Using writing composition pedagogy in an introductory teacher education practicum to learn about the motivations, journeys, and understandings of preservice teachers

Daniel Archer Rothermel

University of New Hampshire, Durham

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation

Recommended Citation
https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation/2109

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact nicole.hentz@unh.edu.
Using writing composition pedagogy in an introductory teacher education practicum to learn about the motivations, journeys, and understandings of preservice teachers

Abstract
Over the last third of the twentieth century, best practice in America’s public schools has evolved from a focus on the teacher’s behavior in presenting material to a focus on whether and how students learn. Over that same period, writing composition pedagogy has focused on the emphasis on students’ growth and development as they think reflectively, write drafts, and self-monitor. Integrating writing composition pedagogy in the education of preservice teachers, I use Exploring Teaching, a learner-centered introductory course in teacher education that I teach, as the specific context of my inquiry. As my students write Dear Classmates Letters, portfolio reflections, and self-evaluations, I seek to learn what teacher educators can do to effectively mentor students exploring teaching, challenge their assumptions about teaching, construct introductory courses in education, and create new courses in the program of study in teacher education to meet the individual needs of students as they explore teaching.

By examining the motivations of preservice teachers as they explore the teaching life, teacher educators can learn how to tailor their mentoring to the needs of individual students. By discerning whether the Exploring Teaching course changes preservice teachers’ orientation to teaching, teacher educators can construct such introductory education classes to effectively mentor those in transformation; to appropriately challenge those preservice teachers who enter with preconceived assumptions about the teaching life so that their decisions to teach are well informed and realistic. By learning what preservice teachers understand about the roles of teachers, teacher educators can mentor individual students to respond to their existing images of teaching and clear up misconceptions; to construct classes that engage students in dialogue and discussion that challenge, critique, and/or further explore individual assumptions about teaching; to help students understand more clearly what teachers do; and, if warranted, address the construction of additional courses in the teacher education program of study to meet the individual needs of students.

Keywords
Education, Teacher Training, Education, Language and Literature

This dissertation is available at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository: https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation/2109
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the
text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and
dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of
computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy
submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and
photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment
can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and
there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright
material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning
the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to
right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced
xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic
prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for
an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA

UMI®
800-521-0600

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
USING WRITING COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY
IN AN INTRODUCTORY TEACHER EDUCATION PRACTICUM
TO LEARN ABOUT THE MOTIVATIONS, JOURNEYS, AND
UNDERSTANDINGS OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS

BY

Dan Rothermel
B.A., Arizona State University, 1970
M.A., Arizona State University, 1974
M.S., Arizona State University, 1981

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Reading and Writing Instruction

December, 1999
This dissertation has been examined and approved.

Thomas Newkirk
Dissertation Director, Dr. Thomas R. Newkirk
Professor of English

Dr. Charles H. Ashley
Associate Professor of Education

Cinthia Gannett
Associate Professor of English

Dr. Jane Hansen
Professor of Education

Dr. Thomas H. Schram
Associate Professor of Education

October 22, 1999
DEDICATION

to my sweetheart
Hannah B
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My doctoral study has been my latest adventure that has helped me further understand who I am and what I value as a husband, father, and educator. Through it all, my family has been and remains the foundation for whatever success I have had: my wife Hannah who supports me in all ways and through her work as activities director at the Homestead Nursing Home in Kittery, Maine; our daughter Molly who as a junior at Geneseo State University in New York enlivens my life with her enthusiasm, energy, and thoughtful compassion; our daughter Robyn, a most generous soul and a senior at York High School in Maine, who challenges us to be the best parents we can be; our son Will who as a sophomore at York High School is someone you would love to have as your son, brother, cousin, or friend; my Mom and Dad who have given me unwavering support throughout my many years in education; and my sister Patty and her husband Glenn and my brother Richard who have taken me in whenever I needed a family friend.

Thanks to my friends and compadres: my fellow classmates at the University of New Hampshire: Amy Smith, Kathy Staley, Kim Boothroyd, Elizabeth Lane, Pam Mueller, Dale Wright, Connie Israel, Pat Wilson, and Julie Brooks, who saw me through the good times and the times when my self doubts made me question myself; Steve Adler, my weekly breakfast partner over the last twelve years; Seth Goodwin, a new found breakfast amigo; Mike Andrew who gave me the opportunity to teach the Exploring Teaching course; and Dan Garvey who inspired my teaching by his good humored example of experiential learning.
Thanks to my committee members: Jane Hansen who encouraged me day in and
day out so that I might succeed in the doctoral program and as a college teacher; Tom
Newkirk who gave me the many opportunities to present and teach at the college level;
Cindy Gannett who relentlessly saw the good in me; Charlie Ashley, a truly inspirational
teacher and compassionate human being who gave me the opportunity to learn more about
myself as a person and a teacher; and Tom Schram who wouldn't let me fail.
ABSTRACT

USING WRITING COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY IN AN INTRODUCTORY TEACHER EDUCATION PRACTICUM TO LEARN ABOUT THE MOTIVATIONS, JOURNEYS, AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS

Dan Rothermel
University of New Hampshire, December, 1999

Over the last third of the twentieth century, best practice in America's public schools has evolved from a focus on the teacher's behavior in presenting material to a focus on whether and how students learn. Over that same period, writing composition pedagogy has focused on the emphasis on students' growth and development as they think reflectively, write drafts, and self-monitor. Integrating writing composition pedagogy in the education of preservice teachers, I use Exploring Teaching, a learner-centered introductory course in teacher education that I teach, as the specific context of my inquiry. As my students write Dear Classmates Letters, portfolio reflections, and self-evaluations, I seek to learn what teacher educators can do to effectively mentor students exploring teaching, challenge their assumptions about teaching, construct introductory courses in education, and create new courses in the program of study in teacher education to meet the individual needs of students as they explore teaching.

By examining the motivations of preservice teachers as they explore the teaching life, teacher educators can learn how to tailor their mentoring to the needs of individual students. By discerning whether the Exploring Teaching course changes preservice
teachers' orientation to teaching, teacher educators can construct such introductory 
education classes to effectively mentor those in transformation; to appropriately challenge 
those preservice teachers who enter with preconceived assumptions about the teaching life 
so that their decisions to teach are well informed and realistic. By learning what 
preservice teachers understand about the roles of teachers, teacher educators can mentor 
individual students to respond to their existing images of teaching and clear up 
misconceptions; to construct classes that engage students in dialogue and discussion that 
challenge, critique, and/or further explore individual assumptions about teaching; to help 
students understand more clearly what teachers do; and, if warranted, address the 
construction of additional courses in the teacher education program of study to meet the 
individual needs of students.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ................................................................. iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ..................................................... v

ABSTRACT ........................................................................ vii

CHAPTER PAGE

INTRODUCTION .............................................................. 1

I. CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT .............................................. 3

  The Apprenticeship ...................................................... 4

  Returning to the Middle School ................................. 6

  One More Time .......................................................... 8

  Rethinking Exploring Teaching ................................. 13

  Reemerging Questions .............................................. 14

  Getting Organized .................................................... 16

  Theories of Stage Development of Preservice Teachers... 17

  Opening Day ............................................................ 25

II. WRITING IN EXPLORING TEACHING ......................... 27

  The Philosophy and Structure of Exploring Teaching .... 27

  Experiential Learning ............................................... 30

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Dear Classmates Letters ............................................................... 31
Class Letters ................................................................................... 32
The Schedule of Writing ............................................................... 32

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ............................................... 42
Teacher Researchers ..................................................................... 42
Problematic Issues with Exploring Teaching ............................... 45
The Setting ........................................................................................ 46
The Students of Exploring Teaching ........................................... 46
Data Sources ..................................................................................... 47
Analyzing the Data .......................................................................... 48

IV. WHAT DID STUDENTS EXPLORE IN EXPLORING
TEACHING? ................................................................................... 59
Looking Inward ............................................................................... 59
Looking Outward ............................................................................ 62
Margaret: On an Inward Journey ............................................... 63
Mia: An Inward Journey of a Different Sort ............................. 70
Lynn: An Outward Journey ............................................... 74
Carola: Another Outward Journey ............................................. 81
V. CHANGING OR CONFIRMING EXPECTATIONS: WHAT EFFECT DID EXPLORING TEACHING HAVE ON STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE PLACE OF TEACHING IN THEIR OWN LIVES? ................. 87

Bob: Confirming his Expectation to Teach. ............... 89

Alane: Confirming her Expectation to Teach in a Slightly Different Way. .......................... 92

Joe: Uncertain and Hopeful to Start and Still So at the End. .................................................. 97

Ruth: Doubting Coming In, Doubting Going Out. ........ 102

Lisa: Uncertain, but a Decision Made. ....................... 106

VI. WHAT DID PRESERVICE TEACHERS LEARN ABOUT THE EFFECTIVE ROLES OF TEACHERS? ............ 111

VII. IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS. .... 134

Exploring Teaching I. .............................................. 145

Exploring Teaching II. ............................................ 147

REFERENCES. .......................................................... 151

APPENDIX. .............................................................. 156
INTRODUCTION

Tucked away in a small corner room on the second floor of McConnell Hall, the business school building of all places, my fifteen students and I sat in a circle of desks on the opening day of my apprenticeship as a university instructor. On the blackboard, I listed the order of activities for the first class: name tags, index cards of student information, a getting-to-know-you ice breaker, student placements in public schools, an explanation of the syllabus and assignments, and an interview exercise. I had my fingers and toes crossed hoping that a learner-centered model of teaching that I had used in middle schools would work in the Education Department's introductory course, Exploring Teaching.

After twenty years teaching in elementary and middle schools in California, Arizona, New Hampshire, and Maine, I had hit the big time; for one year I was appointed the teacher-in-residence at the University of New Hampshire. During that year and two future ones that I taught the Exploring Teaching course, I wondered about the roles of teacher educators as they seek to engage students in their own learning, mentor them effectively, and construct such introductory classes in education to meet the needs of individual students.

The purpose of my research is threefold:

(1) to examine the motivations of preservice teachers as they explore the teaching life so that teacher educators can learn how to tailor their mentoring to the needs of individual students,
(2) to discern whether the Exploring Teaching course changes preservice teachers' orientation to teaching. In so doing, to help teacher educators construct such introductory education classes to effectively mentor those in transformation; to appropriately challenge those preservice teachers who enter with preconceived assumptions about the teaching life so that their decisions to teach are well-informed and realistic, and

(3) to learn what preservice teachers understand about the roles of teachers to assist teacher educators in mentoring individual students to respond to their existing images of teaching and clear up misconceptions; to construct classes that engage students in dialogue and discussion that challenge, critique, and/or further explore individual assumptions about teaching; to help students understand more clearly what teachers do; and, if warranted, address the construction of additional courses in the teacher education program of study to meet the individual needs of students.

