The Field Experience Journal

Volume 6 Fall 2010

Cover: ***Yakima Time Ball***

Itítmat
(counting days or counting calendar)
Time is a relationship between events,
Kept fresh in the memory by selected objects on knotted hemp.
Connection is as vital as Separation.
The strand is begun by a woman at her marriage.
By the time she is a grandmother,
The unity of life is wrapped and remembered in a Time Ball.

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Submission Guidelines:

1. Manuscripts should be no more than 15 pages of narrative (excluding references, tables, and appendices), using the latest APA style, and double-spaced on one side of 8-1/2 by 11-inch paper with justified margins.
2. Manuscripts must be submitted electronically via email attachment to kim.creasy@sru.edu containing name, position, place of employment, mailing address, phone number, e-mail address, and a 2-3 sentence description of background and experience for each author. The title of the article should also appear on page 1 of the manuscript, but do not include the author(s) name(s).
3. Pages should be numbered consecutively including the bibliography, but the author's name should not appear on the manuscript itself.
4. Charts or illustrative material will be accepted if space permits. Such materials must be camera-ready. Photographs will usually not be used unless they are black and white and of high quality.
5. Authors are expected to take full responsibility for the accuracy of the content in their articles, including references, quotations, tables, and figures. The editor reserves the right to edit articles accepted for publication.
6. Authors of manuscripts accepted for publication are expected to make a presentation about their article at the next National Student Teaching Supervision Conference.
7. There is no remuneration for articles accepted for publication, but each author will be mailed a complimentary copy of the journal. There is no fee for the review of the manuscript.

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Table of Contents

From the Editor

Dear Readers of *The Field Experience Journal:*

This Fall 2010 edition of *The Field Experience Journal* features a Yakima Time Ball on the cover. Much of the Yakima tribe's history was passed down from generation to generation by the women of the tribe using an oral tradition known as the time ball. This creation by a new bride used hemp twine to record the life history of a family beginning with courtship. They tied different knots into the twine for days and weeks and added special beads for significant events.

This edition features a collection of special events or memorable moments that were submitted and shared at the National Student Teaching and Supervision Conference. Memories included in this edition come from experiences of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors.

Prior to these memorable moments are three articles of significance. The first comes from Dr. Daniel S. Katz, Dr. Roberta Devlin-Scherer, Dr. Jim Daly, Dr. William McCartan and Greer Burroughs of Seton Hall University. Their submission of "Successful Structures for Field Experiences in Secondary Settings" discusses efforts to expand field experiences beyond the traditional classroom settings as a method of fostering teacher candidate development.

Dr. Matthew Boggan, Dr. Sallie Harper of Mississippi State University, and Dr. Kimberly McAlister of Northwestern State University in their submission titled "Achieving Mathematical Concepts One Word at a Time" focus on the necessity and importance of classroom teachers and teacher candidates connecting language with mathematics.

"Interviewing: The Two-Minute Drill" submitted by Dr. Jim LaBuda and Grace S. Thomson of Nevada State College draws a comparison between the skills needed in a successful two minute drill by an NFL team and the execution and well delivered responses of teacher candidates in interviews. This article shares the skills modeled at the last two National Student Teaching and Supervision Conferences by Dr. LaBuda.

Finally, my thanks to those who have contributed their manuscripts for our consideration and to our reviewers for their time and expertise

Kim L. Creasy

Successful Structures for Field Experience in Secondary Settings

Daniel S. Katz, Roberta Devlin-Scherer, Jim Daly,

William McCartan, and Greer Burroughs

Seton Hall University

Abstract

Reform efforts in the United States of the past two and half decades have called upon teacher education to expand its use of field experiences with preservice teacher candidates. While the premise behind this call, drawing theory and practice closer together, makes sense, there are assumptions about the field that need to be more closely examined. Specifically, if we are concerned that much classroom practice needs to be reformed, what kinds of settings can best foster candidate development in positive ways? In this paper, we discuss several efforts of our teacher education program to expand field experiences beyond traditional classroom settings into contexts that allow candidates to work with best practices, to decrease isolation from other teachers and to develop their own skills with students and pedagogy.

Introduction

In this paper, we explain one university teacher education program's efforts to use meaningful learning experiences for undergraduate teacher candidates in the field. First, we examine the current movement in United States education reform to expand the use of field experiences in preservice teacher education. Then we look at specific problems both with the underlying assumptions of that expansion and with issues that complicate the use of field for secondary education. After explaining these concerns, we turn to the need for undergraduate, preservice field experiences that are appropriate to the secondary school environment and highlight what secondary teacher candidates are capable of doing. Alternative experiences and how they specifically address the nature of secondary school teaching will be discussed as well as background information on the significance of field experiences to programs.

The Importance of Field Experience

Taking their cue from the withering conclusions of *A Nation at Risk* (1983), a flurry of reports and proposals emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States calling for greater emphasis on preparing prospective teachers for their eventual classrooms using field based experiences. Some critics argue that using this document as a foundation from which to consider reforms is problematic as it has a political agenda (Bracey, 2003, Kohn, 2007). Nonetheless, reports throughout the 1980s and 1990s continued to highlight the value of field experience in teacher training. The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy produced *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (1986), which recognized the need for the professionalization of teaching and using "clinical" schools where teacher candidates could spend an entire year in a

medical-style residency. The Holmes Group report, *Tomorrow's Teachers* (1986), also recommended the creation of both high standards for professional teachers and for "Professional Development Schools" (PDS) where prospective teachers would work with clinical faculty specifically trained to help them understand the complexities of classroom teaching. In 1995, *Tomorrow's Schools of Education* reaffirmed the importance of field-based teacher education. This vision is shared by John Goodlad (1990), Kennedy (1992) and the National Commission for Teaching and America's Future (1996).

Emphasis on teacher preparation in the field is reflected in the standards of the National Commission for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which devotes an entire standard to the depth and quality of field based work in teacher education. The NCATE standards require that a college of teacher education "and its school partners design, implement, and evaluate field experiences and clinical practice so that teacher candidates and other school personnel develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn" (NCATE, 2000, para. 1). Guidelines recommending that teachers learn from experience are not new and, in fact, can be traced to John Dewey's work (1929; 1938) in progressive education. However, the current reform and policy cycle in the literature represents a renewed interest by influential stakeholders in using classrooms to promote teacher learning**.**

Potential Concerns about Increased Field Experiences

The documents discussed above provide an articulate perspective on the role of field experiences for students involved in professional education, but they may be embraced and acted upon as much because of the deserved respect due to the authors as upon a strong research base. Englund (1986) argued that there is a difference between

teachers behaving professionally and teachers being *professionalized*. The latter tends to reduce classroom teaching to technical performances rather than content to be scrutinized with a truly open mind. Labaree (1992) also warned that the professionalization agenda in American teacher education, by promising to enhance the rationalization of instruction via performance standards, risks increasing the view of teaching as a "technical activity," a set of research-validated strategies implemented unproblematically. These critiques caution that field experiences can be used to enforce rigid, technical views of teaching as easily as they can emulate best practices.

In contrast, Lanier and Little (1986) argued that field experiences risk reinforcing Lortie's concept of "reflexive conservatism" (1975), but they also provide strong opportunities to learn technical mastery and to closely examine experiences. Feiman-Nemser and Buchman (1985) reiterated some of these concerns, arguing that prospective teachers can fall victim to "pitfalls" in experiences that teach them lessons inappropriate for the classroom. They noted that prospective teachers are already familiar with classrooms but not their complexity, university and school can be seen as two separate worlds, and classrooms are not set up for teacher education, but that such pitfalls can be overcome.

These concerns find contemporary echoes. Speaking at an American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) Conference, Fuhrman (2003) challenged educators to consider several questions: How much field work is necessary for preservice candidates? What kind of supervision for such field work is appropriate? How do we best prepare candidates for urban schools? How important is the expertise (and willingness to

work with a candidate) of cooperating teachers? Her contention is that we do not know the answers to these and other questions.

Ironically, for over two decades, reports from American governmental, educational and corporate entities criticize the current nature of schools, especially secondary schools. Yet with the increased amount of time in those classrooms, preservice teachers are often confronted with conflicting approaches to education and risk adopting the common view that universities are out of sync with the real world of teaching. In spite of districts' efforts to provide substantive professional development, typical teaching responsibilities can minimize teacher adoption and continuation of innovative practices.

Potential Issues with Secondary School Settings

Secondary schools themselves provide their own, unique, challenges to effective field experiences. Research from the past decade and a half confirms that the sociological and academic environments of secondary education are dissimilar to elementary education. The power of subject matter affiliation manifests in the fact that teachers within the same departments at *different* schools generally have more convergent views of practice than teachers from different departments within the *same* school (Grossman, 1994; Siskin 1991; 1994). Strongly organized departments, while providing affiliation and support for teachers, do not necessarily mean a commitment to improving teaching overall (McLaughlin, 1995).

Hargreaves and Macmillan (1995) describe secondary schools as "Balkanized," suggesting that departments and sub-cultures within schools isolate teachers from each other to the point that many high school teachers do not know what their colleagues are doing in other parts of the school simply because they do not see it happening. Talbert

and McLaughlin (2001) note that high schools and high school departments have distinct "cultures" that have significant impact upon teachers' practice and career trajectories. Meister and Nolan (2001), much like the previous literature on high school reform, found that teachers needed resources rarely provided and had difficulty detaching from "subject loyalty" in order to work within assigned cross-disciplinary teams.

Furthermore, despite numerous reform efforts in the United States aimed at breaking down teacher isolation, promoting collaborative practices and structuring induction into teaching, new teachers working in American schools still find themselves largely unassisted by their veteran peers (Kardos & Moore-Johnson, 2007). The persistence of the solo teacher working in near isolation despite proximity to numerous, experienced colleagues raises legitimate doubts about the ability of many schools to serve a proper venues for preservice teacher candidates. If teachers do not share and collaborate with their peers, how strongly will they model and reflect upon teaching with transitory students?

