor of Methods with preservice students in a Faculty of Education. My students use literacy narratives - collegial letters with peers - to explore relationships of care in their personal and professional experiences during their concurrent teacher education program. I hope to report on this three year study as I continue to investigate further the dynamics of written collaborative self-study and how it is related to the personal perspectives of preservice student teachers and their lived personal experiences as literacy (Gallego & Hollingsworth, 2000).

REFERENCES


American schools are currently subject to strong forces of reform that seek to standardize what counts as teachers’ knowledge, as well as content and pedagogy. We argue that teaching within complex school environments requires developing a counter discourse of reform. Here we share an analysis from our self-study of an on-site practitioner inquiry course that supports teachers as forces of counter-reform.

UNDERSTANDING OUR CONTEXT
The construct of location is important to our research and our teaching. In order to locate this study and connect it to our ongoing process of self-study, we draw on the metaphor of neighborhood (Lytle, 2000) to envision how this course fits within a larger on-site university teacher education and research program (the Access to Critical Content for English Language Learning (ACCELA) Project). If we envision a neighborhood as a location that is simultaneously changing and retaining an identity, we can explain how our neighborhood – the ACCELA Project – is a site for developing language for teaching academic literacy and our course represents one “contact zone” within the program where “cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (Lytle, citing Pratt, 1991, p.34). This is the first course in the ACCELA master’s degree program for 27 inservice teachers (all female, primary and secondary English speakers).

THE STUDY
The centrality of language is important to the theoretical frame for the program, the course, and this self-study. We embrace knowledge as social, built in relationship, and developed through language. Identity, both individual and community, is constantly reconstructed at the center of the tensions that both unify and destabilize a social space (Bakhtin, 1981). Studying language generated within tensions helped us understand the power relationships that shaped the learning space and better understand teachers’ learning in relationship to the program goals.

We feel it is important to identify the stance we take as self-study researchers as poststructural. That is, we do not consider our selves as teacher educators/researchers nor the teachers in our course as objects, but instead argue for our self-study as an investigation of the knowledge generated in relationship (Davies & Cook, 1999) between instructors and teachers as course participants. Following Loughran (2004), we:

a) locate the purpose of our study as examining intertextual connections between the texts we brought, those drawn on by the inservice teachers, and the texts co-constructed by participants (Bloome, Carter, Christian, & Shuart-Faris, 2005);
b) identify participants as the instructor (Pat), the teaching assistant (Elizabeth), and the urban inservice teachers who were our students;
c) understand that texts (oral, written, and material) created by the participants shaped the course context and ultimately the ACCELA program and are always influenced by larger social and political contexts as well as local contexts such as teachers’ classrooms.

We collected a variety of texts during the semester, including videotapes of discussions, written assignments, e-mails, course documents, fieldnotes, and memos. In an effort to reconceptualize our own teacher education practices (Hamilton, 1998) we took up a critical inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) similar to that which we required of our students. Drawing on memos, we developed the following questions to revisit our course data:

We teachers have the hardest job. Teaching consists of many other things besides teaching, that with love and care, the proper training, consistency, and high expectations, we can conquer. I know it is not easy but it is what is expected of us.

Carmen, urban teacher (2005)
The terms accountability and blame are almost unavoidable in any discussion of U.S. school reform. In our course, pressures associated with working in a high stakes environment surfaced in the reflections we asked teachers to write. Reacting to the label of underperforming placed on her district in a news article, Cecelia, a kindergarten teacher, exemplified the feelings of many her peers that the situation was the result of large political and economic issues beyond her control. She wrote:

*The socio-economic struggles of any urban school district have great correlation with education. Schools are failing because children are failing. Children are failing because parents and teachers are failing. Parents and teachers are failing because politicians locally and statewide are failing.*

For teachers like Cecelia, failure seemed inevitable. Others, like Carmen, were motivated to conquer such failure. For all, there was a general consensus that despite barriers, they worked hard to improve their students’ learning. Our course took place as the school district faced narrowed curriculum mandates as well as ongoing budget cuts, lay-offs, ongoing reassignments of teachers, and a three-year pay freeze.

**THE POLITICAL CONTEXT**

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**TENSIONS AS CRITICAL SPACES FOR UNDERSTANDING TEACHER LEARNING**

Our course texts represented mutual constructions of power and knowledge generated within relationships locally between all course participants, and more distant-ly with others such as students in classrooms, other university program faculty, and project assistants. Three major tensions emerged from our analysis that we consider important to our ongoing development of ACCELA courses with our faculty colleagues, and especially as we look to design the culminating course for this cohort of teachers for fall 2007. These included:

a) tensions between teachers’ desire to affirm positive professional identities and the course focus that required them to critique their teaching as practitioner researchers;

b) tensions between teachers’ embedded privileging of technical learning (emphasizing methods and procedures), and sociocultural theories (the ACCELA framework);

c) tensions arising when multiple perspectives on research, theory, and practice came into contact as teachers struggled to fit a research orientation into their daily classroom lives.

These tensions provided interconnected opportunities for struggle and for new learning and are only separated here in the interests of framing the analysis. Space requirements limit discussion, therefore we will explore the first set of tensions as an example of how our study offers new questions, insights, and possibilities that inform our praxis.

**Re-affirming competent teachers as critical researchers**

The ACCELA master’s program, purposely located on-site within an urban school district, provided teachers with ongoing support (e.g., free tuition and classroom research assistance). The language of the program, reflected in our course, positioned practitioner researchers as teachers who are valued as authoritative voices within their schools and beyond. A practitioner researcher is “able to see what happens in the classroom more clearly once [she] has ‘unpacked’ hidden assumptions that block the way” (ACCELA document, Spring 2004). In class, Pat explained, “Teacher research is a culture change,” (3/3/05) and later suggested, “The ACCELA project is different, it supports a new role for teachers” (3/24/05), especially in the current political context of federal and state legislation mandating specific curriculum and instructional practices. Despite seemingly strong encouragement to embed classroom research in their teaching lives, many of the teachers appeared to resist being asked to embrace uncertainty, take on intellectual challenges, and become leaders in a climate where such ideas were not necessarily valued.

As we pushed teachers to examine assumptions, many responded in ways that protected their individuality and affirmed present practices. For example, Debbie spoke to Pat’s assertions about a new role saying, “the way you...
teach is the way you are...you are what you teach” (3/24/05). When Elizabeth asked the class whether the practitioner research role was something they would do outside of the course, several voices stated, “we do it all the time.” However, deeper analysis suggested variations in such resistance, informing our ongoing practice as teacher educators and school/university research partners.

Examining language in course texts suggested a range of protective affirmations that indicated more complex learning within what we initially interpreted as teachers’ rejection of essential course goals. Some affirmations suggested intellectual shifts embedded within the teachers’ need to retain authority over their own learning, their own practices, and in the class itself. We began our re-examination of texts by focusing on class discussions, but noted marked silences by several teachers. To address this, we next consulted teachers’ writing. Among them was a text set of Carmen’s written assignments. Although quiet in the larger class discussions, Carmen, a Latina, was always willing to share strong opinions one-on-one or in the smaller groups. Her voice in her writing stood out as strong. We consulted written assignments, such as Carmen’s, to intersect with texts produced through classroom conversations. We considered what it meant when teachers in our class used affirmation as an entry point for becoming critical researchers. The types of affirmations included teachers: a) articulating their practitioner research as a continuation of good teaching; b) confronting potential school/university power differentials by affirming each other; and c) protecting and affirming the profession of teaching.

Carmen’s Texts
We focus on Carmen’s written text as an exemplar of patterns of affirmation used by teachers to retain their authority as we pushed them to problematize their practices. For many of the teachers, articulating practitioner research as a continuation of their already effective teaching practices was a common response to our efforts to introduce practitioner research as a new way of knowing. A few teachers countered this common assertion in class discussions. For example, responding to her colleagues’ arguments that teachers do research “all the time,” Sarah, a European American, spoke up, noting, “We are always doing it, but revisiting our teaching [in this course] was different.” It was “more thorough.” She added that the class encouraged her to “analyze and create process on your own. You design it yourself.” She noted that teaching as a researcher in the current political environment gave her a chance to “choose what to teach” when she was often expected to follow scripted curriculum (3/31/05).

Carmen was less linear in connecting the research process required by the course with changes in her practice. In her writing she was less positive than Sarah. Yet, while she strongly communicated her frustration about the negative positioning of teachers by society, school administration, and academics (ourselves included), her critique included incremental changes in her practice: Teachers, at least teachers I know, are always researching. I have noticed that when a question evolves, others follow it. If something doesn’t function, I try another approach. But it is much easier when you do it automatically, without having to take the time, time we don’t have, to take notes, analyze, and document it. I know that teachers need to take a leadership role in researching, and do what others out of the classrooms have been doing for so long, documenting what we do. But it is easier said then (sic) done. As I mentioned earlier, we do not have time. Nowadays, administrators are taking every little bit of time we have to fulfill students’ and school’s needs to pass the state assessments. At this moment, I don’t know how to approach all the work we have to do for this class. Or maybe it is that the assignments were not distributed properly. (1/20/05)

Carmen argued that, “Teachers are researchers already.” She affirmed her position as a good teacher claiming that her work was already inquiry based. She argued against assignments that asked her to document what she did “automatically.” She refused to let her audience (the course instructors) forget that administrators and course instructors continued to exert power that disabled her professional autonomy. However, in her critique she also incorporated language from the course acknowledging its goals (e.g., “I know teachers need to take a leadership role in researching.”) While challenging institutional power, Carmen made space for new ideas. In doing so, she inscribed herself as a “good teacher researcher” who managed to appropriate the course content for the good of her students and in doing so re-affirmed her continued growth as a teacher.

When it was time to put all this data together, I didn’t know how to. I became frustrated, and overwhelmed with all types of emotion. I was falling behind with this assignment. But last Thursday, on March 24, the professor distributed a couple of sheets, and one of them had to do with another way of putting data together and analyzing it. Triangulation is the use of multiple sources to support findings. This was my salvation! I followed it, and that was the way I was able to lay out all my sources and start finding how one thing was agreeing with another. After analyzing all the data, I came to the conclusion that despite K’s lack of English language proficiency, she has found various methods to learn in content. (April 2005)

Carmen’s writing reflects a critical conversation with the course content where she problematizes her self, appropriates course language to reshape her practice (e.g., “Triangulation...salvation”), and uses evidence from her research to identify new focus areas for teaching. Yet her language of teaching retains and continues to privilege the authority of her own perspectives and experiences as a teacher and language learner (Whitehead, 1993).
Carmen’s writing hints at what was stated in larger discussions, an affirmation of the authority of peers. For example, data collection and analyses were part of the official course readings, documents, and presentations, yet many teachers claimed that peers were the ultimate solution to understanding course content. In doing so they valued their already developed competencies as good teachers as assets in constructing new competencies as classroom researchers.

Also, like Carmen, many teachers found it important to affirm and protect the field of teaching and teachers in general as a professional group. For example, as she struggled with new ideas about practitioner research, Carmen carefully and consistently defended teachers’ work, even when critiquing the lack of communication between classroom and ELL (English Language Learning) support teachers like herself. Carmen positioned herself within a larger group of good teachers who value caring for their students as necessary for success. She expressed her solidarity with this group as she responded to a teacher-authored essay assigned as a course reading, “This essay connected me, helping me to think and analyze this research. I think that good and caring teachers can relate to this piece because ‘we’ tend to think alike” (1/20/05).

**IMPLICATIONS**

Although this self-study is bounded in space and time, our analysis informs our praxis and our teaching/research goals for effective, efficient, equitable, and accessible classroom literacy instruction. As ACCELA faculty/researchers challenge teachers to make intellectual shifts in their work, we must shift our own thinking in dialogue with them and with each other. Our initial analysis suggests an ongoing need for attention to how participants are positioned within our course practices and challenges us to “walk our talk” about school/university partnerships. Three examples include:

- As a doctoral student, project assistant, and teaching assistant, Elizabeth reflects below on her role as project assistant and in negotiating relationships pertinent to that role:

  *Maryann (a teacher) wanted to know what the agenda of ACCELA was. She said that they (the teachers) often whisper about what this is all about, because they know that their classes are always being filmed and data is being collected on them. I told her that from my perspective ACCELA is all about bringing teachers’ voices to the forefront as advocates for student learning and teaching practices. In terms of my own positioning I feel like a translator. I am able to co-construct understanding with Pat and other professors and then I take this to the teachers. The teachers and I then co-construct understandings of their assignments.*

- An ACCELA professor, and a former elementary school teacher, Pat is currently teaching the final course to the different cohort of ACCELA teachers. This initial analysis challenges her to attend to language in her multiple program relationships:

  *Some teachers identified colleagues as their best teachers in the university course. By acknowledging colleagues, the teachers distributed power within their small groups and positioned themselves more equitably as classroom researchers in relation to the academic researchers/instructors. I keep this notion of power in mind as I encounter teachers’ language in course texts. For example, in my current class I recently noted a line in the literature response of one of the teachers who paraphrased, “teacher research is ultimately defined by the use teachers make of it.” Reintroducing this text for subsequent class discussion on teachers’ power and school change is one example of how I need to interrogate my own knowledge as a partner who is responsive to teachers’ and project assistants’ (such as Elizabeth’s) expertise as we build multiple understandings of classroom inquiry.*

- This self-study also contributed to an ongoing dialogue conducted by ACCELA faculty. As we review course syllabi and develop the program we attend to tensions. Analyzing our own academic language in relation to the teachers’ learning is key. For example, in Pat’s current course, while exploring a videotape from a colleague’s classroom, a teacher challenged the group to focus on language that will help the school district foreground literacy as a social process (as such language is not readily available in the dominant discourses of assessment). In response we are challenged to develop discourse analysis as a pedagogical tool as well as a research tool.

**REFERENCES**


NEGOTIATING DILEMMAS OF TEACHER EDUCATION REFORM POLICY MANDATES THROUGH SELF-STUDY

After more than a decade of state-level legislation mandating new curriculum, assessment, and accountability policies in the P-12 education system, the standards-based education reform movement has begun to significantly impact programs of teacher education. In the State of California, policymakers have employed tools such as mandated curriculum and high stakes testing as part of the recently enacted statewide “Learning to Teach System” (Senate Bill 2042) intended to align teacher preparation efforts across undergraduate subject matter coursework, professional education, and induction phases of teacher preparation. Among the most challenging features of the new SB 2042 policies are those that require implementation of a Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA)—a high stakes accountability system for evaluating preservice candidates’ readiness to teach.

On one level, the TPA policies are responsive to a range of professional and political pressures for improving outcome measures for teacher education programs. At the same time, the TPAs, and the underlying framework of teacher performance expectations on which the assessments are based, have been viewed by many California teacher educators to represent a dramatic and regressive shift of values, scope and vision for the teaching profession (Whittaker, Snyder, & Freeman, 2001), to impose serious fiscal and procedural responsibilities on teacher education faculty in the state of California to the new state TPA policies were quite negative (see Nelson, 2003). These reactions constellated a serious dilemma for programs required to implement the mandated assessment policies in order to retain their state accreditation.

In this paper we describe efforts undertaken within a teacher education program situated in a public institution of higher education to construct an approach to implementing the state policy mandates that successfully negotiated the dilemmas described above. Our approach was intended in part as a strategy for resisting the sense of demoralization and loss of autonomy we observed among many of our colleagues around the state in response to what was generally experienced as a dramatic new state intrusion into the work of teacher education (Nelson, 2003). However, we also hoped to use the demands of the new policies as an occasion for learning more about what our students were taking from their coursework and practicum experiences and using these data to generate program improvements. The tension between these perspectives on the state TPA policies was one of the most significant and enduring contexts of the implementation problem.

We chose to engage these policy implementation dilemmas through a process of self-study (Loughren & Russell, 2002; Zeichner, 1999), in which we were simultaneously engaged in theory building, evaluation, and action planning in response to the new state requirements. A specific challenge we faced, conceptually and methodologically, was how to integrate individual and collective dimensions of the self-study process in a fashion that motivated both individual commitment and organizational change.

METHOD

The methodological approach we used in undertaking the inquiry process drew upon several sources and traditions. First, we utilized methods of qualitative case study research as described by Yin (2003), Merriam (1998) and others to construct a rich descriptive account of the events and outcomes of the policy implementation process. Second, we drew on conceptual and methodological strategies from literatures in which the problem of integrating research and action is considered central to the design of inquiry. These included critical action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), self-study research (Loughren & Russell, 2002), and design-based research (Greeno, 1998). In conceptualizing this methodological approach, we were also influenced by van den Berg’s (2002) distinction between rational-linear conceptualizations of change and those relying on what he termed a cultural-individual perspective, in which the values, insights and understanding of change agents (in this case faculty and staff) are considered the most important context (and resource) for designing the change process.
Program
The teacher education program in which the work reported here was carried out annually prepared 120 preservice teachers (60 elementary; 60 secondary) at the masters degree level. The program had several features which functioned as supports for the implementation process. First, the program was situated on one of the campuses of the University of California—a strong research-oriented institution that offered a variety of intellectual, organizational and fiscal supports for the kind of inquiry process described here. Second, the program had a well-developed sense of identity and integrity. For example, it had been featured as one of a set of nationally prominent programs in a recent publication on innovative programs in teacher education. In short, the program was a strong one which was well positioned to respond vigorously and proactively to new state policy.

Participants
A recurring theme which surfaced at all levels of the inquiry process had to do with how we conceptualized and enacted our roles as researchers and practitioners.

Researchers: The inquiry team
The team undertaking primary responsibility for the inquiry process consisted of one member whose primary role and expertise was in the arena of policy research (Gallucci). A second team member (Sloan), was a program faculty member. She straddled the roles of researcher and practitioner throughout the inquiry process. The third team member (Peck) was a program administrator (director) for the teacher education program. The overlapping roles for two of the three primary investigators for the project resulted in a number of methodological and ethical challenges which were a constant focus of concern and deliberation throughout the inquiry process. Particularly at issue were the overlapping roles for the program director. Early in the inquiry process we adopted the general practice of excluding the director from direct participation in interviews. The other side of this dilemma was that the participatory nature of the inquiry process, including the director’s participation, situated the data analysis very clearly and directly in the context of action. In the context of leadership actions, the data helped program leaders understand the concerns and insights of faculty and staff about the new state policies and how they might be implemented in the context of local program values and commitments. This knowledge enabled program leaders to facilitate open and program-wide deliberation and decision-making around critical issues. Faculty and staff used summaries of the data which had been collected to better understand the impacts of the new policies on their own practice, and on their understanding of student learning outcomes. These data formed the context of many faculty decisions about how to proceed with the implementation process.

Informants
All full time and part time program faculty and staff (n=35) participated in program-wide data collection activities including: a) brief free write responses situated in a variety of activities related to implementing the TPA policies; b) participation in program planning meetings in which observation field notes were collected; and c) completing program-wide open-ended questionnaires regarding faculty viewpoints and experiences with the policy implementation process. In addition, a smaller number of faculty and staff (n=15) were invited to participate as key informants throughout the policy implementation process. Performance assessment data were collected from all students in the program (n=120), as required by the new state policies.

Data collection
Several sources of data were collected throughout the twelve-month period in which we studied the implementation process.

- Narrative field notes were taken during observations of faculty meetings, small group work meetings, classes and student work groups.
- A series of two to three semi-structured interviews were conducted over the course of the study with key informants.
- Short free-writes were conducted with faculty at key meetings to gather data on their views and experiences of the implementation process.
- Focus-group interviews were conducted with student groups to gather information about their experiences with the TPAs.
- Artifacts, including course syllabi, assignments, examples of student work completed for the TPAs, meeting agendas, and program-wide e-mail conversations were collected throughout the study.

Data analysis
We analyzed the data collected over the course of the project using the general inductive methods outlined by Yin (2003) and Merriam, (1998). Narrative observational records, interview transcripts, and artifacts from the work undertaken in the TPA implementation process were analyzed in an iterative fashion which began early in the implementation process. We identified potential themes in these early data, summarized the themes with examples and shared them with the faculty to get feedback on how our interpretation fit with faculty perceptions and experiences. We used this feedback and subsequent exploratory analyses to develop a framework for coding and categorizing the data. The general practice of submitting tentative findings for participant feedback occurred throughout the implementation process. This served as both a check on our findings and, equally important, as a means of engaging the faculty participants in discussions and decision making processes regarding the policy implementation process.

Implementation as inquiry-in-practice
The policy implementation process was structured
through a series of program-wide meetings of faculty and staff, complemented by both small group work sessions and a great deal of individual planning and development work. At the same time, inquiry activities were situated in the planning work to allow the planning process to be informed by our developing understanding of the issues of concern to members of the program (including, students, leadership, faculty, and staff). This inquiry-in-practice process was characterized by three distinctive features.

Recursive data collection, analysis and action
Data collection and data analysis activities were conducted throughout the implementation process. As the data were analyzed, various (leadership) actions were planned and implemented based on what was learned through the data analysis. A recurring feature of this process involved bringing the results of data analysis back to the larger faculty/staff group for deliberation and action planning.

Emergent design
An important feature of the inquiry process was its emergent or formative design. That is, the inquiry process was not built around hypothesis formulation and testing, nor structured through any kind of a priori strategic plan, but rather around a continuous investigation of the perspectives, ideas and insights of faculty, staff and students about the TPA policies, and how they might be best addressed in the context of the program.

Attention to subjectivity
An important focus of data collection, analysis and action in the inquiry process had to do with the meanings faculty and staff constructed around the state policies, program values and their own pedagogy (van den Berg, 2002). We assumed that the interpretations program members held regarding the state policies were of central importance to their response to those policies. We paid careful and respectful attention to these interpretations, and the accompanying (strongly negative) feeling expressed about the policies.

SOME FINDINGS REGARDING ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING, INNOVATION AND CHANGE
Drawing in part on Wenger’s (1998) framework for interpreting processes of organizational learning and change, we describe the outcomes of the approach we adopted to the state mandates below in terms of changes in our working practices (engagement), collaborative relationships (alignment), and values and visions for the program (imagination). We then comment on the relationship between individual and collective dimensions of the self-study process itself.

New forms of engagement
The self-study process opened up a number of new modes of direct and indirect interaction between program faculty, staff and students. One obvious example consisted of the emergence of new types of program-wide meetings, in which samples of student work on the new performance assessments were examined. In one case, students were invited to join faculty in interpreting their performance on the new assessments in relation to the coursework and fieldwork experiences they had undergone. Other examples of new types of engagement for faculty involved collaboration across courses, or across coursework and fieldwork dimensions of the program. New activities were needed to make sense of the new performance assessment tasks and led to a wide variety of program changes and innovations. One supervisor commented, for example, “We are all looking at the same student work as opposed to supervisors looking at lesson plans and course instructors looking at assignments in courses.”

Changes in alignment
A closely related change was evident in interviews and observations in which participants described how the policy implementation process led to a clearer articulation of connections across courses, and across coursework and fieldwork dimensions of the program. Many program participants’ comments referred to ways in which the implementation process had “given us a common language, which is so important because when we sit and have conversations we all know what we’re talking about.” One important means of achieving this language involved development of a common lesson-planning framework for use across all courses and fieldwork contexts. In this lesson-planning framework students were required to attend to specific issues in planning curriculum and instruction. This requirement affected faculty as well as students. As one faculty member reported about the common lesson planning format: “Although the ESL part didn’t really give me any problems, I have to admit the focus on special needs students is something I hadn’t really thought about much. I was still at that stage where the special education teacher takes care of that.”

Re-imagining the program
Nowhere was the threat of state intrusion into the sense of programmatic identity more problematic than in the arena of local power and authority to define program values and commitments. Knowing from interview and free write data that these worries were being expressed, we planned two activities in the context of a program retreat. First, faculty were asked to write about and discuss the question: What would you want a graduate to report that they took away from this program? Subsequently, the group created a list of TEP [Teacher Education Program] Mission Themes. Second, the faculty worked in small groups to study the text of state policy documents related to the TPAs. They were asked to consider the following questions:

• What values and images of teachers and teaching are reflected in each of these documents?
• What policy changes are evident as one moves historically from the policies developed in the 90’s, to the recently adopted TPEs, and to the current TPA policies?
• Considering our stated values and goals, what is missing from the new policy frameworks?
• What are the implications for our policy implementation work this year?

Free writes collected following these activities reflected the importance faculty and staff attached to re-imagining programmatic identity in the context of the new state policy pressures:

Reformulating our mission statement is important as is the notion that we do not merely tailor our program to meet the TPEs and TPAs, but we embed them within our own larger mission.

Linking individual and collective learning and change

We observed a constant interplay between individual and collective activity as program faculty and staff worked to construct responses to the new policies. For example, one of the most significant program level innovations was the adoption of the program wide lesson planning format described earlier. While the need for such a common framework was suggested through collective deliberation, the framework itself was created by a single faculty member, and subsequently vetted through a small working group in which several course instructors developed new assignments and other activities which were aligned with the newly developed lesson planning framework. This dynamic interplay between individuals, small working groups, and the larger collective was the key context in which new program practices and policies were negotiated.

DISCUSSION

We have described a self-study process through which our teacher education program responded to new and demanding state policy mandates that intruded strongly on the values and practices of the program. Our data suggest that while the results of this approach were by no means perfect, it was largely successful in both achieving implementation of the mandated state policies, and resisting the disruption of program values and integrity.

These claims must be tempered, of course, by several limitations of our study. These include the limited duration of the data collection (Have the observed programmatic changes endured over time?), and limited measures of student impact (Did the observed changes in TEP curriculum and instruction produce changes in student teaching practice? Did any such changes in practice affect the learning of P-12 students?). While these are significant questions we were not able to address, we believe our data make a useful contribution to the self-study literature in teacher education by making some of the complex relationships between individual and collective dimensions of learning and change more visible and accessible to planning and intervention. The connections we observed between work undertaken by individual faculty, small working groups and the larger collective of program wide faculty and staff members clarify some of the functions of each context, as well as the pathways through which ideas and practices were negotiated across these contexts. We found that careful attention to these processes was extremely valuable in our efforts to engage and support program faculty and staff in responding effectively to the challenges of the reform policies enacted by the state. The data we report here suggest both the theoretical and practical value of inquiry into the complex relations between the individual and collective definitions of self in self-study research in teacher education.

REFERENCES


Senate Bill 2042, California Education Code, Section 44259 (1998).


I bring many identities and experiences to inform my work as a teacher educator including parent, trade union activist, inner-city teacher, and community educator. In all of these contexts I have positioned myself as an activist. All have been significant to me in terms of articulating who I am and what I bring to my work as a teacher educator. A key influence has been the work of *Women’s Ways of Knowing* by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986). This work highlights voice as a metaphor for human development. It identifies how epistemological stances are deeply connected to the kind of educational contexts people have access to. A central question for me is: How can I nurture the voices of student teachers so that they in turn will nurture their own students’ voices?

When I reflect on the genesis of this question I am brought back to my own life history and especially to my childhood growing up female and poor in a rural Ireland of 1950s and 60s. My escape from that marginal position was through education. Like many in the 1960s, I was privileged by a new government policy that abolished school fees thereby making it possible for me to access secondary education. However, once there I found myself denied access to Latin and Science subjects, then requirements for university entrance. The school assumed that they could read my life potential accurately and that poverty automatically meant non-university material. Fortunately my mother intervened and moved me to a new school where I was placed in an honours stream, which made all the difference to my life choices. From that experience I imbibed an activist stance.

However, I only came to voice the meaning of this key experience when I left Ireland for the US in 1986. There I experienced constructivist-learning environments where my thinking was nurtured. It was the first time in my formal education experience that reflection on identity was viewed as a suitable lens for inquiry into professional work. Heretofore the personal was absent in formal educational contexts. Although education provided me with routes to leave behind my poor beginnings, it rendered invisible the oppression of dominant educational structures. In addition, my community education work led me to focus my dissertation on the impact of a community education programme on poor Irish women’s self-concepts. Their stories of being left to the side and actively ignored by the mainstream school system resonated with my experience. It forged in me a commitment to engage with these questions visibly in my work as a teacher educator. As a result I feel passionate about the moral obligations on teachers to build a consciousness of how their judgements impact on students’ life trajectories. I believe critical reflection and dialogue to be key mechanisms for developing this. Returning to Ireland in 1996, after a period of 10 years in the US, I was struck by the fact that little had changed in terms of pedagogical structures since I was a student there in 1980. My return home, moving country and shifting role, once again placed me in the role of cultural outsider inhabiting a marginal space.

As the main actor in this story I will map how my engagement with developing reflective practices within a traditional teacher education practice has been framed and reframed over the last decade. These changes register key movements and emphases in my understanding of the pedagogical interventions that are needed in developing a reflective culture in a cultural context that has been framed around a didactic transmission mode.

In this paper I will analyse various data that I have generated over that period. These data reflect the various ways a portfolio project was interpreted and interrogated by me at different stages. The methods I used for tracking my own process and practice are congruent with self-study methods insofar as they were my attempts to walk the talk of reflective practice by engaging in the kinds of activities I was urging my students to do. This comes from a value that my curriculum decisions need to be constructed as tentative and coming from a dynamic interaction between students’ needs and goals on the one hand, and the knowledge base and conceptual tools of the discipline on the other. Data were generated in the following forms: (a) reflective journaling, (b) memo writing, (c) surveys, and (d) interviews with students and colleagues. These data are viewed by me as artefacts of a learning culture and as lenses through which I can view
my own epistemology and the epistemology and culture of the context more objectively. As Brookfield (1995) states, “Seeing how we think and work through different lenses is the core work of reflective practice” (p. xii).

TEACHER EDUCATION IN IRELAND

The Post-graduate Diploma in Education (PDE) is a 1-year post-graduate programme in the Republic of Ireland that certifies teachers to teach in second-level schools. Most teacher candidates hold honours degrees, and entry into the course is competitive. The structuring of the PDE is closely linked to the requirements set out by the Teacher’s Registration Council drawn up in 1926 and soon to be subsumed by a new body. These regulations identify Studies in the Foundations of Education as essential components of initial teacher education. Other requirements include professional studies and 100 hours on a supervised school placement. Although these regulations are interpreted in slightly different ways from context to context, the academic component generally forms the backbone of most programmes. A didactic transmission model has been the dominant pedagogic frame used to serve large student numbers within a context of inadequate resourcing. There has been little public debate or contestation on the adequacy of this traditional model (Burke, 1999; Gleeson, 2004). As a sector, teacher education has been grossly under-funded and marginalized (Drudy, 2004).