Over the last third of the twentieth century, best practice in America's public schools has evolved from a focus on the teacher's behavior in presenting material to a focus on whether and how students learn. Over that same period, writing composition pedagogy has focused on the emphasis on students' growth and development as they think reflectively, write drafts, and self-monitor. Integrating writing composition pedagogy in the education of preservice teachers, I use Exploring Teaching, a learner-centered introductory course in teacher education, as the specific context of my inquiry. As my students write Dear Classmates Letters, portfolio reflections, and self-evaluations, I seek to learn what teacher educators can do to effectively mentor students exploring teaching, challenge their assumptions about teaching, construct introductory courses in education, and create new courses in the program of study in teacher education to meet the individual needs of students as they explore teaching.
CHAPTER ONE

CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT

It was late in the afternoon on an October day, maybe three-thirty. Students at Frisbee Middle School had gone home on the buses ninety minutes before as I sat at my desk and wondered, What’s missing? As the language arts teacher on a five-person seventh grade team, I was weary and my interest in teaching sagging again. During a similar lull five years previous, I was energized by the collegiality of teaming that was all the rage in middle schools. We five met weekly for team meetings to talk about students and coordinating our teaching days; we planned together for months to organize a three day/two night trip for our students to Bear Brook State Park in New Hampshire; we organized monthly team activities such as a faculty/student basketball game and academic Olympics, had weekly student advisory groups, and grouped our students heterogenously. As teammates, we were middle school, hear us roar.

For awhile the novelty and the creativity to organize the school day invigorated me and the collaboration with other professionals stimulated my creativity. But over time my desire again began to fade with the relentless demands of teaching some one hundred students from seven-thirty to two p.m. without stop and constantly compromising and placating recalcitrant team members. Like open classrooms and individual learning plans before it, teaming in middle school was no panacea as I had hoped. I should have known better. I felt at one with Mick Jagger for I was getting no satisfaction.
To keep myself motivated, I was the cooperating teacher for three young women interns who each spent one year with me as a part of their masters programs at the University of New Hampshire. The daily conversations with these intelligent and eager young adults stimulated my interest in mentoring and brightened my days. Still, throughout much of the year, more than I was willing to admit then, I knew something was missing. And goodness, I never wanted to be one of those teachers who was hanging on for the bi-weekly pay check, the summers off, and Maine State Retirement at sixty-two while all the time complaining about how bad life was, how lousy the principal was, and especially the unappreciative and lazy kids were. Though I thought of myself as still enthusiastic and could, at times, be semi-entertaining, I wasn't finding meaning in my existence. And then good fortune struck.

The Apprenticeship

I'd been selected to be the Teacher-in-Residence for the Education Department at the University of New Hampshire for one year. Supervising interns, teaching once a week courses in Educational Structure and Change and Exploring Teaching was a dream come true. Given this golden opportunity, I was validated as a teacher educator and was intent on being well-organized and prepared for my new professional life. Using the syllabus of my predecessor in this position as a template, I wrote performance outcomes:

1. Participate actively in classrooms (fieldwork).
2. Speak with conviction and clarity in small and large groups.
3. Write descriptively and analytically.

My students were expected to complete sixty-five hours of fieldwork, including time in an elementary school or middle school, a special education setting, a related arts
class, and a faculty meeting, dance, or open house. Each week, they would write response papers about the reading and the fieldwork experiences, self-assess at the end of the semester, and listened to speakers as other instructors had done in the past. Oh, did they ever listen to speakers. This was the dark secret that I shared with no one.

*I didn't really know how to meet the needs of my students who were exploring teaching. I was only guessing.* I thought if I kept the action flowing and brought in inspiring teachers and principals, my students would in turn be inspired. That was the public reason I had speakers most weeks of class during the semester. The private reason was that I didn't know what I would do to fill the entire two hours of our weekly class. I never felt comfortable lecturing, and, in fact, had the self-doubts of the novice that I really didn't know what I was doing. If someone else was talking to my students, I would have the class time filled productively, or so I thought. Not surprisingly, the focus of this class was all about me and my needs to make it through each class and be perceived as competent by the students.

And fill the time the speakers did as they were generally informative and enthusiastic. Now here was where the plot thickened. Even so, my students rarely interacted with the guests nor asked questions to them. They just sat there. I silently stewed, *You have picked the teaching profession to explore in which you can make a difference in the lives of others, and you aren't even engaged in your own education.*

*What gives?* To solve the dilemma, I returned to my belief that it was I who would have to save the day. Again, with my focus clearly on my responsibility to provide a good (read: entertaining) product for my students, I kept returning to what I thought I should do to be a good college instructor of Exploring Teaching. My teaching journal from that first semester revealed my solution.
I learned that rather than speakers talking about topics such as Whole Language, it would be more engaging for my students if the guests told their stories. Their stories with kids, teachers, and administrators. Their stories of teaching. What advice they have? How to keep the job balanced with the rest of their lives? How to manage the workload? The best of times, the worst of times. How you choose to be a teacher?

STORIES STORIES STORIES STORIES STORIES STORIES STORIES STORIES STORIES STORIES STORIES STORIES STORIES STORIES STORIES

In hindsight, I realized that I had provided my students with a Band-Aid as I still saw student learning as a problem that I alone needed to solve. I never thought to ask, I wonder what questions my students needed answering? Funny, I never thought to ask my students what they thought and what they needed. The focus of my teaching was me. I had a duty to them to teach, and I was going to die trying till I got it right. Attending to their life histories and stories and individually mentoring them never came into my mind. I never wondered what they were exploring or what they were learning about teaching. I never asked. Mea culpa. Fortunately, my reading of Ted Sizer (1984, 1992) planted the first seeds of change for me.

Returning to the Middle School

Invigorated by my year of teaching well-behaved students and given the time to read and write during the "school day," I returned fired up and ready to change the world in my own classroom as an eighth grade language arts teacher. Sizer's work keyed me into the importance of demonstrations of learning and student exhibitions of that learning. Rather than paper and pencil tests students would demonstrate their understanding by exhibition. Deborah Meier (1995), as principal of the Central Park East Secondary School in Harlem, New York and a disciple of Sizer, helped organize learning around student
exhibitions at her high school. For example, among the fourteen exhibitions her seniors had to complete to earn a diploma were; (1) a post graduation plan to promote student thinking about the relevance of their high school education, (2) a mathematics exhibition where students present an overview of their past work in mathematics, present evidence of computation proficiency, and demonstrate higher order thinking by demonstrating competence in political, civic, and consumer mathematics (e.g. interpretation of social statistics), and (3) a community service and internship.

Diving headfirst into exhibitions a la Sizer that focused my teaching and student learning, I had my students work for three quarters of the school year on preparing for these exhibitions so that in the fourth quarter they would demonstrate their knowledge. Students would:

1. write autobiographically about an incident or series of incidents that deal with an important relationship in their lives,
2. prepare a high school plan,
3. select a poem or speech to recite. Once done, will explain its significance and how it relates to their lives,
4. create a three dimensional project to show what they have learned after reading a book about the human condition,
5. in small groups, develop a plan for a community service project,
and
6. lead a ten to twenty minute discussion on an issue of current events in a class meeting setting.

To prepare for many of these exhibitions throughout the year, I used writing composition pedagogy of student choice in writing subjects, experimenting in writing, gaining response from peers and myself, drafting, and eventually publishing. For example, for the speech exhibition about what they had learned, students wrote to organize their thinking, worked in pairs to gather response from peers, and practiced for public speaking with their written notes or text; to prepare for the demonstration of their ability to
organize and present information in a meaningful way. One student who was a handful for our team of teachers, but connected with the individual choice, provided by such writing and planning, wrote:

35 Ways to Not Get Suspended
by: The Master of Suspension

1. don't ask the teacher if she is a lesbian.
2. don't yell at the teacher.
3. don't sing in class.
4. don't throw the teacher's things out the window.
5. don't get in the teacher's face.
6. don't take things off the teacher's desk.
7. don't slam the principal's door.
8. don't whistle in class.
9. don't put moldy bread in the teacher's coffee pot...

As writing to discover, explore, and demonstrate understanding held promise for my eighth graders to make learning personally meaningful, I had the skeleton of understanding to be a better teacher educator when I was given another opportunity to teach part-time at the University of New Hampshire.

One More Time

Hired to teach Exploring Teaching again, I was determined to use writing composition pedagogy in the context of school reform thinking of Ted Sizer to provide me with possibilities for addressing the issues of effective mentoring by teacher educators, engaging students in their own learning, constructing introductory courses of education to meet the needs of individual students, and challenging the assumptions with which they came to Exploring Teaching. I leaned on Donald Murray and Nancie Atwell to address
the use of writing to help teacher educators learn about the above issues in teacher education.

Murray's (1987) writing process includes five primary activities:

1. collecting and recollecting specific information that comes from all the senses,
2. focusing... on a single piece of information or several pieces which interest us,
3. ordering... to connect the information that interests us with other information, so a meaning evolves,
4. developing... we write, using our voices to tell us what we have to say, and
5. clarifying... (by) working at the text to make it more sensible, sharper, more understandable... all those activities take place simultaneously (pp. 6-7).

As my students used the experiential setting of their fieldwork classroom and school, they collected information and wrote letters to me to focus and develop their understanding of the teaching life. Murray explains the great potential that writing in this way has for such students as these in Exploring Teaching.

The more you write the more you will discover about your subject, your world, and yourself. I hope through your writing and mine you have found out that we do not write what we know as much as to know. Writing is exploration. We use language to combine experience and feelings and thoughts into a meaning which we may share with a reader...I hope you have learned that you learn by writing. I write to find out what I have lived, what I have felt, what I have thought. I use language as a tool of seeing and understanding (p. 266)...

Using writing to discovering meaning was ideal for students to address the multiple layers that they explored as they learned about teaching. Their motivations and the assumptions were unearthed in a developing pattern of finding their voice as it related to this career search. I parted with Murray on the issue of student's choosing all their own subjects as I resisted giving them carte blanche on writing subjects. As Dewey (1938)
wrote, *The mature person, to put it in moral terms, has no right to withhold from the young on given occasions whatever capacity for sympathetic understanding his own experience has given him* (p. 38). I melded Murray’s notion of students finding their own subjects with Dewey’s belief that teachers have a responsibility to actively initiate and participate in the education of their students. For example, at the beginning of the semester, I asked students to write to me of their motivations and expectations for Exploring Teaching course in addition to their self-selected issues and topics. In a following Dear Dan Letter, I had students write about spending an afternoon in the town in which they would teach to get a feel for the community from which their students came.