The Issue at Stake: Fielding Meaningful Experiences

For secondary teacher candidates in preservice field experiences, these observations are concerns. First, teacher candidates are expected to practice teaching methods learned at the university in the field, but those methods may violate norms of practice within their field placement. Further, schools where departments isolate teachers from other disciplines may not offer candidates opportunities to engage in best practices or to discover what secondary candidates are capable of. For all field settings, the paramount question is: What kinds of field experiences can make best use of school settings while diminishing negative influences? Our goals must be to organize

experiences that diminish the balkanization of secondary school organizations, allow for innovative and active learning and foster teacher candidate development.

Focused Field Experiences

Despite these concerns, it is undeniable that field experience is crucial element of effective teacher preparation. As Feiman-Nemser notes (2001), "purposeful, integrated field experiences" are critical places where prospective teachers test out their knowledge of teaching and where they investigate and analyze the classroom. Over time, our program has located and fostered relationships with a variety of in and out of school programs that work directly with school-aged children. These relationships have provided ongoing opportunities for secondary education candidates to experience working with secondary students in settings and to mediate the concerns discussed previously. Several examples follow.

Challenge Tutoring Program

University and school collaboration over a Goals 2000[1] project led to the development of a tutoring program for at-risk students. In this particular district, a high achieving wealthy suburban school system, at-risk meant something different than in other settings. Language issues were a concern, with large numbers of students enrolling with Spanish as a home language. Additionally, these students were close to passing the statewide tests, and often exhibited attitudes and behaviors that impeded classroom performance.

[1] Goals 2000: The Educate America Act was passed in 1994 and designed to support state level efforts to improve student performance via rigorous standards and goal development. Federal money was granted to states and largely distributed competitively to local school districts. More information on the law and its history can be found at: http://www.ed.gov/G2K/index.html.

The planning for this program was collaborative between the school system and university and involved seeking funding to permit the activities to be initiated. A faculty member from the university was present during each tutoring session for the first two years and routinely on site thereafter. The school district hired up to three teachers to be present at each session. Over the years, suggestions for improvement were made by both parties, considered, and where agreed upon, implemented. Assessment of students from both institutions has been a key component. When grant funding ended, the district committed to continuing the program.

Over the years, the collaboration has brought school and program faculty close together, and teacher candidates have volunteered to remain with the tutoring program after they have completed the experience. District officials indicated that parents want their children involved, and the school often must limit those who can be served. Faculty reported seeing middle school students sneak into the cafeteria after school for tutoring assistance, not a typical middle school behavior. The extensive work between school and program faculty have resulted in a range of collaborative efforts beyond the tutoring program.

Professional Development School

Professional Development Schools (PDS) have been an often-touted model of reform (Holmes Group, 1986; 1995; Goodlad, 1990, NCTAF, 1996) involving close collaboration between schools and universities for the purpose of teacher preparation and on-going school development. The PDS concept has been well implemented in the elementary preparation program for five years in a northern New Jersey school district. Building upon that success, steps were taken to bring a PDS model to the district's high

school. Early discussions between district administrators, high school faculty and university faculty determined that both the interns and high school faculty members could benefit from workshops on differentiated instruction. A multifaceted field experience was designed around this focus.

Each intern was paired with a cooperating teacher with whom they attended the workshops on differentiating instruction, collaborated on lessons that incorporated differentiated instruction strategies and spent time observing and assisting in the classroom. The interns also attended an on-site methods class taught by the same university faculty member who delivered the workshops and who also supervised each of the candidates in the field experience. An additional benefit in this model was the on-going contact that the university faculty member had with cooperating teachers which allowed for in-depth monitoring and support of the interns. In one particular instance, a struggling intern was identified early in the semester and through concentrated interventions by university and high school faculty, the intern was able to successfully complete the field experience.

Project Citizen

The purpose of this internationally disseminated project is to give citizens an understanding of how their governmental system works, so they can become active players in the development of active plans for positive change in their societies. In brainstorming and consensus building sessions participants identify a problem and its components. Students gather data through research, interviewing and explore multiple approaches to solving the problem. Once they formulate an action plan they often succeed in making identified changes.

In discussions over many months, the possibility of using Project Citizen as a context for interdisciplinary learning for secondary teacher candidates evolved. The emerging consensus was that such a project might address our long term concerns about providing positive urban experiences for teacher candidates. The model would have teacher candidates working with the urban teachers who were implementing a collaborative discussion-based model of teaching and who were eager to have interns help them in presenting the Project Citizen program in their classes. Over a five-week period, teams of teacher candidates assisted a teacher trained in Project Citizen, who indicated (s)he was willing to have interns in her/his classroom.

Several features of the model were conducive to providing a successful field experience, particularly when working with novice teacher candidates, and in working with urban schools. One such feature was the fact that the university faculty member supervising the students in this field experience was also the individual who trained the teachers in the use of the Project Citizen curriculum; due to this prior relationship, the university faculty member was able to meet with the cooperating teachers several times before the interns went out to the field in order to clarify what the expectations of the field experience were.

Another positive feature was that the interns were assigned to classes in small groups of three to four and went out to the field in these small teams. This structure allowed for small group debriefings following each of the classroom observations. For teacher candidates early in their teacher preparation program, this small group reflection experience provided a less threatening situation than the traditional one candidate and the university supervisor conference. The small group debriefings also provided scaffolding

for candidates in the same manner that heterogeneous groupings of students allow for students to learn from one another.

Beyond the group reflections, all of the candidates were provided with individual feedback from the supervisor through written field evaluations. Informal discussions revealed that of the 24 teacher candidates who participated, a majority had anticipated problems with students in these settings but were surprised at the student eagerness to learn. In 2008, a single teacher, trained in Project Citizen, volunteered to have interns in all his classes. Candidate discussions about the setting, teacher strategies and students were enriched because of this situation and in 2009, the program expanded; two teachers had groups of interns lead discussions.

Academic Support Program

Founded in 1980, the Advancement through Individual Determination (AVID) Program, an in-school academic support program, prepares average (2.0-3.2 GPA) high school students for college (Sheshadri, 2007). Each AVID student must apply to a panel and be accepted into the program. Parents of students interested in joining must be willing to participate in AVID workshops and events. Teacher candidates shadow the students in their small subject field groups in regular classrooms before they tutor them and teach lessons in classes as well. The balance between conducting small and whole group lessons gives candidates confidence as it builds teaching skills.

Discussion

All of these efforts offer similar features. They bring teacher candidates in contact with secondary students in settings where student potential and best practices are showcased. Experienced and trained teachers serve as willing guides for novice

candidates. Because the programs are established with student learning at the center, teacher candidates are less likely to encounter practices that operate from "reflexive conservatism" and deficit assumptions. Further, many of these efforts are interdisciplinary, asking candidates who are oriented towards subject sub-cultures to think "outside of the box" regarding content.

Establishing targeted field experiences with teachers who want to do more than improve test scores yet are in schools that are trying to overcome recognized deficiencies has enriched our teacher candidates' opportunities to work in situations where they are not isolated, where innovative teaching is possible and where their development is a central task. In all settings, candidates are carefully supervised by both school and university faculty which has encouraged interchange among the two groups.

Focusing on Candidate Development

All of the programs described above were selected for their potential to develop candidates' teaching skills and their understanding of students and learning. By beginning with a well organized, year-long tutoring experience, candidates are able to build a relationship with an individual student, aid with patterns of errors a student makes, and see the results of their instruction. The tutoring program is coupled with candidates' learning about educational psychology and teaching methods for whole class and individual instruction, giving them opportunities to see what they have learned in practice.

During the next experience, candidates lead discussion teams of students as they research, write and present about a common community problem which matches the content on leading discussions in the general methods class. More advanced experiences

allow candidates to work closely with teachers trained in a program (Project Citizen) or innovative practice (PDS) and enable candidates to expand their teaching repertoire and learn to adapt a method when needed. All these opportunities provide discussion material in the corresponding university courses. The overall goal is a well-coupled series of experiences in both traditional field experiences and in innovative programs that enhance what candidates are learning how to do.

Using Innovative Practices

All three initiatives involved candidates in innovative practices. The Challenge Program has been especially successful in helping sophomore candidates in their first field placement participate meaningfully in student learning. Both the individual and small group sessions alert secondary candidates to the difficulties individual students may be facing in their future classrooms that often remain hidden because of the class sizes and time frames. Class discussions of accommodations now have a basis in students' demonstrated needs.

Project Citizen's focus on social action enables secondary candidates to view and participate in project-based, cooperative learning in action. In teams, candidates learn to appreciate the contributions subject fields in addition to their own make to a developing project.

The PDS environment is premised on the candidates' ability to practice within a school environment dedicated to ongoing improvement. Trained teachers interested in trying new practices engage preservice teachers and give them confidence to rise above the routine and typical. At this site, candidates have been able to assist experienced

teachers as they pilot new techniques as well as extended enrichment projects and discuss the effects on students.

Decreasing Isolation in the Secondary School

These programs help decrease teacher isolation in various ways. First, the tutoring programs help teacher candidates learn about the school wide curriculum, and candidates often have to collaborate with others in order to successfully assist their students. Project Citizen's training sessions bring together teachers across a school district to learn interactive strategies to use to foster student planning of projects designed to improve their communities. In discussions secondary candidates begin to appreciate the different responses students in various environments can have to the same project.

In addition to the differentiated instruction sessions in the PDS site, the following year a secondary education international mediation program involved teachers in all disciplines, but particularly English and History. The skills of reading carefully, researching accurately and presenting skillfully with current information and how they were taught as well as the student enthusiasm as a result of the project were observed by candidates. In addition to practical training in important best practices pedagogy, such collaboration breaks down the norms of isolation behind the proverbial "closed door" where teachers do not traditionally subject their practice to scrutiny.