The programme in which I teach is framed within these structural constraints. The pedagogic forms assume that translation of foundational theory to practice is straightforward and linear (Schon, 1983). Students spend the bulk of their university time in large lecture theatres (220 students) where dialogue and discourse are constrained. Teaching practice is school based, and students spend a minimum of teaching six class periods a week. Each student is assessed by a university-based supervisor/tutor on at least 5 occasions during the academic year. These supervisors also meet students in a weekly 1-hour tutorial. The tutorial space is one of the few spaces where students can talk about their meaning making.

However, engaging students in dialogue was a problem when many students were expecting formulas and technical thinking that you have only arrived and what would [you] have to say (1997). It was clear that he was telling me that as a cultural outsider I was contravening some invisible discourse code. However, at the time I interpreted his advice as patronising and cynical. Ten years later, I now reframe his intervention as an accurate reading of the cultural context and the unwritten discourse codes that gave permission to speak or not to speak. Interrogation of our teaching practice as teacher educators was a no-go area and, nobody was listening. Talking about practice would contravene the autonomy of the lecturer, which was viewed as sacrosanct.

THE REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

Toward the end of my first year teaching, I advanced the idea of students keeping a reflective journal to the Department Chair as a way to respond to the statements heard again and again in staff meetings: (1) Our students don’t read; and (2) Only a few of them really get it (critical thinking). The perception that students came to lectures and then regurgitated the material in a terminal exam was the dominant view. However, this perception did not lead to a questioning of the dominant pedagogic forms that nurtured this kind of stance. The Chair called a meeting with senior lecturers to discuss the journal idea. In this discussion there was some doubt about PDE students’ ability to do work. There was a belief that reflection was highly cognitive work and a belief that only the very bright students would get it. However, I was asked to develop the journal idea further. I presented my initial ideas expecting that they would be a discussion point at the next meeting, but instead a decision was made quickly in June to introduce it the following year. The journal consisted of five focussed reflective statements that included, among other things, an autobiographical statement, a classroom management reflection, and self-evaluations. The journal was tacked onto the main programme as an addendum with no pedagogic changes other that I had four lecture slots to introduce the idea to students. I also did a seminar with tutors. In this framing it was clear that we expected that the students would be able to reflect without support of any kind. It also reveals that change was viewed as a quick decision rather than something to be negotiated.

In a survey at the end of year 1 and 2, it was clear...
that both students and tutors were grappling with the change. Although there was some evidence of students reflecting on practice, there was quite a large group who found the task frustrating. Many had never been asked to reflect before in formal education. One student wrote, Imagine giving us marks for writing down our own thoughts and opinions. That’s not what I came here to do. It is a waste of time and paper and my tutor thought the same. It also became clear from this survey that most students were writing their journals in a vacuum with no guidance or feedback. Tutors who did read journal entries were careful not to give feedback because they framed them as a terminal exam material and giving feedback would influence student thinking. Again what is revealed is a culture that saw learning as individual, done in isolation and private.

One of the most persistent misconceptions was the idea that the reflective journal was a private document constructed solely by the student. As a private document, students framed it in terms of describing what happened in their classroom. There was little analysis of why something happened and little connection to theoretical concepts or the need to change practice. Another misconception that emanated from this was that entries were often very subjective. Because of the highly subjective nature of some of the entries, tutors felt uncomfortable commenting on or assessing these documents. There was enormous confusion, resistance, and challenge to the whole idea.

It became clear to me that we needed to work through to some common understanding. We began to have seminars on what reflection is and how we could scaffold it in the tutorial sessions. This began a new discourse about practice problems. However, the nature of this discourse initially was a discourse of complaint and blaming (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). As leader of these sessions, I framed my work in terms of building a community of inquirers about practice. I presented my own work and aimed to walk the talk and demonstrate my own work in this area. I shared my experiences of students’ work with tutors and students. Tutors who did read journal entries were careful not to give feedback in the form of grades. There was direct engagement with student problems, an activity that questioned deeply held systemic beliefs and assumptions about competence and responsibility. I was also able to shape a new discourse about practice problems, an activity that questioned deeply held systemic beliefs and assumptions about competence and responsibility. I was also able to shape a new discourse about practice problems, an activity that questioned deeply held systemic beliefs and assumptions about competence and responsibility.

Contravening boundaries of power and authority by promoting teaching as inquiry. The culture validated hierarchical authoritative stances, teacher autonomy, and certainty, but my discourse pattern was framed as exploratory and collaborative. I often left these meetings drained and defeated. However, privately some tutors told me that I was succeeding stories and welcomed the engagement. Some part-time tutors shared that this was the first time that they had any engagement of this sort from full time faculty. Also, some students were getting it. They found journaling a cathartic experience and a structure to focus on their own thinking.

THE PORTFOLIO EXPERIMENT
Part of my job was teaching a history methods course, and I was the coordinator of history and geography methods courses. I was interested in developing a teaching-for-understanding methods course (Wiske, 1997), as I was unhappy with the terminal exam. I invited all the tutors/lecturers involved to a meeting where I proposed a common portfolio project as the final assessment. Our goal was to sing from the same hymn sheet and to have congruence between teaching and assessment. In our meetings we shared readings, teaching strategies, goals, and dilemmas. This became a core support group and met regularly over the next 2 years.

In surveys and reflections, a clear pattern on the effect of this work was a reframing of teaching and supervising. There was direct engagement with student problems, and lecturers/tutors took these on board to question what they might do differently. One lecturer wrote, Student reflective pieces both encourage and sustain me and often send me back to the drawing board. I feel I am back at stage one and I am being recreated as a teacher practitioner. Our portfolio group is most inspiring. Another wrote, I have to take over the work of coach and critic, push the students to start writing, set deadlines for different reflections, read the drafts and critique them. It’s very rewarding as I have seen the quality of what I’m getting improving all the time. I feel I really know my students this year. (June 1999)

The quality of student work was outstanding. For the first time we had students who were theorising their practice. Many of them talked about university lecture time spilling into coffee rooms and there was lots of evidence of deep engagement, inquiry, experimentation, excitement, and understanding. A particular theme reflected on by students in terms of their developments was an epistemological one. One student wrote: I began to treat all knowledge as legitimate, although as teacher and historian, realizing the degrees of legitimacy. All pupil knowledge is legitimate in the sense that it is the starting point from which all existing knowledge can be challenged and built upon.

BRINGING THE PORTFOLIO TO THE LARGER PROGRAMME
Building on the work of Lyons (1998), the reflective journal was changed to a reflective portfolio in 2000.
This was responding to the fact that some students were writing what seemed to be insightful reflections without actually enacting any change in their practice. The theory/practice split was still evident. We now added the requirement that students would not only reflect on an issue or theme but would also show evidence of their engagement with this issue in their classroom practice. The portfolio has undergone many changes which space here does not allow me to go into but presently consists of 5 components. The first component is a teaching statement that requires students to articulate their understanding of what it means to be a professional. They then must create 3 portfolio entries. Each entry consists of an abstract that clearly states the problem/issue to be addressed, a reflection of up to 1500 words, and evidence of classroom enactment/applications. Finally, they must submit a final statement where they must reflect on their overall development in the year.

Surveys showed that the portfolio was shaping a new discourse in the tutorial space and reframing the tutor’s role. Discussion and nurturing student thinking were now becoming new values. One tutor wrote, *It has made it easier for me to generate discussion and get responses on non-methodological issues I found it much harder to get topics and responses from students in the past. It is now institutionalised as a feature of tutorials* (2001). Another wrote, *It has made me more reflective and caused me to consider my tutorial and my role as a tutor. I have been slower to give ‘right’ answers. They’re looking at themes and grappling with them right through the teaching year.*

The core group from history/geography was a key turning point as their support and our growing understanding acted as a bulwark against defensive routines that resisted change. I was now not alone in sharing practice and dilemmas in the larger programme meetings. Also, other colleagues who were finding it helpful in generating dialogue began to publicly support and present ideas. Gradually this has changed the resistance to more engagement and clarity about what reflection is. Our views of reflection and how it is facilitated by dialogue and feedback have developed, and there is clear evidence of much more clarity and support in student portfolios. A new emphasis now is the link to professional learning and linking insights to action research strategies. Initially we looked for one or two artefacts from the classroom as evidence of engagement. This has now developed into much more structured and systematic evidence of inquiry and data generation, building on the work of Dewey (1933). A new role of portfolio coordinator was created in 2000, which gave a new holding space for conducting the faculty seminars. In 2002, for the first time a space was made on the lecture timetable for the portfolio. It was allotted twelve 1-hour lecture slots. It was not ideal, but it was a symbol that the portfolio had arrived in terms of being an accepted programme structure!

**ENDPOINT**

Despite now being viewed as a valued part of the programme by faculty/students and acknowledged publicly by the external examiner as an example of students demonstrating the ability to theorize and bridging the theory-practice gap, there is still unevenness in the practices of scaffolding and understanding of the portfolio project. Each year new *cracks in the system* are revealed. However, now the portfolio lectures, seminars, and coordinator are structures for actively engaging with these cracks.

Looking back now, I would say that my cultural outsider positioning could be interpreted as naïve. Indeed, my inattention to contextual cues was a major stumbling block. However, this positioning also allowed me to imagine change. The complexity of change, when viewed as incremental and developmental, can uncover deeply held cultural beliefs that otherwise remain invisible. However, it is only through active engagement that such invisible structures are revealed, thus deepening contextual understanding. A new question emerges: Is it possible to understand any context without actively challenging some part of it?

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The Difficulties of Forging a Teacher Educator Pedagogy: Transitioning from Classroom Teacher to Teacher Educator

ABSTRACT
This paper reports an investigation of the difficulties a former classroom teacher encountered as he was compelled by his experiences as a graduate assistant and supervisor of student teachers to forge a distinct teacher educator pedagogy for his university-based work. A qualitative self-study methodology was used to identify and examine the competing tensions that surfaced as the author made the transition from classroom teacher to teacher educator. Findings indicate that the author experienced unanticipated challenges establishing his professional identity as a teacher educator, navigating the ambiguous role of teacher educator as both an advocate and evaluator, and dealing with external sources of resistance manifest in the belief systems of student teachers and the norms of the public school system.

RESEARCH PROBLEM
While classroom teachers are expected to teach subject matter, university-based teacher educators are expected to teach about how to teach subject matter. Given this different emphasis for instruction, it seems obvious that the pedagogy used by a teacher educator would differ in some important ways from the pedagogy used by a classroom teacher. Despite these perceived differences, teacher education is often erroneously regarded as a “self-evident activity” (Zeichner, 2005, p. 118). It is generally assumed “that a good teacher will also make a good teacher educator” (Korthagen, Loughran, & Lunenberg, 2005, p. 110).

As such, many supervisory teacher educator positions are hastily filled by former classroom teachers turned graduate assistants who are wholly unaware of the pedagogical challenges that their new roles will present (Zeichner, 2002). These former classroom teachers technically become teacher educators as soon as they accept their university appointments. However, as a point of caution, Bullough (2005) claimed, “…simply declaring teachers to be teacher educators or mentors, as is so often done, and occasionally meeting with them on campus to discuss problems and programs does very little to improve the situation” (p. 144).

It would appear that the actual transition from classroom teacher to teacher educator is considerably more involved than generally assumed. Murray and Male (2005) claimed, “This is a transition that entails the learning of new social mores as a teacher educator and the creation of a new professional identity” (p. 126). Along these lines, Dinkelman, Margolis, and Sikkenga (in press) claimed that, “Developing an identity and practices in teacher education is best understood as a process of becoming” (p. 1). This study was undertaken with the desire to better understand and subsequently to inform the process of becoming a teacher educator.

RESEARCH FRAME
The process of how one becomes a teacher educator remains a relatively unexamined question (see Korthagen, Loughran, & Lunenberg, 2005; Russell & Korthagen, 1995; Zeichner, 2005). Although there is no grand theory that I am aware of to explain this transition, I operated from a particular micro theory, situated within an interpretive paradigm, in that I recognized teacher education as a learning problem as opposed to a technical training problem (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

According to Cochran-Smith (2004), the notion of teacher education as a learning problem rests on three main ideas:

…teacher education occurs in the context of inquiry communities wherein everybody is a learner and a researcher; inquiry is an intellectual and political stance rather than a project or time-bounded activity; and, as part of an inquiry stance, teacher research is a way to generate local knowledge of practice that is contextualized, cultural, and critical. (p. 12)

This perspective is based on the premise that “teaching itself is an intellectual, cultural, and contextually local activity rather than one that is primarily technical, neutral in terms of values and perspectives, and universal in terms of causes and effects” (p. 2).

Understood in this light, there is not necessarily a single right way to teach that will lead to desirable outcomes for everyone involved in the process. Instead, educators must decide and act upon their pedagogical decisions...
For my study, perhaps the most significant implication of viewing teacher education as a learning problem was that I had to constantly remember to look inward at myself and my own practice in order to discern the role that I played in creating and maintaining the difficulties that I identified as I forged a distinct pedagogy for my university-based work. As Dinkelman (2004) noted in a reflection on his own work as a teacher educator, “Framed in this way, the challenges of helping new teachers develop their rationales are as much my own learning problems as theirs” (p. 15). This understanding of teacher education lends credence to the notion that assuming the identity and role of teacher educator is a process of becoming that must regularly be negotiated.

METHODS
Since I was interested in how I would perceive my transition from classroom teacher to teacher educator, self-study seemed like an appropriate mode of inquiry for me to make sense of that experience. Self-study seeks to increase understanding of “oneself, teaching; learning; and the development of knowledge about these” (Loughran, 2004, p. 9). While the specific methods used in self-study may vary, “The common element is the reflective, critical examination of the self’s involvement both in aspects of the study and in the phenomenon under study” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 240).

I decided to engage in such critical reflection through regular journaling. My plan was to write an entry after every class, student teacher observation, university supervisor meeting, and any other event that seemed significant to me during the course of the academic year. In this regard, I intended to use “writing as a method of inquiry” to learn more about myself and my research topic (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). According to LaBoskey (2004), my approach had an additional benefit in that “Personal history/autobiography in its various forms including journaling recognizes and therefore allows for the inclusion of the emotional in the process of teacher development; the whole of the individual is thereby incorporated and addressed, as it should be” (p. 836).

Summarily, I did manage to follow through with my stated course of action as I juggled a schedule that included six graduate classes and over fifty observations with fourteen student teachers. The journal entries were intended to address the question of how I was changing, if at all, as I became a teacher educator. Some of my entries explicitly attempted to answer this question; however, most indirectly touched on it by way of me simply expressing the difficulties that I was experiencing.

Data analysis formally took place in the summer of 2005, although I maintain that I informally analyzed data throughout the study as I regularly reflected upon and wrote about my experiences. In any case, after reading through my journal entries, I ascertained that many of my responses expressed confusion and/or frustration regarding what I was reading, learning about, and experiencing first hand with my student teachers. Upon closer examination and subsequent readings of the data, I discovered that the confusion and frustration that I expressed was usually related to pedagogical tensions and the resistance that I felt as I was confronted with new obstacles and challenges in my own thinking and in my work with student teachers.

Using a basic coding scheme, I initially attempted to situate relevant journal entries into one of two categories based on the perceived source of resistance (i.e., internal or external). These categories proved too simple for my data as some of my feelings of resistance seemed to properly fit into both categories, while others did not seem to fit into either category. After reevaluating relevant journal entries, I settled on more nuanced categories that seemed to more accurately capture and convey the primary difficulties that I experienced as I was compelled to forge a new teacher educator pedagogy. Sub-themes emerged from within these core categories and helped to fill in the overarching narrative.

FINDINGS
The broad guidelines that I established regarding what to write about in my journal initially made data analysis a complicated affair. However, in the end, I feel that the broad nature of my responses helped me to recognize a larger number of difficulties that I had confronted over the year than I would have if I had only responded to more structured and focused sets of questions. These perceived difficulties included challenges establishing my professional identity as a teacher educator, navigating the ambiguous role of teacher educator as both an advocate and evaluator, and dealing with external sources of resistance.

Establishing a professional identity as a teacher educator
Lacking any kind of formal training in teacher education, I initially invoked my identity as a classroom teacher to guide me in my new role as a supervisor of student teachers. Unfortunately, my white middle-class upbringing and monocultural schooling experience had compelled me to uncritically embrace a banking model of education (see Freire, 1970/1993). As such, in my new role as a teacher educator, I came to assume that I was supposed to be the expert over my student teachers and that it was my responsibility to deposit appropriate information into their minds regarding how to effectively teach. The possibility that my views of effective teaching might be flawed never seemed to enter my consciousness.

Such a strong affiliation with my classroom teacher identity also caused feelings of internal resistance to changing my pedagogical beliefs. These feelings persisted even after I recognized that the beliefs that I had

within a matrix of competing and constantly changing tensions. This view defies convention in that it calls for more fluid understandings of what it means to be a teacher educator, of what it means to do teacher education, and of how to properly conceptualize and conduct research.
embraced as a classroom teacher were not necessarily suitable for my new goals as a teacher educator. In my mind, this resistance can best be thought of in terms of fear. I resisted changing the pedagogical beliefs that I embraced as a classroom teacher because I was afraid of discrediting my former work in the classroom and because I was afraid of selling-out to higher education.

Despite these feelings of resistance, I was eventually compelled to more critically evaluate my own practice and subsequently to begin slowly changing my pedagogical beliefs. While it is difficult to pinpoint what exactly provoked these changes, I believe that I can identify two rather broad factors. First, my observations and conferences with student teachers led to cognitive dissonance and self-reflection regarding the efficacy of my prior work. Second, my coursework and discussions with peers challenged my larger belief systems and subsequently my views on the purpose of teaching social studies.

Owing to some combination of these experiences, I began to rethink my professional identity. While it is not the intent of this paper to detail all of the ways in which my views changed, let me just state that I now call many more things into question as they relate to the purpose of my work. Perhaps most importantly, I recognize that the place where I am at now in terms of my understanding is not an endpoint.

Navigating the ambiguous role of teacher educator

Another major source of difficulty that I encountered involved how to navigate my role as both an advocate and evaluator for my student teachers. While on the surface this tension may not appear different from the role played by classroom teachers, I maintain that there are circumstances unique to teacher education that make such a balancing act especially difficult to achieve.

One of the most difficult circumstances of teacher education for me to manage was the limited interaction and familiarity that I had with my student teachers. Such unfavorable conditions posed significant challenges to establishing any kind of mutual understanding, thereby making it difficult for me to assess when they were feeling challenged. This lack of clarity made it nearly impossible for me to know when it was appropriate to support and when it was appropriate to be more evaluative. In fact, the mere presence of an evaluative function further complicated the problem of establishing mutual understanding by hindering open and honest communication.

Additionally, while the same might not hold true for every former classroom teacher making the transition to teacher educator, some of my difficulty in effectively serving as advocate and evaluator for my student teachers was related to my own evolving expectations. Due to my experiences over the course of the year, I had realigned myself ideologically with the position of teaching social studies for social transformation (see Stanley, 2005). Given this ideological shift, I often found it difficult to support my student teachers who were interested, at least implicitly, in transmitting the existing social order. Even if I was able to move beyond my ideological beliefs to provide all of my student teachers with the support that they needed, there was still always the troubling question of assessment. I was oftentimes left pondering the question, “But how good is good enough?”

Dealing with external sources of resistance

Finally, I experienced difficulties forging my teacher educator pedagogy due to a number of factors that I refer to as external sources of resistance. These external sources of resistance manifest themselves primarily in the form of the belief systems of student teachers as well as in the norms of the public school system.

As far as the belief systems of my student teachers, most with whom I have worked have possessed backgrounds similar to my own: the kind of privileged existences that make it easy to be wholly uncritical and content with the status quo. As such, many of my student teachers seemed to want to teach in the same traditional ways they were taught, even when such methods contradicted their expressed goals. As a teacher educator, I have learned that the belief systems of student teachers always play a role and therefore must always be considered when attempting to develop and/or implement pedagogy.

The norms of the public school system also represented a source of resistance with regard to the evolution of my pedagogical beliefs as a teacher educator. While the norms of the public school system refer to a whole host of constraining traditions and rituals, my experience mostly focused on the challenges of developing a teacher educator pedagogy given the presence of standardization, and more specifically, the actual content standards themselves. As an example, consider that most of my student teachers mention admirable goals that they want to accomplish as teacher: critical thinking, social justice, historical consciousness, and so on. However, these goals rarely get translated into practice as the student teachers succumb to the pressures associated with the norms of the public school system. Therefore, a significant part of establishing my teacher educator pedagogy involved considering how to best negotiate these external sources of resistance.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the primary difficulties that I encountered as I transitioned from classroom teacher to teacher educator. These findings contribute to understanding the challenges that new teacher educators may face as they are compelled to modify their existing classroom teacher pedagogies to suit their new positions. The mere presence of such challenges refutes the “assumption that educating teachers is something that does not require any additional preparation and that if one is a good teacher of elementary or secondary students, this expertise will automatically carry over to one’s work with novice teachers” (Zeichner, 2005, p. 118).

My experience indicates that the process of becoming a teacher educator is far more complex than typically
acknowledged as it involves modifications to identity as well as to pedagogy. While there are certain similarities between the work of teachers and teacher educators, there are also differences that must not be ignored. By bringing to light some of these differences, this study reinforces the claim that teacher education:

...demands skills, expertise and knowledge that cannot simply be taken for granted. Rather there is a need for such skills, expertise and knowledge to be carefully examined, articulated and communicated so that the significance of the role of the teacher educator might be more appropriately highlighted and understood within the profession. (Korthagen, Loughran, & Lunenberg, 2005, p. 107)

By more fully informing what occurs as an individual becomes a teacher educator, it is my hope that this study suggests avenues for future research to consider. It would seem that only by understanding the challenges involved in such a transition can we begin to seriously consider how novice teacher educators should be being inducted into their new roles. It is time to stop taking for granted the skills, expertise, and knowledge required to do teacher education.

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INTRODUCTION
During Fall 2005, four public school teachers and three college faculty members came together in a writers’ group to reflect upon, write about and analyze the beginnings of a school/college collaboration project of which we all were a part. The group had hopes of furthering our learning about our collaboration effort and discovering how we could use that learning to help us enrich and deepen our future collaboration work. We chose to use self-study research as a way to help us with this process, and we found the strength of self-study research was that it forced us to see the complexities, layers, nuances, and multiple perspectives of our actions and thinking. We also believe that sharing with others the results of this richly contextual and professional inquiry will be an important component to our endeavors (Hamilton, 2005).

CONTEXT
Albion is a city of approximately 9,000 residents located in Michigan. The schools, representative of the city’s demographics, are approximately 50% students of color. Because of economic problems and state and federal budget changes, the city of Albion has encountered financial burdens that severely affect the Albion Public Schools (APS); 65% of the present school population qualifies for free or reduced lunch programs. State results show the middle school has failed to make annual yearly progress in several areas. In many ways, the Albion community and school system mirror the issues and needs of large, economically struggling urban areas.

Situated within the city is Albion College (AC), a private, residential, liberal arts college with 1,867 undergraduate students, most of who come from middle- to upper middle-class white families. During the last five years, the teacher education program has been completely re-envisioned with college-wide input and support. The new program places a premium on helping prospective teachers learn to teach all children, regardless of background and needs—a key ingredient in helping all students succeed in school (Delpit, 1995; Zeichner, Grant, Gay, Gillette, Valli & Villegas, 1998). Thus, APS provides an excellent educational setting and opportunity for these prospective teachers. Each institution has a unique set of strengths, resources, and needs from which the other benefits.

Much is written about what constitutes an effective collaboration (e.g. Hug & Moller, 2005; Lasley, Matczynski & Williams, 1992; Smith, 1992; Rasch & Finch, 1996; Ridley, Hurwitz, Hackett & Miller, 2005) and how difficult partnerships are to establish and continue (e.g. Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust & Shulman, 2005; Solomon, 2000; Zimpher & Howey, 2005). Because this specific collaboration is taking place between a small, heterogeneous school district and a small, homogeneous college, we have the opportunity to examine carefully all dimensions of the collaboration including personal, relational, curricular, and political ramifications of the work.

This self-study focuses on the beginning of an intentional collaboration project initiated to help create parts of the new teacher education program. The project, in its first year, involves AC faculty from within and outside the teacher education program and APS teachers. This group of eighteen spent a week together during June 2005 (1) creating a common vision of what collaboration between the school district and education program could and should be, (2) developing a coherent and developmentally appropriate set of field experiences, and (3) beginning to create an integrated, intensive, three-week junior year experience (the Maymester) to take place after the college’s spring semester and before the end of the public school year.

Our immediate goal is to understand our initial interactions more thoroughly, which in turn will strengthen our group functioning and improve future collaboration efforts. We present this research in order to invite others to add new perspectives to our analysis.

METHOD
During the fall, one AC faculty member invited collaboration team members to establish a self-study writers’ group. Although many people wanted to be involved, scheduling conflicts, and previous time commitments allowed just four public school teachers (one elementary,
One middle school, a high school special needs teacher and a secondary English teacher) and three college faculty/staff members (a senior faculty member, a second year faculty member, and a former elementary school teacher and principal who works as college-school liaison) to form the writers’ group. The purpose of this group is to create, gather, and analyze written reflections regarding the development of the collaboration project. In particular, we are interested in using what we are learning to inform our next workshop (in June 2006), which will include many new AC faculty members and APS teachers.

We began our writing when Deborah sent out a list of writing prompts—items relating to expectations, feelings, growth, roles, problems—to help stimulate peoples’ reflections. The group initially met in January 2006. The public school teachers still had many questions and some brought pages of reflections while others brought no written materials, still not certain about what to write.

During that meeting, participants shared what they considered most important to them about the collaboration effort and their reflections. We chose three themes for further work: (1) how two entities became one, (2) the balance between dreaming and accomplishments in the collaboration effort, and (3) the challenges to sustainability. After participants wrote further on each of these topics, we paired up to take responsibility for analyzing each of these themes. Tom Russell learned in his self-study with Sandy Schuck (Schuck & Russell, 2005) that, “Having a critical friend forced me to maintain a reflective journal and document my weekly experiences in teaching, even when I was tired and could easily have postponed my writing” (p.111). Although we did not play the same type of critical friend role that Schuck and Russell examined in their study, knowing others were writing and needed our pieces was key for each of us for why we made time to write down our feelings, reflections and analysis.

THE THEMES

Two Entities into One

We quickly identified this theme and named it as Two Entities into One based on the overwhelming consensus among the writers that our collaboration group had achieved a unique unity of purpose. That unity was empowering and personally satisfying, and we all agreed to write more about it. In our continued writing, we found ourselves admitting to personal doubts and insecurities, which occupied many of our minds on the first morning. The divisions between groups seemed, to some, insurmountable. It is difficult to trust other when one sees little common ground.

Melissa: I walked into the collaboration feeling like an outsider, barely a member of the AC community, after less than one year there, and certainly not very entrenched/useful as a member of the general Albion community, and even less central/knowledgeable to the APS community. I envied those who were so able to network...I brought youth...and inexperience...and I wondered if my input would be valuable and/or valued.

Erica: Before meeting the rest of the Collaboration group, I had to think about myself and what I could bring to a new group and what would stop me from participating. This was a big jump for me to take. I am not usually a person who will speak up much to those who are older (wiser). I don’t think my ideas are as good. I had to look deep within myself and push myself to speak up and share.

Mae Ola: The participants of each organization AC and APS should realize that we are on even playing fields. Everyone would have the same worth and commitment. A major concern was could we bridge the communication gap that has been perceived for many years. Could we actually become one?

Such feelings are not unusual. Craig (2004) describes the deep and apparently systemic societal divisions between university and public school faculty. Yet, as we will see, we apparently overcame this obstacle.

One of the activities we did in our initial workshop was to outline strengths, resources, vulnerabilities, and needs of our individual settings. The collaboration separated into various territorial groups: APS teachers divided by building, AC faculty split into education and non-education groups. We shared our strengths and resources but also our constraints—personnel, finances, space, time, institutional politics, tenure and reward systems, contracts and unions—in a very public way. Though the original objective of this task was to match needs and resources, it also served as a way for us to articulate the sources of some of our deepest reservations.

In reflection, this activity may have played a crucial role in allowing people to showcase their limitations, and then let go of them. In the words of Stephens and Boldt (2004), we were safe to move beyond the level of rhetoric and get to reality and even intimacy. Old territorial divisions seemed to melt for a time, and we found ourselves speaking for each others’ rights and needs.

Michele: I appreciated the respect and encouragement that all offered to each other. This strengthened my sense of what I was able to offer and gave me the feeling that I could take risks to better myself and the group. I was able to more fully appreciate people’s abilities, rather than categorizing as AC or APS.

Carmelia: By the end of our five-day workshop we were united as a group, bonded together and self motivated that we could dream. We were ready to share the dream with our staff, united to make a difference in the way we educate our students to meet challenges of our changing society.
Dreaming and Accomplishing

The second, and perhaps, strongest theme that emerged from our writing was centered on the power of dreaming and how that needs to be balanced by accomplishment.

Dreaming was new for some of us. As one member recalled, After the idea of dreaming was presented, the members of the new collaboration sat quietly, then there was a voice from out of the silence, “I do not know how to dream.” There was then a buzz of conversations, questioning his ability to dream. Finally, another quiet voice, “I will help him.” This was the collaboration team’s first accomplishment, helping a team member learn how to dream.

Michele: Dream!! Deborah invited us to “dream.” Immediately the questions were hurled at her…”How much money, how many, what is the time line, what limiting…” Her reply and repeated invitation was, “just Dream!” Deborah earned her wings with me that day. To be allowed limitless dreaming was exhilarating.

Ruth: I appreciated the fact that the collaboration project encouraged us all to dream and think Big!

The task of dreaming seemed to help connect us to Vito Perrone’s (1991) idea of “larger purposes” (p. 1) because our dreaming used the intellectual and imaginative rather than technical skills. If we want our schools to be more attentive to moral and intellectual directions than technical, we need to bring our imagination and creativity to our work at hand. We need to be guided by our dreams, our larger purposes, rather than consumed by just getting through the days and weeks.