At the same time I was trying to understand my students’ needs, I was struck by their repeated attention to their autobiographies in their letters to me. Portalupi (1995) report the importance of attending to life histories to make sense of present learning. Unfortunately, I was primarily the only one informed by these Dear Dan Letters. Though I highlighted key points to inform all students in my weekly class letters to them, my writing only summarized and excerpted their experiences, dilemmas, and questions. I had given them an audience, but one that was smaller than it needed to be. A simple reorienting from writing for just me to their classmates enabled my students to broaden their audience and inform each other of the depth of their understanding each week (Rothermel, 1998). To ward off the isolation of writing without a significant audience, students published letters regularly for classmates. Rather than an occasional reading or one time publishing for classmates, I put publishing front and center as a focus for writing by having my students weekly publish for classmates.

With approximately sixteen students, Exploring Teaching’s small class size meant publishing weekly for each other was plausible without being too expensive or paper consuming. Though each semester, it seemed, there was one student who complained
about "wasting" paper, I believed the benefits of students sharing their experiences and insights worthy since the total cost and volume of paper was less than one moderate size textbook. The letter writing my students did to each other was designed to free them to explore their own subjects well, and their schooling life was a prominent one. Regular opportunities to publish gave my students the audience of classmates to change the traditionally writing-for-the teacher dynamic. With a sense of audience, my students could develop the principles of what Murray (1982) felt readers needed from writers: (1) specific information, (2) meaning of the information, (3) to see people who talk, act, and react, (4) a sense of order, and (5) an individual's voice of authority, concern, and energy.

As my students wrote letters, they reinforced Murray's notion that the writer was at the center of writing and learning. A misreading of writing composition pedagogy was that anything goes, that an attention to quality of substance and convention had no need to be addressed in the initial stages of writing. My hope was that publishing letters to classmates would bring out quality writing and satisfactory attention to grammatical convention, though such attention was not primary for me. Though I suggested some topics for students to write about in their letters, my students had, as Murray expected, important responsibilities to find their own subjects and then construct a piece of writing which supported the subject. And they did by writing about teaching lessons in the middle school, being accepted by the middle school students, and relating topics to the course text, such as grading, to their fieldwork.

Nancie Atwell (1987, 1998), whose work inspired me and changed the fundamental way I approached teaching in the middle school elaborated on Murray's writing process to help me understand how to use writing in the introductory classes in Education Departments. Her belief in the importance of choice underscored her commitment to develop a sense of ownership and voice in her student writers. Adapting
her view of the need of student ownership and choice, I integrated my suggestions for writing topics to expand the repertoire of writing abilities of my students. In an attempt to have them dig deeply to understand the complicated nature of teaching, I asked them to think metaphorically about teachers. In the past, students have compared teaching to a lighthouse, a sculptor, a gardener, a computer programmer, and a piece of clay. Other times, I had students write about issues that spontaneously emerge from class discussions and student interest. The writing about the ideal classroom came from students, and I made it an expectation for the next letter.

Respecting students' intentions and ownership of the writing in Exploring Teaching came from my reading of Atwell. The principles she offered teachers whose students wrote form the foundation for writing in Exploring Teaching. The seven principles that constantly inform our teaching and students' learning:

1. Writers need regular chunks of time - time to think, write, confer, read, change their minds, and write some more...
2. Writers need their own topics...
3. Writers need response...
4. Writers learn mechanics in context...
5. Children need to know adults who write...
6. Writers need to read...
7. Writing teachers need to take responsibility for their knowledge and teaching (1987, pp. 17-18).

To support these principles, Exploring Teaching students wrote weekly, for the most part choosing their own topics. Fundamental to Atwell's beliefs was the need for an audience for writers to give purpose and passion to their writing; letter writing in Exploring Teaching gave my students such opportunities. Two hour class periods once a week in Exploring Teaching precluded in-class response to each other's writing, but the use of study partners gave students the possibility to use each other as an optional responder. My weekly class letters to them explaining my teaching decisions, things I was
learning through my reading and my experiences, and responding to student statements and issues gave my students a weekly example of an "adult" writing for them. Regularly students respond to the course text, *A Letter to Teachers* (Perrone, 1991) to construct meaning from the text in light of the past and present experiences in schooling.

Ultimately, my supervision of writing was less than Atwell's was to her students. Any drafting of letters was left up to the students to do themselves. For at the university level, I gave the responsibility for writing to my students as a means to set the stage for their learning through writing. Writing was a regular fixture in Exploring Teaching and now it was time for me to mine its possibilities for the learning of teacher educators.

**Rethinking Exploring Teaching**

Through the use of writing by my students in Exploring Teaching, I was going to use the thinking of Ted Sizer (1984, 1992) to ground that writing. His admonition of *too much teacher talk and student listen* spoke to my problems when I previously taught Exploring Teaching. In my headlong rush to be everything to my students, I was in no way following his dictum of *less is more*. I believed in the metaphors of teacher as coach and students as workers, but I don't live it. I cast my students in the role of passive recipients of my many years of experience and those of the authors we read without giving them any meaningful responsibilities for their own learning or to ask and begin to answer their own questions. I still didn't know their questions, but I knew it was time to find out by restructuring Exploring Teaching and "listening" to their writing.

So too would my students go beyond responding to their reading on index cards and handing them in to me and listening to me and other guest speakers, they would meet in groups to demonstrate their learning by organizing a presentation on specific chapters in
A Letter to Teachers (Perrone, 1991), the course text. To engage them in their own learning and have them doing what teachers do by organizing information, collaborating with peers, and presenting it in an engaging ways, I had groups of students lead twenty to twenty-five minute hands on and participatory discussions on group-selected topics such as grading, the appropriateness of standardized testing, and tracking and heterogeneous grouping.

I had solved one problem, but was left with another. So what? During these student exhibitions, we laughed and had fun participating, but did the learning from the group presentations translate into an understanding and building of useful and applicable knowledge for my Exploring Teaching students in making career decisions? What was the connection of these educational experiences to mentoring my students and meeting their individual needs as they explored teaching? An examination of my students' writing seemed to hold promise for me to more effectively mentor my students and construct the Exploring Teaching course to meet their individual needs as they sought answers to the place of teaching in their lives.

Reemerging Questions

So what was it that motivated preservice teachers to explore the teaching life? Could what I learned about students' motivations from my students' writing assist other teacher educators in tailoring their mentoring and counsel to the needs of individual students? An examination of theories of stage development of preservice teachers might prove informative to understand the major stages in their maturation as preservice teachers. Would an examination of my students' writing support or challenge the predictable stages that other researchers have noted? How would theories of stage
development of preservice teachers help teacher educators mentor their students and construct classes to meet the various stages of students as they explored teaching.

Then I wondered did the Exploring Teaching course change my students orientation to teaching? If they were transformed by this active involvement in the lives of students and teachers in public school classrooms and classmates in our class, how would that information be helpful to teacher educators as they constructed introductory education classes and mentored their specific students? If they were not transformed, what would teacher educators do to challenge those preservice teachers with preconceived assumptions about the teaching life? What could teacher educators do to have their students well-informed and realistic about their decision to teach or not to teach? What must teacher educators do to change facile assumptions about being a teacher? Even if their orientation to teaching remains unchanged, what if anything was changing throughout the semester for such Exploring Teaching students? For example, if, as some of my students had in the past come to Explore Teaching to confirm their decision to teach and learn the ways of teachers, what subtle, if any, changes were occurring for those students throughout the semester? As for teacher educators, what would that information do to help the mentoring and course construction of introductory education classes?

As they explored teaching, what did preservice teachers understand about the roles of teachers? Were preservice teachers so concerned about being liked and that the students were having fun that learning was secondary? Or were preservice teachers so concerned about being in charge and maintaining order that they lost sight of the learning needs of individual students? How would the knowledge of what preservice teachers think were the proper roles for public school teachers assist teacher educators in mentoring them and responding to preservice teachers existing images of teaching and clear up misconceptions preservice teachers might have? What effect would it have on the
construction of introductory education classes? How would teacher educators engage students in dialogue and discussion to challenge, critique, and/or defend individual assumptions about teaching? Was there a way to help students understand more clearly what teachers did?

**Getting Organized**

To learn about my students' motivations, beliefs, and journeys, I relied first on John Dewey's (1938) belief of the two principles for educative experiences: (1) student interaction with the environment and others and (2) continuity of new learning experiences that build upon previous student learning and socializing experiences. Those principles were the foundation for Kolb and Fry's (1975) four stage experiential learning cycle. The diagram below summarizes this experiential learning cycle, adapted from Dan Garvey (personal conversations, September 25, 1997).

![Experiential Learning Cycle](image)

**Experiential Learning Cycle**

In my section of *Exploring Teaching*, the use of the experiential learning cycle began with students having experiences in the class such as the group presentations. In this example, students began to develop an understanding of teaching situations from a personal perspective, not just from guest speaker and observing me and their cooperating...
teachers in the field. Students reflected during class discussions and later in writing about what they had learned. They then thought how this experience is similar to and different from others they have had in their own teaching, learning, and schooling (transfer); they then formed preliminary conclusions about their emerging new perspectives on teaching. Finally, students could use these new understandings in their fieldwork classroom and in our class (new knowledge). The cycle had its limitations for students had few if any opportunities to present their new knowledge since their fieldwork experiences provided only an occasional time to teach all the students and no opportunity in our class to lead another discussion based on their learning. The importance of the cycle was to introduce a way to analyze educative experiences in writing and use them to improve subsequent lessons.

**Theories of Stage Development of Preservice Teachers**

As preservice teachers were in the process of becoming teachers, research suggested that they passed through various developmental stages. Through examination of some three hundred, mostly quantitative studies, Fuller and Bown (1975) identified four stages of development: (1) preteaching with no concerns, (2) concerns about self, (3) concerns of being a teacher, and (4) concerns with students. These "stages" could be thought of as clusters of concerns of preservice teachers which, when understood, could be a helpful way to describe the experience of learning to teach.

The preteaching stage had students unaware of what to be concerned about as a teacher and fantasizing what the life of a teacher must be like. Having not experienced the realities of the classroom, they identified with the very students they would be teaching and were often unsympathetic and critical of teachers in the classroom. In the second
stage, students were concerned about their survival in the classroom as their idealized vision of teaching was replaced by concerns of classroom control, ability to master the content of the curriculum, and evaluations by their supervisors.

Teaching is also constant, unremitting self-confrontation. From such a process are saints - and blind men - made. Class "control" is difficult because feedback about herself is impossible for a teacher to deny. Pupils tacitly, if not overtly, let the teacher know what they think, what they learn, how they feel about her. Learning to tolerate, nay to seek systematically, to assess, to perceive, and use such information, is the sine qua non of teaching. But truthful feedback can be excruciating (p. 48)...

Considering these constraints in the (classroom) situation, the powerlessness of their position, the paucity of resources, and their inadequacy as teachers, it is not surprising that prospective teachers are typically anxious, and preoccupied with their own survival (p. 49)...