Creating an environment where teachers productively collaborate around teaching and student learning is an important goal if teacher candidates are to learn positive lessons from the field. Most reform efforts of the past two decades envision a far more collegial and collaborative environment within schools premised on the belief that collaboration benefits teachers' use of best practices. Within the PDS site, teacher

candidates benefit from witnessing and participating in an environment that breaks down norms of teacher isolation.

Conclusion

While field experiences are potentially powerful learning tools for secondary teacher candidates, they must be crafted with care and attention to the potential pitfalls of learning from experience within a complicated and, often, contradictory organization. Nonetheless, the answer may not be less time in the field, but continuous cooperation and communication between the field sites and the university along with careful examination of the effects on candidates and students.

For the past decade, reforms in the United States have concentrated on improving the content knowledge of teachers through standardized testing, GPA requirements, and liberal arts preparation for teachers. While teacher educators believe certain program elements (specific course content, methods, field experiences) effect candidate expertise in teaching, they do not know which contribute more or precisely how they help foster teacher learning (Fuhrmann, 2003; Whitcomb, Borko, & Liston, 2007). In a recent article describing an AACTE initiative to prepare more mathematics and science teachers, the gap that exists between teacher knowledge and sharing that knowledge is highlighted. Willner, a leader of IBM global community initiatives, commented, "We know there is a huge gap between mastery of a subject and the ability to teach that subject to others, especially when the others are a group of sometimes wayward, sometimes bored, and sometimes poorly prepared teenagers" (DeVaney, 2007, p. 3). The next wave of reform needs to focus on the influence of pedagogy and field experiences on candidate ability to affect student learning.

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Achieving Mathematical Concepts One Word at a Time

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Abstract

Language is a very important concept that is learned before a child comes into the world. Once the child gets here, the world is new and language is used to help make connections and gain insight on what is going on around them. Mathematics and language are two things that can go hand in hand to help better understand mathematical concepts and have children obtain a better understanding of mathematics and language and how both can be used to successfully teach mathematics to children. Experienced teachers and student teachers need to be able to teach concepts that connect language with mathematics. This paper will discuss the importance of this connection.

Introduction

Possible Scenario: Students in a Pre-Kindergarten class voted on the daily graphing question. The question asked, "If it were a rainy day, do you play inside or outside?" The teacher passed out clothespins with the student's name on them and two paper plates. One plate had a picture of a house indicating "inside" and the other plate showed a rainy outside scene, indicating "outside". After the students had the opportunity to mark their choice, the teacher held up the plates and asked one question. "What do you notice about the plates?" said the teacher. One student held up his hand and said, "The plate with the house has the mostest". The teacher did not tell the student that he was incorrect in his answer. Instead she told him that he was correct and that the inside of the plate had "more" plates. Another student replied, "The plate with the rain has the "lessest". Again, the teacher replied by telling the student that she was correct, and told the class the plate with the rain scene has "less" pins than the other plate.

As the class continued about the graph, the teacher realized that her students were engaged in learning mathematical concepts and they were able to put into words what was going on in the math lesson: the idea of learning "more than" and "less than". Math and language go hand in hand and more teachers should be able to understand that talking to and with students using math terminology helps them to better understand the skills and objectives being taught.

Language and Communication

Between the ages of two and five, children acquire a tremendous amount of information about language. They go from saying brief two-word sentences to full, long phrases. They learn how to make past, present, and future tenses; how to devise singulars

and plurals; and how to ask questions and make statements. They learn the basics of numbers, colors, and letters (Needleman, 2000). It is important to also know that the differences between children with different degrees of language skills can be striking. One child may have a vocabulary of four to five thousand words while another child may only have one to two thousand. As children make the transition from preschool to kindergarten, one of the best predictors of school success is how many words they know and use (Needleman, 2000).

Language for school aged children is also important. Some may question, what is the point of nurturing language in school aged-children if they already know how to talk? Language takes practice, and language skills play a role in virtually every class in school (Needleman, 2000).

Mathematics and Communication

Most people think of mathematics as separate from language and literacy (Clements & Sarama, 2006). Actually, there seems to be more of overlap between language and mathematics than one might think.

Talking about mathematics builds language skills. When students discuss and debate about mathematics, they have to be precise in their language and thinking. Clements & Sarama (2006) pointed out that when student explain their reasoning in math problems, they are actually building on their language skills. Children develop literacy skills as they think about what words mean and decide which words appropriately describe certain objects and situations. Mathematics is an ideal context in which to discuss exactly what words mean (Clements & Sarama, 2006).

The Pros and Cons about Mathematical Language

There are many pros and cons about connecting math and language. Many educators of mathematics believe communication is a crucial part of mathematics (www.math.umd.edu, 2009). It is a way of sharing ideas and clarifying understanding. Through communication, ideas become objects of reflection, refinement, discussion, and amendment (www.math.umd.edu, 2009). The National Council for Teaching of Mathematics (NCTM) notes that the communication process also helps build meaning and permanence for ideas and makes them public. The article, *The Importance of Communication in Mathematics Classrooms* states that when students are challenged to think and reason about mathematics and to communicate the results of their thinking to other orally or in writing, they learn to be clear and convincing (2009).

In every pro there is also a con. With this topic, the con normally involves traditional educators. The traditionalist educator is reluctant to accept the method of communication in mathematics (www.math.umd.edu). L. Stiff from the NCTM notes, "When traditionalists see students engaged and talking with one another asking questions, thinking about the mathematics and mathematical relationships, they view those behaviors and infer that the basics and other important mathematics are not being taught" (www.math.umd.edu, 2009). Many traditionalists believe that learning takes place when the basics and fundamental mathematical concepts are taught in the classroom. Teachers in traditional classrooms often disseminate knowledge, facts, algorithms, and generally expect students to identify and replicate the field of knowledge disseminated (www.math.umd.edu, 2009). Normally in a math class, students are not accustomed to "talk" about mathematical concepts. They are usually "taught" the concept by the

teacher. Therefore, teachers, need to use a number of approaches to probe student' thinking in mathematics. Students are not natural talkers in the math classroom (www.math.umd.edu, 2009).

The pros and cons about having communication in the classroom both bring out valid points, however, it is important for children to express themselves in any subject. Math should be the subject in which language is expressed most, next to reading.

Mathematics and Language Making the Connection

The University of Maryland completed a study in which communication in principles and standards for school mathematics was discussed. In that study, it explained, that an effective educational program needs to have clearly defined goals stating what students should know, understand, and be able to do, as well as a plan that guides instruction to the levels defined by the standards (www.math.umd.edu). It also points out, that instructional programs from pre-kindergarten through grade 12 should enable all students to: a) organize and consolidate their mathematical thinking through communication, b) communicate their mathematical thinking coherently and clearly to peers, teachers, and others, c) analyze and evaluate the mathematical thinking and strategies of others, and d) use the language of mathematics to express mathematical ideas precisely (www.math.umd.edu).

Language and math must start in the early childhood classroom. Although high-quality learning in the preschool years is often informal, this informality does not imply an unplanned or unsystematic program. Mathematics learning in preschools should be thought provoking, should include opportunities for active learning, and should be rich in mathematical language (Kirova and Bhargava, 2002). Picture books can help establish an

environment where math concepts can be explored without being explicitly taught (van den Heuvel-Panhuizen et al, 2009). Language allows the acquisition of new information as well as the appropriation of complex ideas and process (Kirova and Bhargava, 2002). Open-ended questioning can encourage expanded thinking. Questions like: "What else?" and "I wonder what would happen if?" can draw children's attention to new ways of thinking and interaction (Kirova and Bhargava, 2002). Children's literature can be the connection providing meaningful context for learning both language and math concepts (Shatzer, 2008).

Mathematics, Language and Interventions

Language and mathematics do not only tie in with teaching mathematics, but it also helps with student interventions when a particular student does not gain an objective or concept. The term scaffolding comes from the Vygotskian theory based on the important role that social interaction plays in learning (Baker, Schirner, & Hoffman, 2006). Scaffolding can occur when children and teachers converse about tasks and activities and engage in joint problem-solving situations (Baker, Schirner, & Hoffman, 2006). Baker, Schimer, & Hoffman (2006) also describe that children who vary in their cognitive and social abilities can provide scaffolding for one another when given opportunities to work together.

As we know, "Humans are social beings; like adults, children learn best through social interaction. Planning for and supporting certain scenarios during mathematics instruction and exploration scaffolds learning for children who are on the verge of grasping a concept, as well as those who have learned a new concept and are ready to be further challenged" (Baker, Schirner, & Hoffman, 2006). The social interaction can

provide the scaffolding for the challenges and higher level thinking that children need to move naturally to the next, more complex concepts.

The Use of Math Talk

Research says to make math a part of young children's lives first, the child must feel comfortable in the world of number, quantity, measurement, shape, and design (Martin & Milstein, 2007). The authors also say, that in order to achieve this, it cannot be accomplished through "math time" alone. Math learning must occur throughout the day, embedded in the authentic experiences children encounter through classroom routines, play, and active learning (Martin & Milstein, 2007). Communicating mathematically requires teachers to understand that the skills of listening, talking, and sharing in math contexts is not intuitive; children must be taught these skills which connect language acquisition with math concepts (Coates, 2005)

Teachers play an important role of making sure that math and language are being used in the classroom, and this can be used for the traditionalist teacher. Teachers need to explore math with their students, making an opportunity to learn through manipulating objects, trying a strategy, or asking a new question (Martin & Milstein, 2007). There are an unlimited number of ways to highlight important concepts through story sharing experiences. Teachers can talk about numbers, correspondences, and patterns as they read a picture book (Clements & Sarama, 2006). Teachers need to be skilled in questioning and able to ask mathematical questions using correct mathematical language. Skillful questioning by the teacher is imperative to ensure that the children's mathematical knowledge can be used to form a strong foundation on which to build further mathematical knowledge. Children should be expected to explain their strategies

to both the teacher and other students and where necessary prompts should be given such as: "How did you do that?" (Pearn & Merrifield, 2009).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is obvious to see that mathematics and language can be used together to help students better understand mathematical concepts. It has been shown that building language is an important way to support children's learning of mathematics (Clements & Samara, 2006). Research shows that one characteristic of children who do better than others in math is that they can explain and justify the mathematics they are doing (Clements & Samara, 2006). At the same time, one of the best predictors of later success in school mathematics is how well children understand and tell stories.