Even as we shared the excitement and productivity of dreaming, people also had their concerns and worries about spending time in this way. Some of these concerns were grounded in logistics and finances, and others about the complexities involved in the reality of accomplishing our shared tasks and goals.

Mae Ola: Amidst all of the excitement and brainstorming, the unpleasant issue of financial stability was still circulating. We would not be able to accomplish anything without funds. What are our sources?

Ruth: I am concerned that we don’t try to do too much too soon….It is important that we dream, but that we keep things manageable. I don’t want to say that we shouldn’t dream big, but we need to remember that when we work with human beings, and not models on a chart, unexpected problems can develop….I share the dream, but I wonder about the reality.

Toward the end of the workshop, people chose to work in one of two sub-groups: developing the field experiences or beginning the creation process for the Maymester experience. At that point accomplishments started to become more central to the work, with people balancing dreaming with creating concrete pieces of the program.

Michele: When we dreamed the possibilities seem endless. When we planned, dreams took form….Implementation of our dream, one step at a time, requires grounded thought. We will need to approach this with patience, an open mind, respect for others, and a focus on our goal(s).

Erica: I believe, due to everyone believing in one another’s dreams, we were able to come up with a plan and a logical one at that….From our big dreaming and into our dreams and realities of our subgroups we are on a great path toward a successful teaching program…During the workshop it was obvious that dreaming, as an activity and part of the ethos of the week, was a central and important factor in the success of the week and development of the team. Through the reflections of the writers’ group and subsequenceanalysis of that writing, the importance and role of dreaming to our collaboration work became clearer. Dreaming was a shared experience that helped the two entities become one and brought energy and creativity to the tasks the group tackled. People also needed dreaming to be balanced with accomplishments. What we don’t know is how exactly to find that balance and what role dreaming could/should play as we continue our work.

Sustainability

Sustainability was an area of concern mentioned by all members in our collaboration group. Examinations of the writings revealed that sustainability was addressed at the individual, group, and institutional levels.

Individual sustainability issues were focused around commitment, workload, and time. During the workshop, participants were able to focus almost wholly on the collaboration effort. When schools resumed in the fall, all involved felt time to work on the collaboration was difficult to find.

Ruth: I did not understand that there would be frequent meetings and responsibilities during the school year. Meeting dates pop up, and I feel like I have little input into the schedule. Evening meeting times particularly cut into my personal schedule as I try to be at work by seven in the morning. This is difficult for me, as I feel committed to the collaboration; however, my primary job is as a public school teacher.
Michele: Meetings are a hardship when they are in addition to your already full workload and commitment to family/community activities.

Institutional concerns surrounding sustainability were identified as commitment, time, and equity. Commitment from the institutions’ administrators and boards—both current and future, as political and economic shakeups ensued—were viewed as important to the collaboration’s success. Again, time constraints were present as school and college schedules conflicted, which restricted meeting times. But this time, the writers also addressed concerns about equity, particularly financial issues, between the schools and college.

Mae Ola: When we looked at the financial aspect of the collaboration, we had to discuss what would happen if we did not have grant funding. As two entities coming together as one, would both parties want to support the grant-writing component or will that be totally the responsibility of Albion College (the entity that formulated the idea of the collaboration)?

Deborah: Big Picture sustainability—I. Where is the Money? We need money for the Maymester workshops— for every June. Whose job is that—to find the money? How to make it institutionalized?

Ruth: Albion Public Schools is struggling for survival with a tight budget, declining enrollment, and major problems with the public’s perception of the school system.

When reflecting on the collaboration team, the writers named mission and goals, application of theory, and trust as sustainability topics. The initial workshop provided a vital step in creating an environment of trust in which we could work together. Maintaining the closeness between members proved to be a challenge once we returned to our full time responsibilities in the fall. The ability to turn ideas and theories into a functioning and successful partnership will require much research, review, reflection, and adjustment.

Melissa: Perhaps by revealing in such a public way my inexperience and desires to understand the social and political milieu better, I can find the strength to continue asking questions and seeking guidance from those who have developed the wisdom I seek. That would certainly be a worthwhile outcome for me!

Carmelina: The collaboration must continually research similar projects that sought to build a partnership between the colleges, public schools and communities. If we plan to sustain the finished project, we must be constantly reviewing and adjusting those elements which would cause the project to fail.

The process of self-study has caused us to face these issues and own them. Instead of wishing the naysayers would not speak, fearing they would drag the collaboration down, our self-study stance has encouraged us to look at the issues, the hard places, and find the places of learning within them. By publicly stating our thoughts and concerns, we have made the first steps in recognizing what we need to do to sustain our work. John Loughran (2005) states that “The challenge of self-study is for teacher educators to look into their practice with new eyes so that their understandings of teaching and learning become more meaningful and applicable in their own practice” (p. 13). Teaching and learning are happening within our collaboration project and, with our new shared eyes, we are exploring ways to bring our understandings into our next stages of work together.

Conclusion
We have been learning from each other and also want to have others see what we are writing and thinking in this initial stage of research and give us their critical response. “Checking data and interpretations with others is crucial to self-study. It is through the involvement of others that data and interpretations can be viewed from perspectives other than one’s own and therefore be scrutinized and professionally challenged.” (Loughran & Northfield, 1998, p. 12) We seek that outside professional support and critique to help us understand more clearly what we are learning and how we need to improve our collaboration projects. To that end, we presented about our work at the Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education annual meeting at the end of January and look forward to more conversations at the Castle Conference in July 2006.

References


Boundless Possibilities: How Online Communication Prompted Self-Study for Novice Teachers and their Experienced Professor

CONTEXT
One of my former English education students, Toni, called recently to remind me of a night in July 2004 that stands out in her memory: my students and I were having a farewell night-on-the-town to celebrate. I was taking a leave of absence from the university to return to high school teaching for a year while they were about to begin their first paid jobs as high school teachers. After dinner together, we proceeded to a neighborhood pub where we sat around the table, happily singing along to Elton John’s Tiny Dancer. This recollection is important because it stands in stark contrast to the place many in our small community are today. Sadly, out of our group of thirteen, only five are working in the same position where they began (one is considering leaving the profession). Three changed schools during or after the first year; one has held five interim positions; three left teaching altogether (Toni being one of them); and, dissatisfied, I left my return to teaching five months early.

My return to the secondary English classroom really began with questions regarding my professor identity. Was this what I wanted to do? Was this what I was best at doing? Where was I needed and wanted more? Where would I make the most impact? Another reason for going back was to address the concerns of my teacher candidates (a point raised by Myers, 2002). Was I current with what was occurring in schools? Was I willing to step beyond my university supervisor role where I commented on novice teachers’ practice? Did I still have credibility with teacher education students? Although I did not know it at the time, going back to the classroom began my introduction to self-study.

This self-study emerged from an e-mail support group that began in July 2004 shortly after our farewell dinner. I approached the new teachers with the idea for a support group after seeing how an online discussion board provided much needed psychological support and a sense of community during their internships. Likewise, I wanted to keep in touch with them and continue the relationships begun in 2003 when I was their professor and internship supervisor. Knowing that my former preservice teachers were nervous about starting a new job, the online support group seemed a proactive measure to combat the normal feelings of anxiety, stress, and isolation that new teachers face (Andrews & Martin, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2003).

PURPOSE
What I hope to convey is how creating and becoming a member of an e-mail support group prompted self-study among my students and me. While I am the sole presenter, this work has been a collaborative effort. As such, my aim is to use excerpts from our e-mail exchanges to highlight specific cases where self-study particularly impacted our reflection, growth, and improvement. Two significant questions guided this self-study: How could self-study improve novice teachers’ experience and practice? What could I learn from studying my return to high school teaching to make me a better teacher educator?

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE
E-mail, chat rooms, and discussion boards are also referred to as computer-mediated communication (CMC), which has been shown to provide beginning teachers with emotional and professional support (DeWert, Babinski, & Jones, 2003), a place to make connections (Romiszowski & Ravitz, 1997), deeper understandings of teaching and learning (Ferdig & Roehler, 2003-2004), and practice with collaborative reflection (Nicholson & Bond, 2003). The online setting provides a place for teachers to both learn about their practice and construct teaching selves (Emig, 1977; Murray, 1996). Furthermore, narratives created through their stories give them a means to explore their professional lives for both analytical and developmental purposes—a way to make sense of new information and experiences (Singer & Zeni, 2004). This shared space additionally prompted my interest in self-study.

Self-study is “the focal point for studying the intersection between theory and practice” (Russell, 2002a, p. 9) and is research that puts us in touch with ourselves, our actions, and how we transform in order for us to grow as we learn to teach (Bass, Anderson-Patton, & Allender, 2002). As Bullough and Pinnegar assert, the purpose of
self-study research is “to provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than confirm and settle” (2001, p. 20). Myers (2002) notes, however, that teacher educators study the work of others but rarely study themselves. “Unless teacher educators engage in critical reflection and ongoing discovery, they stay trapped in unexamined judgments, interpretations, assumptions and expectations and, sadly, their students remain there as well” (Crafton & Smolin, 2004, pp.76-77). Going back to the high school classroom, and having membership in a community of new teachers, forced me to study my practices as a teacher educator. The e-mail transcripts created over the course of the 2004-2005 school year provided permanent artifacts for each of us to go back to and study. Because artifacts can be in existence before self-study begins (Allender & Manke, 2004), this is one tremendous benefit of computer-mediated communication—it can be permanently stored, studied, and re-studied year after year.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

The e-mails became a permanent record of events, and both the novice teachers and I were able to study them and adjust our teaching practices and beliefs. Two broad themes emerged from our self-study: improving instructional practice and moving beyond assumptions. These, in turn, have permanently altered and re-shaped the way I teach preservice teachers and my own beliefs about teaching. The e-mail excerpts and reflections from me and two of the teachers, Lane and Jennifer, illustrate the themes.

**Improving instructional practice**

From studying their frustrations, it seems the one area where I prepared them most was teaching English; where I did not do so well was general pedagogy. Lane struggled with one issue—differentiating her instruction—not within one class but among class periods, feeling that if she did so, she was not being fair to all students. Jennifer, on the other hand, was concerned with managing her classroom and discipline.

> My only question is, “Is it ok to be a different teacher with different classes? Do all classes deserve the same from me?” I feel like I can be the teacher I want to be with my honors class, because I know they can handle the freedom. But I have earned the reputation of the meanest teacher in school from my standard classes, which I kind of consider to be positive and negative. I just don’t put up with the crap I did last year, and maybe I feel like I can be like that now because I don’t have the label of “intern.” But at the same time, I feel if I let my guard down with these other classes, they are going to walk all over me, yet I feel like a better teacher with my honors classes because I can be myself. (Lane, September 2004)

I really found myself straddling the line between the kind of teacher I wanted to be and the kind of teacher particular classes needed me to be. For some reason, I always thought that if I was the teacher that I wanted to be that it would be enough. I’ve seen that it is not, and that you need to adjust your patterns and habits for whatever works best for the dynamic of students that you have. It sounds very simplistic, but the actuality of modifying who you are is quite scary and very unsatisfying at first until you begin to see it working. (Lane, March 2005)

> I had a great rapport with my students last year. This year I’m dealing with a new socio-economic (rich and poor kids) and more diverse school. I think I had some kind of epiphany the other day. I sat down and completely reworked my previous ideas of classroom management. I think my new system will make things seem more cohesive in the classroom. I don’t think I will [feel] like I am “winging it” like I did last year. Anyway, those are some brief thoughts on the beginning of this year. (Jennifer, August 2004)

Ironically, I have had this same epiphany every day this year! I changed and tweaked my classroom management every day. As interns, we complained about the lack of classroom management taught, but I have come to realize that experience is truly the only way to learn this things. Our first few years will be difficult because we have to grow into being teachers – it is not something given or taught to us. (Jennifer, March 2005)

METHOD

I selected qualitative case study (Merriam, 1988) as the most appropriate way to complete this self-study. Case study is a research strategy that investigates a current phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly apparent (Yin, 2002). Naturalistic research of this type emphasizes a focus on meaning in context and is an “ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomenon” (Merriam, 1988, p. 2).

Data analyzed in this self-study include over 600 e-mail exchanges written between August 2004 to May 2005 among the thirteen of us, and follow-up e-mails and reflections with selected teachers (Fall 2005 and Winter 2006). As a participant in the support group, during the course of the year I would read the e-mails, and pose questions (e.g., Did I prepare you well enough for teaching? What could I have done differently?) to the group in order to study my own practice and beliefs. These e-mails became the basis for follow-up dialogue with participants and later reflective conversations with a colleague at another university.

Stake claims that naturalistic generalizations can be made from qualitative case study research. These “are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience [that are] so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves” (1995, p. 85). To encourage this type of generalization, I have included excerpts of the e-mails so that readers can decide the relevance to their own teaching environments.
The narratives and reflections produced encouraged me to study and analyze the past and also offered new approaches for teaching my methods courses. While my students told me that I was more practical than theoretical, which I take as a compliment, returning to the high school has added additional aspects to my teaching in order to assist them in making a more successful transition from student to teacher. For example, because students enter the program with an English degree (or enough hours for one), perhaps it is more important to focus on general aspects of teaching — organizing and differentiating instruction, classroom management, and accommodations for students — than how to teach high school students to write a poem. This past fall, a move to another university offered me the opportunity to teach an undergraduate Introduction to Secondary Schools course. I use my recent high school teaching experience in each class session. My hope is that by being honest about what occurred, I will prevent them from having some of the same difficulties. Here also is where the impacts of my self-study work are seen. First, rather than assigning a multitude of small assignments (outlined by the previous instructor), such as videotaped microteaching sessions for their peers, which were never reflected upon, a midterm examination, ten lesson plans, and so on, I implemented fewer assignments, and each incorporated reflection and self-study. For example, students videotaped the lesson they taught in their clinical placement and then wrote a five-step reflection and self-study of the experience. Second, I use more real-life assignments (e.g., community mapping, writing case studies) — each using their clinical hours in the schools as the basis.

**Moving beyond assumptions**
In the following e-mail excerpt and reflection, Jennifer talks about her issues with a particular group of students which partly stemmed from her initial negative impressions of the students. She later realized that by taking the time to get to know them, they were the opposite.

*My second period students can honestly be described as Hell Raisers. They are all emotionally disturbed, but since only 6 of them have learning disabilities, it is not considered an inclusion class. I’m sure they are going to be the death of me! I hope to wrangle them into submission - at least somewhat - very soon. Any ideas about dealing with tried and true “gangsta’s” and “wangsta’s”? ARGGGGGG! Frustration levels are up right now!* (Jennifer, August 2004)

*These kids are teaching me their “ways” so I can get where they are coming from. A lot are actually doing fairly well in my class and are working hard. I think too many teachers are giving up on students, or perhaps I’m still in the naïve stage of teaching. I have found that a lot of previously unmotivated students can do well.* (Jennifer, March 2005)

Unfortunately, unlike Jennifer’s situation, mine never improved. My students were truly gangsters, complete with weekend gang fights involving entire neighborhoods, and beliefs (such as bullying others, including grown adults) that could not be altered. Although my original intention was to teach for one year, I left the position in December 2004 and returned to the university. Going back to the high school classroom and, in essence, failing, taught me more than I ever imagined. This negative experience showed me the reality of some schools and what teacher education needs to do to help preservice teachers be ready for anything and everything they might encounter. New teachers often believe that they will save the world, and many martyr themselves. For what cause?

*Until I resigned, I didn’t necessarily challenge the negative assumptions about quitting. However, I learned that leaving a situation is not the same as quitting — and this is a message we have a responsibility to share with novice teachers, or any others, who feel like they are drowning in their jobs, a point I shared in an e-mail to the group.*

*I think that is going to be my mission when I return to higher education. Yes, I already know that I will do that unless something miraculous happens or I myself go to a school like Bishop or Franklin. I am just too old, and too entrenched in wanting to [do] research, to stay in a low level, remedial classroom for the rest of my life.* (Lisa, September 2004)

*At that point the decision had been made: I would never do this job in this kind of school. No more need to save the world. That would be someone else’s mission. I realized I did not have to do that. I don’t know why it seemed so important. What that school taught me is that there are a lot of people who don’t want to be saved, and you can’t make them.* (Lisa, March 2005)

Interestingly, after announcing my decision to leave the high school and return to university teaching, some of the teachers (like Lane) seemed to come to terms with their decisions, whether it was to remain in their present positions, change schools, or leave the profession altogether. However, even more important is that through self-study, the teachers were able to accept their choices, move on, and be better at whatever it is they decided to do in with their lives.

*I think the hardest part has been coming to the realization that I am not a kid anymore - in fact, I’m not even that half-breed kid/adult anymore. I am a working person who has a mortgage and bills and who goes to bed at 9 every night, which usually I define as [being] an adult. At least last year we were reminded every Monday night that we were, in fact, still students. We got to live the double life; now it seems as if I have fought this adult/teacher creature tooth and nail. Through many weekends in my classroom, leaving school at 8 p.m., and many, many bottles of wine, I feel as if I am slowly coming to terms with acceptance with the life I chose for myself, a truth that I do have to revere every time I complain about the state of chaos, confusion, and frustration in my life.* (Lane, November 2004)
CONCLUSION
“Often it is challenging enough to look critically at one’s own teaching practices. While the obvious purpose of self-study is improvement, it is even more challenging to make changes and seek evidence that the changes did indeed represent improvement” (Russell, 2002a, pp. 4-5). Similar to Schuck and Segal (2002), I found that graduates were unprepared for the tensions between school realities and their novice ideals which created frustration. Since this self-study, I changed the content of my courses to include information concerning the culture and politics of schooling, additional lessons regarding classroom management and discipline, and assignments that utilize self-study. However, and most importantly, it was through my experiencing and negotiating these same difficulties that I was and am able to study my own practices and be a better teacher educator. Self-study has become the lens through which I now design and teach my courses. I tell students about the good and the bad, what might work and what might not, and that it is okay to decide that teaching is not the career for them. For my last one. The most important part of this actualization is that I saw that this is what I had chosen for myself; it didn’t just happen to me, and I needed to not only accept that, but take responsibility for it. I still love that I can e-mail my friends from the internship for help on assignments and projects, and I know they will provide me with cool ideas of which I would never dream. (Lane, March 2005)

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Sharing the Mirror Maze: Self-Study Community Formation

CONTEXT
Here we discuss the impact that writing a book on teacher education self-studies had on a group of Australian teacher educators. The purpose of the paper is to identify and analyse the ways in which this activity contributed to the growth of our self-study community. We examine the way that this process strengthened the group’s reflective and supportive activities.

We began with a seminar series of working papers in which interested staff members presented their proposed chapters reporting research on teacher education and self-study. The book, *Teacher Learning and Development: The Mirror Maze* (Aubusson & Schuck, 2006), was edited by this paper’s authors. Chapter authors were mainly from our Teacher Learning and Development Research Group (TLD). Most contributors presented seminars to interested faculty members and students. TLD had existed as a research group for two years. It was a loose community with a history of collaboration in teacher learning research, with a program of regular seminars, conferences and visiting scholars. The book was proposed to highlight and share the group expertise. A self-study focus emerged from early discussions within the group. A powerful outcome of this focus was a deeper understanding of how each of us constructs our professional selves. This understanding contributed to community formation.

The process of presenting seminars as the chapters developed was an interesting one in that contributors were a mix of people who had previously engaged in little explicit self-study and people for whom self-study has long been central to their practice. For most of us, the process has not left us untouched but has led to cohesion among the group, and the start of new conversations about teaching and learning. We discuss these phenomena, starting with a discussion on community and on self-study. We then describe our study and illustrate our experience with two small case studies.

Community formation
We viewed our group as a research community. Our view of such a community is informed by notions of a knowledge building community (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993), community of practice (Wenger, 1998) and community of learners (Brown, 1994) as well as the formation of teacher education learning communities elsewhere (e.g., Erickson, Farr Darling, & Clarke, 2005). These communities are not identical but an analysis of their characteristics yields features which we consider desirable if we are to a synergistic interacting entity, rather than merely a group which shares a broad interest and a sense of belonging. These features (derived from Brown, 1994; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993; Erickson, Farr Darling, & Clarke, 2005; Wenger, 1998) are:

- group identity – (manifested as) teacher educators researching practice;
- sense of belonging – as members of the TLD research group;
- sharing knowledge – through writing, collaboration, presenting, editing and conversations;
- conversation advancing understanding about phenomena of significance – clarifying issues, challenges, and research practices of importance to each of us;
- mutual respect – enhanced through deepening understanding of our professional selves;
- development of collective expertise surpassing that of individuals – presentation and feedback informing each others’ work leading to insights extending the knowledge of individuals;
- enquiry – reflexive analysis of action informed by evidence;
- a determination to improve – expedited by mutual support and knowledge exchange.

Self-study seemed to have potential not only as a project (a field of shared endeavour and end in itself) but also, through its process and intent, as a means to enhance our research community. Upon reflection and through discussions with colleagues, it has become apparent that these features of a professional research community characterised the seminar/book process and enriched our community and enhanced our work. This paper explores our personal experiences of the way in which interactions in the seminar series and production
of the book provided insights into each other’s research and the professional selves that informed the work of our community.

**Self-study in community formation**

A self-study has an aim of providing insight into the individual’s practice, but it is limited if it does not provide insights into the practices of the community. Borko (2004, p. 8) suggests that a “multifocal lens” is needed to keep both individual and community in focus. The need for self-study to be communal as well as personal is indicated from another perspective, by Berry (2004, p. 1298), who describes the difficulties of learning to be a teacher educator when it is a “private struggle.” Bullough and Pinnegar (2001, p. 15) acknowledge the importance of self in self-study but highlight the focus of self-study on the “space between self and practice engaged in.” They indicate that there is always a tension between these two elements as well as a need to negotiate carefully the balance between the self and the community of practice.

Examining our teaching through presenting seminars and writing about it has precedents in the self-study literature. Phillips and Hall (2002) suggest that writing about their beliefs, actions and knowledge helped the authors to become more aware of these areas, and encouraged them to start thinking more deeply about their work. They also suggest benefits to the university in enhancing their profile. What they do not discuss is the benefit to the community of educators that can accrue from this sharing and publishing. We focus on this aspect here.

**THE STUDY**

Of interest to us was what we, as a community, had collectively and individually learned from each others’ seminars and chapters in which we discussed what we personally had learned when we held a mirror to our practices. This study examines the process from a self-study perspective; we hold a mirror to the mirror and examine the iterations of self-images that occurred.

There were three phases to the community formation process: 1) a seminar series; 2) the writing of chapters; and 3) editorial conversations. The seminar series (one hour sessions, held fortnightly) provided feedback for authors on their developing chapters; we collectively shared and deconstructed analyses of our practices, as well as the dilemmas and challenges that we had all experienced at one stage or another. After authors had made their presentation, they modified their chapter drafts to take note of the discussion that had occurred at the presentation. They then engaged in dialogue about their chapters with us as the editors.

From the first seminar, the presentations and comments that ensued evidenced a powerful learning experience for all of us. There was a rich emotional engagement with ideas, beliefs and experiences as colleagues yielded insights of themselves through their reflections on their work. Recognising the significance of what was happening, we began this self-study by reflecting on episodes, discussing their impact and influence with each other and then with colleagues, and noting these.

**Conversations**

As indicated above, the conversations about the chapters led to our learning about each others’ teaching and hence learning about our own. The extracts reported below reveal reflections on self and on the “space between self and practice” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15) that were not evident in early drafts but emerged after conversations with us. We also learned about community and the ways in which we could support each other in this self-study community. For many members of the community, this was their first self-study, or at least, their first open discussion with their colleagues of their (up till then) private self-studies. Furthermore, our students often attended the seminars, which added another dimension to the sharing of beliefs and practices. Consequently, many of the presenters were tentative in their presentations, or noted how confronting they found the experience of presenting their self-studies in the seminars. Presenters were exposing their inner selves in ways that are not usually done in research or teaching seminars. However, the audience at the seminars were provided with a way of getting to know their colleagues and their practices as they had not known them previously. This process continued for us, as editors, as we read through and discussed the chapters with the authors. There was reciprocity in the learning which occurred through conversations among editors and authors. We got to know the authors and their reasons for teaching in particular ways and understand the guiding principles by which they operated. Prior to the seminars and the book, understandings about beliefs, values, and principles underlying colleagues’ work were not central to community identity and knowledge sharing. Our newfound understanding allowed us to mentally compare their experiences and practices with our own, and provided us with new insights into our own practices. The process offered an openness and developed trust in our group’s work that is not easily captured in other ways. We all took risks in exposing our professional identities and found ourselves growing as we did so.

We now offer two very different examples of conversations we experienced during this process, with some insights into what we learned from them. The first is with our colleague, Jennifer, who worked with us as a special educator, the only one in a group of mainstream educators.

The teaching roots of most members of the group lie in school teaching often associated with particular curriculum fields. The paradigm shared is informed by constructivist and socio-cultural referents. It sits well with postmodern notions of evidence and research. By contrast, Jennifer is a researcher and teacher of special education. Located in special education, her paradigm is informed by a behaviourist referent and tends towards positivist notions of research and evidence.

I cannot abandon my professional identity as a special educator with a commitment to a scientific approach to education. This has created some dissonance as I would not regard self-study as a scientific approach to
the problems of teacher education. However, the questions that are addressed by a scientific approach must emerge from observations and experience. I have become comfortable with the idea of self-study and other qualitative and descriptive approaches as a source of observation and problems that could be addressed through a more rigorous approach. (Stephenson, 2006, p. 117)

From the outset, like many others, she had doubts about the research worth, reliability and validity of sharing self-study guided analyses of teaching and learning experiences with others. The process, however, was not merely informative, but transformative for us. We had long seen the surface features of the difficulties she faced in her teaching; difficulties which stemmed from the different paradigms underpinning her work compared to that of the majority of her colleagues.

By sharing our reflections on teaching we came to see the thinking that underpinned the decisions and action each of us took. We came to see the common ground and differences more clearly. This understanding built on mutual respect, which already existed for each other as colleagues, extending it to a greater regard for each others’ research and the modes of enquiry we each adopted. Having Jennifer involved in the project also meant that we were forced to justify our thinking and processes in more detail as her analysis of her thinking, indirectly, caused us to subject our own views of evidence and practice to scrutiny of an ‘unlike-minded’ researcher. Her influence came not so much through direct critique but through the expression of her own story and perceptions of the way students’ views in our teacher education courses had been so influenced that it made it difficult for students to appreciate the theoretical bases and practices of special education.

Student teachers assume that teaching strategies that engage children in interesting activities, will automatically result in student learning. … They do not seem to question this belief in the face of evidence that not all students learn from these relatively unstructured approaches. They do not see, and perhaps their lecturers outside special education, do not see the fundamental urgency which drives the outcomes-focussed approach characteristic of special education. (Stephenson, 2006, p. 124)

Her revelations in her seminar presentation and chapter pushed us to a better understanding of her position and a paradigm we had discarded and with which we no longer engaged. We recognised that while there had been no intention to exclude, the effect was that we had isolated her field of endeavour and thereby, to some extent, her professional self. At the same time, Jennifer’s discourse with others in the group similarly influenced her.

I would not claim to have written a ‘self-study’ chapter, although it is not really a ‘special education’ chapter either. The discussion around this book certainly helped me see that many of the problems or questions I had about teacher education were shared by others. Our analysis and solutions to those problems would probably be quite different, but I think I understand more about approaches to regular education, I can certainly see more commonalities than I would have recognised before as a result of the sharing and dialogue. (Stephenson, 2006, p. 129)

A second, very different conversation was held with John, a teacher educator in Asian studies. John has a deep interest in his practice, and found the process of developing the seminar and chapter were instrumental in developing his thinking about his teaching. Prior to the seminar and chapter writing, John’s deep interest in developing his teaching had largely been a private one, not shared or discussed with his colleagues. It could be said that the book provided him with a licence to write more freely about his experiences. John has commented that the presentations by others, and perhaps more particularly the conversations we held after those presentations “were very generative of new ideas and directions for the paper, as well as being a real encouragement that I was ‘on the right track’, … which gave me thoughts on a whole new direction for my chapter” (Buchanan, personal communication, February 21, 2006). Early drafts of John’s chapter drew mainly on evidence such as survey data and interviews with students, while after initial conversations with us, his interpretations and meaning-making became central.

The chapter provided a window on John’s perspectives and philosophy. We both felt privileged to have the opportunity to look through this window and both of us experienced great excitement at reading later versions of the chapter. As editors, we valued the opportunity to have wonderful conversations with him that enriched our thinking and contributed to our ideas about teaching. John’s reflections about his teaching were encapsulated in powerful ways in the chapter. For example, he proposed a set of dilemmas through a discussion of the contrast between his rhetoric and practice.

I say…
It’s neither possible nor healthy for the teacher to always be in control.
In reality…
I feel uneasy when things aren’t in my control, Even to the point of the way I set out my writing. (Buchanan, 2006, p. 137)

The set of dilemmas he posed were very powerful. Discussing them and reading his chapter gave rise to the question, “How does this apply to me and my context?” Together with other aspects of the chapter, John’s work provided us with the opportunity to delve into conversations about similarities in our thinking about teaching. The conversations were an impetus for us to think about ways to act and move forward in our own teaching. John posed a question that has occurred to many of us engaged in self-study, but has rarely been made explicit:
If I’ve been (relatively) satisfied with my teaching until now, is it because I had reached the point of being unconsciously skilled or because I was still unconsciously unskilled? The former strikes me as unlikely. In other words, am I defrauding myself in my beliefs of adequacy? What if, unlike Narcissus, I remain un subdued by my reflection when I look into the puddle? (Buchanan, 2006, p. 136)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our conversations with Jennifer had impact on our professional practice. We revisited our paradigms and recognised the importance of engaging in conversations with unlike-minded colleagues to challenge our thinking; this has led to a more explicit respect for alternative paradigms in our teaching. Our conversations with John and our reading of his chapter had a powerful effect on us. We were struck by how his work developed our thinking about our work, in a community of like-minded teacher educators. His dilemmas were our dilemmas; his voicing of them enabled fruitful discussions and has stimulated current collaborative self-study research projects.

For most of us, presenting in the seminar series was both exhilarating and threatening. There was unease about revealing our professional selves to our colleagues and students for scrutiny. However, the unease dissipated because the feedback to our stories was rich, warm, and encouraging as well as perceptive, critical and constructive.