They wondered, Where do I stand? Is it going to be my class or the teacher's class? Does she tell me what to do? Or can I try things myself? If I see a child misbehaving in the hall, do I handle it, ignore it, or tell someone else? There was little concern on the part of the preservice teachers about the students as learners. Most intense were the concerns about class control as preservice teachers dealt with balancing the number of students in classes, the involuntary status of the students, and the variable parental and community standards with which they would have to deal.

In stage three, there was an awareness of the limitations and frustrations of teaching as students were quite aware on the personal demands of becoming teachers. Their concerns included having to work with too many students, too many non-instructional duties, time schedules and pressures, and lack of adequate instructional materials. They had found they had learned the content from their methods classes well enough to reproduce it on exams, but not well enough to explain it to someone else, to answer questions, or to give examples. Their continued emphasis continued to be their
own performance as teachers, not concerns about students and student learning. Finally in
the fourth stage, preservice teachers were beginning to focus on learning about the social
and emotional needs of students and relating to the students more as individual learners
that Meier (1995) stated as crucial to meaningful education. Being fair and tailoring
content to the needs of individual students were important considerations of preservice
teachers in this stage. Often powerless in the classroom, preservice teachers felt
inadequate by the dynamics of classroom life with students. The concern to successfully
manage a class remained high priority in establishing themselves as teachers.

More recently other stage development of preservice teachers theorists (Caruso,
Reven, Cartwright, and Munday, 1997) have added their interpretations to this field.

In dealing with preservice student teachers, Caruso (1977) identifies six phases of
feelings of the preservice teachers as they developed personal and professional identities.
The dichotomous phases are:

(1) anxiety/euphoria as preservice students are wondering whether they will be
accepted by the public school students and teachers, they are pleased with the warm
welcome of these same students and teachers,

(2) confusion/clarity as they lack knowledge in the curriculum nor know the
appropriate language to use with the public school students, they feel a growth in their
own learning through classroom experience,

(3) competence/inadequacy as they make progress in understanding the classroom
life, they are overwhelmed with how much they still have to learn,

(4) criticism/new awareness as they begin to be think what they would do if the
class were their own class, they become critical of self and others; at the same time they
do have the scope of their experience broadened,
(5) *more confidence/greater inadequacy* as they begin to raise deeper questions about the lives of teaching professionals, their high expectations make them frustrated, and

(6) *loss/relief* as they experience the sadness as the preliminary teaching experience ends, they begin to reassess and reflect about their future in teaching.

Student letter writing and self-evaluation, which addresses the individual needs of students to participate in their own education that school reformers espouse, can reveal these companion and ambiguous feelings which emphasize the complexity of the preservice learning process for my Exploring Teaching students.

The initial two stages of six of Yarger and Mertons (1976, 1980) developmental stage addresses preservice teachers. Stage one has preservice teachers exploring a teaching career, but not committed to it. They are testing out preconceived notions about teaching and are focused on observations of students though they have minimal interaction with those students, if at all. While at stage two, the preservice teacher has committed to teaching and learning about life in the classroom. Preservice teachers are placed in a non-instructive field observations and begin to work with students in small groups. In this model of developmental stages, the other four stages (initial teacher, developing teacher, practicing teacher, and experienced teacher) focus on inservice teaching.

Concerned about the apprenticeship model where novices imitate the expert which denies the importance of individual's biography, Zulich (1991) offers up three stages: (1) an idealistic introductory phase, (2) an intermediate phase where the specifics of teaching lessons overshadows the idealism of dealing with global issues, and (3) immersion. Students progress through these stages with the help of teachers who promote reflection and reflective inquiry valuing the individual's prior experiences. Writing and discussion bring to light both individual and collective issues as well as problematic situations as
students in Exploring Teaching do. Rather than a focus on an apprenticeship, empathetic teachers encourage communication and growth in preservice teachers. In Exploring Teaching, students write in letters of important educational experiences in their past as they move themselves through their stages of development. The focus on written and oral communication in Exploring Teaching can promote the growth and understanding of the teaching life.

Drake (1992) uses the five stages of the monomyth (Campbell, 1973) of heroes that cuts across cultures to shed light in the stages of preservice teacher development. In the monomyth, the hero is called to adventure, then must leave her/his world. During the adventure, the hero is tested by demons and dragons. Upon victory, the hero is rewarded and returns with the reward to the world from which she/he came.

Initially, the Call to Adventure occurs when preservice teachers seek to serve humanity by finding meaning and commitment in a path with heart. As the student begins the journey, she or he make changes to become a teacher (Death/Endings), be they geographical, career, or with relationships. Since this is a time of loss, this is the time in teacher education for preservice teachers, at the encouragement of their teachers, to tell their stories orally and in writing. The Struggle begins with the anxiety, a universal feeling of preservice teachers, which is mediated by reflective thinking supported by the teacher educator. When preservice teachers are encouraged to risk, they can learn from their mistakes. Completing the initial induction into teaching, preservice teachers celebrates the learning they have done and admission into the field of education (Rebirth/Beginning). Over the next five to ten years, teachers can develop competency and skills that define good teachers. Once so experienced, teachers can take on an apprentice of their own (Return/Service) to share what they have learned as they take part in collective professionalism.
Drake's contention is that when preservice teachers are aware that they are traveling a path with a heart, they can realize that they can make meaning from their experiences as they struggle and travel a journey similar to what all humans are traveling. Successful teacher education occurs in a caring, respectful environment where the education is connected to the lives of preservice teachers. Students in Exploring teaching have indeed chosen to learn about a path with a heart. Writing gives students a strong voice in their own education as Sizer (1984, 1992) believes is important. As Exploring Teaching students reflect on their own stories and current learning in middle school classrooms, they write letters and self-evaluate to deal with the anxiety they feel, the doubts they have, and the potential for making a difference they dream about.

Reven, Cartwright, and Munday (1997) have found six developmental categories:

1. awe and excited participation when preservice teachers romanticize the role of public school teachers and overestimate their potential to change the world,
2. adjustment when they become disillusioned with the demands on teachers such as the volume of paper work and the exhausting amount of work in general,
3. redefinition as they create their own definitions of teachers and teaching (a stage that may last for years)
4. transformation as they broaden their perspective of themselves as a professional (another stage that may last for one's entire career),
5. commitment as they have a more accurate view of the duties, responsibilities, and rewards of teaching, and
6. renewed anticipation about upcoming internships or student teaching and their increased involvement in the instructional aspects of teaching.
A review of these six developmental stage theories highlighted that Fuller and Bown's theory of stage development of preservice teachers incorporated the categories of the more recent studies. Though each of the other theorists offered insights and clarifications into the field of stage development, the elegance and simplicity of Fuller's (1969) and Fuller and Bown's (1975) made their organization both straight-forward, and yet still applicable and appropriate as a reference point for understanding the motivations to teach of preservice teachers. Fuller and Bown also had a category focusing on the learning of students that the others did not include which made it the obvious choice for a study focused on a learner-centered, experiential classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. pre-teaching</td>
<td>1. anxiety/euphoria</td>
<td>1. idealistic</td>
<td>1. call to adventure</td>
<td>1. awe/excitement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. concerns about self</td>
<td>2. confusion/ clarity</td>
<td>2. death and endings</td>
<td>2. adjustment</td>
<td>3. redefinition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. concerns about teaching</td>
<td>3. competence/inadequacy</td>
<td>3. struggle</td>
<td>3. transformation</td>
<td>5. commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. concerns about students</td>
<td>4. criticism/new awareness</td>
<td>4. testing preconceived notions</td>
<td>4. transformation</td>
<td>6. renewal anticipation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stages 3-6 apply to inservice teachers</td>
<td>stage 4 &amp; 5 apply to inservice teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Revealed through their writing, these recursive developmental stages or categories could be instructive for teacher educators to better build relationships with their students and better understand their mentoring role with students being introduced to teacher...
education. An understanding of the research into the developmental stages of preservice teachers could help make sense of the strengths and weakness students brought to their teacher education. Attention to the initial stages of preservice teachers could help teacher educators deal with students who entered teacher education with unrealistic optimism and self-serving biases about what teaching was. Entering with high levels of confidence and conviction, they believed they entered their preparation with the necessary characteristics such as being warm, friendly, and caring for teaching. Yet, with that focus on compassion and understanding, preservice students might neglect the importance of pedagogical and subject matter knowledge (Weinstein, 1989). In the initial stages, some preservice teachers held a clear and strong image of themselves as teachers while others had great role ambiguity when it came to actually seeing themselves as teachers. The ones with a strong self-images might undermine their ability to settle into a teaching environment while the less sure might tend to conform to the norms of the school in which they are placed which could hinder their ability to develop as thoughtful and reflective practitioners (Hawkey, 1996). Placek and Dodds (1988) found that in the initial stages of preservice education, students were not concerned or did not judge their effectiveness based on how quickly or well students learn.

The Piagetan framework (Piaget, 1952) of learning stages had critics that believed that advancing from one stage to another was not incumbent on completing the prior stage (Gleason, 1997). Dewey's (1938) cycle of learning was based on interaction with the environment and continuity of experiences where learning opportunities were based in previous learning in a recursive way. In his examination of student writing, Graves (1984) found that there were an incredible range of exceptions that each child presented as she or he learned to write. Learning to write was not done in stages, but a process of topic choice, rehearsal, composing, reading, and revision in no set order. The use of stage development theory of preservice teachers in this study was to highlight central tendencies.
of those individuals, not to suggest a rigid, incremental development as university students learned about teaching. The learner-centered classroom of this study was based in the constructivist theory that knowledge was created individually and shared collectively. As such, students may have a primary focus that varies and returns to previous points of development. In times of stress or new learning, learners might return to earlier stages of development as they clarified their motivations and intents and made sense of their new situations. Stage theory of preservice teachers was used in this study as an elastic frame that had individuals becoming aware of the importance of students in the learning equation, even though their reflections may periodically return to the importance of their own motivations and the details of the decisions of teachers in classrooms. Though the Exploring Teaching course was constructed on the experiential learning cycle, the use of the preservice teacher stage development theory allows for students to reflect and make new knowledge no matter the primary stage that they were presently at. Fixed stages had no place in the analysis of the data.

**Opening Day**

As students entered our first class together, they sat in a circle with no back row with in which to hide. Girded with learning from teaching the Exploring Teaching course seven times previous, I had a plan to fully engage them in their learning about the teaching life by having them participate in middle school classrooms and during discussions and group work and by writing in our Exploring Teaching class. Writing with a conscious attention to reflection and synthesis of the experiential learning cycle and awareness of stage development of preservice teacher theory might provide teacher educators with important knowledge about their students. Aware of my role as coach and students as workers (Sizer, 1992), I sought to learn from student writing about their motivations,
assumptions, and beliefs in order to help teacher educators build relationships with their students, effectively mentor them, and construct introductory education courses to meet the individual needs of preservice teachers. Through their writing, I would seek to learn if their needs for survival included a dominant need to be well-liked by their students and to maintain classroom control. Considering their need to survive, what would they see as important roles for teachers?