In 2000, NCTM stated, "Children need an introduction to the language and conventions of mathematics, at the same time maintaining a connection to their informal knowledge and language. They should hear mathematical language being used in meaningful contexts" (NCTM, 2000).

Conversation is very valuable in any classroom, and comments by children show the important roles that conversation plays in mathematical learning and they include the following:

a) It fosters diversity of language in describing mathematical relationships.
b) It demonstrates to children how productive and creative group discussions can be.
c) It highlights the mathematical concept of equivalence and strategies of comparing, matching, and ordering in purposeful ways.
d) It provides a forum for assessing the children's knowledge of these concepts and strategies.

e) It underscores the important role that teachers play in fostering open-ended discussions.

f) It gives teachers a chance to reflect on their own teaching (Whitin &Whitin, 2003).

In summary, math and language should always be a vital characteristic in every classroom.

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Interviewing: The Two-Minute Drill

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Abstract

As is in the closing two minutes of a National Football League game, this short period of time can define a successful response to an interview question. The NFL team or the teacher candidate, not only need to possess the required skills but need to execute and deliver a well developed response. This article will focus on a series of two minute drills to prepare for an interview. The process will assist the teacher candidate in aligning their educational philosophy, content knowledge and teaching strategies. The results will be a game-winning performance during their interview.

The Background

During a National Football League game, two teams battle throughout the game. Often the winners of these hard-fought games are not decided until the final two minutes. The referee steps to the center of the field and signals the two minute warning. The teams reposition themselves on the field. The defense digs in and prepares to hold their position. The offense quickly sets up to run plays without a huddle: their intention is to use the final two minutes of the game wisely, making the best use of their time. These plays are scripted, practiced, and everyone must move in sync if the team is going to successfully drive down the field and score.

The same scenario can be put into place for student teachers. They work hard throughout their college coursework, face many challenges applying their skills during student teaching, and are persistent in earning their degrees. However, like the NFL football team, their success often comes down to two minutes. The "two minutes" is the time required to properly answer an interview question. Each time the interviewer asks a question, the student teachers must run their two minute drills in responding to the question. Like the football team, the student teachers must have their answers scripted, practiced, and in sync. It is time to score a job!

Conceptual Framework

Current interview practices in business and education focus on a list of set questions. Each candidate is asked the same questions to increase the reliability in scoring (Barrick, Shaffer & DeGrassi, 2009). The interviewer usually tries to develop a quantitative measure of the responses so a point total can be given to the candidate. The use of an evaluation instrument or rubric increases the objectivity of the interview

process (Clement, 2009) enabling a fair and legally-sound basis for hiring. Beyond employment laws, ethics in hiring must yield the best-qualified candidate through the use of structured interviews to reduce the risk of bias in the process (Alder & Gilbert, 2006).

Usually, the candidates' interview scores are taken into consideration and combined with their applications, references, assessments of cognitive abilities, and personality (Kinsman, 2005). Employers consider the interview process a "deal-breaker" and use a series of techniques combining cognitive and behavior-based questions to predict future performance (Clement, 2009; Alder & Gilbert, 2006). Self-presentation tactics such as verbal and non-verbal behavior, appearance, and self-promotion (a type of impression management tactic) would make an impact on the scoring of their interviews.

The ability to use the limited time of an interview for self-promotion will ensure a better outcome in the process. Applicants should be able to describe their experiences using exemplification and enhancements so that the interviewer perceives their competencies (Barrick et al., 2009). Mock interviews or drills are valid methods to prepare applicants to master these tactics. Consequently, candidates must practice how to utilize their time wisely in order to impress the prospective employer during the interview.

The Dilemma

My previous experience as a principal in a large urban district cast me at various times as a new teacher recruiter. The district hired 2,000 to 3,000 teachers a year and I frequently traveled out of state to interview candidates. I also assisted at the district office interviewing candidates. These interviews served as a screening interview to find qualified candidates for other principals to interview via phone or face-to-face.

Over the years, I noted a sharp discrepancy in the time utilized during an interview between an inexperienced teacher and an experienced teacher. The less experienced candidates rarely took over half of the time allotted for the interview, as their responses were generally less than one minute per question. However, the more experienced candidates usually utilized the majority of the allotted time for the interview. Experienced candidates had more examples to draw from and typically expanded on the answers far more than the inexperienced candidates. This outcome is consistent with the literature that suggests that applicants that shared their experiences using exemplification received higher interviewer ratings (Barrick et al., 2009).

As I became a student teacher supervisor, I was aware of the need to better prepare student teachers for the interview. They need to draw from their limited experience and expand on their responses. To do this, they need to script their responses to anticipated questions and topics, practice their responses, and make sure that their answers are in sync with each other. The objective was to prepare the student teachers to use the interview time effectively.

The Process

In order to accomplish this, a six step process was developed. This process enabled the students to work as a group in preparing for interviews, enabled them to tailor their responses to their individual beliefs and practices, and provided them with an opportunity to practice for the interview. These six steps are outlined below and illustrated in Figure 1:

- Step 1 – Identify anticipated topic questions
- Step 2 – Brainstorm responses to topics as a group

- Step 3 – Review group answers for completeness
- Step 4 – Individually organize responses
- Step 5 – Sync your answers
- Step 6 – Practice

Figure 1. Six-Step Model for an Effective Interview Preparation©

Step 1 – Identify the Anticipated Topic Questions

The student teachers must understand that they generally know the questions that their interviewer will be asking during an interview. They are interviewing to be a teacher; they know that the questions will focus on topics pertaining to teaching and setting up a classroom. They may not know the exact questions, but they will be able to identify topics that will certainly be asked in most teaching interviews. As a group, they should generate a list of these topics. A sample list is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Sample List of Topic-Questions for Teaching Interviews

• Assessment
• Classroom Management
• Diversity
• Math
• Physical Set-Up of the Classroom
• Reading/Language Arts
• Science/Social Studies
• Special Education/Gifted Education

Step 2 – Brainstorm Responses for Each Question Topic

The identified interview question topics should be posted on large charts around the perimeter of the room, with each topic having its own chart. Students will work together to generate ideas and concepts about each topic on the charts.

Students are paired/grouped and asked to stand in front of one of the charts. It does not matter which chart they start with, because they will rotate to add supporting information to each topic chart. They will have two minutes to add supporting information to the chart. They then rotate to the next chart for two minutes. The process is repeated until each pair/group of students has responded to each chart. It becomes more difficult to add to the chart as the process moves on but the students quickly realize they are generating more information than they could have generated by themselves. They are also becoming aware of the two-minute timeframe.

Step 3 – Review Group Answers for Completeness

As a group, the students should review and discuss the information on each chart. They should add any additional thoughts they may have that were not included during the rotational drill. This step will enable students to check the information for completeness.

Step 4 – Individually Organize Your Responses

The objective in this step is to have the students organize the information into their own responses. Each student needs to take the information from each chart and document it in some way. Some classes have a volunteer write or type up the comments from each chart and then distribute copies to all participants. In other classes, students individually take pictures of each chart, often with their cell phones or mp3 devices.

Generally an outline helps students to organize the responses before the interview. The students may not use all the information on the chart but will formulate answers that coincide with their beliefs and teaching philosophy. The student should generate an outline for each topic chart.

Step 5 – Sync Your Answers

The objective in this step is to ensure students' responses reflect their beliefs and practices. Students will want their responses in the interview to convey who they will be as a teacher. They must check to see if their responses are in sync. One topic response must support another.

What will your instruction emphasize? If you are going to promote "writing" in your classroom, do you have writing activities within your math responses? Does your room set-up include writing centers? Are the walls filled with writing aids? Among other things, do you have writing tasks related to journals or behavioral logs? Let the interviewer know that you have a comprehensive writing program in your class. Like the movement of the football players, your responses should be in sync. Self-promotion by exemplification is of upmost importance in the interview (Barrick et al., 2009).

Step 6 - Practice

After the students organize the information, they must practice responding to the questions in an interview setting. The objective of this step is to have the students formulate answers to the topic questions ensuring that they are two minutes in length. This enables the student to share a sufficient amount of information for each interview question.

An instructor or fellow student should ask the student questions related to the chart topics. The student should respond by utilizing the outline for each question topic. This gives the students an opportunity to take the organized information and adjust it to the question asked in the interview. This can be done as a group activity or as a paired activity. Either way, it is important to critique the answers.

The critique should include the timing of responses. This is valuable feedback to the students on the effective use of time. It should also involve the interviewer taking notes. This simulates the actual interview process and provides information for the response critiques. The students' reflections on response notes will be important in making adjustments to their responses and for the preparation for an actual interview. Self-reflection after mock interviews increases the ability of the students to reduce their stress before and during the interview (Yale, 2005). Self-reflection makes them aware of opportunities to improve and strengths that they can reinforce.

The Outcome

Over the past three years, this method has been utilized at Nevada State College. The student teaching seminar has addressed the need for better interview preparation in a tightening job market. The emphasis has been on this six-step process. Mock interviews such as the 2 Minute Drill© also contribute to replicate the actual conditions of job interviews on the field, reducing the uncertainty faced by the candidate in such high-pressure settings (Clement, 2009).

Interviewing: The 2 Minute Drill has also been presented at the National Student Teacher Supervision Conference, Slippery Rock University. In 2009, a session was conducted for college/university supervisors and students. In 2010, a double session was conducted for students attending the conference.