The process was far more than one of producing a book but, through the analysis of professional self and practice, it was a means of research community building. Reworking Feiman-Nemser’s (2001) view of a professional community of teachers, we can now assert that the professional discourse among colleagues, grounded in self-study of teaching and learning, deepened our knowledge of our practice and honed our collaboration, inquiry and critical reflection.

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PURPOSE
The purpose of this paper is to explore a critical friendship that did not work to support practice in order to identify ways of strengthening such relationships that are often an important part of research using self-study of teacher education practices methodology. In doing so, I hope to facilitate professional dialogue around ways of supporting the critical friendship process in workplaces other than universities, where research is not an expected part of the workplace.

BACKGROUND
Costa and Kallick (1993) offer the following definition of a critical friend in the research process:

- a trusted friend who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers a critique of a person’s work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes the person or group is working towards. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work. (p. 50)

Often part of the self-study of teacher education practices research process involves researchers working together as critical friends to test and critique the trustworthiness of their reflections about aspects of their practice and to support a consequent reframing of that practice. Critical friendship can provide the self-study researcher with the support necessary for transformative learning about her practice as the critiquing of practice pushes reflection further to become reflexive (Bass, Anderson-Paton & Allender, 2002).

Reframing of practice can also be supported by the critical friend process due to an understanding of the practitioner’s context that assists those involved to view their respective teaching situations from a variety of perspectives, including those of colleagues and students (Loughran, 2002). This process often involves challenging individuals to make connections between what they believe and the ways in which these beliefs are translated into action in practice (Tidwell & Heston, 1998).

When I commenced my self-study as a doctoral student, I was keen to include collaboration with a work colleague to support my professional learning. I was working as a Senior Education Officer (SEO) in the Gender Equity Unit of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (DET). I was appointed to the three-year position after having worked in primary schools in NSW as a classroom teacher and as an assistant principal. My appointment as an SEO came with no support for professional learning about the position.

As a newly appointed consultant, I was troubled by the lack of professional development for my position that was provided or expected by the DET. My job description included the provision of professional development to teachers across the state to support their implementation of the DET’s gender equity policy - *Girls and boys at school: Gender equity strategy* (NSW Department of School Education, 1996). I was familiar with the policy as I had been the gender equity contact in my school when the policy was released. I was also familiar with the support documents that had been sent to schools to assist teachers to implement the policy as I had used them to lead various teacher professional development sessions.

At the commencement of my appointment as a senior education officer (SEO), I was given a desk on which were a collection of books on gender in school education, a computer and storage files that contained the work of the previous SEO. I spent the first week of my appointment reading through the previous SEO’s files to familiarise myself with the work he had done in the unit. I also began to read some of the books that were on my desk. In my second week, I attended a professional development session presented by the manager of the unit at a high school in the south of Sydney. This session, together with the reading through various documents and books in the previous week, was the extent of my professional development for my job as a senior education officer. The default position seemed to be that I had been successful at interview in securing the job, I was a good classroom teacher with a level of knowledge about gender equity and therefore, I was capable of doing the job.

Given this work situation, I was keen to include the collaboration of a critical friend in my self-study, which...
focused on my practice as a gender equity consultant to teachers. I hoped that the relationship would support my reflections on and subsequent reframing of my practice as I worked to improve my work as a consultant to teachers.

METHOD

One of the field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) that I constructed was recorded conversations with my critical friend, a work colleague in the Gender Equity Unit. I commenced my self-study in my second year as an SEO. At the time, the Gender Equity Unit schools section consisted of the manager of the unit, Ian – a newly appointed SEO, and me. After Ian’s first term in the position, I approached him and asked if he would be interested in collaborating with me to critique my practice as a consultant. Ian agreed as he felt that such collaboration would also assist him in his work with schools.

Our conversations occurred a various times throughout our working weeks and were not formally structured but took place when either of us had an issue that we wanted to discuss further to attempt to make more sense of within our understandings about practice. These meetings were at times structured to take place in the unit’s meeting room. At other times we chatted more informally across our desks.

I also used a journal to record my reflections on my work and my critical friendship. This field text provided me with a place to record my thoughts, as well as my attempts to analyse what these thought meant for my practice. I used a series of questions within my journal: what does this mean for my practice? Why am I doing this? Why is it important? What does it mean for teachers? What does it say about my consultancy? What does it say about me? These questions assisted me to make sense of the experiences I had with teachers across a variety of school settings.

COLLABORATION WITH IAN

Whilst Ian agreed to the collaboration, there were several problematic issues that meant that the relationship was not built on very strong foundations. The first of these was that I did not discuss the process of critical friendship with Ian in any real depth. Schuck and Russell (2005) highlight the importance of both parties in a collaboration that aims to critique practice having a clear understanding of the expectations of such a relationship. My initial conversation with Ian mentioned meeting regularly to discuss issues of concern in our work but I did not thoroughly discuss with him what my expectations were, nor give him the opportunity to raise any concerns about the process. My journal entry below indicates how I reflected in this issue.

I assumed too much in the initial establishment of the relationship. I was so keen to examine my practice that I just assumed that Ian would be too.

I think that I was dishonest with Ian to an extent. I quickly brushed over the fact that I needed this to be part of my research. Ian signed an agreement to participate but I don’t think I discussed this issue enough with Ian. I naively assumed that by saying we could do this that he would understand what it meant. I assumed that he would understand something that I had read about extensively as I developed my research project. (Journal entry, July 2003)

Secondly, I was undertaking doctoral study and Ian was not, therefore I had an interest in pursuing the relationship that did not exist for him. Whilst Ian agreed to discuss issues of concern with me, the relationship was not built on the basis of both participants being equally engaged in the research process as is the case for many self-studies that involve collaboration with colleagues (see for example Bass, Anderson-Patton & Allender, 2002; Guiffoyle, Placier, Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1995; Tidwell, 2002). I had a vested interested in the relationship – I needed a critical friend to challenge my understandings about my practice as I was involved in a research process. Much of the practice of other consultants that I observed in my early work involved a “technical-transmission” approach (Beck, Freese & Kosnik, 2004) where consultants lectured teachers. I was seeking to make changes to my work that was informed by more constructivist, interactive approaches to consultancy. On the other hand, Ian was carrying out his duties within the gender equity unit as expected. Whilst his approach was to lecture teachers, he was receiving positive evaluations from teachers with whom he implemented professional learning activities. As Griffiths and Poursanidou (2005) ask – why would he want to collaborate with me at all? Critiquing of practice was my need – not Ian’s.

As a result of the above situation, many of our conversations were very one-sided in terms of actually critiquing practice. Whilst Ian was happy to discuss issues that I raised as being of concern for my work with schools, he rarely exposed his work to our critique. As stated above – why should he? His performance was not under question by anyone. This situation created significant tension for me as the relationship was not the two-way interactive approach to learning about practice that I had initially envisaged. I felt that I was attempting to openly explore my problems of practice, but that Ian was not honestly reflecting on issues that may have been problematic in his work with teachers.

When I attempted to include situations that I knew were similar to Ian’s he tended to deflect the problem back to my work, rather than exploring the issue from both our perspectives. This occurred after an issue I had at one school with whom I was working with a parent meeting that I led, exploring issues of gender construction. After the meeting, parents attended a P&C meeting (all public schools in NSW have parents and citizens groups as part of school organisation) and demanded that the school overhaul their home reading system to remove all sexist books. As a result, teachers refused to continue with the proposed gender equity initiative that the meeting had been a part of. I raised this problem with Ian as he
was planning a trip to a number of regional areas across the state to work with teachers and parents. My reflections of what occurred at the school led me to realise the importance of working with teachers and parents together so that they have the opportunity to engage in conversations around gender initiatives within the school. Ian would not discuss his impending trip in light of the problem that I discussed. When I suggested that he consider how he might bring parents and teachers together, he said that the programs were set and that he didn’t think teachers would want to come back to school at night to work with parents. The situation was treated as my problem, my issue to explore if I felt the need but nothing that needed his consideration.

Thirdly, the opportunity to discuss our practice was not built into our work schedules. When I attempted to structure regular meetings so that Ian and I could discuss our work, the gender equity unit manager sat in on these meetings, which made it difficult to discuss issues of practice openly. As a result, the meetings tended to focus on generic problems with our work rather than focusing on personal issues of practice, which is what I had hoped to be able to achieve. However, I am mindful of Griffiths and Poursanidou’s (2005) point that whilst institutional factors may be helpful in supporting collegial collaboration, “it is tempting to locate difficulties in the institution” (p.155) rather than focusing on uncomfortable questions about self that may be at the heart of problems with collaboration. Rather than seeking other opportunities to discuss practice within the gender equity unit, I tended to use the problems within the context as one excuse for not continuing the relationship.

Finally, Ian had been working in the unit for less time than I had and it was my role to support him in his work. He often accompanied me to schools as an observer so that he could learn about his role. At the time of the study, I focused on what I perceived as the inadequacy of Ian as a critical friend, given his relatively short time working in the unit. I often strongly disagreed with his approach to problems of practice that arose in our discussions. One particular incident exemplifies this issue.

I was preparing to work with the teachers at a school for a day exploring their understandings of gender issues within their school context. As part of the day, the deputy principal had asked me to present a workshop involving a series of lessons that teachers could use to explore gender issues with their students. I was reluctant to hold such a workshop as I believed that this approach of giving teachers lessons to mimic would have little impact on their understandings about gender as an educational issue. When I raised my concern with Ian, he suggested that giving teachers lessons to model might assist them to make shifts in their understandings. Ian developed many units of work for teachers around various novels and used these as a basis for his work with high school English teachers.

Our discussion left me annoyed with Ian, disagreeing to this as an effective approach to developing deep teacher knowledge about gender issues and teaching practice, and discounting him as helpful in supporting me to reflect on my practice. In my journal I wrote about what I perceived as the differences between his secondary approach and my primary school approach to pedagogy. I felt that the way that I had worked with teachers as an assistant principal in schools, whereby we collegially planned our teaching and learning programs was far superior to Ian’s approach as a head teacher that involved giving his teachers units of work that he had developed to implement. I believed that there was a huge gulf in our attitudes towards teacher professional knowledge, underpinned by our former practice in schools, which was not going to support my exploration of practice.

In my relationship with Ian, my focus tended to be on my dissatisfaction with him as a critical friend rather than reflecting deeply on my practice. However, as I worked with the field texts from my study, I came to realise that whilst the approach of providing teachers with sample lessons was flawed, this was more a function of my way of working with teachers when using sample lessons, than with the approach of providing lessons.

Rather than merely providing lessons for teachers to mimic, I could have used example lessons far more effectively as a basis for teacher discussion about gender as an educational issue by explicitly discussing the purpose of such lessons. By not providing teachers with time to discuss their experiences with the lessons, I did not provide them with the opportunity for reflection on the implications of the ideas underpinning the lessons for their own teaching. Such discussion and reflection may have assisted teachers to better understand the pedagogical purposes of the experiences, as well as the range of student learning outcomes that could result from participation in such lessons (Loughran, 1997).

Reflecting back on the critical friendship relationship with Ian has led me to realise that it would have been better to ask questions about my self in the process, rather than rejecting Ian as a suitable critical friend to support my learning about practice. Such questioning may have led me to understand the issues of perceived power and status that may have impacted negatively on the collaboration and that my self-study was about me and improving my practice, rather than my colleague (Griffiths & Poursanidou, 2005; Schuck & Russell, 2005).

WHERE TO FROM HERE FOR CRITICAL FRIENDSHIP IN PRACTITIONER SETTINGS?
Given the issues raised above, it may not seem surprising that the critical friend relationship within my study was not successful. Reflection on the relationship has been somewhat uncomfortable as I have come to realise my naïve approach to the collaboration I was seeking, and the role that my own inadequate understanding of such a relationship played in the malfunction of the process. However, the failure of the partnership to support my exploration of practice provided me with much to consider in the area of collaboration for those working outside the university setting that is the usual context of many self-studies. Whilst I acknowledge that supportive
institutional factors are not essential for the success of collaboration in self-studies, where professional learning and improvement of practice are not part of the culture of a workplace, collaboration will be more difficult to achieve. The question is how does one go about developing a culture of workplace collaboration?

My reflections on my flawed professional relationship with Ian in terms of critiquing practice point to several factors which I believe need to be in place to support the collaboration of critical friendship within the workplace. First, a culture of professional learning needs to exist where colleagues are encouraged to share ideas about and critique their work as they seek to improve practice. Second there needs to be time set aside for such discussions where colleagues are supported to participate in conversations aimed at improving their practice. Third, individuals need to have a common purpose for participating in a critical friend relationship. There needs to be something in the relationship for all concerned. Fourth, the participants need to have a shared understanding of the relationship and its purpose. Finally, colleagues need to be prepared for a certain amount of openness and honesty if a trusting relationship is to develop (Griffiths & Poursanidou, 2005; Schuck & Russell, 2005). The development of contexts conducive to practitioner professional learning will only occur where such learning is deemed a necessary part of professional practice. Where such contexts do not exist, it is essential that practitioners agitate for the space to undertake collaborative professional learning that will result in improved practice.

My current workplace is in a school where I am deputy principal. I have leadership of several projects both within my school and across a cluster of schools that focus on teacher professional learning. Again I am exploring my practice and seeking to develop collaborative relationships to support my self-study. I am hoping to gain conference delegate support through discussion at this paper presentation to assist me to establish collaborations with colleagues that enable us to improve our practice as teachers and school leaders.

REFERENCES


INTRODUCTION
This collaborative self-study was undertaken by two secondary school English teachers who met over twelve times beginning in July 2005 in order to reflect on the nature of their teaching and its application to teacher development. We began by analyzing documents from Joe’s Grade 9 English class last year. Starting with student work as well as some teacher work, the two researchers began a series of conversations that have lasted for a year (so far). During that time, some documents and student work were coded, but the exact research tool used was based more on chance than a plan. Conversations with other teachers between our research conversations, outside readings, and the need to produce something usable motivated us and caused us to seek to understand our teaching selves in a new light. Grounded theory about teacher education developed as a result of this research.

Our journey took on a life of its own. Although we began this journey by analyzing and interpreting artifacts from Joe’s Grade 9 English class, we meandered into discussions about the role of the teacher as healer, talk that led us to dwell on the resistance of secondary teachers to differentiated (responsive) teaching. As a way to make differentiation more practicable for teachers, we developed a tool that we call a Differentiation Matrix. All of this preceded our efforts at self-study.

A commitment to the power of self-study provoked us to become more reflective about our principal journey as well as our side trips. Over the course of eight months, each of us kept a record of our conversations. Paul had written reflections after three of our conversations, Joe after seven. We tested our understandings of self by analyzing patterns that emerged when we revisited each set of our reflections in chronological order and applied our new understandings of self to current or past experiences. The following two parts of this self-study trace our individual development and the personal significance of the self-study.

JOE’S REFLECTION
From an e-mail to Ian Mitchell, November 7, 2004:
Ironically, whenever I look at what I think I have learned through my own research, I find it astonishingly self-evident. Is that always the case? Realizing the simplicity of my growth, I still persist in my questioning and research because I discover personal rewards in growing as a teacher as well as growing as a learner.

When I happened to come across my musings to Ian and others who were working on a proposal for AERA, I was struck by how the passage above, written over a year ago, shed light on the collaborative self-study I was conducting with a fellow English teacher.

Without a doubt this self-study with Paul Swanson has uncovered some of my own thinking and practices in the secondary English classroom and in my role as a teacher-educator. My collaborative self-study with Paul has revealed an aspect of my self that I had not before realized.

Paul has nicknamed moments or events that were critical in diagnosing student needs and subsequently adjusting my teaching as conjunctions. I think that the same term could be applied to our self-study. The path that we took from analyzing my comments to students in July, to imagining teacher as healer in August, to creating a matrix for differentiating instruction in October, to analyzing our self-study roles in February has been a series of conjunctions that, when connected, fill out the picture of our learning.

In order to uncover the self-study part of our collaboration, Paul and I talked long and hard about our relationship, personal and professional, and what made it work as a vehicle for this self-study. After these extended conversations (some were over three hours long), one or both of us often tried to capture our thinking by writing. When we later tried to uncover our relationship, I read and re-read all the writing that we had done since July 2005. I began by chronologically reviewing the three essays that Paul had written over the course of the last eight months.

I noted differences in the issues Paul addressed and the kinds of questions he posed over time compared to my
own concerns. He began in the summer by writing a piece that consisted mostly of a series of questions that centered on two things: the practicalities of teaching and the professional obligations of teaching. He posed issues about the use of time and expressed doubts about how professional he would be if he did or did not do certain things in the classroom. For example, he asked: When does a teacher offer differentiated instruction or is the teacher abdicating professional responsibility?

In October Paul’s writing took a turn from practicalities and professional doubts to talk of practice. Paul wrote in less general terms and started to reflect more on what he actually did in the classroom. Perhaps the shift here could also be attributed to my challenge to him to tell me what he was getting out of our dialogues. As I had written at that time, the discussions centered more on my talking about my class and what I had done, but I didn’t know how any of that affected Paul and his teaching.

The piece he wrote for our Castle paper (and in response to my own writing) took him another step or two forward. Instead of writing about the practicalities of teaching, or questioning his professional responsibilities, Paul wrote more about what he called his principles. These principles or beliefs were guiding his analysis and understanding of the relationship we had in this self-study and that led him to reflect on his professional growth. Although Paul said he was writing about the role of self-study, I read his commentary as a reflection on himself as teacher-learner. Perhaps that is just my own bias coming through (Senese, 2005), but I cannot help notice this stance in the progression of his writing. The question arising from this analysis becomes: Is this a way that a teacher is motivated to change through self-study?

In other words, does the self-analysis begin with the practicalities of teaching and professional doubts, move into thinking about actual practice, and develop into a consideration of principles (beliefs), so that professional growth can occur? Paul is certainly not an average teacher, but the route he took through this self-study lends itself to further analysis.

Subsequently, when I read my own reflections through this process, I noted that I wrote infrequently about the practicalities and never about professional doubts. I immediately wrote about my practice and either deduced my principles from that or, more often than not, related how my principles influenced my practice. I was reflecting much more on the process that I had taken to get to where I am today. Although I often write about and talk about the role and benefits of genuine doubt in practice, I didn’t see much doubt in what I had written. Sure, I asked questions and I said I didn’t have the answers, but I didn’t dwell on the doubt very much because it seems that when I have it, I seek the answers in my research.

I felt that this reading/analysis exercise might have been a breakthrough of sorts for me because it was about the self-study process and the routes that Paul and I took to get to where we are right now. I wonder why our paths have been different and how the collaboration addressed our individual growth. Perhaps that is the ultimate subject of our self-study.
I needed to relearn it for myself in my own experience. If I had not listened more closely to Paul through this collaborative self-study, I would not have achieved a deeper understanding of myself and how I could better work to help others.

**PAUL'S REFLECTION**

From the summer of 2005 to the present, my colleague and I rigorously examined our teaching. Beginning as non-threatening bantering, my visits with Joe Senese evolved into inquiries, and chatting grew into nurturing. The sharing continued because we created a safe place for introspection and problem solving. In such a place (the home of a friend with whom I traveled to and presented at education conferences) and in such a context (summer vacation’s flexible time) I was able to examine new areas of self-study.

This experience was unique to me for several reasons. I discovered that my investment in the process grew, partly because I was emotionally and physically available to think critically, partly because Joe is a highly respected practitioner of educational theory, and partly because I did not have to attend to my teaching schedule’s practical duties. As a result, our conversations grew into head-on confrontations of ideas. Now as I reflect on how this process evolved over the course of the last year, I am able to observe my usual uses of summer vacation and then an abrupt metamorphosis into a hectic school year. As a result several focal questions regarding self-study arise: What allows me to become authentically available for self-study? What patterns of self-study arise when I prepare curriculum and instruction? What is my relationship between introspection and conversation? How do I make self-study a series of critical discoveries and not acts of show-and-tell self-indulgence?

To understand what allows me to become available for self-study, I look at the interactions of my emotional, mental, and physical selves (Allender, 2001). During the summer, I become interested in taking a long view of my teaching; whereas, during the school year, I seek short-term solutions for dilemmas. During the school year, my thoughts regarding my practice occur in what William Faulkner (1930) called “dynamic immobility” (p. 124), introspective frenzy without release. However, because of this past summer’s study, I was in a state of imaginative curiosity regarding my professional developmental. As I reflected with Joe, I discovered patterns in the ways in which I disengage from school each June. Typically, I find the end of school to be very stressful, and, with the advent of summer vacation, soon forget the causes of that stress as I focus on rest and relaxation. As a result, I lose the chance for revising my teaching practice. However, in my recent conversations, Joe gently brought me back to the previous school year, and, in a stress-free environment, allowed me to reflect on the year, rather than my typical flight from it. For example, he questioned if I had distorted in hindsight my evaluation of the previous year’s teaching, and he questioned my inconsistent memory of how the year had progressed. He and I examined my practice and discovered that my change in perspective came from my habit of chucking and dodging many of the previous year’s problems rather than reflecting on them, something I never realized until working with Joe. As a result, my summer became an opportunity for curricular and instructional revision, something that would never have happened if I were working - and distancing - alone.

Because I was investigating without stated commitment, deadline, or agenda at the beginning of the summer, my introspection and my conversations with Joe were speculative in nature and distant from workplace interruption. During the past three school years, I have met daily with teachers to discuss instruction. However, crises and demands dilute my concentration, and, as a result, I lose my creativity. However, with Joe I was able to focus and found my imagination growing. Initially, I was a listener for Joe’s analysis of an educational theory - differentiated instruction. However, Joe is also my friend and a colleague with whom I have worked in our school’s Action Research Laboratory. Because of our history and my interest in reconsidering my instruction, I found that, without conscious intention, I was evolving from a sounding board into an analytic confidant. For example, such trust allowed us to state when we weren’t making progress. However, because we were frank with each other, we didn’t disengage but continued to talk. Always, we found that our conversations led us to other places; however, if we hadn’t been able to honestly gauge our satisfaction, I’m sure we would have, at least covertly, disengaged. In addition, I discovered a pattern of self-study: conversation, introspective writing, critical thinking, and revisions to teaching practice.

Due to sustained and expandable time during the summer, my work with Joe was not sequestered within a multi-period school day; therefore, we conversed in a productive manner. It is only now after months of summer and weekend work with Joe that I see my avoidance of theory in the name of the practical. I now see that my teaching is ephemerally based on educational theory and, instead, I tend to base it on coping with day-to-day problem solving; educational theory typically falls to the wayside. Now as I reflect with Joe on my teaching, I find that my instruction and, not unexpectedly, my patterns of self-study begin with the practical and afterward, in a place of safety, move into the theoretical (Bass, Anderson-Patton & Allender, 2002).

A result of our combining theory with the practical was the development of a matrix to help teachers plan for differentiated instruction. I have known that students have different learning styles; however, in practice, I often resort to my familiar model of instruction, all-class discussions. This time I was motivated to break out of this pattern, but I did not know how. Because my work with Joe resulted in our developing a useful model for planning differentiated instruction, this time I did not abandon theory because I could not implement it. Instead, for example, I encouraged more student choice in materials, assessment, and instruction as a result of our
conversations. At the end of every year, I ask my students to assess my instruction. Overwhelmingly, they praised the changes that I had made as a result of working with Joe.

I have been a member of our high school’s most meaningful and successful professional development program – the Action Research Laboratory. Through this program, teachers reflect upon their practice. Researching a question, teachers gather data from their students, collaborate with colleagues, study published research, present their findings and revise their practice. In this way, professional development is entrenched in one’s own research with students and the research of others. Because I have worked either tangentially or directly with Joe in the ARL, I knew the most effective principles for my professional development and self-study. I employed what I had learned from ARL during the last ten years. Therefore, at the end of this summer I was inclined to continue our self-study into the hectic resumption of the school year.

This summer revealed the professional dance that succeeds for me: I work best with one nurturing partner, later, perhaps, expanding upon that stabilized and safe beginning. However, this can only occur after a sustained understanding of how each partner works in particular contexts (Loughran, 2002). ARL has taught me how to collaborate most effectively and move my practice into the future. This educative process began with asking naive questions about practice of colleagues all the way to analyzing data taken directly from our teaching. From this experience, I have learned how to partner with a colleague; therefore, when the opportunity arose for working with Joe, I had a history of collaborative research to draw upon. As a result, now I’d like to expand my partnering with Joe and investigate when I initiate ideas rather than primarily critique others. In other words, when does my original thinking begin?

CONCLUSION

From the same e-mail to Ian Mitchell in November 2004:

The knowledge we create [about teaching and learning] will always be oversimplified when we communicate it to others. If we believe that experience is key to learning how to teach, we have to accept the first statement here. Accepting that maxim is the first step to freeing us from trying to tell others what things mean and helping stimulate their own thinking through experience and provocation.

The experience that we took together to arrive at different places developed at the same time but had different destinations. It is a product of self-study because our selves are different. As oversimplified or self-evident as our learning may seem, we can now claim it as our own.

REFERENCES


In this study I explore teacher efficacy to better understand my personal and professional journey over thirty-five years as a female teacher and teacher educator. Using a self-study approach, I explored the conditions of teaching that affected my professional efficacy. As this study continues to evolve, it is changing my work with my students, many of them young female teacher candidates. I am finding better ways to support them as women and as teachers. Although I also teach male teacher candidates, this study focuses on women’s ways of knowing.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
A feminist perspective on teaching and learning places care and understanding at the center (Delpit, 2006; Noddings, 1984, 2003) and recognizes that we construct knowledge in relation to others and to the situations and experiences we encounter (Hollingsworth, Dybdahl & Minarik, 1993). Connecting the affective dimensions of self and the cognitive functions of learning (Morawski & Gilbert, 2000) engages the whole learner. Within a space of caring and trust infant ideas are shared, clarified, and expanded as learners negotiate meaning and construct knowledge. Teachers accept that knowledge is created within and drawn from the learner much as a midwife helps a mother draw new life from her body rather than seeing their role as depositing knowledge into the learner (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986).

Life experiences shape a woman’s way of thinking and knowing (Belenky, Bond & Weinstein, 1997). Marginalized women are silenced, do not question others, and lack confidence in their own ideas (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). Silent women accept others’ right to decide for them. The conditions of teaching often place highly educated women in positions of professional silence. For example, under No Child Left Behind only scientific, research-based instructional decisions are valued. Teachers’ expertise, experience, and beliefs in a different view of learning are marginalized and silenced by powerful policymakers and business leaders.

Belenky et al. (1986) suggest women may move beyond total silence while continuing to see knowledge as received from experts. These women seek expert advice on the right way of thinking and listen carefully to learn what is right. They do not believe they are qualified to question the experts. Received knowers disregard their own knowledge and experience as a way of knowing as they follow directives from experts.

As women question authorities, experts, and traditions and seek like-minded groups, they become connected knowers (Belenky et al., 1986). Connected knowers develop trusting relationships, take nonjudgmental stances, and focus on understanding others’ experiences to better understand their own ideas in relation. They remain loyal to each individual’s right to her own views rather than accepting one standard of right.

Women who develop more complex ways of thinking and knowing move beyond reliance on the ideas of others to find their own voices. They gain confidence and skill in synthesizing information into their own understandings (Colflesh, 1996) and believe knowledge is actively constructed by all human beings (Belenky et al., 1986). They move beyond the belief that there is only one right way to see things and use many sources of information such as research, academic arguments, experiences of others, and their own ideas and experiences to develop and to construct new insights. Constructivist thinkers exemplify professional teachers.

Women move toward constructivist knowing within “public homeplaces” or places where “people support each other’s development” (Belenky, Bond, & Weinstock, 1997, p. 13). In public homeplaces people are safe to express their thoughts, use extended dialogue to construct ideas, and develop self-respect and confidence through this process. Female teachers who learn to construct ideas about teaching in public homeplaces, develop their own thinking, increase their confidence, and change their practice (Standerford, 2005).

Feminist theory provides a lens to explain how female teachers may find it difficult to move toward constructivist knowing because of the conditions of teaching and the limited resources of teaching practice. Cohen (1989) suggests that teaching is one of the “impossible professions” (p. 55). Cohen argues that teaching, as a “practice of human improvement” (p. 55), lacks the resources
usually available to such practitioners. Resources such as practitioner selectivity of clients, client choice of practitioner, dependence on clients for results, and societal consensus about acceptable results characterize the challenges of teaching practice (Cohen, 1989; Labaree, 2005). Other practices of human improvement such as psychotherapy include these resources of practice, thus minimizing the personal resources demanded of the practitioner. However, in teaching, these resources of practice are largely absent, requiring practitioners to expend much higher levels of personal resources in their work.

Conditions of teaching affect teachers’ satisfaction with and success in their work, such as lack of control over curriculum, materials, and schedules; little time for preparation and reflection; a heavy workload coupled with low pay; low public esteem; poorly motivated students; and, the complexity of teaching practice (Cuban, 1984; Ingersoll, 2001; Labaree, 2005). Teachers work in a climate of constant calls for reform while few resources are provided to carry out the reforms (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; Tyack & Cuban, 1995) and the political nature of reforms often situates them at cross purposes (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Standerford, 1992; Standerford, 1997).

In teacher education students seldom understand the complexity of teaching practice and the difficult conditions of teaching. Many expect to learn tricks that simplify the problematic nature of teaching (Intrator, 2006; Loughran, 2005). Teacher educators who believe that “education is development from within” (Dewey, 1938, p. 17) resist the push to provide simple answers. Their classes can become public homeplaces that support the process of synthesizing ideas and experiences, constructing one’s own knowledge, and building the students’ confidence and efficacy.

The conditions of teaching require that teachers expend personal resources of energy, knowledge, skill, effort, and risk-taking at a discouraging pace. Teachers can deal with such demands by becoming silent and doing what they are told, by becoming received knowers who look to others for the right answers, by joining groups of like-minded colleagues who buoy their confidence without challenging them to grow, or striving toward a higher level of professional thinking by continuing to search and question as they construct their own knowledge. My research, self-study, and experiences as a teacher educator suggest that the number of teachers who come to this higher level of professional thinking is relatively small. My self-study explores how I have moved into, across, back, and around these stages of knowing in my own career and analyzes the shifts in relation to conditions of teaching and resources of teaching practice.