Asked to complete a survey about herself as a student and the responsibilities of teachers at the university, Lisa wrote, *As a student, I mean well. I usually start off the semester o.k., but it's down hill (until the finals where I kick butt) from there. Unfortunately, I need to be interested in something to do well.* She grabbed my attention as I looked into the individual motivations, journeys, and needs of my students as they explored teaching.
CHAPTER TWO

WRITING IN EXPLORING TEACHING

As a reflection of American society, public schools provide challenges and opportunities for personal satisfaction for all those who teach. With all the violence and the exhausting demands of meeting the individual needs of a diverse population in the late twentieth century, public school teaching is not for the faint of heart. The massacre at Columbine High in Littleton, Colorado in April, 1999 has countered any thoughts that schools are sanctuaries from society's tensions and conflicts. Who would ever have thought they would put their life in danger by becoming a teacher in a suburban Denver high school? And yet, students flock to the University of New Hampshire to learn about the classroom lives of teachers. They enroll in Exploring Teaching to learn if teaching America's youth is their calling.

The Philosophy and Structure of Exploring Teaching

The Exploring Teaching course is the first step in the five year preservice teacher education (PTE) program. At the University of New Hampshire, the foundation of Teacher Education is the focus on developing a "community of inquiry" and "community of support" (Oja, Diller, Corcoran, & Andrew, 1992). At its best, such a supportive learning community becomes a safe space where class members assume some responsibility for each other's well-being as well as the success of the group as a whole. Each student brings their partial perspective to respond to the common inquiries of the
entire class. Something of value, be it social, personal, intellectual, and/or ethical, is created by the written and oral interaction of classmates.

Central to our vision is the teacher as reflective decision maker. Teacher decisions are called for across the range of classroom activity. Teacher decisions usually have value components. They are often moral decisions. When teachers own the decision making process, they work from their own philosophical constructs. They move beyond blind implementation of packages and prescriptions. They make informed choices that direct practice (p. 6).

One implication of this philosophy of communities of support and inquiry is the necessary organization of Explore Teaching to foster such community building. Regular writing of Dear Classmates Letters allows Exploring Teaching students to share their fieldwork experiences, their doubts, their questions, and/or their reflections that they produce. The knowledge of classmates' struggles and successes that students can demonstrate in their weekly writing can promote an understanding of each other's learning. In addition, small and large group discussions about the substance of their letters allows individual students' stories to be acknowledged and accepted in building a safe setting for all. As an instructor, I work to model and create a classroom atmosphere which fosters a community of learners, establishes an atmosphere of mutual respect and caring, and cultivates a celebration of diversity (Exploring Teaching Manual, p. 4). The laudatory goals for Exploring Teaching are for students to become knowledgeable, committed, thoughtful, reflective, and proactive practitioners and teacher leaders (Andrew, 1997) as they compare their attraction to teaching with the reality of classrooms. Exploring Teaching is also successful if students learn teaching is not for them.

The intent of Exploring Teaching is not to feed students orthodoxy, but to have them experience life in the classroom, ask questions, and draw some preliminary
conclusions about their match with the teaching life. Fieldwork experiences help students address in writing and during class discussions any gap they have between their idealism and the reality they encounter in the public schools. Exploring Teaching students learn of the diversity of public school students so the Exploring Teaching students learn how teachers and schools might deal with this variety in effective ways. As an Exploring Teaching instructor, I assume the role of counselor to learn their individual stories through their writing to deal with students to help them sort out and make sense of their experiences in relation to whether they want to enter a teacher education program (M. Andrew, personal communication, April 20, 1998). Supported by public school reform thinking which focuses on the need to engage students in their own learning (Glasser, 1969, Sizer, 1984, 1992), the learning community in Exploring Teaching, with its attention to each student's voice, can foster individual's growth in a group setting (Oja, et al., 1992). Through their interactions with middle school students one-to-one or in small groups and their reflections of, for example, the optimum length of class periods for student learning or dealing with doubts about the appropriateness of their cooperating teacher's teaching style, Exploring Teaching students use writing to begin to understand the roles of students and teachers in schools.

Students spent at least sixty-five hours in a public school classroom as a teacher assistant with a cooperating teacher as mentor. This fieldwork experience was not student teaching nor an internship, but a once or twice a week opportunity for them to see the lives of students and teachers in classrooms. In their fieldwork in my section of Exploring Teaching, students observed middle school students and teachers in classrooms, hallways, lunchrooms, and playgrounds. In the classrooms, Exploring Teaching students worked with middle school students one-to-one or with small groups to support the teacher, graded papers, gone on field trips, or visited other classrooms and schools to broaden their experiences and be better informed them on the teaching life. If Exploring Teaching
students felt confident and willing, some taught their own lessons to full classes of students.

Weekly, Exploring Teaching students met with me for a two hour class to discuss their fieldwork experiences in small and large groups. They participated in experiential learning such as leading discussions on chapters for the course text (A Letter to Teachers, Perrone, 1991) and organized the visits of guest speakers. As they explored teaching, they wrote in many ways as evidence of the students' reflection and synthesis. They wrote Dear Classmates Letters to wonder, reflect, and clarify their thinking on educational issues as well as their experiences in the public school classrooms. Also, their expressive writing encouraged an active, participatory role for the student (Britton, et al., 1975). In writing students set goals, explained the rationale for their goals, and made plans to achieve them. In a portfolio reflection, students identified personal or professional artifacts that had value to them, and then wrote about the meaning of one of the artifacts as they told the "story" behind the artifact. At the middle and at the end of the semester, students self-evaluated as they wrote about what they had learned, updated their goals, and planned for future learning experiences (Hansen, 1998).

**Experiential Learning**

I used the four stage experiential learning cycle (Kolb and Fry, 1975) as a tool for my students and myself to analyze our experiences. This cycle has its foundations in John Dewey's (1938) two principles for educative experiences: (1) students interaction with the environment and others and (2) continuity of new learning experiences that build upon previous student learning and socializing experiences. The recursive aspects of continuity fostered the students' and my co-planning for students' continued growth as students
interact with their surroundings. This learner-centered classroom atmosphere sought to challenge the power structure of the status quo culture of schools (Golez, 1996).

In our experiential classroom, students became more and more responsible for their own learning as they wrote to reflect, reassess, and plan for their future learning and understanding of their active roles as teachers (Fulwiler, 1997). My students had the opportunity to gain confidence in their abilities to make meaningful educative choices. As a teacher, I was a co-learner with my students (Dewey, 1938).

**Dear Classmates Letters**

My students wrote *Dear Classmates Letters* to promote a reflective stance for themselves and to promote dialog, exploration, and inquiry with each other. Toby Fulwiler (1997) believes that letters encourage doubts, uncertainty, and candor. Letters promote the give and take of learning rather than the finality of testing and measuring. With copies for all classmates, these weekly letters were opportunities for students to wonder, reflect, and clarify their thinking on their fieldwork and class experiences, reactions to readings, requests of mine (e.g. write about an important educational experience, comment on an ideal classroom), and personal musings about their introduction to the lives of teachers. The intent of *Dear Classmates Letters* was to challenge the traditional notion that information and insights travel in one direction (i.e. from teacher to students) (Sizer, 1992). The letters gave students an audience beyond me to inform each other of their experiences, dilemmas, doubts, and questions. In addition, with oral sharing of information in class, it was less likely that students would feel that *no one can understand want I am going through*. Through their writing, students had opportunities to be significant parts of the learning equation in the classroom.
**Class Letters**

To respond to the writing of my students, I weekly wrote class letters to clarify and explain teaching decisions I had made to support their thinking about students, teachers, and schooling. While students informed each other through Dear Classmates Letters, I used my class letters as a satisfying and time efficient way to respond to student writing in an economical and focused manner by opening with comments about my latest learning about teaching as it relates to our *Exploring Teaching* course. I reflected, transferred when appropriate, and explained my teaching decisions in light of my recent learning. I did this to let students know the thinking that was behind my decision making process as an instructor. As one model of teaching, I wanted students to consider that not all instructors taught as they were taught. As potential teachers, they have choices of teaching styles from which to choose.

**The Schedule of Writing**

The sequence of writing assignments for my section of Exploring Teaching was as follows:

1. Dear Classmates Letter
2. Dear Classmates Letter
3. Portfolio Reflection
4. Dear Classmates Letter
5. Dear Classmates Letter
6. Mid-term Self-Evaluation
7. Dear Classmates Letter
8. Artistic Artifact
9. Dear Classmates Letter
10. Dear Classmates Letter
11. Self-Assessment
The First Dear Classmate Letters

Since most of my students would not have been in their fieldwork classrooms by the time this letter was due at the second class meeting, the first writing students did was a Dear Classmates Letter based on questions I asked my students to address. I referred to them as "teachers" in my salutation to have them focus on the learning from the teacher's perspective as they observed me in our class and their cooperating teacher at their public school fieldwork site. I did not want their experience in Exploring Teaching this semester to be focused only on their roles as students. My letter to them follows.

Dear teachers of Exploring Teaching,

In your first Dear Classmates Letter, please include a description of an important educational experience you have had. It may have occurred in one class, on one day, or over a number of days.

To complete your letter, consider choosing from among the questions below which are designed to help you begin to focus on the process of exploring teaching. If there are other comments you want to include in your letter please do so.

Why are you taking this course? What do you hope to get out of it? What do you plan to put into it?

What are your thoughts and feelings about teaching as a career? What do you need to learn about teaching? ...about yourself?

What kind of help and support do you anticipate needing or wanting?

Review your own educational history to ascertain how you have learned best in the past. What kinds of classes did you have where you succeeded? ...where you did poorly? What did you learn from those classes?

Dan Rothermel
Since publishing for classmates may have been a novel experience for many students, I created this first writing assignment to give them many options from which to choose so that they were likely to find subjects to feel safe and comfortable about as they wrote. Letters focused on the writing moment rather than probing analysis which allowed for exploration, not definitive response (Fulwiler, 1997). A warm and supportive environment where students do useful work (Glasser, 1993) was necessary for students to risk in writing and to support our developing community of support and inquiry (Oja, et al., 1992).

To establish firmly in their minds that I wanted my students to reexamine the roles of students and teachers, I choose to have them write about a significant educational experience that they had had. I want my students to begin to make the connections between their meaningful life learning experiences and the learning that was going on with their middle school students. In the past, I have never had a student say sitting in a lecture hall, writing definitions for vocabulary words, or answering questions at the end of the chapter was memorable and important. Becoming a drum major, the personal discovery of being able to teach the structure of muscle tissues with an orange, a kind and thoughtful teacher, traveling to Belize, or working with Habitat for Humanity have been such experiences.