In these settings, students were preparing for a 25-minute interview, in which they would respond to eight interview questions. Eight blank charts are posted on the wall, one for each interview question. After placing the charts, students were paired off and stationed themselves in front of one chart as the starting point for the drill. After two

minutes, the students rotated to the next chart. The process was repeated until each pair had added information to all the eight charts. After 16 minutes, the students were amazed at the volume of information they had generated. They were also impressed at the variety of information available to them. As the charts were reviewed, it was evident that much of the information they would not have drawn into their responses, had they done the brainstorming independently.

The process of synching their answers is an eye-opening experience for the students. They generally do not think to review their answers to see how their answers support each other. Students seem to have a new insight on how they would project their strengths and instructional strategies within their answers. This is essential to increase the effectiveness of self-presentation tactics of self-promotion and exemplification (Barrick et al., 2009).

As the students take time to create outlines for their responses, they become more confident in their abilities to respond to the interview questions. They develop their strategies in how to respond to various potential questions with confidence. They are also able to combine their cognitive skills (e.g. knowledge about techniques) with behavioral and non-behavioral skills (e.g. voice tone, time management) (Clement, 2009).

There is still some anxiety as we get set for the mock interview. I usually act as the interviewer for the first mock interview in front of the class. I ask for a volunteer who is willing to respond to all eight questions with a 25 minute time limit.

Generally, the first student to respond in an interview session uses approximately 7 minutes of the allotted 25 minutes, thus failing to utilize much of the valuable time

available to impress the interviewer. Being aware of this issue certainly focuses the students on the need to organize and expand on their answers. After additional practice sessions, the students become more aware of the two-minute response time goal and expand their answers with relevant information. Feedback from students after their interviews has been very positive. Though some anxiety exists about the actual interview, the students certainly feel better prepared.

Conclusions

In conclusion, most student teachers walk out of an interview and say, "I wish I would have said…" Though this may not ensure that student teachers will say everything that they would like to include in an interview, it does help ensure they will provide complete and organized responses. Students will also feel better prepared to use their self-presentation tactics given that the topics are mentally organized as a result of the 2-Minute Drill. They can then focus more on how to create rapport and impress the interviewer. Like the NFL football team, they will be well prepared giving them a better chance to score – a job!

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Social Studies as Conscientization:

Discussing Puerto Rican History with Puerto Rican Teenagers

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When you know your history
Then you will know where you're coming from
Then you won't have to ask me
Who the 'ell do you think I am?
--Bob Marley, "Buffalo Soldier"

Who did I think I was, a white, lifetime small-town-resident college student standing in front of twenty-five Latino eighth graders in the heart of Philadelphia, leading a class discussion on the history of a people I had never studied, whose grandchildren were sitting attentively before me, eyes glued on me as though I was the world's foremost Hispanic historian? Who was I to describe, in details gleaned from an online research paper, how people like them had struggled against oppression from people like me?

These questions had gnawed on my mind as I scoured the Internet for information on Sonia Sotomayor and highlighted copies of Pedro Pietri's "Puerto Rican Obituary" in preparation for this lesson, yet they disappeared the instant I introduced the lesson to the class. The young men and women who had every right and reason to treat me as an impostor, who continue to live the lives of the people that I, their polar opposite, had chosen to discuss, were riveted—not because I displayed knowledge or eloquence, but because I provided an opportunity for them to discover meaning by studying history.

Faced with the daunting assignment of teaching at least one ninety-minute lesson to Mrs. Cohen's eighth grade social studies class, I submitted several possibilities to my

mentor teacher that reflected my major areas of historical study and somewhat related to the chapter of United States history that the class was currently studying. It was to be my first lesson in front of a completely non-white class in an urban school, and I was playing it safe. Mrs. Cohen offered a few words of critical praise for my lesson planning efforts. Then she threw me a curve ball: "I'm not sure how much they know about their own history." Meaning: That's your lesson.

I was quite sure that I knew next to nothing about the history of Puerto Rican immigrants, whose grandchildren and great-grandchildren comprised over ninety percent of Mrs. Cohen's students. I knew of, but little about, the militant Young Lords Party; I admired the slugger Roberto Clemente, who died transporting aid to Central America; and I discovered the existence of the poet Julia DeBurgos when I received my placement at this Philadelphia school which bears her name. How could I walk into this academic consulate of Puerto Rico the next morning with a ninety-minute lesson on Puerto Rican history? I was an outsider in every way. How could I presume to "teach" these bright youngsters about the lives of urban Puerto Ricans when, by virtue of their daily existence, they knew far more than I could learn in a lifetime, let alone one evening?

Before I even thought to protest, however, Paolo Freire's conscientization approach surged through my mind. Here was an opportunity to have a conversation with the students that they might find meaningful. Rather than fret over the differences in our perspectives, I could offer my thoughts, draw out theirs, and steer them to search for meaning in the past of their people. If I showed my students that I was interested in them, their history, and their thoughts and ideas pertaining to their heritage, perhaps they would view me less as a pretentious outsider. Might they gain an insight from studying their

people's history that they could apply to their own lives? With these thoughts in mind, I set to work collecting material and arrived the next morning with a satisfactory lesson.

I began by asking the students whether any of them knew when and why their grandparents (or other relatives) had come to Philadelphia. To my surprise, not a single hand went up. As I was to discover more and more as the lesson progressed, very few of these young people had ever been exposed to even the slightest elements of their ethnicity's history or culture. I began to realize that I was introducing them to new information, which they eagerly soaked up. As I posed questions to stimulate discussion, I found the students to be remarkably perceptive in understanding and evaluating the lives and actions of their Puerto Rican predecessors. They were doing exactly what I had hoped they would—analyzing the past to discover meaning.

Five volunteer students stood in front of the class, reading aloud the poem "Puerto Rican Obituary" by Pedro Pietri, a Puerto Rican poet of whom none of them had ever heard. Scanning copies of the poem, which I had divided into parts and highlighted, these five recreated the anxieties and frustrations of the Puerto Rican immigrant community of Spanish Harlem:

> Juan: Here lies Juan
> Marcos: Here lies Miguel
> Grisella: Here lies Milagros
> Crystal: Here lies Olga
> Lynette: Here lies Manuel
> All five: who died yesterday today
> and will die again tomorrow
> Juan: Always broke
> Marcos: Always owing

Grisella: Never knowing
that they are beautiful people
Lynette: Never knowing
the geography of their complexion
All five: PUERTO RICO IS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE!
PUERTORRIQUENOS ARE A BEAUTIFUL RACE!

As we discussed Pietri's work, one concept seemed difficult for the students to digest: Juan, Miguel, Milagros, Olga and Manuel, and the thousands of immigrants they represent in the poem, tried to escape their ethnicity, culture, language, and place of origin to avoid the social stigma preventing their success. My students insisted that one's heritage should be a source of pride: "If you know who you are, then nobody gonna tell you you something else." I could only agree.

However, only a handful were able to list the three roots of their Puerto Rican ethnicity—Taino, Spanish, and African—and this presented me with an opportunity to connect the students with something positive happening in their own neighborhood. The previous week, I had visited a community-based cultural center only a dozen blocks from the school, where several elderly women have constructed gardens representing each of these ethnic roots in an effort to keep Puerto Rican heritage alive, as well as maintaining an eco-friendly island of organic food production. When I described this cultural center to my students, I found that only one girl even knew of its existence. However, many others expressed interest and enthusiastically promised to check it out and get involved. Who can tell whether our class discussion on the value of one's heritage sparked an enduring desire in even one student to work for cultural promotion in the future?

The lesson that I had planned for one period stretched into a second, in which we analyzed the actions and goals of the Young Lords Party, and a third, in which we examined Sonia Sotomayor's attributes as a potential Supreme Court Justice. During the course of the lesson, my anxieties over whether the students would accept me, an ethnic outsider, as a teacher of their history evaporated. My confidence as a teacher grew with the students' confidence as "organic intellectuals," in Freirean terminology, who could apply their own perspectives to the subject matter. In fact, our positions as teacher and students shifted, for I was not merely depositing information. Rather, we were sharing together the experience of exploring meaning in history.

I'll never know whether my three days of discussing Puerto Rican history with Puerto Rican teenagers will have any sort of impact on their lives. For many of them, academics are a secondary concern to the difficulties of daily life in the inner city, and my lessons might be quickly forgotten along with the rest of United States history. However, I do believe that discovering, studying and understanding one's history can be a form of conscientization, in which one applies a critical, questioning search for solutions to life's hardships and frustrations. My students showed me that they can apply this approach in the classroom. May the meaning that they found through our discussions of the past empower them to make critical, conscious decisions for their future.

More than Just a Title

Ryan Griffin

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

The idea of paid summers off, long holiday breaks, and relatively short workdays were what made me consider the profession of "School Teacher" many years ago. Now after an incredibly inspiring and eye opening few months student teaching in the inner urban setting, I have no doubt that teaching was meant to be my path, this is my purpose, and the profession, "School Teacher" is a lot more than just the title.

I went to a suburban high school surrounded by farms, with a pleasant community that is considered to be relatively safe and secure. Each day when I would arrive at my high school not so long ago we would pull up to the school, walk in and greet the secretary or principal, then make our way to home room. I was rather alarmed on my first day of student teaching walking through metal detectors, being patted down by city police, and seeing a security camera in each and every hallway and stairwell. The students I observed were not affected by these security regulations. They knew the drill. Walk in; set your book bag on the table, security searches the book bag, then walk through the metal detector. If the detector goes off, you get patted down and simply move on with your morning. Eventually I found as the days went by the morning procedures became second nature and just part of the drill.

After entering the school each morning with my briefcase and mug of tea, I would find my way up to my classroom. I felt out of place early on. I thought that all of the

students and faculty knew it too as I walked through those hallways my first few days. I learned very quickly from my co-operating teacher that you *must* demonstrate a considerable amount of confidence in all schools, but especially in the urban setting. My students called it *swagger*, my co-op called it *confidence*. You say potato, I say potahto.