METHODOLOGY
Data for this on-going self-study include personal reflections on my thirty-five years as a teacher and teacher educator, reflective journals and papers across a seven year period as I left elementary school and moved to teacher education, publications and presentations completed over the last ten years, student comments and evaluations across fourteen years, personal correspondence with former students who contact me to discuss personal and professional issues in their teaching, and data from my earlier eight year study on the development of female teachers’ professional thinking (Standerford, 2005).

I chose self-study as my approach as it offers a deeply reflective and longitudinal approach, enabling me to explore the contradictions within myself as a woman and a teacher/teacher educator, contradictions that have perplexed me across my entire career (Whitehead, 1993). I have used and continue to use constant comparative qualitative methodology to analyze, reconsider, and reframe the data to construct descriptive and interpretive theories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Glaser, 1978). A major part of this analysis was searching for shifts in my understandings of teaching and reflectively revisiting those shifts. The theoretical framework of the study shaped the analysis into categories that offered possible explanations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Culture Shock: Silencing a New Teacher
My own teacher education delivered Dewey’s ideas on progressive education, but did not link them to the dilemmas of teaching. Professors lectured, tested, and assigned papers, but did not model progressive teaching. Teacher education that does not model the types of instruction novice teachers are learning ill prepares them for the challenges of the classroom. New teachers who begin their careers within a culture of opposing beliefs become isolated and marginalized by students, parents, colleagues, and administrators who do not understand and/or trust progressive ideas. With limited knowledge and ability to respond to the opinions and concerns of others, new teachers may find themselves silenced.

My early years of teaching were full of culture shock. I student taught in an urban school with one hundred percent African-American students. I had no preparation for working within this different culture. I tried to implement ideas learned in my teacher education program, but often found I was at odds with the culture in the building. For instance, I tried techniques that engaged students in exploration and active learning, but was quickly told that the students needed to learn to sit quietly and work independently. I encountered discipline problems and witnessed corporal punishment as the response to misbehaviors. I was adrift and learned to be silent and do as was expected to get through my days. I struggled to understand how my visions translated into the reality of teaching as defined in this first experience as a teacher.

There was almost no supervision from the university, and my supervising teacher gave scant support for my ways of teaching. I left student teaching feeling marginalized in a world of practice that seldom resembled the idealistic lessons from my teacher education classes.

Upon graduation I became a remedial reading teacher.
in Taiwan at a school for English-speaking children from around the globe. My teacher education courses had focused on phonics first for reading instruction, so the children and I merrily /buhed/ and /dahed/ our way along. They became good word callers, but their limited understanding of English coupled with few cultural connections to the books we read stalled comprehension. Again, I was totally unprepared and left to my own devices to figure it out.

Both my first teaching job and my student teaching took enormous tolls on my confidence. I had been a highly successful student in high school and college, but I was not prepared to begin teaching in these contexts so different than my own schooling or my teacher preparation. I internalized the problem as a deficiency within myself rather than my own schooling or my teacher preparation. I was not prepared to begin teaching in these contexts so differently successful student in high school and college, but I was not prepared to begin teaching in these contexts so different than my own schooling or my teacher preparation. I internalized the problem as a deficiency within myself and drew heavily on my personal resources of energy, time, and hard work to meet the challenges.

Searching for Answers: Received Knowing
After returning to the U.S., I began teaching kindergarten in an open-concept school. A colleague with no experience in elementary teaching and I had fifty children in one large room. It was chaos. We suggested to our principal that dividing the class into two sections would allow us to develop a better program based on our understanding of early childhood education. Our principal saw the problem as our lack of ability and told us to continue the open-concept approach and figure out how to make it successful. We gradually developed a program of active learning and authentic learning centers. Once again our principal disregarded any expertise on our part as the first grade teachers wanted more worksheets in kindergarten to prepare the students for first grade workbooks.

In my confusion and frustration, I began to search for the right answers from experts. I became a received knower. I believed that if I listened, read, and searched hard enough, I could find those answers. However, the conditions of teaching such as administrative decisions, limited materials and resources, and predetermined curriculum (Cuban, 1984; Labaree, 2005) did not support success. I was beginning to see myself as a failure, and my confidence in my own abilities was eroded.

After two years we moved. I began another teaching job in another location and at another grade level, but the challenges remained the same. Administration was heavy-handed, curriculum was materials-driven, and ditto masters were teachers’ most valuable possessions. I continued to search for the right way to teach from colleagues and in books, magazines, university classes, and conferences. The conditions of teaching (Cuban, 1984; Ingersoll, 2001; Labaree, 2005) continued to limit my success. When I dared to ask tough questions, I received simplistic answers, suggesting that something was wrong with me because I did not see the simple solutions for myself. My frustrations with teaching grew as I lost any sense of professional efficacy.

In a parallel world, my personal confidence and efficacy continued to grow as I successfully met life challenges, grew in a successful marriage relationship, and raised two children of my own. My husband sometimes commented, “You are so confident about everything else in your life, but you seem to have no sense of confidence when it comes to your job.”

Gathering Colleagues: Connected Knowing
About ten years into my teaching career and after completing a masters degree, I became a reading specialist in a small, Midwestern town. I assumed leadership roles and began voicing my own ideas. I still read voraciously, attended classes and workshops, and chatted with colleagues. I sought colleagues that were like-minded. I moved toward connected knowing. In connected knowing, each woman’s experiences are respected as the basis for her actions (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). We happily shared our classroom stories, but never asked tough questions that might threaten relationships.

Connected knowing is one way in which teachers manage a lack of resources of practice. Teaching is uncertain work with no general consensus of success. Teachers rely on their students’ motivation and behaviors to successfully do their work. Progressive teaching is not the norm in schools and is often seen as suspect by students, parents, colleagues, and administrators (Cohen, 1989; Labaree, 2005). Given these uncertainties of practice, teachers find comfort and support in a group of like-minded colleagues. Connected knowers begin to gain their voices, but their thinking remains limited and unchallenged within the group.

Finding My Professional Voice: Constructivist Thinking
When I entered my Ph.D. program, the questions I had been asking for nearly twenty years became clearer. I gradually found others with similar questions and no simple answers. I learned to trust and expand my own ways of knowing in cohort meetings and classes conducted as public homeplaces (Belenky, Bond & Weinstock, 1997). We nurtured each other’s questions and right to ask those questions, while not simply accepting any opinion without question. The feelings of marginalization and self-doubt grew less prominent as I better understood the paradoxes within which teachers work.

At the university the conditions of teaching and resources of practice changed dramatically. As a teacher educator, I had freedom to choose my materials and pedagogy, select contexts for teaching, develop curriculum for my courses, and set assessment criteria. Students made choices such as whether to take my section of classes, students were screened for academic success before they entered my classes, and students were motivated by high tuition and program requirements. These conditions of teaching (Cuban, 1984; Labaree, 2005) and resources of practice (Cohen, 1989; Labaree, 2005) have made my work as a teacher educator less personally taxing than that of K-12 teachers. I found the time, energy, and support to become a constructivist thinker, and I developed efficacy about my work.

The conditions of teaching and the lack of resources of
practice (Cohen, 1989; Labaree, 2005) require teachers to meet the challenges of teaching by drawing heavily upon their personal resources of energy, confidence, knowledge, skill, hard work, and risk taking. As a teacher’s personal resources are depleted, she is left with feelings of marginalization that silence her voice, believing she must search for right answers from others, or feeling that all opinions are equally valid. None of these ways of thinking are desirable for professional teachers. Each leaves a teacher limited in her ability to challenge students to construct and apply knowledge as she is unable to do so herself.

Silencing Forces Return: The Pendulum Swing
Now as I near the end of my career as a teacher educator, I feel a swing in the reverse direction. The steady negative media attention, the reductionist belief that all learning can and must be measured numerically, the demands for time-consuming assessment reports to maintain accreditation and funding, and the daunting changes technology is bringing to our work nibble at my confidence. I recognize what is happening, and I am better equipped to assess, evaluate, and challenge the effect of these forces. However, the personal toll for me and for all teachers remains high. Nearly every week I hear from former students who consider the personal costs of teaching too high and are managing the situation with silent voices, by searching for simple right answers, or accepting any view as valid. All of these solutions bring a sense of powerlessness and disengagement with the profession.

CONCLUSION
Teaching continues to attract more females than males, and females often enter the profession hearing and using a different voice (e.g., Tannen, 1990). Educational reforms, conditions of teaching, and resources of practice all systematically ignore and devalue teachers’ voices, leaving many teachers and teacher educators silenced in policy debates and decisions. Silenced teachers are denied opportunities to use higher order and critical thinking skills in their professional roles. This not only limits their teaching, but demands high levels of personal resources that weaken the teachers’ professional efficacy (Cohen, 1989). My study offers one way for educators to understand the confusing and complex world of practice. It offers a framework within which educators can consider and analyze their own ways of thinking, the contexts within which that thinking can move from simplistic to complex, and the conditions that sometimes set it back again. This deeper understanding of self and of the world of teaching enables professional teachers to question and construct deeper knowledge when complex problems resist easy solutions, to follow their own winding path to professional efficacy.

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Making Collaboration Explicit in Self-Study Research in Teacher Education

For teacher educators to be effective and adaptable to the needs of students, the process of self-renewal and change are essential. Teaching principles and practice are continually constructed through self-reflection. The use of self-study research has proven to be a powerful vehicle through which teacher education has evolved (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Cole & Knowles, 1998; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998). As Loughran (2002) writes, “There must be change by teacher educators themselves before there can be genuine educational change” (p. 242).

Self-study in teacher education has been defined as “qualitative research turned inward.” Some have maintained that even though “learning in self study is intensely personal, it requires collaboration” (Loughran & Northfield, 1998, p.14). Although most of the self-study research emphasizes that it is conducted both for and with community (peers and prospective teachers), the definitions for collaboration and how those definitions have an impact on the roles and relationships of self-study researchers vary; in many cases, collaboration has served as a methodological strategy rather than a more encompassing learning perspective. The purpose of this paper is to explore, through three self-studies, the ways in which sociocultural learning theories can inform both the process and the continual outcome of collaborative self-study.

EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

We are teaching in difficult times, where teacher educators are challenged to justify their curricular strategies and pedagogical beliefs in the face of a call for quantitative, positivistic accountability. Through these times, we must remain true to our purposes--examining and reshaping our practices and beliefs, fostering learning and support for teachers, and ultimately have an impact on the achievement and life-long opportunities of all of our students. Collaborations, core to learning itself, are also fundamental to these purposes.

Collaboration is viewed in various ways in the self-study literature. Some see collaboration as a strategy to help a self-study researcher “step outside” of her perspective by involving a colleague who can “remain at a distance from the experiences and see trends developing over” time (Loughran & Northfield, 1998, p. 11). In this view, collaborators are distanced “others” and the relationship between researcher and collaborator can be characterized as “so-called” subjective insider to objective outsider.

Others have articulated a “critical friend” approach to collaborations. A critical friend “challenges” and “professionally scrutinizes” a researcher’s data and interpretations (Loughran & Northfield, 1998, p.12) to prevent the researcher from making conclusions that become self-justifications or rationalizations. In this relationship it is the role of the researcher to present oneself as the subject of investigation and to self reflect and the collaborator to analyze and critique the researcher. The researcher acts as the novice who looks to the collaborator for expertise and guidance.

Collaborations in self-study have also been defined as “shared adventures” (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). While the focus of research, like those described above, is still on an individual’s (i.e., researcher’s) situation, the relationship between researcher and other is not characterized as novice to expert or one who reflects and one who critiques. Rather, collaborators are jointly involved in developing the study and in learning through their shared experiences.

Throughout most of the self-study literature, the collaboration is implied and the individual is made explicit; we seek to make the collaboration explicit as the vehicle of examination and analysis and the individual/personal implied. The personal is important but we maintain that there would be no self-study without collaboration. Our interpersonal interactions inform our intrapersonal knowledge (Samaras, 2002). Although we believe that others serve important roles, we do not envision these others as validators, critics, button pushers, or scrutinizers. Within our collaborative framework others are co-constructors of knowledge: co-researchers/subjects. There is no hierarchy of power or knowledge. We do not point out weaknesses, give advice to one another, assume an attitude of superiority, or create antagonism; rather we listen, share our own stories, interweave them, and talk. It

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is through these exchanges that, as individuals, we realize our analysis, develop new ideas, and articulate goals. We construct our own theories not through the adaptation of others’ perspectives but through our own realization of these ideas through dialogical reflection.

Our self-studies draw from a feminist post-structural framework, enabling us to explore the complexities of teacher education from a collaborative, multiply informed perspective. This perspective of the non-unitary self takes into consideration the public and personal intersections of discourse, knowledge, and power within our lives, and draws on the socially constructed understandings of complex phenomena. It offers opportunities to ask a multitude of questions and offer a multiplicity of answers. By acknowledging that the self is not independent or unitary we have attempted to develop collaborations where we can listen to multiple voices informing our own understanding of teacher education and shaping of our practices. The views that we are living contradictions who develop personal living theories continually nudge us to question our actions, motives, and beliefs (Whitehead, 1993).

OUR COLLABORATIVE SELF-STUDIES

Co/autoethnography as a lens for self-study (Monica Taylor and Lesley Coia)

Our own self-study of exploring issues of authority in a democratic classroom (Taylor & Coia, 2006) revealed how the collaborative nature of co/autoethnography served as a useful lens to understand the ways in which community was created with our students. Within two courses at a large Northeastern university and a small Southern liberal arts college, we examined how our students could benefit if the explicit authority of the teacher is removed. Drawing on two models of autoethnography, Reed-Danahay’s (1997) work in anthropology and Lionnet (1995) and Pratt’s (1992) work in post-colonial literary theory, we used co/autoethnography as an analytical paradigm for our self-study. Co/autoethnography is a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context. Our work relies heavily on producing and analyzing autobiographical episodes in a collaborative setting where the autobiographical work becomes both a method and a text and where we are able to recognize the complexity of our identities (Coia & Taylor, 2006).

Using collaborative analysis for the self-study proved to be significant. Although we struggled to understand what went on in our courses, we were clear about the success of our own collaboration. To further understand the issue of authority in our teaching, we began to look at our practice through the lens of our collaborative research relationship. The complex understanding of self, afforded by the co/autoethnographic methods we had utilized, enabled us to consider our collaboration from a unique perspective. We were able, for example, to uncover and probe our, in Gallop’s (1994) phrase, “good girl” feminism. Using Gallop’s analysis of why feminists have problems with authority as a foil we were able to delve deeper into the analysis of authority using our collaboration as a model. We were able to see our collaboration as in many ways mirroring Gallop’s criticism, the eschewing of conflict and a relatively selfless approach to our work with students, however our collaboration showed not the negative aspects of these traits but the positive. We found the ways in which we care for and listen to each other provide a space for vulnerability and risk-taking. Through opening ourselves to each other, allowing each other to write into each other’s lives we learn from and about each other. It seems that for collaboration, as with good teaching, there has to be risk and trust. In a collaboration based on shared authority, respect and trust grow not primarily through critique but through increased understanding based on serious examination of self and others. Our collaboration is possible because it is based on the relational authority (Applebaum, 2000) that is constructed through our caring relationship.

We have continued our self-study but have shifted the focus slightly to more explicitly examine the ways in which our co/autoethnographic collaboration frames our exploration of the subtle aspects of classroom interactions. We are focused on how our own collaboration outside the classroom has led to a deeper understanding of our practice in our classrooms and the collaborative conditions that we foster with our students. We believe it is important to highlight the various dimensions of collaboration both among ourselves as well as with our students: the conditions for its existence; what is needed to nurture it; and the self-analysis it can generate. Our co/autoethnographic self-study illustrates the importance of trust with one another and with our students as well as the role of democratic virtues in a successful collaboration.

Creating self-study communities of university instructors, teachers, and preservice teachers (Tim Hopper and Kathy Sanford)

Self-study of oneself in isolation is limiting and, we would argue, not possible or productive. If the goals of self-study are to examine and reshape our practices and beliefs, foster learning and support for teachers, and ultimately have an impact on the achievement and life-long opportunities of all of our students, then we must create trusting and respectful self-study communities. Student teachers are confused about what they are expected to be able to learn and teach; inservice teachers struggle to maintain their passion for teaching, and a divide is created between university teacher educators and teachers in schools. The research project that forms the basis of our self-study is an attempt to create time and space for a collaborative mutually informing community to exist, aimed at maintaining rewarding and sustaining careers in teaching, by developing opportunities for partnerships between school classrooms and university courses.

In this collaborative self-study we investigate how school integrated teacher education (SITE) courses have created self-study communities for university instructors, teachers and preservice teachers. These SITE courses
Our collaboration has been an evolution of explorations characterized by dialogue and inquiry that can be transforming when it is contextualized within a profession. Our previous reporting of the SITE project has yielded shared insights that included views of learning as dialogic, occurring in multiple communities of practice; and the conditions that support dialogue including collaborative inquiry, social and cultural acceptance, meaningful and intentional engagement. We were most interested in creating conditions for our students and ourselves in which our learning would be transformative rather than a mere assimilation of new ideas into old conceptual frameworks.

Out of our initial work grew an interest in collaborative self-study. Again guided by a sociocultural definition of collaboration, we entered into this self-study committed not only to valuing ourselves as primary sources of knowledge but recognizing that collective action in any context increases the possibility of deep understanding. We designed this study to explore critical reflection as a means to enhance our own personal and professional development, examine our ability to support students in their development of critical reflection, refine our understandings of teacher knowledge as a primary source for improving practice, and to develop an initial foundation for collective self-study as a key inquiry method to achieve professional transformation. The theoretical explorations that informed our work included Wenger’s (1998) notions of communities of practice, Mezirow’s (1990) theory of transformative learning, and Brookfield’s (1995) understandings of critical reflection as the process by which adults identify the assumptions governing their actions and challenge prevailing social, political, cultural, or professional ways of acting. As we taught our separate courses, we, along with our students, maintained reflective journals, met on a regular basis to share reflections and support one another in the discovery of alternative perspectives on our teaching, and engaged in joint analysis of journals and transcribed audiotapes. Through this research process, we learned that collaborative self-study has the power to transform us as professionals and that critical reflection into our practices can be transforming when it is contextualized within a collaboration characterized by dialogue and inquiry (Crafton & Smolin, 2004).

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND TRANSFORMATION THROUGH COLLABORATIVE SELF-STUDY

(Louanne Smolin & Linda Crafton)

Our collaboration has been an evolution of explorations into sociocultural theories and questions of practical significance. Because we both believe strongly in the power of community and social learning, it was a natural step for us to come together to generate focused questions, plan our curriculum simultaneously, use common methodologies, meet on a regular basis to share our data sources, and make sense of them through ongoing critical dialogue.

We began with a mutual concern regarding the cultural relevance of our pedagogy as we taught two different courses in teacher education in two different institutions. This two-year scholarship led to a focus on community in and out of the classroom. While we built our discussions around a set of professional materials conceptually linked by sociocultural theories, we found our primary theoretical lens in the work of Oakes and Lipton and their book called Teaching to Change the World (2003). As we shared the histories of our courses and our current concerns regarding teacher learning, we established a mutual goal: to re-envision each of our courses around issues of social justice. This study yielded shared insights that included views of learning as dialogic, occurring in multiple communities of practice; and the conditions that support dialogue including collaborative inquiry, social and cultural acceptance, meaningful and intentional engagement. We were most interested in creating conditions for our students and ourselves in which our learning would be transformative rather than a mere assimilation of new ideas into old conceptual frameworks.

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CONCLUSION
As we demonstrate above through the three collaborative self-studies, self-study begins with self-reflection, but must involve community – a caring community where we can openly examine our actions in relation to our practice (LaBoskey, 2001). The aims of self-study — to change present practice, to recognize the relational aspects of teaching and learning, and to acknowledge the political/moral nature of the teaching process — are too overwhelming to consider in an individualistic way. Within a community of intellectual, social, and cultural contexts of teaching, we can struggle to develop greater awareness of the implications of our own beliefs and actions.

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INTRODUCTION
A seemingly transparent concept, inclusive/special education, is often invoked in starkly different ways within teacher education (Artiles, 1998), as may be immediately surmised by how I delineate the term itself with the often obfuscating slash: inclusive/special education. Inclusive/special education background theorists with more of a special education background have typically taken up designated students with disabilities/disorders/exceptionalities and often advocated for individualized student curricula and specialized teacher training. Indeed, some theorists fear that conflating special education with diversity education, multicultural or even inclusive education may erase or dilute the category disability/exceptionality by positioning it as simply another student difference among many—thereby undermining the need for specific teacher training (Heward, 2003; Pugach & Seidl, 1998). Conversely, inclusive/special education understood with more of an inclusive bent tends to be talked about within the rubric of anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2002, 2004), and usually tackles issues of gender, race and sexuality. Inclusively queer pedagogy most often takes up issues of sexual minority students (Quinlivan & Town, 1999). This nexus—inclusion as special education vs. inclusion as anti-oppressive, postmodern, critical and/or queer pedagogies—has been a source of intellectual and practical curiosity, as well as frustration within my teacher education practice.

AIM AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
Inclusion as anti-oppressive education attempts to make explicit and remediate social systems that work to exclude certain students. Inclusion as queer pedagogy usually problematizes notions of authentic categories, such as heterosexual or homosexual. Usually, anti-oppressive and queer theorists look to broad—less individualized—approaches to inclusive teacher education, such as curricular/institutional reforms. Anti-oppressive and/or queer theorists rarely take up disability/disorders/exceptionality, and if so, relatively little attention is paid to effecting enabling practices for such students within teacher education. Within special education, there seems a compulsory and incessant pull to the practical. Fundamental concepts are often shaped as platitudinal promises such as the current evidence–based practices, which significantly permeates the discipline and discourse of special/inclusive education. In many ways, this is the land where the theoretical is unapologetically positivist; within inclusive education as anti-oppressive education, theory is social constructivist, critical, post-modern, and/or queer—a land of the post-positivists, post et al. s.

Teaching and practicing inclusion within teacher education is filled with these lived, everyday stark contradictions and contrasts—contrasts inherent within all of teacher education but, I argue, that are especially pointed within inclusive/special education. For me, it is a difficult space to negotiate on the ground; this contested arena is implicated within the construction of my own inclusive teacher educator identity and indeed, my pedagogy. The push to continue to (re)build railroads is necessary, but at the same time, there is a need for new tools, new ways of thinking, new theories and paradigms: “Brother can you spare a ‘digm’?” The aim of this project then is to explore these tense spaces as they unfold daily and variously iterate within my identity practices and my pedagogy.

CONTEXT
I teach in southern Saskatchewan within a faculty of education at the University of Regina, which is strongly shaped by social constructivist understandings of teaching and learning. There is a distinct emphasis on social justice particularly around issues of gender, sexual orientation, race and culture (notably, First Nations). I am...
the only special/inclusive education faculty on staff. Presently, I teach various courses on autism and pervasive developmental disabilities, functional assessment and positive behavior support, adapting and modifying curricula, and enhancing classroom management. Within Saskatchewan, there is a recent return to psycho-educational testing from the provincial government, as occurred in Alberta, the adjoining and very rich province. This return has an impact on teacher education at the university, especially within educational psychology and special/inclusive education. At the same time, there is an exciting re-visioning of our middle years program here in our faculty, specifically framed within social justice, critical and postmodern perspectives with the aim to better prepare teachers for the demands of the diversities of the Saskatchewan context (Cherland & Badali, 2005). In many ways and on many levels my sense of “living contradiction” (Loughran, 2005, p. 7; Whitehead, 1993) within inclusive/special education teacher preparation is not subtle; it feels as concrete as bricks and rivets and lime.

METHOD

Within my special education course offerings, I often use a major assignment in which students must apply some of what they learn within an actual classroom—the practical. Students program around a challenging behavior or situation; they take baseline data, create and implement intervention strategies and materials, and finally take post-vention data. I have been intrigued at how students work with this assignment—which has also propelled this self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Dinkelman, 2003; Feldman, 2003). Although this general rubric is the same for each major assignment as just delineated, there is great latitude within it. Some students have tackled challenging behaviors, some have instituted classroom meetings, some have worked for equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, and some have applied different aspects of restorative justice. In my experience, these students by and large see these assignments as ways and means of improving their practice, and a specific aspect of practice that is important to them.

A short vivid case study may illuminate some detail. In one project, a student was interested in gender equity in the pre-kindergarten classroom. Initially, this student had thought that the processes of socialization lay outside of her classroom. For the baseline, the teacher tracked how many times students chose a gender divergent activity. To assess the situation, this student teacher counted how many times she called upon the boys vs. the girls, and she also took pictures of her classroom and specifically of the placement of the learning centers. When she stepped back a bit, she noticed that all the traditionally female gendered activities were placed together (the kitchen, the dress-up clothes, etc.), and similarly so were all the traditionally male gendered activities (the basketball hoop, the toy trucks, etc.). For her intervention, this teacher held meetings around gender equity with parents; she talked about the issues with her students; she called on the females more often than before. She changed the constitution of the play/learning centers. At the end of her project, the post-vention data revealed her early childhood female students choosing leadership roles at much higher rates, and students generally were choosing gender divergent activities much more frequently.

I have re-visited some of these student assignments, such as this gender equity one, which I constructed from an explicitly positivist schema, through these paradigmatic frictions. As an additional data source, I recorded my thoughts, reflections around, through, within these spaces via a detailed personal journal regarding my understandings. Within this I noted my re-invention of my intellectual identity within differing academic contexts, among different colleagues. I documented and became keenly interested in the emotional valence (Winograd, 2003) inherent within these ostensibly highly divergent performative inclusive/special education and teacher education moments.

OUTCOMES

To reiterate, my purpose here is to explore my own lived contradictions between preparing teachers for educational inclusion as special education—and/or—vs. inclusion as anti-oppressive, post et al. frameworks. Although my thoughts are preliminary, there are at least three significant outcomes, which I need to continue to pursue to better understand inclusive teacher education. In many ways I am left with more questions than I began. Firstly, Patton (1993) speaks of “identity closures,” as a way to describe the immediacy of identity performativities. In many ways the comfort of appealing to the present is simultaneously caught up within the practical. Apparently pressing and instantaneous contingencies within the local milieu often shaped my identity.

Identity closures typically take the path of least resistance within my encounters among academic peers. At first, emotional investment seemed to me to be minimal since I can chameleon my teacher identity with ease; however, upon reflection I now do not believe this to be the case. I sometimes simply avoid conflict and difficult questions or issues, but I do believe in the contextualized applicability of the ‘digms. Secondly, it is difficult to tolerate ambiguity demanded by ways of knowing that do not presume to know, or outcomes. It is easier and more comfortable to live in the extremes: the extreme prescriptiveness of positivist thinking and the equally extreme, almost mantra-like pat-answer within critical, queer or post-modern query, “It’s complex.” The question for me remains, how to push through such limits to something truly new within inclusive/special teacher education.

Thirdly, among my students, within my pedagogy, I need to present and share more of my own thinking—specifically around the limits of paradigmatic truths and how these may have an impact on everyday practice. I will discuss each of these issues in sequence—identity closures, paradigmatic extremes and breaking through extremes to (ideally) new theoretical and practical terrain for inclusive/special education.
The performative present and identity closures: Is there a tool for every job, or am I just a tool?

In conversations with colleagues researching within postmodern, critical, anti-oppressive views on teaching and learning, the ‘digms are sometimes referred to as tools, a tool-for-every-job. Often the jobs in inclusive/special education involve supporting students with developmental disabilities, students who learn quite differently and often in very small, and not always linear, increments. So, special education tools and precepts are replete with the observable and the measurable. Indeed best practice within special education and students with autism for example, clearly articulates applied behavior analysis (ABA) and related approaches such as functional assessment, positive behavior support, and functional communication training among the gold standard of best practice (Simpson, 2005).

Yet, just as I am on occasion embarrassed about outing myself as an ABBA fan, I am on occasion embarrassed about outing myself as an ABA fan. At other times, I am flummoxed, for I feel that ABA and other positivist conceptions about teaching and learning have become the necessary Other (Felman, 1987) for the post et al. crowd. That is, in order for paradigms to be, there need to be boundaries around perspectives to create them. Positivist paradigms are required so that there be post-positivist paradigms, in order that there be anti-oppressive, queer, critical paradigms, postmodern, poststructuralist, post-colonial paradigms, or a postpostmodern paradigm, etc.—most ironic, of course, since the posts are fundamentally anti-paradigmatic. Some theorists have taken up the ABA cause within special education (see especially Heward, 2003; Pugach & Seidl, 1998). From these views, I sense that special education is seen as a muddy job, but someone has to do it; I play the role of practical martyr, sacrificing theoretical complexity and implication for elimination of target behaviors in the classroom.

Embracing my positivist self has not been easy; actually acceptance was precipitated by much reflection to navigate a bit of a theoretical crisis I experienced. I arrived at the University of Regina to teach, as described, special (not so much inclusive) education courses—my bread and butter, my bricks and mortar. Despite my training and twelve years experience as a special education consultant, I had a difficult time teaching these courses from the heart with conviction. I really felt that positivist understandings of special education were limited. Yet these tools were most helpful to my students, my diatribes on the implicated-ness of disability oppression within special education seem to go unnoticed (at best) to unappreciated. The more practical my courses, the more my teaching evaluations improved, although it was not my evaluations but the personal that brought me round. It seems that my academic career has been one of theoretical dichotomy (or better yet, complexity), not unlike others that I have seen. Within my Master’s of Applied Psychology, I specialized in behavioral analytic psychology; within my Ph. D. of Education, I used critical, material, queer, postmodern theories of identity. It was my fondness for my master’s supervisor, Linda Hayes, that allowed me to come to terms with ABA. I re-read her work through this emotional partiality, and I began to re-parent myself with its intellectualism within its own terms.

Real special educators don’t eat quiche -Or- Will the real data please stand up?

At the same time, I remain committed to understanding how oppression operates for students with disabilities—that is I find great promise and merit in critical, social justice and postmodern queer approaches. I do admit, however that I am personally often blinded by extremes, or more accurately how easily I buy into the apparent discreteness of the ‘digms—despite my better judgment. Not only do I buy into—and probably oversimplify—’digm distinctness, I easily yoke the positivist ‘digm with the practical and the critical, queer, anti-oppressive with the theoretical. Here are some thoughts from my journal; again my emotions seem close to the surface:

I can’t get over how smug I sometimes feel when discussing what it means to do what I have come to refer to as “real” special education practice—and this is almost always among those who, like me, are interested in bringing about actual changes to student and student teacher behaviors—things that have a noticeable and measurable impact. I am so smug that it is almost alarming; my soapbox in some of these settings seems to need no propping up. Real men bring about behavior change—and they don’t eat quiche.