The other questions from my letter gave students a wide choice to begin their exploration of teaching with some self-exploration. If they were going to discover if teaching was for them, they needed first to think about who they were and what they valued. Such explorations of the self gave students the opportunity to grapple with ideas, take personal responsibility for what they wrote, and in the process may have helped them find their own voices.
The following week I asked students in their Dear Classmates Letters to include a paragraph or two of their full page single-spaced letter about two or three goals they would choose to address during this semester. I included a section in the class letter for that week to help them with their goal writing.

*When you think of writing goals this week, remember goals are often SMART. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Tough. My goals are to answer these questions:*

1. What does a good Exploring Teacher instructor do?
2. What works and doesn't work in Exploring Teaching this semester?
3. How do I best reflect and learn in this semester?
4. What are students learning in Exploring Teaching?

*That was good for me to do. I am a strong believer in teachers doing what they ask their students to do to better understand the learning process and what students are going through.*

As teacher, I was a most obvious and visible example of a learner. If I demonstrated that I had much to learn from my students (Atwell, 1987, 1998, Graves, 1994), I would be doing my part to establish the supportive community of learners in our classroom since I was the most significant model of the importance of writing. Writing myself reinforced in the minds of my students that writing matters, that I learned by writing as they did, and that as a veteran teacher I still continued to explore teaching myself.

To reinforce for my students that they were primarily responsible for their own education, I had students write goals to take some ownership and responsibility to decide what they wanted to know as students rather than passively respond to only my goals as their teacher. Students later self-evaluated to find the value in their experiences and plan for new learning experiences (Hansen, 1998). The self-evaluation process began with goal setting and plans to meet their goals. Writing could propel students to clarify and
articulate their reasons for exploring teaching and put the primary responsibility for learning on their shoulders. If they were going to seriously reexamine the roles of students and teachers, I needed to give them concrete opportunities, such as writing, to do just that.

**Portfolio Reflection**

During the first three weeks of classes, students presented meaningful personal and professional artifacts to their classmates. Eagle scout rings, pictures of Mom and Dad, ticket stubs to concerts, date books, calculators, and cell phones were such artifacts. The purpose of this experience was threefold: (1) if we were to become a learning community and learn from each other, we needed to know each other (to be a successful public school teacher they would need such collegial support), (2) to explore teaching and their place in American education, they needed to look within themselves to see who they were, what they valued, and what were the foundations of their lives, and (3) by talking to classmates about their artifacts, they would have an experience doing what teachers did in classrooms.

After the five minute artifact presentations, the students selected one artifact and wrote in detail about its meaning to them. Students needed to know that their autobiography mattered as they addressed their basic needs of belonging and developing self-confidence (Ross, 1988). By scheduling the artifact experiences at the beginning of the semester, I set the tone with the students that I was serious about letting their voices be heard. If I wanted them to begin to understand that the individual student in the public school classrooms mattered, I, too, had to actively value each of the students in my Exploring Teaching class.
Additional Dear Classmates Letters

For the next two weeks prior to their one-to-one mid-semester conferences, students wrote Dear Classmates Letters. Now that they had been into their fieldwork classroom for up to four weeks, they often wrote about their fieldwork. Being able to write about how they were adjusting and adapting to a social setting (the classroom) where they were the outsider built our learning community by the sharing of similar experiences. Letters which could promote equality increased the chance of students being honest and invited the back and forthness of the skeptical mind by acknowledging the paradoxical and contradictory way the world of the classroom worked (Fulwiler, 1997). I suggested they consider identifying a quote that was meaningful to them. As with past letters, they could comment on the course text or if they were ones who lead a chapter leading discussion, I asked them to self-evaluate their learning to inform us all. As learners in an experiential course, my Exploring Teaching students reflected on the experiences they had, thought about past experiences that were similar, and then made plans for future learning.

Mid-semester Self-Evaluation

At mid-semester students wrote self-evaluations to reemphasize the primary role of themselves in their own learning. They self-assessed their progress on reaching their goals and describe what they were learning about schooling, students, and teachers. They wrote about their participation and initiation in their own education. Crucial to their reflection was their planning for their own future learning (Hansen, 1998).
Mid-semester Dear Classmate Letter

The following week students again wrote Dear Classmates Letters to focus on their fieldwork experiences, the readings, the class discussions and experiences, or personal journeys in becoming teachers. Now that they had spent eight weeks together as a developing learning community, the letter writing allowed students to put their opinions and beliefs out to their classmates for feedback, further self-reflection, and self-monitoring. The publication of the letters allowed students to respond to others in writing and continue to build the learning community and to see how their experiences compared and contrasted with their classmates.

Artistic Artifacts

Howard Gardner's thinking (1993, Checkley, 1997) continued to play a prominent role in my section of Exploring Teaching. In a class letter, I outlined the elements of his theory of multiple intelligence.

Some teams Howard Gardner's ideas of multiple intelligences. Typically, we in public school systems emphasize the linguistic and mathematical capabilities of our students, and neglect many other intelligences they have. Gardner feels we are missing the boat if we do not address other intelligences students bring to the schoolroom. He has identified eight such intelligences:

- artistic - spatial relationships,
- interpersonal - dealing with other people,
- intrapersonal - knowing your own strengths and weaknesses,
- kinesthetic - movement, physical activity,
- linguistic - language,
mathematical - logical and systematic thinking, musical, and naturalistic - ability to organize information into categories.

I went beyond merely informing students of multiple intelligences to creating learning experiences that gave them experiences with other than linguistic intelligence. In addition to developing their linguistic intelligence, their writing could promote my students intrapersonal intelligence by fostering reflection and self-awareness. Group work projects and discussion could foster their interpersonal intelligence as they learned the give and take that builds successful relationships. In addition, at this point two-thirds into the semester, I asked students to create an artistic artifact to have them experience their artistic intelligence. My students could choose to artistically represent what they now understood about teaching and learning by collages, drawings, painting, something computer assisted, cartoons, sketches, schoolscapes, photography, or their own ideas. They included a caption on the front with their artwork which described the meaning the artwork had for them.

Students created artistic artifacts to stretch their thinking about how students could represent their understanding and knowledge of their exploration of teaching. In some cases, students, who described themselves of "not being good in art" and struggled with this assignment, had a better understanding of what middle school students go through who were not good mathematically or linguistically (the primary intelligences dealt with by public schools). The design of this assignment was to sensitize Exploring Teaching students in a personal way, who on the whole had been quite successful public school students since they were at the University of New Hampshire, to the many students in schools who found schooling difficult and challenging.
End of Semester Dear Classmates Letters

As the semester drew to a close, students wrote two more weekly Dear Classmates Letters primarily to further reflect in writing about their experiences in the fieldwork. Many had begun to teach a full class of students on a lesson that they had created. As their experience ended, they wrote about the opportunities they had had to learn from middle school students and teachers.

Self-Assessment

The final self-assessment paper is a requirement for all students in all sections of Exploring Teaching at the University of New Hampshire to write. The guidelines follow.

As you know, a major purpose of Education 500 (Exploring Teaching) is to help you begin to decide whether teaching is an appropriate profession for you. Now that you have worked with students and teachers in classrooms, and talked/read/written about teaching, students and the school environment in the seminar, you should have a good idea whether you want to continue to pursue the teaching profession. You should also have a good idea of the special qualities you can bring to teaching and the challenges becoming a teacher will present to you. For those of you who do not want to teach, the course should have helped you to clarify why teaching is not an option you wish to pursue.

Part of the course requirements for Education 500 include a self-assessment paper. This paper stays in your Education Department file and, if you apply for admission to the teacher education program, your paper becomes an important document in your application. As you write your paper, try to write it in such a way that who you are and what you believe about teaching, learning, and schools comes through clearly. Use the questions below as your focus question.

Based on your experiences in Exploring Teaching, what it mean to you to be a teacher? In your response, consider the following areas:
(a) becoming committed to students and their learning.
The writing in Exploring Teaching was the foundation for students as they reflected, expressed, and understood the schooling experience. Students could learn about themselves by writing about their understanding of the roles that students and teachers play in schools. These students could learn in community which valued the individual voice and acknowledged the various stages of development each brought to the university classroom. Writing valued the individual learner as students tried to find if they "fit" into the present educational system or if they were going to be ones who would transform the system. Writing and sharing of letters, artifact reflections, self-evaluations, and creating artistic artifacts demonstrated to Exploring Teaching students the variability of individuals in our own learning community which is an example of a diverse group of learners similar to the variety that they might find in schools in the pluralistic society of twenty-first century America. Writing had the potential to promote and identify the individual's voice as Exploring Teaching students made sense of their own exploration into the world of teaching.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Teacher Researchers

The revolutionary nature of teacher research has to do with its emphasis on change from the inside out (Ruth Ray, 1992, p. 173). Teacher research challenges the conventional belief in the separation between researchers (those who make knowledge) and teachers (those who consume and disseminate it) as it tries to demystify and democratize knowledge making (p. 174).

As I look at my students' writing in Exploring Teaching, I am aware of the unusual context of my role as teacher researcher: (1) I use the university classroom for the context of my study and (2) I am presenting in the Exploring Teaching course a learner-centered framework based in school reform thinking using writing composition pedagogy as a vehicle for understanding my students as they explore teaching.

Though teacher research is often thought of as research done by school-based researchers (i.e. classroom teachers) in contrast with academic researchers in education (i.e. university professors), I want to support the case for the use of teacher research for university instructors such as myself as I look at the writing my students do in Exploring Teaching. Such a notion was stated by Pearl Rosenberg (1989), Teacher research necessitates classroom teachers (at any level) to participate in a highly reflexive and immediate process of solution-oriented investigation (p. 32).

Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle (1993) capture the stimulating intellectual advantages for teacher/researchers.
1. Their teaching is transformed...; they become theorists, articulating their intentions, testing their assumptions, and finding connections in practice.

2. Their perceptions of themselves as writers and teachers are transformed. They step up their use of resources; they form networks; and they become more active professionally.

3. They become rich resources who can provide the profession with information it simply doesn't have...

4. They become critical, responsive readers and users of current research...

5. They collaborate with their students to answer questions important to both...

My role as teacher researcher in my own classroom has problematic issues that are important to acknowledge and address. As a teacher researcher based in the university, I am aware that my dual roles of teacher and researcher may confuse my students who expect a teacher and then find they have a researcher muddling around, too. A limitation of such teacher research is that it may divide my attention between data gathering and instruction. When doing two jobs at once, my responsibility as a teacher-researcher at the university is to not neglect my role as teacher, especially when the research stakes are high (i.e. dissertation inquiry). So too is taking time to reflect on my work with my colleagues to give myself the sense of "otherness" that helps me see a wider view of my data. To clarify my dual roles, I note my research intentions to my students at the outset of the course.