After my first week or so of observing I was in awe seeing how some of the students (I now proudly call mine) could lay their heads on their desks, talk back to their teachers, get up and leave in the middle of classes, and show the signs of disrespect I saw. I thought what are they going to do when someone like me the same age as a lot of their older siblings gets in front of them and tries to teach and guide the class. With an understanding heart, the mindset and leadership of a coach, and the tools from experienced teachers I soon found myself loving and enjoying every second in front of my students.

Let me start with the idea of having an understanding heart, because in the beginning I can't say that I had one. When I was given sole responsibilities of the classroom after a few weeks of observing, seeing students with their heads down or eating in class really made me upset and I took it personally. I would raise my voice, "You don't think I'm tired too? Pick your heads up." "I'm hungry too, but there is absolutely no eating in this class room!" It never crossed my mind that the crackers and candy some of my students were eating in the class could have been the only meals they'd eaten since lunch the school day before. This was unheard of in the area I was from. I ate at least three meals a day. The thought of having only one or maybe two

broke my heart. My students weren't misbehaving by eating in my classroom, some were literally surviving. I quickly began to understand and allowed several of the students to eat in the classroom as long as they kept the room clean and did not disrupt any of the others. And for the students who would sometimes fall asleep in my classroom-- in some cases their families had lost their homes, or mothers and fathers. They would have to move into households with sometimes up to three families all living in one house. They weren't getting any sleep living with three families in a small city home. I encouraged these students to give me their attention when I asked them, but would also let them rest for periods at a time because the sleepless nights were too overbearing. We found a happy medium and stayed productive. Although just a few examples of how I grew to become more understanding teaching in the city, these were two examples worth mentioning. They have changed part of who I am, as well as many future teaching strategies that I could only have obtained in this setting.

Now to the idea of being a leader and a coach in the classroom. This was one of the most essential ideas and strategies embedded and drilled into my mind by my co-op and university supervisor. My co-op demonstrated this ability to lead with confidence and encouragement in a very strict and professional manor. My past university supervisor could manage a classroom without saying a word. A stare from her, and you knew you were in for it. Yet she had the dearest heart of anyone. The stare didn't really work for me, but showing confidence and respect did substantially. I expressed often the respect I had for each and every student, and demanded it in return. I found that this is

what the students really wanted, respect and someone they could trust. I was told just because I was older than my students didn't mean I would simply inherit their respect in return. However, I demanded it and eventually I received it. With mutual trust and respect, the classroom management became second nature. As the days and weeks went on the students who at first wouldn't look me in the eye or sing when asked, were eventually shaking my hand each day as they entered my classroom and even signing up to sing in the talent show. My co-operating teacher taught me to come on strong when teaching the class, but eventually back off finding a happy medium between too harsh and too soft. She called it, "A kick in the butt, and a kiss on the cheek." I will undoubtedly never forget those words.

Teaching in the city has been the most incredible and rewarding experience of my life. Every single day brings a new experience and teachable moment. The joy I've felt seeing my life skills and autistic support class perform written music, have open discussions about blues and jazz and there correlation to today's music, and seeing them singing and improvising in front of the entire classroom is indescribable. The amount of admiration I've had for the students who come into class smiling ready to make music the day after their families or relatives were on the news for drugs or murder is insurmountable. Each student has a story whether beautiful or heart breaking. I quickly learned not to judge or have pre-existing notions towards any of the students. I've also quickly learned to love each and every single one of them.

I've been blessed to have two of the finest educators one could ever imagine in

my co-operating teacher and my university supervisor who sadly past away last summer. Although no longer with us, she has touched and positively impacted every student she has ever taught. I am confident that her pedagogy and inspiration will trickle down through her past students, to their current students, to their future students and beyond. She changed lives, and inspired me to try to do the same. Seeing her, my co-op, and other teachers in the schools teach made me realize that changing lives is what is in the fine print under the title "School Teacher." It's the moments when you and your students truly feel like a team. It's the moments when all of the hard work comes together at once and the light bulb turns on for everyone. It's the life changing moments you encounter as a teacher that are truly memorable.

It's Not Always Good to BEE Back!

Karen L. Matis

Shenango Junior/Senior High School

Returning to the classroom following summer break often finds a teacher experiencing a range of emotions as well as never-ending and always-growing lists of things to accomplish. The year 2004 was no exception. As I readied my junior high classroom for the eager students who would rush into my room anxious to learn and excited to read new novels, I prepared also for my first adventure with a student teacher.

On the first day of classes, my student teacher Liz arrived along with the students. I welcomed her first with an enthusiastic, "It's good to be back!" It only took moments for me to recognize a major difference: Liz was excited, enthusiastic, and dressed for success to begin establishing her place in the world of education. Conversely, the students were lethargic and in a state of disbelief insisting that summer break must have been shortened by at least three weeks. But both Liz and I were not disheartened in the least; we greeted the students with our best efforts hoping to convince them of the incredible adventures the reading classroom offers.

Opening days of school are filled with a plethora of managerial tasks: reviewing school and classroom rules, assigning student lockers, assisting first year junior high students with locker combinations, providing directions to the gym or cafeteria for new or lost students, and sorting through the endless administrative documents that students need signed and returned. These tasks completed, it was Liz's time to shine!

August days in a building with no air conditioning translate into heat-plagued afternoons, sluggish students, and wishful thoughts of 2:52 p.m. dismissal time arriving quickly. This was just such the case as Liz circulated among seventh grade students who were writing a journal in preparation for reading a short story. One student, a young boy struggling against the afternoon heat and self-proclaimed writer's block, reached to scratch his neck where he happened upon a yellow jacket bee. With great care, the student quickly swiped the bee away from his neck and instantly bolted out the classroom door. Liz, still reeling from how quickly things happen in the classroom, stood awed and wondering which strategy from her methods class she should apply. Another student who sat nearby quickly informed both Liz and I that our now "missing" student suffers severe allergic reactions to bee stings. No sooner had this information been revealed when yet another student noticed a bee buzzing around her trapper. Random high-pitched squeals of fear from the girls excited the boys to action as they valiantly grabbed notebooks and writing folders to swing and swat at the bees which appeared to be multiplying exponentially. What initially appeared as a class of passively engaged students writing in journals evolved rapidly into a frenzy the likes of a circus in the throes of a class IV tornado. Seemingly out of nowhere, a student appeared balancing on top of a desk like a tightrope walker and swinging at a bee that only barely managed to escape; another student appeared simultaneously spinning in circles mimicking a trapeze artist gone awry. The yellow jackets became more numerous and agitated.

In the 3.14 seconds that all of this managed to occur, I turned to find my student teacher who was staring catatonically at me with a look of disbelief, confusion, and

defeat on her face. Only a barely audible squeak escaped her gaping mouth. One of us needed to act quickly.

Clapping my hands twice for attention, it was obvious that more aggressive action was needed to get the attention of these students. At the top of my voice I yelled, "Freeze!" which to my surprise and delight proved to be a successful strategy. Liz came to immediate attention militantly rounding up the students and herding them out the door as I took a quick inventory of the bees. Shutting the classroom door, Liz responded rather calmly, "What do we do now?"

Moments later in the only available room, which just happened to be air conditioned, the students were gradually calming down relating their bee adventures with valor. One student claimed to have "killed the queen bee!" while yet another seriously announced "a recon mission needs to be employed!" Liz smiled politely allowing the students to vent before bringing them back to the original mission of the journal writing activity. A new level of enthusiasm was evident in the students.

Later that evening, the maintenance team located a nest of yellow jackets in the classroom's univent. Apparently these bees had been enjoying a quiet summer as they built a home where no one would bother them. Approaching the nest from the outside of the building, maintenance men spayed the nest that evening after all the bees had returned. Unfortunately, the maintenance men realized their error too late. The force of the spray directed the bees to "escape" by entering my classroom and swarming with a new vengeance; tens of thousands of yellow jackets now circled the room. With amazing speed, the maintenance men sealed off my classroom and concluded this was now a job for exterminating specialists.

As I entered the school building the next day, I was met by the building principal who offered to escort me to my classroom. Unaware of the events that occurred the night before, I was shocked to see the room sealed off. I could just peek into the window of the classroom door where the bees were clustered on desks, scattered across the counter tops, and exploring what now appeared to be their new residence. The principal politely and without reservation offered to enter the room to get any supplies that Liz or I would need for the day. You might only imagine how relieved he was when I said, "Are you kidding? There's not one thing I need bad enough to send you into that room." He replied with a sigh of relief.

Liz arrived shortly after me to find a note on the classroom door that said "All students report to Room 100 for class." Towels shoved under the door and duct tape along the door's seams and keyhole, Liz peered through the door's window rather hesitantly. Even though Liz had planned an array of activities for that day with markers, graphic organizers, and craft paper, she quickly adjusted her plans to accommodate the room change. She, too, agreed that lesson plans were easier to change than trying to safely get supplies from that classroom.

In the days to come, the room was fumigated, the bees removed, and a thorough cleaning removed any toxic substances. Meanwhile, Liz, comfortable in the air conditioned surrogate room, was experiencing a situation that was not simulated in any of her methods classes. Textbooks, project supplies, and equipment were inaccessible; Liz needed to completely alter her plans for these junior high students.

One mark of a great teacher is the ability to institute quick changes under stress without appearing frazzled. Through this experience and during the days to come, Liz

reworked her lesson plans and assignments, copied short stories, borrowed an overhead project, read aloud to students, and had students design graphic organizers completely deviating from her original lesson plans (which, by the way, were discarded after the fumigation process). She showed great tenacity in not succumbing to the pressures this situation presented. Several days into the classroom change, Liz commented to me during our afternoon prep, "I think the bees have taught me that no matter how organized I am, radical changes may be necessary at the drop of a . . . bee."

Liz's initiation into student teaching taught her valuable lessons about students, behaviors, plans, and adjustments. After two weeks, we returned to the classroom where Liz proudly hung a sign for all the students, "It's good to BEE back!" Liz enthusiastically adopted the bee as a classroom mascot, and the students reacted with matching fervor. The bees helped her to connect to students with an experience that only they shared. There was no doubt in my mind that Liz would succeed and excel in the field of education.