Of course, there is more than comfort among colleagues within the insipid practical—it resonates strongly with student teachers, with “real” school practice, and with parents of students with special needs. But comfort, for me, can easily slide into a kind of myopic knowing, self-identification—nay —self-aggrandizement. Social processes, like multiply manifested material ableism(s)—that substantively and daily enter into the educational routines of those labeled as exceptional, special needs, with disabilities, etc. are typically left untouched. At the other extreme, the post et al.s, I feel that the practical is sacrificed in the name of the theoretical. Theory does not drive or inform or situate practice; it is practice—any relation to a classroom, a student, and teacher education seems tangential at best. Some articles I have read clang so loudly of this that I am bitterly disappointed. Data is not an issue; it appears as an after thought, a footnote. And yet, part of me really wants to enter into the halls of high theory (Lather, 1996)—little old me, special education theorist makes it big.

Mortar between the bricks: The spaces in between

How can I account for my intellectual identity, and indeed pedagogy, as paradigmatic yearning? I long to be both a real teacher educator within special education and a cogent post et al. inclusive educational theorist. Is this possible? Does teacher education identification necessitate an/Other? Can identity only be defined against Others, so that no matter how often, or how layered, or
how comfortable identification is “with” our like educational communities that at least one Other is required to render a sense of identification completeness — indeed a sense of identity. And, if we all need an Other, can the Other be so seemingly temporary, extemporaneous, and so readily situated? I must question myself, when I perform the teacher educator within special education who—or what—is my Other? Who—or what—is my Other within the context of the inclusive post et al.s?

To see the spaces in between, the usefulness of a less rigid paradigmatic approach, it took a student in my Enhancing Classroom Management class to show me the way. During Veitch’s (2005) presentation on her Classroom Management Assignment, how she used classroom meetings, I was struck by her analysis. She had baseline and intervention data pertaining to classroom cleanliness and expectations. The following are some of the headings from her PowerPoint slide presentation: “The students problem solved how to fix messy classroom. Results: everyone having an end-of-the-day job and there was a dramatic improvement” (Veitch, 2005). However, as she continued her presentation, she clearly articulated that the real data were things like the new kinds of friendships, social patterns and sense of belonging that emerged as a result of these classroom meetings:

Real Results: Connectedness + Belonging

- improving social understanding
- better self-control
- less impulsivity
- more effective conflict resolution strategies
- attribute more importance to schoolwork in classes in which they feel liked, accepted, and respected by the teacher and fellow students

Classroom meetings send the message that every student counts and that their thoughts and decisions are valued. Many publications advocate classroom meeting improve an overall social competence in children. (Veitch, 2005)

The positivist data were discarded for interpretative views thought to be more significant as they accounted for substantive shifts within her classroom. Building railroads and towers — doing something concrete like these practical assignments, at least opens possibilities for student to reframe their pedagogy in other ways — ways that may be more significant to them. Clearly, I need to continue to explore this in-between space. There may be more of the practical in the mortar than in the bricks.

REFERENCES


Cherland, M., & Badali, S. (2005). A revisioning of the middle years program in the faculty of education at the University of Regina. A research project funded by the Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit.


This paper presents the nodal moment (a particular moment in time that has importance or value in some way, that is perceived as a significant occurrence) as a frame for critical examination of teaching and learning, and provides theoretical support for the use of illustration to depict nodal moments as an effective reflective process, especially in the self-study focus of reflection on context and practice (Baird, 2004, Manke, 2004). Combining the literature from visual literacy (Goldsmith, 1987; Graber, 1990; Levie, 1987; Stonehill, 1998; Waddell, McDaniel & Einstein, 1988), reflective practice (Campoy, 2005; Henderson, 2001; Schon, 1987) and the more specific genre of self-study research (Allender & Allender, 2001; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004; McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 1996; Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2004; Whitehead, 2000), the following three self-studies present the use of illustrative nodal moments as a tool in understanding the context of a moment, as an effective process in eliciting reflection, and as a promising frame for self-study research. Deb and Mary worked collaboratively together in their self-study of practice. Jerry and Stefinee worked separately on their own self-study research using nodal moments. However, all three studies became collaborative in the process of making sense of the data.

SELF-STUDY #1: EVOLVING AS AN ADMINISTRATOR: EFFECTING CHANGE THROUGH NODAL MOMENTS
(Deborah Tidwell and Mary Manke)
This self-study examines the use of illustrated nodal moments to examine the practice of two administrators. Mary serves as a full time associate dean in the College of Education at her university. Deb serves as the coordinator for her division of Literacy Education and the director of the reading clinic in the College of Education at her university, where her administrative duties are only a part of her work as an associate professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

In our previous self-study research, both of us have used forms of visual literacy to examine practice, whether through photography (Manke, 2004) or through illustrations (Tidwell, 2002; Tidwell, 2006; Tidwell & Tincu, 2004). Our use of illustrative nodal moments in this paper grew out of Mary’s work in the use of artifacts as a method for self-study (Allender & Manke, 2002; Manke & Allender, 2006) combined with Deb’s work in the use of nodal moments for examining student knowledge (Tidwell & Tincu, 2004) and for self-study of her own practice (Tidwell, 2006; Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2004). Our moment-specific sketches created from reflection of our administrative practice became the artifacts for our self-study. These artifacts reflected the perceived context of each moment (Richardson, 1998) embedded with emotional elements, which enhanced the communication of that perceived reality. We used these nodal moment artifacts as the catalyst for discussions about our practice, where we made sense of that moment through our interpretation of the experience, allowing meaning to evolve and learning to occur (Mezirow, 1990).

THE PROCESS
We began this self-study with very different experiences in both administrative work and in the use of illustrations to study practice. Deb came into this self-study from having worked with illustrations in her own self-study work about her teaching and in her instructional work with her students. I (Deb) approached this self-study with some confidence and comfort in using illustrated nodal moments as a form of self-study. What was new for me was using nodal moments in a less structured setting and in partnership with a colleague who was also using illustrated nodal moments to self-study practice. On the other hand, Mary was not as confident about drawing. I (Mary) came to this self-study with confidence in the visual image as a reflective symbol for examining meaning. However, I was less comfortable with the idea of actually drawing.

The process of drawing specific moments in time that are important in our work sounds simple enough. But the move from a specific teaching focus in nodal moment study to the broader administrative work was a bit daunting. I (Deb) saw the administrative context as a much less structured environment than my teaching. I found it
difficult to initially start. My responsibilities as an administrator encompassed many different contexts and many different foci. For me, the greatest initial struggle was just trying to determine where to focus, what would be the context, and where I should begin. For my first nodal moment in this self-study, I used a doodle I had already created during an earlier work-related meeting to begin the conversation with Mary. Mary sent an illustrated nodal moment focused on her interactions with a particular faculty member. In our second nodal moments e-mailed to each other, we both focused on issues of too much in our work (see Figure 1). Mary drew an imaginary bulletin board with all the tasks and assignments she would like to complete. Deb drew herself as a juggler trying to keep all her roles going. These initial nodal moments were critical in helping us begin the conversation. From these drawings we decided to look at three broad areas of concern and interest in our administrative work: (a) the interaction of aggression from individuals we “administer” in our roles as administrators; (b) this feeling of too much that we expressed in our second nodal moments; and (c) meetings we attend in our work.

The act of developing focused areas was helpful. We did not stay tied to those foci, but it did afford a sense of manageable content to begin our study.

An important part of this nodal moment process was the constant exchange of ideas and interactions to our drawings and the meanings elicited from the drawings. We also found that early on a set of question prompts helped us to focus on what we wanted to examine. Examples of these prompts are: What does this moment represent? What does this representation mean? Why is this moment important? The illustrated nodal moments continued across six months, with each of us submitting to each other a nodal moment drawing about once a month. We also met two more times (August and...
October) face to face to see where we were and to discuss our drawings, the meanings within the drawings, and the understandings that evolved from the process. These face-to-face meetings seemed the most helpful as they afforded us a chance to really look at the moments over time, to discuss where we were then at the time of the drawings, and where we had evolved as time had passed. What became apparent was the value and importance of the talk that accompanied the illustrations, which engendered ideas and concepts not always clear at the time of the drawing. It was this collaboration through our discussions of our nodal moment drawings that provided grounding for our understanding of our practice.

As the drawings developed over time, we often drew metaphors rather than a real moment in time (see Figure 2). These metaphors seemed to capture the dynamic being addressed more.

In the metaphor on the left, Deb is depicted as running the gauntlet through a myriad of interruptions, staying the course and completing the coordination of schedules for her division. On the right, Mary is seen preparing to climb every mountain in her quest as an administrator, with the final destination of the biggest mountain not even visible. Are the outcomes clear? Is the end result known? These metaphors helped us to depict the challenges in our administrative work as well as the affective nature of being an administrator.

Both of us were surprised by the understandings and knowledge about our work that came out of this process. Through the creation of these nodal moments and the collaborative discussion of these moments, we were able to better understand the dynamics within our administrative work and the values we find (or don’t find) in our work as administrators.

**SELF-STUDY #2:**

**NODAL MOMENT INQUIRY INTO THE TEACHER SELF (Jerry Allender)**

The focus of this study is on the effect of the nodal moment process on what a teacher educator learns about learning through interactions with a young child. I use illustrative and descriptive nodal moments of time spent with my three-year-old grandson to better understand the teaching and learning of a preschool child. Nodal moments in this context are defined as intellectual thoughts that come attached with feelings of excitement—signifying that an intuition is telling the teacher/researcher that something buried in the more cognitive aspects of the thought or experiences is going to prove particularly fruitful. These intuitions are neither arbitrary nor capricious, but grounded in experience, knowledge and reflection, and when followed through with deeper probing and examination can yield valuable insights.

Over three years of caring for Dylan, the experience has taught me something new: what seems to give him the most smarts is having a breadth of experiences that are opportunities for learning. First we have fun, and while we are so engaged, we check out the world around us together. The most nodal of moments, in the sense they have been defined for the collective efforts of the authors, was the first poster board we filled out together with our marking-pen drawings, all the while talking about what we were drawing, some in response to what he asked me to draw. The result hangs in my bedroom—a wonder of mixed scribbles (with meaning) and images clearly drawn by an adult hand, all in an array of colors. The painting evokes for me thinking, feeling, and a conversation. He’s not interested in it anymore, at least for the time being, having moved on to new drawings and so much more that his world offers.

Another place we create together is at my workbench in the basement. We started with pounding in nails and graduated to the use of many of my tools. The nodal moment emerged as we discovered we were creating a house with a windmill—one small piece of wood drilled with a hole that got attached to the top with a large nail. It spun. He wanted a door, and I suggested affixing a hinge on one side leaving the other to flap open and closed. He figured out penciling in the door and told me it was dark inside. The second object was similar but because of the peculiarities of its construction, we agreed to disagree: for him it was a seesaw, for me, a grandfather clock. Again, in the collection of his toys, he has lost interest in them, but they persistently make me wonder.

In between these two experiences, there are two instances of words he used that are particularly evocative and relationally provocative when thinking about development and learning. The first of these nodal moments was when I was struggling with the DVD player that had just been reconfigured. “Don’t worry, Grangran, you’ll make it work.” The spirits must have moved the universe, because I did. And the other was when he spoofed me for the first time. I don’t remember the build up—where he slyly told me something other than what was true—but when I was quizzical, with a smile he countered, “Just joking, Grangran.” All along I’d been pondering on how, through language, he had some real sense of building a mutually supportive relationship with some of the people in his life, one with empathy, the other with laughing together.

The last of my examples is nothing more than this little three-year-old boy, just deplaned from Costa Rica where he’d been with his parents visiting his uncle, coming out of the concourse at the security check and seeing his grandparents for the first time in two weeks. See in your mind’s eye, just as he sighted us, arms raised in a giant V, stepping out of his stroller even before it came to full stop, saying in full voice: “Nana!!! Grangran!!”

There’s much more to tell. Nodal moments of resistance, so ubiquitous in human life between ages two and three. Discussion of what’s happening here conceptually. These words will have to be left to the discussion at the session. Here, though, are a few of the concluding words I want to share. I think that all of my teaching, and my future learning, will benefit from dwelling on these experiences, and it is particularly helpful that they have been embodied in evocative memories. They are not all visual,
just as I learned from years of doing research on mental imagery (Allender, 1991). The drawing and constructions qualify without a hitch. But the sound of Dylan’s voice uttering a few pithy beautiful words and the image of his greeting at the airport qualify as well. These moments marked in my memory tell a large story of enthusiasm, wonder, creativity, humor, intellectual and emotional smarts, and the beginnings of reasonable feistiness. This is what powerful learning is about. It requires good teaching, a diligent student, and a supportive environment. At another level, it takes building a mutually supportive relationship. And, ultimately, it’s the student’s needs that are primary.

SELF-STUDY #3: UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS’ UNDERSTANDING OF A TEACHER EDUCATOR’S LOVE: EXPLORING NODAL MOMENTS
(Stefinee Pinnegar with Mary Lynn Hamilton)
The purpose of this study is an examination of what a teacher educator learns about the analysis of nodal moment drawings (Tidwell & Tincu, 2004). The data for the study are pictorial representations drawn by preservice students and their teacher educator. Nodal moment drawings allow us to see in an instant how we construct a particular situation—its boundaries, characters and relationships. Three kinds of things were the basis of my analysis—skeletal understandings, essential relationships, and surprise elements. As I approached a drawing, I tried to determine what skeletal understanding about the topic or event was being communicated, using the figures and elements of the drawing as well as the text. Second, I explored the relationships among objects, events and humans present in the drawing. Finally, I focused on surprise elements. These surprise elements were the details carefully included in the drawing that did not seem to be part of the skeletal understandings but which provided texture and depth to the analysis and raised questions about the other two features I examined. While methods employed here follow the pattern of typical qualitative research discussed in Miles and Huberman (1994), Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and others, I recognized as I engaged in the analysis that this methodology seeks to explore, reveal, and establish ontology rather than assert epistemology (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2006). Further work on this methodology promises to contribute much to the discourse of teacher education and self-study.

From earlier work (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2000; Pinnegar, 1989; Pinnegar & Carter, 1990), I understood the asymmetric relationship of trust in teaching. In teaching, students must trust teachers if they are to learn from them. Teachers’ informal theories of teaching identify trust as a crucial component for student learning. If classrooms are to run smoothly and learning is to prosper, students must trust their teachers (Pinnegar & Carter, 1990). From work on what can be learned about teaching from mothering (Pinnegar, Lay, Bingham, & Duluude, 2005), I understood the vulnerability that loving students creates in the teacher-student relationship. The most powerful understanding I reached in my analysis was that when students know that we love them, they allow us to see what I call here their spiritual self.

As I looked through my drawings there were four places in which I had elected to draw multiple images of one character in the drawing (Drawings #1, 2, 5, 6). One of the characters was drawn in yellow and the other was drawn in black. The yellow character captured one character before a moment of connection between the characters. In one of the drawings I actually drew lines of connection. From these four drawings, I realized that in the moment when students connect to us, they and we become more firmly connected to the world and more present in it. Because they recognize our love, it creates from them a safe place that allows them to simply be who they are. When students feel connected and safe because they recognize and feel the love of a teacher, they allow their spiritual self to become vulnerable. By allowing themselves to be vulnerable—to advice, critique, and support—they are positioned to learn more. Two other drawings are pertinent here (Drawings #3, 6). Both capture visits from students in my office, where they opened up in ways that allowed me to provide more emotional and intellectual support. They allowed me to guide them in career decisions, in academic work, and in connecting to the university. When my students realized that I loved them, they made more powerful classroom performances, they asked real questions and revealed their difficulties in understandings, and they tackled harder projects. Two of the drawings capture classroom events (Drawings #4, 7). In one drawing students are doing a classroom presentation. They are presenting a chapter on adolescent peer relationships in which they used cell phones and conversation to do the entire presentation. The second drawing captures the last day of class in a different class. What both reveal is that when students know that we love them they are willing to take risks.

The last theme in the drawings of nodal moments is the deepened understandings I developed about trust. When students know you love them, they are more inclined to trust you. One drawing captures notes from students (Drawing #8). One of the notes came from a student preparing for student teaching the following semester. In her note, the student asks if I would be willing to come see her when she was struggling. In teaching we often learn the most from our mistakes, but that is not usually a time we want just anyone to be there watching. Yet, that might be the time when an observer can help most. This student trusted me to see her when she might be at her worst, because she trusted that she would be able to learn, creating a situation for growth and change in which she would be extremely vulnerable.

Ironically, it was not in the moment that I realized my students knew I love them but in reflection—after the immediate contact was gone. What this suggested to me is that we, as learners and educators, re-learn what we learned in an experience when we reflect, examine, grapple with and re-experience it. I learned that when students knew I loved them they opened their spiritual selves, they
took greater risks and acted with more confidence, and finally, it both increased and exposed the trust needed to support student learning.

**MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THREE SELF-STUDIES**

With all three self-studies engaged in a nodal moment reflective process, we found the use of nodal moments an interesting frame for examining practice and contexts. However, such data gathering, analysis and discussion is most difficult to fully represent within the frame of a proceedings paper. In our conference presentation, we will provide examples of our nodal moments and analysis, along with the understandings and realizations that emerged from these drawings.

The collaborations across the three studies were embedded within the process of data discussion and in preparation for presentations. For these self-studies, the dynamics of face-to-face discussion were more fruitful than attempts toward collaboration at a distance. At the Castle, we will present ways in which we were able to make connections across our different self-studies through collaborative discussion of our data, and provide suggestions for future use of the process in enhancing our understanding of the data and our practice, as well as the possibilities for continued use of nodal moments in our research and practice.

**REFERENCES**


CONTEXT
The first author has aimed to design assignments to foster preservice teachers’ skill at observing and explicitly interpreting people and events in their fieldwork sites in order to develop their phronesis or practical knowledge (Korthagen, 2001). When we began our work in the summer of 2004, we reviewed and analyzed students’ work from the first two years these assignments were used (Fall 2002 & 2003). (They had all been evaluated and returned to students quickly). We felt our work would be a straightforward research project using a constant comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1976; Strauss, 1987) complemented by concern with reflection (Korthagen, 2001; LaBoskey, 1994; Rodgers, 2002).

We found that the project soon turned into a self-study. The second author acted as the critical friend to the first by asking questions such as “Why did you think this student had done well?” or “What was it you hoped that the students would write for this assignment? Why was it important?” and “What is the purpose of this course?” These questions, raised during analyses, required the first author to explicate and clarify her goals and thinking. Our discussions of purposes for and analysis of completed student work also led us to explore ways to modify assignments as goals became more explicit.

All this discussion went on in slow research time, over three summer months, during which we could debate what we were seeing and what it meant. We had time to think about the sequence of assignments for the course, and how the intended student learning from each would build on each other just as the separate themes in a fugue come together in the final resolution of the fugue.

The overall course goal was that students would build a knowledge of practice, their phronesis (Korthagen, 2001), by becoming more aware of their own biases and more attuned to salient features of classrooms and pupils. As Pendlebury (1995) pointed out, "the salient features of a situation do not jump to the eye ready labeled for easy identification. It is up to the teacher to pick them out" (p. 59). We sought to determine how/if assignments fostered observations of salient aspects. We also looked at whether the assignments helped students reflect on their observations.

A host of teacher educators have pointed out the central role that reflection must play in exemplary teaching, basing their ideas on Dewey’s work. We analyzed student work to look for reflection, and focused primarily on how claims were made. In a recent review of Dewey’s work, Rodgers (2002) noted that a key aspect of reflection is using evidence to form conclusions and being able to regard conclusions as tentative. Non-reflection is characterized by quick interpretations that are unquestioned and not clearly based on evidence.

THE FAST TIME OF TEACHING
After the summer of data analysis we co-taught the course together in Fall 2004. Our dialogue about purpose and goals continued during our planning for each class session. We read and responded to student journals each week, discussed the actions of students and our interactions with them, and met with individual students. In all our talk and responses to students we kept in mind how each class and each assignment contributed to the overall course goals. In summer 2005, following our co-teaching, we again analyzed students’ work. We compared this work to what students had done in the previous years. We also looked at the work students from 2002, 2003, and 2004 completed to document their student teaching. Due to length restrictions, we will not include work from student teaching here. We illustrate our self-study by describing some key realizations and the analysis and evolution of just one of the assignments used.

REALIZATION ONE
During our first summer of data analysis, we became aware of the complexity of the changes we were seeking to foster. We were hoping that our students would begin to move from a student’s perspective to a teacher’s perspective on classrooms. These successful preservice teachers had a great deal of practical knowledge about how to act as students in a classroom. We hoped that we could begin to help them develop the kind of practical knowledge teachers use. We used Becker and colleagues’ (Becker, Geer, Hughes & Strauss, 1961) notion of perspective here. As such, a perspective is “a co-ordinated
set of ideas and actions a person uses in dealing with some problematic situation, to refer to a person’s ordinary way of thinking and feeling about and acting in such a situation” (p. 34).

Fuller and Bown’s (1975) classical work documented that new teachers’ concerns first centered on themselves and then gradually shifted to center on students and their learning. Eick and Dias (2005) also found these concerns and shift. The preservice teachers in our class were not yet teaching so they did not have as much reason to focus on themselves. We hoped that we could help the students develop some aspects of a teacher perspective that would allow them to make the shift somewhat more easily.

**REALIZATION TWO**

Teaching together contributed immensely to our abilities to do slow time analyses because all of what happens during a course does not get captured in the students’ work or teachers’ notes about the classroom. Having two of us there helped us recall small details that seemed unremarkable at the time, but that proved illuminating.

In addition to changing the directions, we were careful to discuss the functions of the fieldwork challenges in more detail, and returned to these purposes when discussing the challenges. We also allowed more time for students to discuss and reflect on their work in small groups.

**REALIZATION THREE**

The above assignment reveals we were assuming that one facet of developing a teachers’ perspective involves trying to imagine a pupil’s perspective. The first author began the focus on pupils’ perspective in 2002 with a journal assignment: “Pick out two pupils in your fieldwork and describe how you think they identify (keep them anonymous!).” Here’s a response from one of the most thoughtful men in the class,

*Think this journal topic is weird. Although appropriate for our class discussions, trying to describe an identity of a freshman in high school seems like a fruitless task. I know when I was in ninth grade, I couldn’t tell you the first thing about my identity. I am pretty sure I didn’t even have one. So to try to find an identity about two of my pupils will probably be different from how they may identify.*
Resultant Change Three
Clearly, this journal assignment did not work well, not surprisingly, given the complexity of the notion of identity! In the next year we made two changes that focused on pupil perspective. First, we added an early journal entry asking them to write about a pupil who intrigued them. Second, we added the actual Fieldwork Challenge described above. In 2004, the journal prompt was: “Describe one student in your fieldwork who intrigues or puzzles you and tell what’s intriguing.”

Gregory wrote,
What intrigues me about Philipe is the fact that he’s able to slow things down in class and focus on deeper issues and related concepts. He’s very independent in the sense that even though he enjoys socializing with his classmates, when it comes time to work, they all ‘collaborate’, as does the whole class, while he is one of the few to work alone. He chugs along at what is oftentimes a slow to moderate pace, but you can tell that he gets it, because if he doesn’t he’s willing to ask what tend to be excellent questions in order to make sense of it.

Even though Gregory’s entry was rich, and we could infer why this pupil intrigued him, it was only our inference. We realized that the journal entry did not necessarily help us or our students learn about their assumptions because they weren’t asked why the younger was intriguing. So we changed the assignment for 2005, asking them: “Describe one student in your fieldwork who intrigues or puzzles you and tell why.”

The change worked for many students. In 2005 Mildred wrote:
Yesterday was my first fieldwork experience and to pick just one student that intrigues me is more difficult than I thought. This classroom is so different than I have ever experienced before. I have been placed in two classes with youth that are designated “at risk.” No one has really told me what they are “at risk” for, but I imagine that they are probably “at risk” for not succeeding or probably even completing school, among other things. Anyway, the atmosphere in the classroom is really different than I’m used to, like the students not sitting in their chairs quietly listening to the teacher. As I guess I’ve grown accustomed to, I realized though at times it may have seemed chaotic but the kids were engaged in what was going on in the classroom and that is the important thing.

Reading these assignments led us to realize that we, too, often focused on intriguing students and, sometimes, failed to explore fully the reasons for being intrigued. The exercise reminded us of how we needed to monitor carefully our assumptions and reactions about students.

REALIZATION FOUR
Our commitment to reflection, and the way we operationalized reflection for our analyses, focused on making tentative claims. We looked at how students gathered and used evidence, but our highest evaluations were for the students who were able to offer more than one possible interpretation of pupils or events. And yet, we had not explicitly asked for students to offer more than one plausible interpretation.

Resultant Change Four
The first time we used the Pupil Perspective assignment mentioned above, we asked students to infer a possible perspective. In the 2005 instantiation of the challenge, we asked students to portray the pupil perspective and then asked them to sketch out a possible alternative perspective that also fit with the data provided.

In 2004 Angela wrote,
I find this student’s behavior intriguing because I can relate — I know that I am a very “driven” student myself, and I often find myself frustrated when I am enthusiastic about participating but am not being called on…. Throughout all of my schooling before college, I remembered being impatient with waiting for my classmates to answer, especially when it appeared to me that my classmates did not want to answer or had not done the reading and could not. It is a feeling that often mistakenly comes off to the student as a lack of caring from the teacher, deliberate ignoring to spite the student, or in this particular student’s scenario — “oppressing” the student.

She then went on to write a portrayal from the pupils’ perspective that fit her description closely and that also tacitly assumed the pupil was just like she had been.

In 2005 Leanne wrote,
Herman’s numerous disruptive behaviors caught my attention. He was loud, obnoxious, and rude: chattering while the teacher was talking, kicking the girl in front of him, yelling “shut up” to a classmate, and throwing a lollipop out of the window at someone. He hardly ever paid attention in class, and he never took any notes or did his homework. … My view of Herman changed when Herman pulled out a pen from his pocket and started working on the worksheet. I had guessed that he would make some comments about not having a pen or a pencil and use that as an excuse to not do work. I realized my earlier view of Herman was presumptuous. I started noticing when Herman was learning or doing work. From my observations, math puzzles seemed to interest him, and rewards such as lollipops were definitely an incentive for him to finish his work. He seemed quite smart too; he finished the worksheet quickly and almost effortlessly. Although Herman acted unmannerly most of the time, he revealed an interest in learning sometimes. He needed encouragement and incentives to keep him on task. It is possible that Herman has Attention Deficient Disorder, as he never sits still in class.

Leanne went on to write two different portrayals of Herman, one showing him as generally bored with school and the other showing him as trying hard and ashamed when he could not do all the work.
REALIZATION FIVE

Much of the writing on phronesis, whether by teacher educators or philosophers in the hermeneutic tradition, (e.g., Gallagher, 1992) mentions the moral component of phronesis. It was easy for us to read this, and say “Yes, but of course.” However, careful examination of the goals for student work led to the realization that a major impetus was the hope that future teachers would develop the belief that all pupils can learn if they so choose. Course challenges and readings provided evidence for this belief. From that belief should come an ethical commitment to work to ensure that all pupils have opportunities to learn. Until we started working on this project, and she started reading philosophers again, the first author did not take care to explicate her moral commitments. They were there, but largely implicit, which meant they were not immediately available as yardsticks to judge her own work. In looking back, this work has enabled her to trace the development of this ethic, starting from the early days of teaching when she made quick and mistaken assumptions about pupils. It is possible, now, to interpret the evolution of the challenges we set for our students as reflecting the evolution of a teacher’s ethical stance. As with self-study, work with a critical friend (and colleagues in the self-study community) has enabled the first author to explicate her own ethical commitments and therefore attend to the ways in which she lives these commitments, or, on bad days, fails to live them. For example, this analysis of her use of the pupil perspective assignment refreshed her commitment to making the effort to see each of her students’ perspectives.

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INTRODUCTION
Much of the literature on self-study appears to be connected to classroom practices. Like Boody (2004), I propose that there are other types of practice that could be investigated using the self-study principles. If the aim of self-study is to critically consider one’s teaching practices in order to make changes to them with the help of evidence that the changes led to improvements (Loughran & Russell, 2002), then I believe that my experience as a consultant working with a group of educators falls within the characterization of self-study.

As trainers and consultants in the field of early childhood education, we are often invited to facilitate professional growth and development of individuals and organizations. The basis of those invitations is that we are identified as experts in the field who have specialized knowledge from which educators and programs can benefit. We eagerly go into centers and hope that our involvement will result in sustainable change. Sometimes, however, we get that and much more. Sometimes, our experiences affect change not only in the environments where we work, but also in ourselves, in our ideas and our teaching practices. I had the privilege of having such an experience as I worked with a group of educators at a local child care centre.

I first encountered the educators as a result of an invitation to assist them in strengthening their teaching skills. During the course of my career I had received other invitations such as this one and had worked with other educators in helping them improve the quality of their program. At the time I received this invitation, there was no reason to believe that the results of this experience would be different from the results of my other experiences as a consultant. But I was wrong as this encounter proved to be significantly different. My work with the educators over a ten-month period took me on an unexpected journey in self-study that clarified and expanded my understanding of constructivism and the use of constructivist principles in facilitating the professional development of educators.

CONTEXT
As a graduate student at the beginning stages of my program, I was enrolled in an independent study course entitled Constructivism: Theory and Implication in Educational Practice. My professor, who was also my thesis supervisor, had been contacted by the Director of a community child care centre seeking assistance with professional development for staff. Since the focus of my study was the training and education of early childhood educators and their relationship to teaching practice, and since I had consulting experiences prior to enrolling in the Ph.D. program, my supervisor recommended me to the Director.