As the instructor of students that I have come to know and enjoy over the semester, I have an understanding of them as individuals which becomes a meaningful part of my resources of analysis. The weekly classes with my students and the reading of their writing on a regular basis provides me with a depth of knowledge of them. Identifying the relationships I have with my students as well as describing who I am and what I value
allows the readers of this study a glimpse into my orientation towards my teaching and my students (Lancy, 1993). I want the readers to have no doubt of my background and epistemological stance.

Teacher researchers such as myself may lack the perspective necessary to see and interpret their own classroom environment and may conduct research that does not always meet the expectations of the established research community. Such teacher research can be seen as less precise and most likely to have errors in bias, reliability, and validity. The findings of such research may be limited to the present setting and similar research in a different setting may produce results that are different (Charles, 1998). Being steeped in the experiential teaching philosophy, I may be less able to see its downside. Acknowledging my assumptions about teaching to both my students in the study and readers of my research are crucial to get on the table.

Though teacher researchers may not always frame their findings in terms of theory, and thus their research may have little relevance beyond their own classrooms (Ray, 1992), I use the writing composition pedagogy theories of Nancie Atwell and Donald Murray as well as the school reform thinking of Theodore Sizer and William Glasser in an attempt to mitigate any claims of idiosyncratic and irrelevant research. Socially constructed knowledge based in theory allows practitioners to bring to life those theories as they examine and question actual teaching practices in classrooms.

Teacher research does allow for the exploration of the complex environment in schools as teacher researchers are aware of their own values and how those values interact with students, colleagues, and supervisors. Teacher researchers become more aware of how they participate in creating what happens to them in classrooms. This approach allows to question the previously unquestioned assumptions about the teaching life.
This form of action research of mine is seeking social change in that I am seeking to challenge the traditional teacher-centered curriculums that render students passive and docile. Though I seek change, ultimately, my ethical stance to treat my students fairly and accurately report what I learn underlies my commitment to my teacher research.

As a researcher, I am a teacher first. The interests of my students are embedded within my research, but must take precedence over my research if conflicts arise. My experience is that there is often little conflict over my dual roles, and my students often seem flattered that I take an interest in their work individually. Yet, I am not so foolish to think that problematic situations might not arise.

**Problematic Issues with Exploring Teaching**

When I look at my students' writing, I must be aware that when the match of cooperating teacher in the public schools and Exploring Teaching student does not work, Exploring Teaching students can over-generalize that because of one unsuccessful experience that teaching is not for them. Also, I must be aware that when students publish Dear Classmates Letters for each other, they may censor their responses. They may, in fact, be more "honest" if they think I, as a "sympathetic" instructor, am the only audience.

In addition, students may find the experiential nature of the fieldwork in Exploring Teaching so engaging, since they are often treated like adults in a real world setting for the first time. They may not be able to separate the power of this approach to learning from their personal reasons for becoming teachers. The caution for students and instructors is to reflect further on whether it is the teaching that is engaging and worthy of further
or it is the practical nature of the experience that is most significant. If it is the latter, then a prudent course would be for students to explore a variety of career options in similar experiential settings. As I focus on the writing students do to learn about mentoring, course construction, and programmatic issues of teacher education, my awareness of all these possibilities is fundamental in turning these potential problems into learning opportunities and research insights.

The Setting

The University of New Hampshire is a land grant institution with approximately 12,000 students; 11,000 of which are undergraduates. The Exploring Teaching class meets in a public school classroom at a local junior high school from 2:40 to 4:30 PM once each week. Seating two people each, the eight tables are arranged in a circle in a snug, carpeted room. On the walls, there are three erasable marker boards, and to the side is a stand with a television with a video recorder for our use. Often the energy of middle school students is heard in the hall when they prepare for class plays, complete schoolwork, or relax after participating in school sports. Periodically we are interrupted by the vice-principal's voice over the intercom announcing the late bus has arrived or a student is needed.

The Students of Exploring Teaching

The class of fourteen students was similar in size to the other twelve sections of Exploring Teaching at the University of New Hampshire. There were nine females and five males. Of these students, all were Caucasian except one female who was a native of
Central America. Undergraduate students do not major in education at the University of New Hampshire, but work towards graduation with a bachelor's degree in an academic major. These students were drawn from a variety of departments across campus including English, Mathematics, Foreign Languages, Family Studies, and History. Twelve of the students were undergraduates (one of whom was non-traditional as he had had a twenty year career in the military) and two were graduates (one non-traditional who had returned to school in her mid-30s as she continued to raise a family). Undergraduates took the course as an elective while graduates were enrolled to fill a department requirement to complete this course before they were officially enrolled into the fifth year Masters program. One student declined to participate in this study.

Data Sources

Dear Classmates Letters.

Students regularly write letters to each other in which they write the stories of their fieldwork classrooms, question their assumptions about the teaching life and their suitability for it, comment on the Perrone (1991) course text, and achieve small victories as teaching assistants. They set goals and draw upon prior experiences to begin to understand the lives of students and teachers in public school classrooms. During subsequent class sessions, students would discuss the issues in their Dear Classmates Letters in small groups, then we would discuss some of them as a whole class.
**Portfolio Reflections**

After presenting personal and professional artifacts to classmates, Exploring Teaching students write a one page reflection on the meaning the artifact has for them in an attempt to further understand who they are, where they have been, and what they value.

**Mid-term Self-Evaluation**

Mid-term, students examine the goals they have set, evaluate to what extent they have been successful in meeting those goals, and set new goals, when appropriate, for the second half of the semester.

**End-of-the-Semester Self-Assessments**

Students write self-assessments on whether they will to continue to pursue further teacher education. They write of the special qualities that they bring to teaching and the challenges becoming a teacher will present to them. Writing about who they are and what they believe about teaching, learning, and schools, they describe what it means to be a teacher. They write about their commitment to students and their learning, how they would organize the classroom environment, and what and how they would teach.
Analyzing the Data

An examination of student writing would offer me insights into what students are indeed exploring when they enroll in the Exploring Teaching course. I sought to learn their motivations to explore teaching, the journeys they took throughout the semester to confirm or change their orientation toward their view of their suitability for teaching, and the understandings of the effective roles of teachers they had prior to the course and developed during the semester. Learning such knowledge could inform teacher educators on successful means to build relationships with their students, effectively mentoring them, and constructing such courses as Exploring Teaching to meet the individual needs of students.

Student Motivations

Given my past teaching experiences with Exploring Teaching students and the low pay and status of teaching compared to other professional in the business world as well as the demanding working conditions of classroom teachers in public schools, I looked to understand the variety of reasons students enrolled in this course. Was it primarily due to their commitment to make a difference in the lives of others as had some (maybe most) of my Exploring Teaching students in the past? Reading through the writing of my students week by week, I began to learn that there was more to their decision to explore teaching than an altruistic commitment to the improvement of society through education. Two main reasons surfaced as to why students enrolled in the Exploring Teaching course. Either they, as predicted, wanted to make a difference in the lives of others by learning the details of the classroom lives of teachers or they wanted to find if their talents and interests meshed with what it took to be teachers. An in-depth examination of their individual
stories of members of each of these two groups throughout the semester might lead to understanding of significant experiences and influences on Exploring Teaching students in their understanding of the teaching life.

By requesting that students write about an educational experience that intrigued or influenced them and asking them to consider commenting on their individual purposes for taking the Exploring Teaching course and their feelings about themselves as potential teachers, I could learn more about their motivations to teach and how those motivations manifested themselves throughout the semester. Examining their writing revealed that, though nearly half my students came with an outward focus (i.e. with an emphasis on helping others and learning the details of the classroom lives of teachers), more than half were on an inward journey (i.e. to better understand themselves and their own motivations to teach). Surprised by this focus on inward journeys, I delved further into these first letters to learn that: (1) some students came with doubts about their ability to succeed as a teacher, (2) others with confidence, and (3) a third group just to learn about the teaching life. Not surprised that a number had doubts, I was surprised to learn of the confidence with which so many of my students came to class. Wondering what the letters would reveal about what educational experiences drew them to examine teaching in this course, I found that the following categories were highlighted most frequently: (1) the act of tutoring a younger child, (2) an inspiring teacher, and (3) special assignments such as working on a school newspaper and researching family history.

After the reading of one set of letters, I was learning of the variety of backgrounds and motivations of my students that I would not have guessed. At this critical point I sought to learn if the second set of Dear Classmate Letters which included their self-selected goals for learning about the teaching life would help me learn about their motivations to teach. As it turned out, their goals for this course clustered in three ways:
(1) being a teacher, (2) dealing with public school students, and (3) dealing with themselves. I was not surprised by the focus on themselves (similar to stage two of Fuller and Bown's scale of preservice teacher concerns) or being a teacher (similar to stage three). Yet, I did find myself surprised that my students were already thinking about students and their learning (similar to stage four) since that is the most developmental mature stage of preservice teachers. The idea of an inward journey resurfaced in this letter too as students continued to wonder about their motivations and abilities to teach. In addition, my students' willingness to open up with self-knowledge caught my attention. Here in the second week of the course, my students were willing to share with classmates that they were just beginning to get to know information that spoke of their doubts and insecurities about themselves as learners and future teachers. For example,

Lisa - *I consider myself devoid of creativity. I've never had that side of me nurtured.*

Sean - *(Speaking of just observing on his first day of fieldwork)* *Being a shy person, it would have been hard to jump right into the curriculum, or helping around the school.*

Alane - *I have asked myself over and over again whether or not teaching is something I can really handle. I am a rather shy person - I don't speak up in class, and I have dreaded oral presentations in school and speaking in front of a group, so I guess it would seem a little odd that I have chosen a career that involves being the center of attention for a good portion of the day. I can't really offer a clear-cut explanation for this choice, but I do know that I love history, and that someday I would like to be able to share my love for the subject, and what I know about it, with students.*

These students brought me to a critical point: I needed to expand my assumptions about the motivations for students taking this course as they explored teaching. Their willingness to open up and share personal feelings made me realize their need to individually understand their own motivations and reasons for teaching was crucial to their making personal meaning in their exploration of teaching. Clearly, my original
assumptions about their motivations were limiting my awareness of my students and ability to construct this course to meet their individual needs. If I was going to build relationships with them and mentor them well as well as organize this course to meet their individual needs, I would need to look more deeply into their motivations for taking this course. The third week's portfolio reflections confirmed my belief that learning about the motivations of students in introductory education courses could be important to teacher educators.

When I asked my students to reflect in writing on an important artifact, I began learning that many of the students' conclusions would be categorized by "lessons for success that they had learned." Four such categories emerged: success by (1) self-knowledge, (2) effort and dedication, (3) being in personally meaningful educational settings mattered, and (4) gaining strength from outside self. If I was clearer on their values, beliefs, and motivations as they began to explore teaching with an inward or an outward focus, my mentoring of them would be more appropriate and individualized. I would look further into the journeys throughout the semester my students would take to learn the specifics of those students who began with an outward focus and those with an inward focus.