Mistakes are Acceptable

Jody L. Grove

Belle Vernon Area School District

As a cooperating teacher who has had over a dozen student teachers, I've had many memorable moments in my classroom. But none of those moments was more memorable than when "Mr. H" student taught in my second grade classroom. His name has been changed to protect his identity because if he is with us today, I am sure he would not want to identify himself since the experience I am about to tell you does not meet the criteria for best teaching practices. However, it was a learning experience that I know *I* will never forget!

Let your mind wonder to a classroom of 24 second graders with a variety of learning abilities and styles. Now imagine these students are not the perfect elementary students portrayed in professional magazines or photographs; they are a very energetic, talkative, excitable group. One student has an autism spectrum disorder and requires an aid with him at all times because he has numerous, sudden meltdowns. So there are three adults in the classroom: my student teacher, an aid and myself.

Mr. H is teaching a lesson for his unit in science about environment. Throughout his unit, one of his main objectives is to help these young children realize the impact that humans have on the environment and the balance of the ecosystems of the earth... Pennsylvania State Standard 4.3. B.: Identify how human actions affect environmental health. He was doing a good job as a student teacher in this, his first placement and developed a good rapport with the students, especially the boys. However, he already

had a bachelor's degree in business and very little firsthand experience with young children. Because of this, he required a lot of guidance from me as to what to expect from the students.

We discussed his lesson plan the day before he was to teach it. His plan included demonstrating how an oil spill could have a detrimental effect on the animals in the environment. He included a wonderful piece of children's literature about the oil spill in Alaska and the damage caused to water animals. To demonstrate this effect, he planned on having a container of water to which he was going to add cooking oil. Then he would place feathers in the water/oil mixture to show how the feathers soaked up the oil. Finally, the students would have to work on cleaning the oil off these feathers to discover it was a very difficult task. I was pleased with this hands-on activity and knew the students would enjoy participating in the cleaning of the feathers.

The day of teaching this lesson was here! Mr. H is standing in front of the classroom explaining what was about to happen. I am sitting at the side of the room, observing. After his explanation, he walks to his desk and brings a large bag of materials to the front of the room.

Suddenly, he takes out 24 deep, flimsy, aluminum pans and begins giving one to each student. At this point, I'm thinking to myself, "Oh no! He's not going to have a water/oil mixture for each student, is he?" Then he fills each student's pan with a half gallon of water. The noise is pure glee from the students, and many already have their hands in the water. The thought crosses my mind to halt the lesson, but this is to be a learning experience for both my students and Mr. H, right? So I continue to monitor from the side of the room. Then, he takes out a huge bottle of cooking oil and pours what

I consider to be a large amount into each aluminum pan. He tells the students to gently mix the water and oil with their hands. The second graders obviously didn't hear the word "gently" because they are swirling the water fervently to mix the two ingredients. The aid in the room and I are looking at each other with disbelief. I begin to pace back and forth, around the room, trying my best to calm the excited students. Mr. H passes out feathers to each student and tells them to gather the oil onto the feathers. This is when the rambunctious group of students goes wild! They are swirling the feathers, flinging the liquid, putting their hands in the liquid and splashing like crazy… and Mr. H seems oblivious to what is happening; he's assisting one student while neglecting to even notice what everyone else is doing. A student spills the entire contents of the container on the floor, and I yell, "FREEZE!" I tell everyone to stop what they are doing, go back to the aid to get a paper-towel to dry their hands, and get in line for gym. I took complete control of the students, got them in a line, and told Mr. H to take the students to gym while I get a mop from the janitor's closet. While he was out of the room, I think about why he would give each student their own container of water. Did he really think this lesson wasn't going to turn into a disaster with water, oil, and second graders?

Mr. H returns to the room. I take a deep breath to calm down and I ask him, "So, how do you think this lesson went?" He says, "I think it went really well! The students really enjoyed working with the water and oil!" I just about fainted. Then I started telling him all the strikes against the delivery of this lesson and the way the students probably did not even get the connection of this activity to his objective of taking care of the environment. I could barely stop myself from pointing out all the flaws; yet, I don't think he really understood how wrong things went!

I let Mr. H finish the day teaching his other lessons to the students. After everyone left, we had a serious discussion about thinking things through before doing activities with the class. We discussed the appropriateness of cooperative learning, setting ground rules before passing out materials, keeping control of the whole class while helping individuals, strategies for removing students from the activity when they refuse to follow directions, and many other topics for effective teaching. He also admitted that at the last minute, after he already submitted his plan the day before, he decided to provide materials for each student to work on their own. This was not his original intention, and he did not see the need to discuss the change with me.

This memorable moment definitely taught me a lot about being a cooperative teacher! I do not assume the student teacher has much experience with students of a particular age and can anticipate problems before they arise. I explain to all student teachers in my classroom that the purpose of writing detailed lesson plans is not to torture them, but to force them to think of situations that may occur. I *always* have student teachers present to me any changes to their lesson plan before they teach it.

Although looking back on this moment gives me a good laugh, it also inspires me in several ways. I strive to plan and be prepared for anything that may go wrong in my teaching, either with me or my students. I've learned to be very flexible; sometimes, it is more important to play a game with the students than review with a worksheet. I'm inspired to reflect on the lessons I teach and analyze ways to improve my delivery. Most importantly, I'm inspired to work with student teachers and help them become the next generation of teachers to experience the joys of educating children. I let them know that mistakes are acceptable as long as self-learning occurs from the event, such as when I

was a student teacher and put too much yeast in the homemade root beer my fourth grade class was making. But that is another memorable moment for another time!

A Labor of Love

Linda D. Culbertson

Grove City College

It was a clear, crisp day in the fall semester when our college director of student teaching called me into her office. "We have a bit of a dilemma," she stated. "One of our students who is scheduled to student teach in January is expecting a baby in May, right after student teaching ends. If all goes well, the timing would work, but if there are complications, or if she can't be on her feet during the last few weeks, then she won't be able to continue and thus, be unable to graduate. We need to come up with a way to help her."

After some discussion, it was decided. I would supervise Melissa since her placement was in a northern school, the territory that I usually covered. We just needed to enlist support from our superiors, the public school administrators, and the cooperating teacher to fulfill our plan. Melissa would begin her student teaching experience immediately after the holiday break, placing her in the school a full two weeks before the other student teachers began in mid-January. Hopefully this schedule would allow her to complete her student teaching two weeks early, giving enough time for her to rest a few days before the baby was born.

The plan was set. Everyone was in agreement, and so Melissa began her student teaching placement with all parties on board to help her in whatever way possible. When she began her placement in fifth grade, Melissa was barely showing. Her energy level and commitment to teaching were obvious. She had all of the qualities that we look for

in a good student teacher: her planning was impeccable as she moved easily from daily to weekly to unit plans that reflected the needs of her students; her instructional approach was creative and reflected a solid understanding of skills that needed to be accomplished; her management style was firm, yet compassionate, as she built rapport with her students and truly cared about meeting their individual needs; and most importantly, Melissa was a true professional, displaying the commitment, enthusiasm, and attention to detail that are so highly valued in classroom teachers.

As weeks passed, both Melissa's repertoire of skills and belly seemed to expand at an alarming rate. After seven weeks in an intermediate classroom, she now moved to the second half of student teaching and to the second grade. As I continued to observe her lessons, it was obvious to me that Melissa was struggling. Not only was she facing a primary grade placement in the spring of the year, but she was doing it with a baby in tow. During one particular observation, I could see the weariness on her face, hear it in her voice, and feel it in my very own bones. As I watched her teach subtraction with regrouping (complete with tens and ones rods and concrete examples), my heart went out to this brave young woman. She was so committed to the students in her charge, although it was obvious that it took extreme effort to continue. The room was hot, the kids were anxious to get out into the sunshine, and the teacher was worn out. Yet, as I looked at her in front of them, I realized that her students had no idea of the physical and emotional struggle it was for their student teacher. Mrs. S. could smile and encourage, repeat instructions, and be patient. As I watched her I thought, "Isn't this what we need more of in the classroom?" I decided then and there that even if rules had to be bent, I was going to do whatever it took to get Melissa through her student teaching experience.

As she and I sat down during her post-observation conference, Melissa was ready for the usual format—the time when she would give her evaluation of the lesson followed by my critique of the day's activities. Instead, I had decided to forego the usual and to try a different approach. I began the conference by asking, "What are the things that are taking the most time during your student teaching?" Melissa quickly replied that planning, creating and locating materials, and writing the long evaluations after teaching her lessons took the most time. I followed with another question, "Which of these could we minimize and still maintain a high quality of instruction for your students?" After some discussion, it was determined that lesson planning, although necessary, could be cut from the traditional college format to the more "teacher friendly" version of practicing classroom teachers. I knew that Melissa was ready for this. Next, we discussed the time it took to locate and create materials for her lessons. Melissa was insistent that her students needed the resources that she planned in her lessons in order to succeed in the concepts they were learning. This was not something that could be cut, so we decided to leave as it was. Lastly, we looked at lesson evaluations, which were traditionally written in paragraphs answering two questions: 1) Did the students meet my objective? and 2) In what ways could I improve my teaching of this lesson? As we sat looking through her Supervisor Notebook at the lengthy evaluations that Melissa had been writing, my knowledge of classroom assessment suddenly came through—although the *alternative* form of writing an essay to analyze instruction was most helpful in student teaching, in this situation the goal was to get Melissa through without sacrificing quality of instruction for the students. The process needed to be changed from alternative to a more *traditional* approach of assessment! In that second we began to create a questionnaire

that Melissa could cut and paste to the end of each lesson plan. We decided upon the five most pertinent questions to ask in order to evaluate a lesson. We then followed each question by a 10-point scale. Melissa could then analyze her lesson by circling a response to each question, rather than writing a lengthy and in-depth analysis. Space was left for a few notes on how the lesson could be improved, but the process had been shortened to a more manageable task for this student who desperately needed a break.