THE PLAN
Prior to meeting the Director, I formulated my consulting plan based on a combination of best practices research in the field of early childhood education and my past experiences with similar work. I decided to observe in each, individual classroom using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), a valid and reliable assessment tool used in the field to assess quality (Bryant, Clifford & Peisner, 1991; Dunn, 1993; Kontos, 1991). The ECERS is a 43-item Likert-type scale designed to examine the global environment of a child care centre (Harmes, Clifford & Cryer, 2004). The 43 items are categorized into 7 subscales that include Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language and Reasoning, Activities, Interactions, Program Structure, and Parents and Staff. The items within each subscale are rated on a 7-point scale according to the detailed set of descriptors provided for each of the odd-numbered ratings. The items address aspects of care that have been deemed by an international group of experts in the field of child care to be important elements in determining the quality of care provided.

In North America the ECERS is used extensively in research projects as a measure of the quality of child care settings under study. It is also recommended for use as an instrument for consultants when assessing quality for a variety of purposes. Additionally, the authors indicate that educators may use it for self-study with the goal of
identifying elements of strength and those that require improvement. Consequently, the ECERS was selected as the appropriate instrument for an examination of the global environment of this child care centre. Following the sequence of items outlined by the assessment tool, I planned to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each classroom and to work with individual staff to strengthen the targeted weaknesses identified.

As I was familiar with elements of andragogy, I developed my plan around a model that regards adults as self-directed learners who take responsibility for their own learning and empowers facilitators to share in this responsibility (Knowles, 1990). With that in mind, there were several characteristics of the learning situation to which I planned to pay special attention. These included establishing a climate conducive to learning; creating a mechanism for mutual planning whereby the responsibility of planning the learning process would be shared between me and the learner; diagnosing the needs for learning by involving the learner; formulating directions of learning based on mutual negotiation between the learner and myself; designing a pattern of learning experiences in relation to the learner’s readiness to go through the steps that have been identified; utilizing active learning strategies such as experiential techniques; and responding to different needs that may emerge through the process.

While neither I, nor my supervisor, explicitly designed the independent study course in which we were involved to be connected with the consultation process, the parallels that emerged were far too compelling to ignore.

**THE PROCESS**

I came to the independent study course with some basic knowledge of constructivist theory. I had read various books and articles that explained Jean Piaget’s cognitive constructivism and Lev Vygotsky’s social constructivism and considered myself an advocate of active learning. I had not however, up to that point in my own academic career, taken the time to fully appreciate the attributes of constructivist theory and digest their implications.

Unlike my previous readings about constructivism that often dichotomized social constructivism and cognitive constructivism, the work of Catherine Twomey-Fosnot (1996) to which I was introduced during my course and discussions with my supervisor, challenged me to consider the combining efforts of individual representation and community discourse. The results of this intricate combination provide a vehicle for ideas being accepted as truths by the whole community. Twomey-Fosnot suggests that what takes place is a dynamic, reciprocal, interconnected relationship where the individual’s search for meanings occurs within a social context that both fuels the individual construction process and acts as a place where meanings, once constructed are shared. She further highlights that the sharing of ideas within the community provides new possibilities and perspectives to the individual as he/she goes through the process of perceiving and conceiving ideas. New perspectives shared by others are not merely mimicked by the individual. Rather, they are interpreted, transformed and represented back to the community where they continue to contribute to further developing “taken-as-shared” meanings.

Shortly after I met the educators of the child care centre, observed in their program, and reviewed their processes, it became apparent to me that the centre was made up of individuals with varying levels of knowledge and commitments to educating young children. I started to wonder whether these elements contributed to their implementation of strategies that often collided with each other and subsequently produced friction between the staff.

In an attempt to clarify my understanding of Twomey-Fosnot’s (1996) ideas, I started to see relationships between what I was learning through my independent study course and what I was doing with the child care centre educators. With the help of my supervisor’s probing and thought-provoking questions, my insight regarding the role of community in learning started to shift. I began to consider the possibilities of community as equal partner in learning. As a result, I modified my original consulting plan. Where my initial focus was to work with the individual educators, help them develop new skills and apply them to the community in which they worked, I decided to reframe my focus and recruit the community as a partner in the consultation process.

I facilitated a workshop where the staff could discuss the goals they had for the children who attended their program and how we could work together to carry out those goals. The purpose of the workshop was as much to generate goals as it was to create a community of dialogue and discourse regarding knowledge, values and beliefs. One of my primary goals was to provide the group with the common experience of discussion, debate and negotiation in a safe environment. As facilitator, I made sure that all members had equal opportunity to contribute to the exercise and that no one member’s views dominated the discussion. During the workshop the staff members were asked to individually generate five goals they had for the children and families in their program on five separate sheets of paper. Without sharing their results with the large group, they were asked to rank them in importance from one to five, with one being most important to five being least important. Following this, we posted the goals, with their rankings, around the room looking for commonalities and engaging in a discussion of how these goals could be met. By the end of the session, the staff collaboratively generated nine goals. We decided that these goals would serve as the framework to our continued work together, rather than goals determined by an external assessment tool. While I did not abandon the information found within the assessment tool, I decided to use it as a resource to inform decisions regarding program content.

Constructivism emphasizes that learning must be treated as development, not as the result of development (Twomey-Fosnot, 1996). It maintains that in order for
learners to take ownership of concepts, they must be given opportunities to develop their own questions and hypotheses and test them. As I grappled with the process of conceptual ownership during my own course, the experiences with the educators of the child care centre provided me with a powerful forum for personal meaning making of constructivism as they illustrated many of the concepts I was learning and made them real for me.

I witnessed the educators generating ideas of how to solve problems they were encountering with the children, and learning as much from their mistakes as from their successes. One of the educators informed me one day that she was ready to relinquish some control during meal times and wanted to try and allow the children to serve themselves. In preparation for this she brought several serving spoons to the lunch table and placed the bowls of food in the centre of the table. After she shared her plan with the children, she sat down at the table and assisted those who needed help. What she had not considered was that the children would extend this new-found independence to pouring their own milk. While she was not looking, one of the children tipped the milk container into his glass and spilled the milk all over the table. In reflecting upon this incident with the educator it was fascinating to participate in her recollection as she adjusted her original plan for lunch time based on what she learned from the children the day before and came up with the idea of pouring the milk in a smaller pitcher to allow the children to pour.

Like a game of balloon toss between two children, my consulting strategies gently bounced between my new-found knowledge and my observations of the child care centre. And like every toss has to be adjusted to respond to the one before in order to maintain the game, my strategies were constantly changing and evolving to adjust to my individual constructs of constructivism and my context. I found myself reframing my relationship to errors in connection with adult learning. During a day that the centre was closed to children, the educators and I decided to come in and re-arrange the learning environment. After much discussion about how the children were using the room, we drew up a plan of how they wanted to use the block area and double its original size. Twomey Fosnot (1996) highlights reflective abstraction as the driving force of learning. She states that “as meaning-makers, humans seek to organize and generalize across experiences in a representational form,” and suggests that “discussion of connections across experiences or strategies may facilitate reflective abstraction” (p. 29).

As I continued my journey of reorganizing and reframing my ideas of constructivism, active experience; inquiry learning; reflective abstraction; and community discourse played a major part. They emphasized the changing nature of development and reinforced the notion that our concepts about things, people, events, and transformations are not static. The weekly meetings I was having with my supervisor, where I actively initiated, defended, and communicated ideas became my community of discourse. My community, however, was not limited to the classroom experience. The reciprocal nature of what I was experiencing with my supervisor to what the child care centre educators with whom I was working were experiencing expanded my community. It created a natural fusion as ideas and concepts discovered in one location influenced the development and examination of ideas and concepts in another.

OUTCOMES

The process that eventually emerged through the consultation differed from my original plan. While the original plan was never completely abandoned, it was definitely adjusted and modified to accommodate my new found knowledge and experiences. The plan became a dynamic work in progress that evolved into a series of strategies reflective of a constructivist paradigm. Throughout the process, I worked in collaboration with the educators as a facilitator to enable change, rather than as an expert who...
had been hired to implement change. As identified by current research highlighting successful inservice training, sessions were available on site; continuous and constant; active and interactive; and allowed time and patience for teachers’ ideas; beliefs; dispositions; skills and techniques to develop (Epstein, 1993). The emerging process was influenced by many factors, my knowledge of early childhood education; my past experiences; the context in which I found myself; and my own journey of constructing constructivism.

Based on observations of the program, interviews with the Director and one other educator, it was evident that the child care centre and the educators within experienced some significant changes after ten months. The centre was now in possession of essential policies that had been generated collaboratively by the educators. These policies provided direction to educators when they required it and clarified procedures and expectations. Additional changes were apparent in the program being offered to the children. Many of the educators were recording observations of children’s interests and using these recordings as a basis for generating curriculum ideas. Monthly themes were replaced by curriculum charts that focused on combining what they saw the children interested in; how they planned to extend those interests; and what developmental benefits they thought the children might experience.

While these changes are significant, the primary change articulated by both of the individuals interviewed was that they felt there was a greater sense of community at the centre following this experience. In her interview, the educator revealed that what she liked least about her job when I first met her was, having to deal with coworkers. When I probed as to why this was the case, her response was, because it was very competitive. Who’s the best teacher; who has the best activities, whose kids can make the best flowers, whose kids look the prettiest? That’s how I felt. Whereas now, it’s much better. We go to each other for help if we need it, if we need materials or ideas. The Director indicated that she observed staff engaging in problem solving and spontaneous discussion of curriculum issues much more than in the past.

The process experienced by the educators at the child care centre was not without its challenges. The disequilibrium created by the changes that occurred was not embraced by all equally and some left as a result. For the ones who stayed, the disequilibrium remains as they adjust to their new relationships with curricular decisions, centre processes, and each other. What is becoming apparent, however, is that they perceive themselves as a community of educators and a community of learners empowered to influence their environment without fearing change or making mistakes. As a consultant, I felt hopeful that the change experienced at the centre would be sustained by the community and would continue to develop.

As I participated in my independent study course, I found myself connecting my own learning experiences with the experiences I was creating with the child care centre educators. At times those experiences illuminated the substance of the theories I was discovering and at other times they contributed to challenging my previously held ideas about learning and teaching. My insight regarding the role of community and community discourse in contributing to learning shifted profoundly. For me, community was no longer just a place where one represented new-found knowledge following individual construct development, it became an equal partner in that construct development. My views of mistakes in relation to working with educators were also altered. While I always appreciated the power of learning from mistakes, in working with educators in the past, I regularly designed learning situations that facilitated problem solving in the abstract. My approach consisted of asking them to consider what their plan with children was and to discuss the consequences of that plan with a goal of adjusting it to ensure success in the actual implementation. This was now reframed to encouraging them to implement their plan, experience the consequences and discuss modifications after having the concrete experience.

My experiences with the child care centre educators did not merely mirror my new-found knowledge about constructivism, they contributed greatly to strengthening my understanding of it and eventually reframing my practices in the provision of professional development. These experiences, coupled with discussions with my supervisor, became the source of my personal meaning making. They provided me with opportunities for reflective abstraction as I journeyed through my development. Dinkelman (2003) makes a compelling argument regarding the relationship between reflective teaching and self-study. He advocates for the use of self-study as a reflexive and informing process for reflective practice in teacher education. As a consultant who had been invited into a child care centre to assist the educators in strengthening the quality of their program, and as an education student, I had the privilege and the challenge of exploring the potential of self-study as a contributing factor to reframing my practices and to my development.

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In between tall library shelves, a towering, muscular figure in a fur loincloth looms over an apprehensive man who falters, “Can you tell me where I can find a book on astronomy?” Conan, the Librarian, (epic, militant music menacing in the background) lifts the man in one hand, draws him very close, and in a heavy Austrian accent demands, “Don’t you know the Dewey Decimal System?!” (Scene from the film, UHF, Levey & Yankovic, 1989).

CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY: A DILEMMA...

Librarianship has a bad name. Librarians are prim, repressive, even fierce people. Teacher Librarians are worse: they are classroom escapees who hide away cataloguing and never do yard duty. Student teacher librarians in my institution are part of the mainstream final year of teacher training, and are asked by other Method students what they do. Even student librarians carry around the stereotype. Describing a typical Teacher Librarian’s (TL’s) day, they speak of tasks like getting resources for teachers and students, loans, displays, budgeting resources, purchasing materials, arranging library space, and even, “Yelling shush.” Many come seeing themselves as managers of resources, not teachers.

Of course, they have to be managers; this is central to the success of a good library. Trying to tease out with them what Teacher Librarianship is all about is tricky. There is no standard document outlining a body of knowledge to be taught. Teacher Librarianship can be problematic for preservice students in determining how they describe and illustrate their notions of teaching, for example, in portfolio pieces. Particularly when their practicum experience involves little formal teaching, they have difficulty interpreting what this term means in libraries, where interactions with students are typically one-to-one, or with groups supporting other teachers at the beginning of a research topic. For many, teaching involves conducting a long session dealing with specific content, one of a series of lessons in a unit of work. Putting together a portfolio that has examples of lesson plans presents difficulties.

I didn’t really grasp, until early 2005, that I had failed to recognise that talking about a curriculum for teacher librarians, and suggesting ways of dealing with individuals and groups of learners was not the same as dealing with the notion of my students as teachers. We talked about the development of information literacy programs for all years of schooling; we looked at examples of units of work and individual lessons; we read of team-teaching experiences carried out in different parts of the world by TLs and subject teachers; we looked at reading interests and literature programs. My students’ assessment tasks were based on preparing work with teachers and students, and included online instructions.

When I suggest that these artifacts are perfectly acceptable as portfolio items, they say, “Yes…I suppose I could use that web-based How To guide on searching the Internet for Year 8s that I prepared on my teaching round.” Helping people acquire skills one-to-one as they need them, in context, or providing a way to learn those skills for themselves, is not seen as teaching. This is reinforced in schools: “We don’t really have a teaching program in the library,” I am told by prospective practicum TLs. Even the practicum reports provide difficulties for some supervisors who clearly do not see themselves as ordinary teachers.

This paper tells the story of an attempt to shift my teaching focus in 2005, empowering students as pedagogues in a role that can be seen largely as guardianship, through analysis of data sources (taped teaching sessions and teaching notes) in a search for critical incidents (Tripp, 1993).

Early in the year, Senese (2005) described joining his students as a learner, and this resonated with the struggles I was having considering how to help my students see themselves as teachers - the same as teachers of any other discipline. I decided then to talk to my students about some difficulties I was having as a teacher. The work I do...
mirrors theirs; I am a practising librarian in my faculty, and I team teach in the masters units, demonstrating literature searching and managing readings in preparation for literature reviews in proposals and dissertations. Many students cannot come on campus and always want explanatory notes. At the same time that my students were to prepare a web page instructing in some aspect of information literacy, I was preparing precisely the same kind of material. In past years, I had not discussed the difficulties I was having in writing these resources with my students, but merely referred to them as (imperfect) examples of finished works that might serve as simple models.

...And an opportunity seized

Early in semester one, 2005, I tried to forefront my own thinking and experiences, hoping to encourage my students to articulate their own thinking and developing practice. Time was made in our busy schedule to include talking about teaching, as opposed to talking about the content of what they might teach.

An opportunity arose for all of us to examine my teaching, and to explore how useful it was for them to see me teaching in a formal and sustained session. A colleague had asked me to teach a masters class one morning at the same time that Librarianship Method was scheduled. I had refused – then realised the contradiction of refusing to teach research skills in front of my own students, when our topic for the week was information literacy.

INVITING MY STUDENTS TO LOOK AT MY PRACTICE

Recalling colleagues speaking of modeling teaching for their students and unpacking it with them, I hoped to be able to use this session involving the masters students to address understandings of teaching with my students. In preparing for this activity, I read a paper by Loughran and Berry (2003), but realised that what they described was not something I could really do here, as I would be teaching for about an hour and would have no opportunity, for example, to “think aloud” (p. 4). If I provided this kind of running commentary for my TL students as I taught, I would not be serving the interests of the masters students. I would have to try to make obvious what I was doing, how my interactions with the masters students were not accidental. Moreover, I didn’t have a colleague who was available to unpack the experience with me and my TL students after the teaching session, as Berry and Loughran describe. Hoping to take advantage of an episode that might still have some value, I set the scene and tried to focus their thinking.

What did they say about my teaching?

My students commented on the relaxed mood in the class, enabling interruptions and questions; they were insistent that lecturers often invited students to interrupt, but somehow made it uncomfortable to do so. They thought it wasn’t deliberate, just “part of your teaching style, something you developed over the years, something you couldn’t philosophise about.” These observations surprised me into speaking about my philosophy of teaching quite explicitly, something I had not done before. I found myself recounting a critical period in my early teaching career and reconstructing its connection to the writers (A.S. Neill, Sylvia Ashton-Warner, Bertrand Russell, and John Dewey) who’d had great influence on my teaching. One student, Eloise, talked about my philosophy being one of “sharing knowledge.”

One of my students, John, spoke about teaching as performance. John mentioned – and all the others agreed - that, “It was good how you kept enthusiastic for an hour and a bit with the hand movements (laughter) and the clicking noise (more laughter) – that was good… A bit of humour helped out, too. They were laughing at stages.” When I asked if they thought I had done that intentionally, Eloise said, “I think you’ve learned to do that – to break things up…” John interjected, “I think it’s just part of your character.” Lyn added, “Yeah – you can’t force that – you can’t decide, “I’ll put a joke there,” to make the kids laugh – it’s just something that happens. If you’ve got it, it’s excellent; if you haven’t, you can’t force it.”

My students talked about the structure of the session: the clear intention, progression through the task, summarising and relating the strategy demonstrated to the search the masters students needed to do. They spoke about the importance of the ambience, about the ease with which students asked questions and the way these were integrated into the content.

What did they say about themselves as teachers?

Responding to my question about what was useful about watching me teach, John said, “Being enthusiastic, interested in the topic yourself – if you’re not passionate about it, you just get through it.” They mentioned things they’d been told about lesson structure, making purpose clear, and so on. They liked the fact I didn’t stop for late-comers nor make a point about lateness; they saw this as important for comfortable student participation.

When I asked again how all this was useful, particularly in relation to a lesson on Dewey that John was to give to grade 6 in his upcoming practicum, he said he thought it was important to explain the context for the activity to be carried out in the class (as I had in relation to the masters students’ research questions leading to a literature search). “I’d probably start off by talking a bit about Dewey…about what libraries used to be like…and then, because I’m in the library…I can point over to where the books are (which is Dewey), and then maybe at the end let them play around with it, get a bit of hands on, rather than sitting and doing some chalk and talk.” I said, “So, you think it’s actually useful to know your Dewey numbers?” They all agreed. (Conan, eat your heart out!)

They mentioned the usefulness of the “appalling” lessons they had observed, and then John said, “Teaching is a bit like driving…the more teaching you do, the more you learn, and just try not to pick up bad habits along the way.” “You don’t learn as much from being in the passenger seat as you do in the driver’s seat,” Lyn added.
Continuing the focus

This was the first of many times when we spoke at length about teaching, and I structured more carefully the conversations we had after teaching rounds. For the first time, I asked them to reflect in writing about their teaching experiences based on the foci I’ve found so helpful through self-study. I hadn’t allowed this thinking space before, but have always rushed straight into talking. What resulted was richer than in previous years, although inevitably they mentioned workplace realities like rapport with teachers, dress codes, and the role of the principal.

After the first practicum, we discussed what had surprised them. “I was surprised I had a style. When someone answered a question, I didn’t correct the answer, but repeated it back, adding the bits they may have missed... I didn’t do it consciously,” Eloise said. “Getting them to respect me — I thought they’d run all over me... How fast I calmed down after walking into a class... it just flows,” said John. We talked about dilemmas. “Working in bad classrooms — very hot, tight space, not enough computers... I learned from it — I guess that was the most important thing,” Angus mentioned. “As for dilemmas — teaching styles! My teaching style differs from one of my supervisors — he’s quite tough — but I had to teach his way so I could get the marks,” said John. “That’s the hardest thing, once you get over the initial fighting with the kids,” added Eloise. John continued, “The first thing... to do is learn their teaching styles... If I had a class without the supervising teacher, I think I’d do it differently.” “Did they butt in at all?” Angus asked. (This had been a problem for him.) “No, but at the end they sit down with you and say, ‘I’d have done it this way’,” John replied.

In second semester, after the second practicum, I asked them to write again, adding Korthagen’s “concretizing questions” (2001, p.121) when remembering specific incidents. Their stories were about teaching groups as well as one-to-one encounters. Angus was pleased that students in his class (learning PhotoShop) were using the program for themselves, not simply doing what he had demonstrated. Eloise was excited because she had shown one student (in a school where literacy levels were generally very low) how to find specific information in a book using the index, and later saw him showing another student. Lyn spoke of her success with other teachers, finally managing to teach them to operate a data projector properly. I was pleased that they were thinking beyond traditional class settings as teaching episodes.

Other occasions to share teaching experiences happened spontaneously; instead of chatting incidentally about web pages I was designing, or wondering how I would provide good support to distant students, I invited comments and improvements. My students often suggested technological solutions or reworked expressions and illustrations I had used. At the end of the year, I asked them to amend the survey I was designing about my library service, and they contributed a great deal to my thinking about promotion of my library for the following year.

There was a fundamental shift in the way the practicum fitted into my course because of taking time to consider teaching incidents that had been important. In previous years, all sorts of matters to do with the larger political landscape of teacher librarianship (rapport with teachers, changing the image of Conan the Librarian, the territorial disputes with instructional technology staff) had had greater prominence.

Evaluating the course at the end of year, they commented on the significance the practicum had for them, as well as the importance of the hands-on nature of the course. John described the “flow from classes to rounds [as] seamless.” They appreciated my perspective, practical advice and sharing of experience; Angus talked to me about refining his work long after the teaching rounds finished.

What changed for me?

It’s too difficult both to model teaching and unpack it yourself. Reflecting at the time when I taught in front of my students, I affirmed that trying to do this on my own, especially for the first time, was deeply flawed. Putting all questions of power aside, my kindhearted students would only say positive, and to some extent, superficial things. I took an opportunity as it arose to have a conversation about teaching, but I was too close to it and didn’t realise the extent to which their comments would surprise me, prompting me to muse about the insights they had at the expense of talking about how it had informed them. I wrote at the time, “The conversation with the students was less productive than I hoped, but not without value. I found it hard to nudge them along when I was the object of their observations, and there was a tension between articulating for them what I was doing and where my behaviour might come from, and letting them tease out ideas... It would have been so much better with someone else directing the de-brief, but this wasn’t possible... I did find, to my surprise, that there was a philosophical framework sitting behind my teaching ‘style’ and I hadn’t articulated that before.”

My students honed in on something I discovered about my teaching at Herstmonceux V, when writing a fictional letter to someone who’d influenced me, during Archibald’s session. I wrote, to my great surprise, to my drama teacher. I realised when listening to the recording of the session involving the masters group that I describe teaching often in relation to this kind of sustained demonstration, rather than in relation to the three hours a week I spend with my students in the Method class. This is more like conversation, and I never once thought to unpack my teaching in this context, although I talk to them of the importance of non-formal situations like this. (What inconsistent creatures we are!) This contradiction is something I still have to address. I know viscerally there is a place for teaching as performance; there simply are times when students want us to be experts. I also know it’s important to sit in the background.

When assessing my students’ work at the end of the year, I realised that constantly examining my own work
prompts me to think and act in different ways. In the first year of teaching the unit, I thought more of how the students’ work reached some professional standard and worried primarily about good expression, originality of thought, careful citation of sources, and so on. While these may be important, what has changed is how I look at their work now to intuit the thinking they show about their roles as teacher librarians.

Two years ago I examined the ways in which students interpreted the tasks, and while I recognised they valued them, I had only begun to tease out the idea of the teaching lens through which Ashley looked at her bibliography, a piece I had not examined except in respect to my concern about too much guidance producing works that were carbon copies (Winter, 2004).

LENSES MATTER
This year, I have looked differently at the same elements in the course that were of interest to me in 2004: the assessment tasks and the way in which they can and should be important for student teachers’ development of their notions of teaching. Using a different lens, I saw something important. One major piece is an annotated bibliography supporting a unit of work. This is a standard genre that should require little description here. This task is usually done well by students and reveals their knowledge both of curriculum and resources selection. Eloise’s work was conceived quite differently – she described it herself as a unit of work, illustrated through the use of library resources, including audiovisual hardware. She looked first at the teaching, and then the resources, not simply finding good resources on a topic. This particular piece bore little resemblance to the task as set, but showed a profound understanding of how important the imaginative use of resources can be in stimulating curiosity and generating new ways for students to be engaged in learning. In past years, I may well have asked her to rework it. I can’t say if our explicit talking about teaching and the importance of the conscious instructional intervention of teacher librarians in student learning (Todd, 2004) had any direct influence on this piece of work, but I can say that the lens through which the work was conceived was a teaching one.

The practice of self-study has enabled me to realise that I am a student too; easy to state but not always to experience. I am keenly aware that I am still learning (the motto of my university) – reading in new academic areas, keeping up technically in my own field – but I hadn’t before realized that I haven’t been a student of my own teaching, that I need to observe it more closely in relation to the way in which I want my students to understand themselves as teachers. I had thought that it was sufficient to be a mentor and guide, a doctor. Joe Senese (2005) grappled with learning and teaching by learning with his students. Only this year have I thought it necessary to learn about teaching with my students.

REFERENCES


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History and Literature as Critical Pedagogy: Towards the Study of Race, Social Class, and Gender Inequality in a Teacher Education Program

CONTEXT
Well-known are the adages, “Those who do not know their history are bound to repeat it” and “Literature opens a window to the soul.” These words of wisdom have prompted many inquisitive human forays into our personal and collective histories and excursions into our individual/societal past, present, and future through reflective and projective imaginations. I have found History and Literature to be foundational bodies of knowledge that support my own scholarly, professional and personal/self-reflective inquiries. As an educator, I am committed to social justice, and am always seeking more effective ways to reach preservice teachers where they are, while pushing the boundaries of their thinking about their role as emancipatory educators and citizens for democracy. In particular, I have been faced with the challenge of fostering students’ understanding of the role of structural inequality in processes of human development and education for youth and adults over the lifespan, and for humanity over historical time (i.e., ontogenetically and phylogenetically), of promoting their understanding of the legacy of progressive education and its goals of personal and social transformation, and of encouraging their investment in liberatory educational practices and the development of all youth, all humanity.

This challenge raised a number of questions for me: How could I promote preservice teachers’ understanding of the broader context and dynamic constellation of hierarchical relationships (familial, community, societal, global) that frame their own and others’ life trajectories, processes of development and learning, and dimensions of identity? How could I enrich the problem-posing nature of their educational experience (Freire, 1970)? How could I expand students’ understanding of the sociohistorical and cultural dynamics that are embedded in the current societal relations of inequality, that inform the structure of education and practices employed in schools, and that circumscribe processes of growth, change, and learning in youth? Would these intellectual/emotional
understandings matter? What would provide a solid foundation for preservice teachers and imbue them with an enlivening sense of the exciting possibilities created through education for social justice, for all youth, adults, and for society as a whole?

AIMS
Towards this end, I pondered the myriad of factors that anchored my personal, professional, and civic commitment to and fueled my passion for social justice, so that I might use this self-understanding to support and refine my pedagogical practices with preservice teachers. Through my reflections, I realized that I understood and created meaning about my own individual development, the growth and change of children, youth, and adults, and the transformation of community, society, and humanity through the critical study of historical knowledge (my own and society’s) and through my immersion and analysis of insight-filled readings from various genres of literature. Though history held absolutely no allure for me prior to college, and literature was purely for enjoyment and escape, I discovered that my growing knowledge of and disdain for inequality fueled in college, forged a newfound love and valuation of history and contextual and critical analyses of literary works. This self-discovery led me to consider the possibility of using explicitly historical and fictional literary texts in human development courses for preservice teachers. Would my experience be theirs?

METHOD
The overarching, long-term goal of incorporating historical and literary texts was to give new disciplinary meaning to the study of the psychological foundations and to bring new life to the concept and practice of interdisciplinary study in my courses. Through these texts, students could thereby forge an understanding of development, identity, education, and social change that reflected the complexity of life and the interlacing individual-social, personal-societal, cultural/current-historical, institutional-relational, internal-external processes at play. It was my hope that preservice teachers would envision liberatory educational processes in preschool through graduate school classrooms as organically connected to the healthy transformation of teachers-students, of individuals and society.

In this paper, I will focus on two graduate courses into which I incorporated specific historical and literary texts, SCG 403: Human Development, for prospective elementary school teachers, and SCG 604: Construction and Negotiation of Identity, for graduate students in Educational Policy Studies and Research. I will discuss the theoretical framework and assumptions undergirding the critical pedagogy that guides my teaching—its challenges and possibilities. The critical texts and my emphasis for these courses addressed various dimensions of social inequality: race, gender, and social class. For SCG 403: 1) Historical texts addressed race, ethnicity and social class by Joel Spring (1994/2003), Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States and addressed gender by Christian-Smith (1990), Love Makes the World Go Round, Sealed with a Kiss and Mirror, Mirror on the Wall; 2) Literature texts addressed social class, race, colonization, and gender by Herbert Kohl (1995), Should We Burn Babar? and by Jean DeBrunhoff (1937), The Story of Babar. For SCG 604: 1) Historical texts addressed race and social class by David Roediger (2005), Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White, and by Cheryl Harris (1995), Whiteness as Property; 2) Literature texts addressed social class and race by Nella Larsen (1938), Passing. In addition to these texts, data include written texts (students’ 3-5 page response papers), verbal texts (comments and discussion in class), course evaluations, and my own written reflections after class.

OUTCOMES
On the basis of my textual analyses, this paper will examine the readings, their overarching content, my rationale for their inclusion, and their contribution to the articulation and elaboration of themes and concepts that anchored and were developed throughout the course. In addition to the textual analyses, I will examine students’ written texts addressing the readings, discussion and comments in class, and my own reflections about each class session. I will also discuss pedagogical assumptions and decisions (e.g., the changes that I made in the introduction and orientation of students to the course), differential student responses (intellectual and emotional) before and after reading the texts, the types of questions and concerns posed by preservice teachers, course evaluations, and shifts in understanding that occurred during and by the end of the courses. In addition, I will address my organization of the class discussions around these texts, my reactions to students’ queries and reactions, my responsive mini-lectures, and commentary during the course to link the historical and literary texts conceptually to the overarching purpose of the course. Ultimately, I will examine the discomfort, challenges, triumphs, low points and epiphanies that emerged throughout the courses, as well as my own questions, concerns, and worries. In addition to the analyses of the written and verbal texts, I will consider the implications of this self-study for my ongoing teaching practices, pending research projects, and overarching scholarship agenda.