Now I would like to say that during my next observation the changes we had created caused a drastic improvement in the ease of the student teaching experience for Melissa. Although the changes were helpful, alas, it is the nature of pregnancy to get more difficult as the time of birth approaches. So, on a smoldering day in May, I completed my last visit to Melissa's second grade classroom. By this time it was obvious that the few more days that Melissa had in the classroom were all she was going to be able to stand. I said a silent prayer of thanks that we had started the experience two weeks early!

Melissa went on to become certified in Elementary Education and to have a beautiful baby girl. Her story did not end there, however. A few months after the semester ended, I received the college's alumni magazine in my mailbox. As I was flipping through the pages, one of the articles caught my eye: it was about Melissa and her graduation day! I thought about the ceremony, and how I had felt so proud watching her walk on the stage to receive her diploma. I realized how hard she had worked to get to that point and was encouraged to have been a part of the experience. (It was one of those, "*I teach—I make a difference*" moments.) What I didn't realize was that the graduation ceremony was only part of Melissa's excitement for the day. I continued to

read how Melissa began contractions on the morning of graduation, but thought they were false labor pains as her back did not ache as she had been informed it would. Believing that she was not going to have a baby, Melissa decided to don her cap and gown and to go through with graduation. The author stated that during the ceremony Melissa's "labor pains became so intense that she had to grab onto the chair in front of her to relax and breathe her way through the contractions" (Lambo, 2002). When asked what the ceremony meant to her, Melissa stated that she had worked so hard to earn her degree that she just wanted to graduate with her class. And she did. And *then* she went to the hospital to have her beautiful baby girl. Thus, the article was aptly entitled, *Labor of Love: Grad Receives Diploma and New Baby on Same Day*.

At times I still marvel and Melissa's stamina and will. She had a goal; she had a dream; and she had a plan. Although her plan was altered, she kept her goal and her dream alive, and with a little help from a lot of people, finished student teaching and earned her degree. Perhaps writing a lengthier lesson plan or one more thorough evaluation would have been in keeping with program goals for student teachers, but I doubt that they would have made a difference for the children in that second grade classroom or for Melissa as a future teacher and mother. Individualizing instruction undoubtedly makes a significant difference for our students. But when it hits home with one of our students, we realize how life-changing—and sometimes life-saving—it can be. I think that Baby Grace, now age 7, would agree.

Lambo, A. M. (2002, Fall). Labor of love: Grad receives diploma and new baby on same day. *The Collegian*, p. 25.

The Defining Moment

Roots and Wings

John M. Kuntz

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

In another life, at another time I would have been called “guide”. In my lifetime I have been called “pledge master, teacher, coach, principal, director” -but very simply I have always been a guide my whole professional life.

As an undergraduate, I was a member of a social fraternity. This was the end of an era when fraternities still believed in brotherhood, academics and the helping hand. I was fortunate enough to be elected pledgemaster of this organization. My job was to educate and design learning situations to teach the fraternity lore and tradition to potential brothers (pledges) while socializing them and seeing that they maintained high grades while increasing their standing on campus.

I took great pride in my weekly meetings with the pledges and getting to know them. Each week we would discuss their needs and challenges and celebrate their successes. During my tenure as pledgemaster, not one of the pledges had grade difficulty and all were accepted into the fraternity.

Being a student teacher supervisor is a similar charge. Each semester I am assigned potential educators who are preparing to join the “fraternity of educators.” I take pride in meeting with my young professionals, offering them guidance and seeing them through an exciting yet challenging semester. It’s rewarding as they discover the students’ sparkling eyes and the moments of “Ah ha!” I am comforted when they say

“They didn’t get it right in first period so… I changed it up in period two and it went better…and period three seemed the best!”

As the semester proceeds, I meet the student teacher’s family-from a distance-and learn where they come from and what mountains they had to climb to get to school. They ask my advice and often think outside the box. What a breath of fresh air! I’m impressed with their knowledge of technology and their ability to transfer technological information from one situation to the next. They are not intimidated by new technology or strange formats. They are able to incorporate technology into the daily classroom without a major strategy shift. This is real credit to the university and the students’ daily learning environment.

The past four semesters have been rewarding. After spending 35 years in public education, it’s gratifying to be able to use my life experiences to help mold new professionals. There is a thin line between helping to circumvent their potentially stressful situations and letting them learn by trying out their “new” ideas.

Despite all of the great moments that I enjoyed with university students, I didn’t think that I would ever have a special defining moment that would move me to write. After all, every supervisor has these moments and blessings!

As a teacher, coach and administrator I always gauged my effectiveness as a professional by the students’, athletes’ or teachers’ comfort in coming to me and sharing and engaging in meaningful conversation. I felt that I was most effective when I wasn’t the center of the circle but part of the circle. I pride myself on team building, communication, and accessibility.

Today, I feel, was my finest moment as a supervisor. After the assistant dean gave his motivating parting speech and welcomed the students as new professionals, he always has the current supervisors stand in front of the auditorium so we can also welcome the new professionals. Normally, we stand there for a few moments while he dismisses the students and we depart. Today, every one of my assigned student teachers came down and shook my hand and thanked me. There was no paperwork due - no reason to see me –except for saying goodbye to a colleague. We all stood around as they shared their holiday plans and post graduation goals (substituting and where they will apply). Awkwardly, one by one, they said their last goodbye, and excused themselves as they met their friends and made their way out of the auditorium.

I take great pride in supporting their roots and wings. Each student should have strong roots set in a rich academic tradition and knowledge and the ability to withstand the rigors of their chosen profession. They should also have the courage to spread their professional wings and fly with great confidence and poise into any academic situation.

There it was. This was the perfect ending for a rewarding semester. I spent much of my life coaching young athletes and trying to put them in the best situation so they could have an optimum chance to win or at least improve their skills and gamesmanship. The closure that I had today with these "educational athletes" was as rewarding as any sports event. I feel that being part of the university experience will present these students with many opportunities to reach the life goals that they envision.

As for me, I am anxious to see what next semester holds. I look forward to meeting new colleagues, traveling to new schools and getting new instructional ideas for

my “bag of tricks.” I also look forward to meeting a new “pledge class” and hopefully opening the doorway to their future.

My wish for the future is that we continue to foster a strong academic tradition for our new educators so eventually; they can pass down their “professional bags of tricks and understanding” to new generations of teachers.

The Grip of a Father's Hand

Jim LaBuda

Nevada State College

After watching two student teachers give their reflective portfolio presentations, which is the culminating exercise at our college for all student teachers, I exited the room and turned to walk down the hallway. I was met by the father of one of the student teachers, who had just completed her presentation. He held out his hand to greet me. As I looked into his face, his eyes teared and he sincerely said, "Thank you for all you have done to assist my daughter". I sensed the pride he had for his daughter and her accomplishments. I acknowledged his appreciative comment and complimented him on his daughter. He gripped my hand, nodded his head and smiled – more to hold back his tears than to respond to me. At that moment, I realized that these portfolio presentations were not only for the students to reflect on their accomplishments but they were a celebration for all those who supported them on their journey to become a teacher.

This man's daughter, Diana, was a student of mine in the first class I taught at the college as a part-time instructor. She had already been accepted into the Teacher Preparation Program and was scheduled to do her student teaching in the near future. That was nearly five years earlier. During that time period, I was hired as a full-time faculty member of the college and then moved into administration for two and one half years. When I returned to the faculty and resumed oversight of the student teaching program, I was surprised to see Diana's name on the roster. She had taken time off to start a family and gave birth to two children. Yet she had never given up on her goal to

become a teacher and she had come back to complete the only remaining requirement for her degree – student teaching.

At the time, I wondered how she would cope with returning to school. It had been a long time since her last class and now she had more responsibilities at home. I knew this would be a difficult task for her; student teaching is challenging for all students, even without having two young children at home. I was sure that she and her husband would need to make many family adjustments and financial sacrifices in order for Diana to successfully complete student teaching.

Diana charged into student teaching with enthusiasm and developed a great rapport with her cooperating teacher and students. She often shared things she had learned in the literacy class she had taken with me five years earlier, some I barely remembered myself. It was evident that she had never given up on her goal to become a teacher. She was consistently prepared and regularly sought out additional resources for her lessons. Her students loved her and learned from her. I often wondered how she juggled her schedule, met her commitments at home and still lit up the classroom with her smile. She was an excellent teacher.

Diana completed student teaching successfully. She received high marks from her cooperating teacher and me. Her last task was to give her reflective portfolio presentation in front of peers, school colleagues, family and faculty. Initially her presentation was delayed, as the main street leading to the school was closed for police activity. She frantically rushed into the room a few minutes late, after taking an alternative route to the school. Then she was greeted by some technical issues with the computer, which delayed her presentation further. However, she persevered and completed her presentation with

confidence and professionalism. It was well received by all in the room and was the last task she needed to complete to earn her long sought after degree in elementary education.

The road to any degree has challenges. However, the grip of her father's hand, his kind appreciative words and the pride that set in the glossiness of his eyes indicated to me that he too had reflected on his daughter's path to becoming a teacher. The presentation shared Diana's development of becoming a teacher through reflection of her college coursework and her student teaching experience, as well as outlining her goals for her professional career. Though for her father, I am sure he reflected on the sacrifices his daughter made, her dedication to her goal and her accomplishment of earning a college degree. To me, his handshake not only made me aware of the people who support each student teacher but the sacrifices each student teacher makes to gain an education. Too often, we think we know our students but in reality we are unaware of the challenges they deal with away from school. We instruct our student teachers to build rapport and meet the needs of their students, as college supervisors we need to do the same.

It is often said, that you can tell a great deal about a person by their handshake. In this case, a handshake told me a great deal about a student and her commitment to be a teacher. It also reminded me of the importance of our role as a college student teacher supervisor. Our commitment must match that of our students.