My hope is that this self-study will be useful for and instructive to myself as well as other educators traversing the challenges of engaging students and ourselves in rigorous interdisciplinary inquiry and education that sustains the legacy of social justice and human development.
Negotiating Authority in an Undergraduate Teacher Education Course

CONTEXT

Issues of authority are of particular relevance to educators interested in fostering democratic classroom practices. Specifically, processes of negotiating authority permeate all facets of teaching experience (Shor, 1996; Winograd, 2002), and can be considered outgrowths of collaborative dialogue and decision-making intended to foster active student engagement and investment in learning. While different aspects of negotiating authority have been theorized as essential dimensions of democratic education (Boomer, Lester, Onore, & Cook, 1992; Shor, 1996), classrooms in which authority is purposefully negotiated remain more the exception than the rule in educational practice. Traditional conceptions of authoritarianism persist to such an extent that efforts to share authority are commonly perceived as completely abandoning it (Oyler, 1996).

A starting point for teachers interested in democratizing classroom practices is to understand how authority is negotiated in the classroom. We know very little, however, about this process. Theoretical claims for how authority is negotiated have been instantiated with little empirical examination, and depictions of democratic classrooms have relied more on anecdotal accounts of teaching/learning practices than systematic research (e.g., Apple & Beane, 1995). What we do know is derived more from elementary and high school contexts (e.g., Manke, 1997; Oyler, 1996; Tabulawa, 2004) than college classrooms (e.g., Shor, 1996; Wade, 1999). If teachers are to gain a deeper understanding of negotiatory practices, empirical support for their implementation, and practical guidance for sharing authority in the classroom, systematic empirical study of negotiating authority is needed.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to present findings from an investigation into how authority was negotiated in an undergraduate teacher education course. I will discuss aspects of the course experience that, based on the literature and the data, fostered explicit and purposeful negotiation of authority amongst the participants.

METHOD

The exploratory study reported in this proposal was a pilot for my dissertation. It was conducted during one semester at a large comprehensive state university in an urban area in the Northeast. The instructor (whom I will call James) was a tenured full professor who openly espoused a critical pedagogical perspective to teaching. I analyzed several sources of qualitative data: field notes and recordings from observations of whole-class sessions; one-on-one interviews with James and several students; focus group interviews with students; documents generated by James and students; and personal log reflections.

My dissertation, meanwhile, is currently in process, and is what I will present at the conference in July. It involves similar data sources as my pilot, though it is a comprehensive self-study of my own teaching practice. It includes in-depth analysis of my own teaching motivations, beliefs, and struggles, in an effort to transform my own practice and establish trustworthiness as a teacher educator (Hamilton & Finnegan, 2000; Loughran & Russell, 1997, 2002). The findings will resemble though will extend far beyond those reported below.

OUTCOMES

Three major themes emerged from the data about how authority was negotiated in this course: student choice, strategic manipulation, and structured chaos. No theme was as prominent in the data as choice. Students had choices about many fundamental aspects of the course experience, including attendance, course requirements, learning goals, materials, quality of work, and grades. One student likened this to negotiating with ourselves, since we have to figure out, make a deal with ourselves. Another said: [James] has the opportunity to control us and mold us as he wants to...[but] he doesn't so that it doesn't interfere with our critical learning... James repeatedly used his authority to invite and suggest—rather than impose and coerce—students to undertake certain activities. In this way, he used his professional experience and expertise to appeal to students' internal motivations for learning, providing them with the responsibility to make important choices traditionally considered the sole domain of the teacher.

The abundance of student choices, however, did not override or short-circuit James's influence as a teacher. He remained influential in ways resembling strategic manipulation. One student said: He takes whatever we start with and tries to get it there, suggesting James had a precise idea where he wanted each class session to end, whether explicitly stated or not. Another student described James’s teaching as trying to engineer, mastermind, and manipulate the dialogue, while a third said: He acts like it’s a free-for-all, but he always has a strategy. It's like a trick up his sleeve... James’s actions alternated between passing all responsibility to students and abruptly donning his teacher hat, which seemed to simultaneously exercise his authority as teacher, relinquish it, share it, but also negotiate it.

Such strategic manipulation translated more directly into structured chaos than an orderly classroom environment. Anything could have happened on any given day, though there were limits to what transpired. James consistently opened each class by asking: What brings you here today? One student said: This question is like the only steady thing to this class besides him being our teacher. As a result, discussions often followed an
unpredictable pattern—six, three, four, one—unlike the orderly one, two, three of other classes. Within such chaotic conditions, James nevertheless provided considerable structure. He often lectured, raised the majority of questions, and conducted classes with only a small cadre of students (never more than half) participating. Opening the class agenda both precipitated chaos and evoked teacher structure—a continual back-and-forth that seemed to define authority relations in this class.

EDUCATIONAL RELEVANCE
Fostering active participation in democratic life is a major priority of many teacher educators, though this task is complicated by limited insight into how authority is negotiated in different classroom contexts. The insights into an undergraduate classroom provided by this study demonstrate that student choice, strategic manipulation, and structured chaos present possible frameworks for negotiating authority in teacher education. Such knowledge can help us more deeply understand the complexity of authority relations in teacher education, inform negotiatory practices and future research, and help future teachers embody dispositions of democratic participation in their own future teaching.

REFERENCES


A Collaborative Inquiry Into Shared Practice

CONTEXT

The self-study of teacher education movement springs from increasing appreciation of the institutional and social contexts contributing to the complexity of teacher education (Loughran, 2005). This turn to practice as a productive site for research is predicated on an epistemological argument that much of what we can know about teacher education must come from inquiry into the practices of teacher educators at the ground-level. Ground-level investigations allow exploration of what is arguably one of the more overlooked aspects of teacher education research—how teacher educators make decisions about their practice.

This paper reports on a collaborative self-study into this very question. Three teacher educators—one experienced (TD), and two novices (SH and TH)—researched the basis for their instructional decision-making as co-instructors of a student teaching seminar course in a secondary social studies program at a doctoral/research university—extensive (McCormick, 2001) in the U.S. Southeast.

The launching point for this study was a set of questions that is almost always present but too often unstated, important yet usually left implicit, about standards in teacher education research: What is good teacher education? How would you know it if you saw it? Of course, answers to these questions are predicated on normative views of education. We have been frustrated by the possibility that a major reason these questions are so rarely addressed in the teacher education literature is that they are normative. Here, we welcomed the opportunity to dirty ourselves in the messy particulars of practice to address the following research question:

What does collaborative inquiry into shared instruction of a social studies student teaching seminar reveal about how beginning and experienced teacher educators make pedagogical choices and draw on standards to support them?

AIM/OBJECTIVES

Most educators would be hard pressed to provide a full account of competence in teacher education, though many probably know it when they see it. For guidance on what it is, how to see it, and how it develops, we turned to literature on teacher socialization (see Zeichner & Gore, 1990) and assumed an interpretive approach to making sense of how one becomes a skilled member of a professional community (Battersby, 1983; Lacey, 1985). This view emphasizes both the agency teacher educators exercise in developing their ideas of effective teacher education and the context in which that work takes place. We also relied on Dewey’s (1933) notion that professional activity proceeds along a continuum from routine to reflective. In part, we assumed there is a dimension of practice that teacher educators internalize uncritically and unreflectively, or in a routine manner. At the same time, we also assumed that there are what Munby and Russell (1990) refer to as puzzles of practice that lead to reflective examination. Borrowing from Schon (1983, 1987), we understood such reflection takes place both in-action (within the moment of practice) and on-action (after the moment has passed). In the teaching and learning space of a one-semester student teaching seminar course, we looked at what was routine and what prompted our reflection in order to understand why we made our pedagogical choices and, in turn, how collaborative inquiry into these choices informed our notions of good teacher education.

METHOD

The methods of this research are grounded in qualitative case study and collaborative self-study. Collaborative self-study is a reflexive, and typically collaborative, approach to teacher education research nested in a larger movement of practitioner research (see Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). For this study collaborative self-study meant exploring multiple perspectives, uncovering hidden assumptions, and focusing on the contradictions and tensions of teacher education practice, collaboration, and reflexivity (Ham & Kane, 2005; LaBoskey, 2005). With this foundation, the intent of the project was a concerted effort to make the pedagogical intellectual. The collaborative sense-making experiences of TD, TH, and SH combined experiences provided the bounded system for the case study (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

Data collection was accomplished through a recursive series of structured reflections and conversations about the experience of teaching the twelve class meetings of the seminar. Each of us took notes as the activities of every seminar meeting unfolded. Answering Richardson’s (1994) call to use writing as a method of inquiry, a way of knowing, each reflected on these notes and then created narratives of each particular class meeting. These narratives were typed, shared, and read aloud in research meetings held within the week following each class meeting. Common themes and points of divergence in these narratives served as the basis for open-ended discussion among us. These twelve discussions lasted from 45-90 minutes and were audiotaped and transcribed. Data analysis occurred as the semester unfolded and after the class had ended when the entire body of data could be examined inductively.

OUTCOMES

Undeterred by the complexity of the inquiry, we met our expectation that the exploration of good teacher education would get messy. The presence of three teacher educators—TD, TH, and SH—combined experiences provided the bounded system for the case study (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). With this foundation, the intent of the project was a concerted effort to make the pedagogical intellectual. The collaborative sense-making experiences of TD, TH, and SH combined experiences provided the bounded system for the case study (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Data collection was accomplished through a recursive series of structured reflections and conversations about the experience of teaching the twelve class meetings of the seminar. Each of us took notes as the activities of every seminar meeting unfolded. Answering Richardson’s (1994) call to use writing as a method of inquiry, a way of knowing, each reflected on these notes and then created narratives of each particular class meeting. These narratives were typed, shared, and read aloud in research meetings held within the week following each class meeting. Common themes and points of divergence in these narratives served as the basis for open-ended discussion among us. These twelve discussions lasted from 45-90 minutes and were audiotaped and transcribed. Data analysis occurred as the semester unfolded and after the class had ended when the entire body of data could be examined inductively.
educator/researchers did as much to complicate the question of good teacher education as it did to clarify. The continuous framing and reframing of practice occasioned by the shared narratives and open-ended discussion generated insights that challenged our sense of what counted as effective teacher education. The discussion of good teacher education bifurcated along what we describe as the idealist path, representing our commitment to a critical democratic conception of social studies teacher education, and a realist path, representing the problems of practice and the resistance we encountered from the student teachers enrolled in the seminar—challenges all too familiar to teacher educators engaged in critical teacher education (Liston & Zeichner, 1991). For example, students often resisted naming the theory implicit in their teaching. Race was an absent presence, both as a lens for understanding student teaching and in the dynamics of the seminar itself. For some, feedback intended to push the thinking of some student teachers was interpreted as harsh criticism. Democracy, power, and privilege struck many student teachers as remote abstractions. This paper elaborates on how these tensions played out in the pedagogical choices made by three social studies teacher educators.

Our situated account is a response that moves beyond claims that speak to the desirability of particular approaches of teacher education (we should do this rather than that) and descriptive accounts of programs and what happens in them (this is what we try to do and how we try to do it). The findings reported in this study provide a narrative of social studies teacher education (see Adler, 1991, 2004; Armento, 1996; Banks & Parker, 1990) in what Schon (1987) has called the “swampy lowlands of practice.” Here is the place where standards in social studies teacher education become real. We argue that advances in social studies teacher education are likely to come from this place, and require researchers willing to go there.

REFERENCES


Surviving the Recursive Condition: Two Tales From Paths Less Travelled In Teacher Education

If teacher education is ever to establish itself as a discipline it must, among other things, identify and articulate clearly all of that which makes it unique as a form and body of knowledge, that which identifies it as a set of distinctive professional practices, and that which constitutes the distinctive form(s) of study and knowledge-making that can best progress it. The very existence of the S-STEP group could be seen as a bid for self-study to represent at least one of the latter (distinctive epistemological forms), but this presentation will address a particular aspect of the former (distinctive forms of knowledge and practice) that has been concerning us as our own careers in teacher education have moved over the last couple of years. The distinctive aspect of teacher education we refer to its recursive nature, both as a form of knowledge and as a set of professional practices or career. Our paper will describe the recursive turns that have taken place in both of our teacher education careers in the last year or so, as a result of our decisions to take paths less travelled within teacher education, and it will use those experiences as a lens through which to investigate some of the tacit or hidden assumptions we often tend to make about what teacher education is as a socio-professional enterprise, and its status as a discipline-in-waiting.

There is a conceptual process used particularly in mathematics and computer programming called recursion (from late Latin recursi, recursio- a running back) which we have increasingly taken to stand as a central metaphor or descriptor for several of the disciplinary dilemmas faced when doing and studying the teaching of teachers about teaching. In mathematics recursion is “an expression, each term of which is determined by application of a formula to preceding terms” or as “a formula that generates the successive terms of a recursion.” (http://www.yourdictionary.com/ ) (Duh! Don’t you just hate it when dictionaries define terms by using the terms themselves!). More comprehensibly, in computer programming it refers to a procedure, or set of instructions, which creates clones or copies of something by endlessly calling itself. For example, a brief procedure called square which in itself just draws one square, can be made by recursion (by telling itself to square again, as part of doing the first square), to very easily create much more complex images made up of lots and lots and lots of squares.

In real life, the concept is perhaps analogous to looking in the mirror at oneself looking in the mirror, …at oneself looking in the mirror... at oneself looking in the mirror...
mirror, etc. Or, maybe another analogy could be those little Russian dolls — the person within the person within the person, the teacher who teaches teachers a thing called teaching, and so on. In our self-study of our own careers over the last two years we have increasingly come up against some of these uniquely recursive aspects of teacher education, to the point where we see it now as quite centrally, the recursive discipline.

CONTEXT
We are two teacher educators in Christchurch, New Zealand, whose careers have both taken something of a sideways/recursive shift in the last couple of years. The sideways part of these shifts see us still working within the broad field of teacher education, but in sub-fields of that professional domain that do not seem well reported, especially within the self-study literature. For both of us, the shift has involved a move out of preservice or initial teacher education into full time research and research supervision (in Vince’s case), and into inservice teacher education (in Ronnie’s). However, we have noticed that apart from the sideways element of these career moves, such as the move to a different or more experienced student population, there has also been another, almost nested or iterative, dimension to the move to new roles, which we are calling the recursive dimension. In Vince’s case, for example, he has moved from teaching pre- and inservice teachers and supervising teachers doing traditional case study or ethnographic research in a College of Education, into supervising teacher researchers engaged in specifically self-study research modes under the general heading of action research, in a private research centre. In Ronnie’s case she has moved, first into an Advisory role, supporting the professional development of teachers in schools rather than graduate neophytes, and more recently, and more recursively, into a role as a National Facilitator in a project to improve the professional capabilities of School Advisors and other teacher professional development providers.

What, then, have been the professional shifts involved for Vince in self-studying his role as the supervisor of the self-studies of others? And what has it meant to Ronnie to move from being the teacher of teachers or teachers-in-waiting, to being the teacher of fellow teacher educators? What has it meant, in short, to cope with the increasingly recursive nature of our changing roles as teacher educators?

METHOD
Reflective journals and series of co-interviews over time
• Ronnie’s story: Becoming a “teacher of teachers who teach teachers”
• Vince’s story: Self-studying the supervision of self-study

OUTCOMES
As a result of self-studying these two career shifts, and the subtly different sets of practices, different audiences and different goals and roles involved, not only have we had to come to grips with the recursive nature of doing teacher education, but we have also unearthed and challenged a number of implicit (and perhaps conceptually constricting) assumptions often made in the professional discourse about what teacher education is and comprises as a set of professional, dare we say disciplinary, practices. At a specific level the experience has challenged such assumptions about supervision and the preservice / inservice divide as:
• Supervising/mentoring self-study/action research is the same as, as easy/difficult as, supervising other non-recursive forms of research, or
• Inservice professional development — at least from the perspective of the professional developer — is a well studied and understood set of teacher education practices

At a more macro level, it has also been a salutary reminder of the particularly eclectic and comprehensive nature of teacher education as forms of knowledge and practice, and of the problematic nature of its claims as a ‘discipline’ in the academy. Do we, for example, correctly assume that:
• Teacher education occurs predominantly in the academy
• Teacher education is done by people with doctorates employed by universities
• A formal qualification is the outcome of most teacher education programmes
• Knowing and publishing are the highest goals of the teacher education enterprise, and most controversially perhaps, even
• Teacher education can and should regard itself as a discipline.
Herding Cats and Nailing Jello II: Reflections of a Reluctant Dean

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this paper is to share my self-study of being a Dean of Education. For the past five years I have been the Dean of Education at Southern Oregon University. The journey of becoming a university administrator in a faculty of education with which I was/am intimately involved has been fascinating, exciting, challenging, maddening and saddening—sometimes all in the same day. Nonetheless, it has been a wonderful journey of self-discovery and professional growth that I believe will make me a better teacher and administrator.

CONTEXT
Southern Oregon University is a comprehensive liberal arts college in Ashland, Oregon, with approximately 5,000 students. The School of Education offers graduate only programs that account for approximately 75% of all graduate students on campus. The School of Education is seen as a unique entity on campus with its large graduate student population, distance learning programs, and accreditation issues. For the past two years I have been keeping a journal of my reflections in my quest to learn about being a university administrator—something that I did not necessarily aspire to—and that is reflected in the title of this paper, Reflections of a Reluctant Dean. This is my story of self-discovery.

I have been at Southern Oregon University since my appointment as an Assistant Professor in the fall of 1988—the same time that I finished my doctorate at the University of Oregon. During this time I have risen through the professorial ranks and was promoted to full professor in 1999. I pretty much avoided administration options and was content with being a professor of education. However, in February 1999, the Associate Dean for the previous decade announced her retirement to be effective in August of that year. At the time, the university administration decided not to conduct a national search for a replacement due to the late notice and announced that an interim Associate Dean would be appointed from the existing faculty. In April 1999, the administration called for expressions of interest for anyone who wished to be considered as a candidate for the position. There were three applicants; one senior faculty member within two years of retirement, a new faculty member in his first year in higher education, and myself. After a short review of written statements from each of us, the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs announced that the newest member of the faculty had been appointed as the interim Associate Dean of Education. However, within a short amount of time, the Interim Associate Dean found out that he would not be eligible to apply for the permanent position (due to his lack of experience in higher education—a condition for continuing employment set by the Provost!) and resigned on December 1, 1999. At this time I was asked to accept the position on an interim basis pending a national search—a process that was already well underway. After a few months on the job I decided that I would apply for the permanent position and was ultimately successful in my appointment as the permanent Associate Dean and Director of Teacher Education on June 1, 2000. This permanency was threatened on December, 16, 2002 when I was summoned to meet with the SOU President and notified that my position would be terminated at the end of the 2002-03 academic year. However, the termination was retracted, and after 4 years as Associate Dean, and the restructuring of the academic structure of the university, the Department of Education became a School of Education on July 1, 2004 and my title subsequently changed from Associate Dean to Dean.

THEMES/OUTCOMES
During my first full year on the job I realized that there was absolutely nothing in my academic or personal background to prepare me to be a dean of education. While I knew something about teaching and learning and working with children I knew nothing about leading an academic unit of diverse, intensely individualistic personalities and managing a multi-million dollar budget! I had my own theories about what it took to be a successful university administrator and found that those theories were tested on a daily basis. These theories included:

• Do unto others as you would do to yourself
• Treat all people with dignity and respect
• Listen a lot and talk a little
• Be fair and equitable in terms of distribution of resources and faculty loading
• Do not take myself too seriously
• Commit to learning what I don’t know about administration
• Be honest and open about all matters that affect faculty and students
• Nurture the growth and development of faculty so that we can provide the best possible education for our students

However, I have learned that these theories about what it takes to be a good, successful university administrator have been challenged on a daily basis and what I will do in this paper is to share some vignettes that capture my life as a reluctant dean and what I have learned in the process.

DEAN(LY) ROLES
As I have reflected on my life as Dean I have come to recognize that I live-out a variety of what I have called Deanly Roles. These roles are somewhat different to the themes that emerged from my first iteration of this paper in 2002 that included:
The Dean(ly) roles around which this paper, and subsequent presentation (utilizing role play and discussion) will be built include:

- Dean as Caregiver
- Dean as Cheerleader
- Dean as Policeman
- Dean as Darth Vader

Each of these roles will be described in detail and session attendees will be invited to participate in a discussion of the dean(ly) roles and to engage in role play activities that illustrate the intricate nature of the role of a dean in a faculty of education.

REFERENCE

Let's Play Desperation: Savvy Warm-Ups for Teacher Candidates and Teacher Educators

CONTEXT
Numerous self-study scholars (Berry, 2004; LaBoskey, 2004; Loughran, 2004) assert that self-study is an attempt to better understand teacher education and to improve teacher educator practice. Munby, Russell and Martin (2001) suggest that knowledge of teaching is acquired through personal experience of teaching. Therefore it seems to follow that knowledge of teaching about teaching also develops through personal experience as a teacher educator. The purpose of this self-study is to better understand how I seek to help preservice teachers think about teaching and learning. I believe this is an essential part of my role as a teacher educator.

One central problem in teacher education is the gap between learning to teach in university classes and in practicum at schools. In order to tackle this pedagogical problem, I sought to first better understand preservice teachers’ learning experiences across the program. Although I had required reflective journals from my students and engaged in reflective writing practices with my students in previous years, my understanding of the two distinct learning contexts from the perspective of preservice teachers was minimal. Conversations with a critical friend helped me decide on a new approach that focused specifically on preservice teachers’ learning in university classes and on practicum. I am thankful for examples of electronic assignments used by other teacher educators (Hoban, 2000; Russell, 2002).

In the 2003-2004 academic years, I taught four sections of elementary science and technology curriculum methods classes (160 students). A reflective practice assignment required preservice teachers to respond to five or six questions electronically at four intervals across the teacher education program. I intended these questions to guide teacher candidates’ reflections on learning to teach and to draw their attention to learning to teach in university classes and in practicum. After each of four on-campus sessions teacher candidates submitted their stories of learning to teach electronically and I provided written responses to their reflections before sending their stories back. This process of reading 160 preservice teachers’ stories of learning to teach (4 classes of 40 students) and finding ways to respond as a teacher educator should is at the heart of my learning.

AIM/OBJECTIVES
In order to move beyond assumptions about how I respond to future teachers’ stories of learning to teach, I examined how I wrote back to students. I wanted to learn what was in a teacher educator’s feedback, and if it was helpful. It was my intention to challenge their thinking.
about teaching and learning. Nevertheless, the act of writing about self-study serves as a reality check on my pedagogy (LaBoskey, 2004), and this check is absolutely vital if I wish to continuously improve my practice.

METHOD
In order to refine my focus and make the data manageable for analysis purposes, I selected 40 stories of learning to teach. Ten stories from each of the four classes I taught reflect the range of students I taught (representative sample of female and male students; representative sample of students from diverse cultures including First Nations, Asian, Black African, South American). Three main categories emerged from the data and provide some insights into how I actually responded in print to preservice teachers.

Creating learning environments or contexts of teaching and learning where future teachers engage in thoughtful thinking about learning to teach is an ongoing aspect of my practice. Across six years as a teacher educator I realize that framing thoughtful experiences is not a small challenge. My most recent teacher educator plan included what I now identify as three distinct learning contexts for preservice teachers. The first intentional learning context required future teachers to write about their learning to teach experiences across the teacher education program in a Story of Learning to Teach. This act required them to commit some thoughts in print about their learning to teach experiences in university classes and on practicum and to send these thoughts to me. The second intentional learning context invited future teachers to think again about their learning to teach experiences when I returned their stories with my responses to their writing. The third intentional learning context took place in a university classroom and future teachers were asked once more to think again about their learning to teach experiences, but this time with their peers in small groups. This presentation will focus specifically on the third intentional learning context.

OUTCOMES
What I did learn from analyzing my written responses that may guide me in the future is that I do attend to specific teaching and learning issues. Now I need to be explicit about such issues and find ways to create possibilities for teacher candidates to discuss how and why such topics may be important for learning to teach. Too often I assume that future teachers see what I do in written comments and therefore I neglect to help them learn about it.

As a starting point, I realize that it is vital to have regular conversations about specific teaching and learning issues in my classes and not just the first 30 minutes when students return from the practicum learning context to the university learning context. Additionally, I need to reframe the purpose of these sessions so that students have some guidance regarding what to talk about. Perhaps most importantly, I need to be explicit about the central problems of learning to teach and be certain to help students keep track of the issues that they do discuss across the year. Presently, I am developing the idea of teaching and learning warm-ups for teacher candidates and teacher educators based on this self-study.

This particular application of my learning from self-study seems realistic and potentially useful when thinking about how to help future teachers consider how they are learning to teach. Additionally, I am trying to find my voice as a teacher educator seeking to create “appropriate disequilibrium” (LaBoskey, 2004) for preservice teachers so that it will prompt changes in practice. Perhaps I am really just beginning to see how my own learning experiences can and do contribute to who I am as a teacher educator.

REFERENCES


Members Talk Back: The Early Issues of Studying Teacher Education

Join us for a discussion of the first volumes of the S-STEP journal.

CLARE KOSNIK
Stanford University

New Faculty Mentoring Group

This session is for faculty who are tenure-stream and will be applying for a mid-tenure review (e.g., 3 year review) or for faculty applying for tenure in the next few years. We will begin with a general discussion about issues around tenure and then depending on the composition of the group we may split into sub-groups. Since the expectations for tenure can be substantially different from university to university depending on the emphasis within your school (research-intensive or teaching focused), it may be worthwhile to work in smaller groups with others who are in similar settings.

If you have recently been granted tenure we would welcome your participation because your experience might be useful to others. New faculty are encouraged to bring specific questions (or to email them to Clare Kosnik before the conference) to the meeting which we hope we will be able to address. Any suggestions for format are encouraged. All questions and concerns are “legitimate” and we hope to provide a safe environment for addressing them.
Defining Workspaces, Defining Ourselves

RESEARCH FOCUS
The broad focus for the research is everyday social justice in the workplace — or lack of it. The particular focus is on workspaces in the academy. The research investigates how we act on, within, in spite of, and because of, the spaces in which we work. It contributes to the continuing debate about agency and structure. This is an important question for educators, especially for educators concerned with social justice. Workspaces give powerful implicit messages to every member of an institution, including its students, about values and persons.

Workspace is a matter of social justice as can readily be seen by contrasting the office where the Dean’s secretary works with the office in which the Dean works. We think that the difference is more a matter of status than of necessity. The research will investigate and explore this issue. The four researchers hold very different positions in the academy: full professor (Morwenna Griffiths), research fellow/contract researcher (Dina Poursanidou), research assistant (Margaret Simms), and departmental administrator (Joseph Windle). Their socio-cultural positions each carry a specific status and power. We are also not homogeneous in age, nationality/cultural background, religion or gender. The research is designed to illuminate such differences and to reflect critically on them from a social justice perspective.

At the start of the research we assumed a three-dimensional space that can be photographed. However we did not assume that this would be the only space we would consider. Other possibilities included: social space, spaces of resistance, public space, thinking space, creative space, and perhaps even “the harsh and contradictory space of collaboration” (Bodone, Guðjónsdóttir, & Dalmau, 2004, p. 748). Some of these may be included as the research develops. Since it will continue to develop as the exhibition is put together, we are not yet sure (May 2006) what will be included, but we will probably include: core workspace, switch off space, mulching space, expressive space and convivial space.

PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT
Three of the researchers were involved in a visual presentation of their work lives at the Castle two years ago (Griffiths, Windle, & Simms, 2006). They found visual representation was powerful in illuminating aspects of their work that had previously remained unnoticed, unquestioned, and uncriticised. Moreover, the visual presentation appeared to have a powerful effect on the audience, as well as on the researchers themselves. The research generated an interest in the spaces in which we work. The analysis of the research used categories such as public and private, home and work, impersonal and personal, and status.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT
The project has two kinds of theoretical frame: methodological and substantive. Methodologically it draws on the rich and increasing literatures of visual and image based approaches. This literature includes, but is not confined to, work in the area of self-study (e.g., Bodies in Flight, 2001; Hamilton, 2002; Mitchell, Weber, & O’Reilly-Scanlon, 2005; Perselli, 2003; Pink, 2001; Weber & Mitchell, 2004). The literature pertaining to the substantive area has drawn from our earlier work within social justice (Griffiths, 2003; Griffiths & Windle, 2002; Griffiths, Windle, & Simms, 2006), philosophy (Le Doeuff, 1989; Merleau-Ponty, 1945), and geography (Massey, 2005; Pile & Keith, 1997).

OBJECTIVES
• To explore our own workspaces using visual and image-based methods
• To explore agency and structure at work as individuals
• To explore agency and structure at work in relation to social, cultural and professional position
• To illuminate the significance of workspace in higher education
• To encourage others to reflect on their own workspaces, and on the workspaces of their colleagues (especially where they are in authority over those colleagues)
• To invite viewers to interact with the exhibition
• To invite viewers to consider the implications for social justice in universities
• To invite viewers to consider the implications for teacher education

METHOD AND OUTCOMES
The research method was cyclical and iterative. During each cycle, data was gathered and analysed. The next cycle was then planned in the light of the previous ones. Thus the exact method was/is always provisional.

Phase 1: Initial explorations and representations (January-April 2006)
Each researcher took photos of their workspace(s) and also, for the sake of comparison, their home space(s). The results were shared by e-mail. Dina changed jobs during the project, and it has been interesting to compare her workspace and her feelings about it in two different institutions.

Phase 2: Turning visual representations into images (May 2006)
Each researcher made short comments on all the pictures, their own and those of others. This was initially by e-mail.
and then in a meeting. The discussion was recorded. As a result, some more pictures were taken and circulated, and we continued to comment on them.

Phase 3: Planning the interactive exhibition
(June 2006)
The exhibition is to be planned collaboratively. The pictures and the discussions about the pictures will be used to analyse and present the research visually and interactively. Conference participants are invited to bring their own pictures, images, objects, and so on, to add to the exhibition.

PRESENTATION FORMAT
The research will be presented as an interactive exhibition. There will be no formal spoken presentation. Rather the audience will be invited to respond to the exhibition. If a discussion develops naturally and informally during the exhibition, it will be recorded with the permission of the participants.

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