**Student Evolutions**

Once I began learning about the motivations to take the Exploring Teaching course, I thought an examination of their writing would show me both whether their desire to teach had changed from the beginning of the semester to the end and whether, if it did or not, how that evolution manifested itself throughout the semester. Examining student
writing in the beginning of the semester and again at the end would help me find if there were clusters of students who evolved throughout the semester in similar ways and whether there were individual journeys that would be important for me as a teacher educator who was building relationships with my students to know.

Given the experiential nature of this course with its active involvement in the lives of students and teachers, students might be transformed by an experience that is so dissimilar from the typical college lecture courses. Would it turn out that the mere opportunity to deal with "live" subjects would engage and transform students into committing to further teacher education?

Critical to this inquiry was putting together profiles of my students based on their week by week writing which would help me understand a detailed evolution of students throughout the semester. Emerging patterns and noting the experiences, incidents, or reading that they thought important in their exploration of teaching would help me make sense of their journeys.

For example, Alane, one whom I categorized as on an inward journey, focused on these issues in her writing.

1. In her first Dear Classmates Letter (DCL), she focused on the importance of a high school independent study project that was based on her family heritage.

2. In her second DCL, she wondered if she had the aptitude for teaching. Her letter was filled with questions about the lives of teachers in classrooms such as how do I make up a lesson plan?

3. Her portfolio reflection was about her life with horses and the connection she made with her teaching horseback riding to being a classroom teacher.
4. In her third DCL, she wrote about the success of her cooperating teacher by being relaxed and humorous with his students.

5. In her fourth DCL, she focused on an excellent teacher from her educational past who was enthusiastic, made learning experiential, and knew students on a personal level.

6. In her self-evaluation, she commented that in addressing her goals, she was learning: (1) what it took to be a teacher and if she had it, (2) the importance of dealing with the nitty gritty of a teacher's life such as answering the question, how to deal with trouble-making students, and (3) the need to participate more fully in our class.

7. Her next DCL focused on her successful attempt to spend some time in a high school as well as her assigned middle school placement.

8. The emphasis of her next DCL focused on the learning she did as a discussion leader the previous week and the successful nature of the visit by the middle school principal to our class who addressed one of her important questions about the hiring process.

9. The following letter focused on a high school field trip to a Superior Court and conversations with her cooperating teacher about hiring.

10. In her final self-assessment, she confirmed that teaching was for her and that knowledge of students and a respect of them was key to being a successful teacher.

The journeys in Exploring Teaching such as Alane's would be examples of students' actual evolution of development of preservice teachers as identified by Fuller and Bown, 1975. In addition, I could learn of the reoccurring and overlapping concerns of students throughout the semester. Alane's concerns progressed from her need for self-understanding to dealing with the actions and decisions teachers made every day in the classroom. The variations on the stage development of preservice teacher's themes would
provide me with information about clusters of journeys of my students as well as the unique ones.

Reviewing all the students' writing, I wanted to answer the following questions: (1) what happened to students throughout the course of their exploration of teaching? (2) Did students change their orientation towards teaching throughout the semester and what would students reveal as important in their writing to that transformation? (3) If they came committed to teaching, did they stay committed or lose interest? (4) What if any changes occurred and how they evolved throughout the semester? (5) Were their own preconceived assumptions they had about the teaching life well informed and realistic?

My first examination of the data found that more than half of my students were certain they wanted to teach at the beginning of the semester while the others were uncertain. A thorough examination of students writing throughout the semester would inform me whether there were changes to those students who were certain about teaching and those who were uncertain at the end of the semester; learning from their week to week writing would provide me with the specifics of their journeys.

**Students' Understandings of the Roles of Effective Teachers**

Fuller and Bown (1975) found that preservice teachers felt that class control was an urgent problem which they were faced with as novices. Concerned about their survival, they quickly became aware that the teaching life was complex and demanding. With their adequacy at stake, they had needs to be liked and praised. Through their writing I sought to learn whether and how the survival instinct and need to be liked manifested itself in student views about effective roles for teachers in classrooms. Would they believe an
effective teacher was one who had a focus of making learning fun, one who was in control, or something else? An initial review of student writing in the first weeks of the semester showed that fun and enjoyment were important characteristics of teachers from students' point of view.

Kate - *I want to be the type of teacher that makes learning fun for students. I believe that students have to be eager to learn, and if the information is presented in an interesting enough way, they will give you their attention. I want to teach all the fun and interesting things there are to learn about art and how beautiful it really is.*

Lisa - *Am I making the classroom an interesting place to be? Are the students thinking or memorizing? Am I teaching the right stuff? Are we having fun? These are questions I'm going to think about, and I'll be sure to add more to the list.*

Yet a full semester review of student writing revealed that references to fun as an important role for teachers to provide were limited to the beginning of the semester. Remining the data, I found that three categories emerged from their writing which were the importance of: (1) students being engaged, (2) teaching being holistic (i.e. practical, relevant, and accountable), and (3) attending to the details of teaching such as being prepared, aware of time, and being concise. A closer examination of student writing would reveal the specifics of these categories and the implications for teacher educators.

Looking for direct references of discipline, class control, and classroom management, I wanted to learn the depth and breadth of my students concerns about their survival with middle school students and if and how those concerns effected their beliefs about effective teaching. Generally the classroom management concerns of my students surfaced in their writing during the end of the semester which was reasonable since that was when they were being given their first chance to teach a thirty minute lesson or substitute for their cooperating teachers. Expressions like *quieting them down, hell on
earth, and regaining control appeared in their writing. Wanting to learn about their thinking about effective roles for teachers, I sought answers to: (1) what did Exploring Teaching students feel was the best way to discipline? (2) was their evidence, even an emphasis, in student writing for the strong need for order and rule making? (3) were there concerns of Exploring Teaching students that discipline and classroom management issues might make it difficult to teach effectively? (4) was there evidence that preservice teachers found dealing with discipline issues significant and/or troublesome as they thought about the role of teachers? (5) given whatever evidence there was about classroom management in student writing, did anything else stand out in their writing that they believed was crucial to teaching effectively?

Though classroom control was mentioned, the importance of developing relationships with students by gaining a knowledge of students as individuals and respecting them was more often evident in student writing about effective roles for teachers. Delving into the details and background of their fieldwork experiences in their writing, I could learn the extent of the importance they attached to building relationships with students. Despite the need for some semblance of order, Exploring Teaching students' writing showed no evidence that their survival in the classroom dominated their thinking, but that they believed there were other important factors to consider when being a teacher: (1) constructing successful lessons, (2) knowledge of individual students and the importance of forming a relationship, and (3) mutual respect. I would reexamine student writing in depth to flesh out the substance of these categories.

In the process of understanding the similarities and individual natures of my students, I was learning through their writing of important elements of their autobiographies. This information, in turn, would help me understand the foundation of their beliefs as they entered Exploring Teaching and the framework of experiences with
which they would use to construct meaning this semester. Their letters, portfolio
reflections, and self-evaluations would help me understand their individual and shared
motivations, journeys, and beliefs about effective teaching. Such knowledge could inform
teacher educators about effective mentoring and the construction of introductory courses
to meet the needs of preservice teachers at the onset of their preparation in teacher
education.
CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT DID STUDENTS EXPLORE IN EXPLORING TEACHING?

When students enrolled in Exploring Teaching, what were they actually looking to explore? Teaching certainly, but was there more to it than that? Some preservice teachers hold a clear and strong image of themselves as teachers while others have great role ambiguity when it comes to actually seeing themselves as teachers (Hawkey, 1996). My research found that students approached this course in two primary but not dichotomous ways: (1) they looked inwardly to examine their own motivations to teach or (2) they looked outwardly to see how the teaching life in classrooms could help them make a difference in the lives of others.

Looking Inward

The inward journey of students had various manifestations that were beginning to be revealed in the first Dear Classmates Letters that students wrote to each other. In attempts to gain some self-understanding, these students focused on their own personal growth as they confronted their fears, doubts, and lack of self-confidence in facing the world of the classroom. These were journeys for students to determine whether they were up to the challenge of teaching and, if so, would they find it personal satisfying? Locating themselves in the present gave them some bearing to make their exploration personally relevant. Ruth's exploration began with some prior experiences with teachers, but a
realization that she needed to know more about her own motivations to teach because the choice to teach was indeed murky for her.

...I am taking this course to get a better feel for being in the classroom working with children. I want to feel it from a teacher's perspective more than I already have. I want to better understand how I would be as a teacher. I know how schools and classrooms work a little because my parents are both teachers, but there is so much more to it that I want to begin to learn about. I have always thought about being a teacher and I would like to teach at some point in my life, but I am not sure when, soon after college or years after. I want to see what else is out in the world that I might like to do. I feel that getting a good idea on what teaching is like is a start at knowing my opportunities and will help me in the future.

Ruth

Others came to exploring teaching, as I did in the late 1960s as an undergraduate at the College of Wooster in Ohio, bumping up against the reality of the real world after graduation; with eight to four jobs, rent payments, and the awareness that one was inexorably crossing into the adult world. Pressed to do something with the next stage of her life, Lisa came with the fear of the unknown that I once felt as a college senior. She wondered if teaching would be personally satisfying and meaningful. Would it provide the need for self-actualization that Maslow (Lowry, 1973) identified as necessary for self-fulfillment?

So... I'm taking this course to see if I want and am able to become a teacher. I'm a senior and a science major, with little direction. I've always thought that teaching was something I would be unable to do. I'm doubtful of my ability to communicate information. Like, I can't give directions. I always have to draw a map. Teaching seems like it would be a very rewarding job. I've gone back to some of my old instructors to see how they find it, and I've gotten mixed replies...

Lisa
Lisa was hoping her ship comes in and teaching would turn out to be "right" for her while Sean looked to examine his own perspective as a learner to begin his sense making of Exploring Teaching. Bringing his own ideas based in his schooling experience to the Exploring Teaching table, he wondered if his "way" of learning works for the middle school students he would meet. Would the Exploring Teaching course provide him an opportunity to be challenged and to struggle so his exploration of teaching was personally satisfying?

...This experience leads me to the question that I would like to answer from my point of view for the class. How I have learned best in the past? The times in which I have retained the most knowledge is from experiences when I struggle the most. Not to say that all of education is a struggle. Education for me needs to be a challenge. Even now as an adult I find my attention drifting when I am not "interested" in a subject, or the subject is begin taught too slow for me to stay awake.

As well, the kind of structure that I have learned the most from is hands-on learning. Math classes that have computer labs or humanities courses in which there is a large emphasis on discussion. With this structure of hands-on experience is the issue of assignments. For me the most worthwhile assignment is an extra thought assignment. As a math major I run into a lot of "busy work," when I prefer the long lengthy problems that have an application that I can visualize and take gratification from solving.

I hope to struggle in this class, but I hope that I am up to the challenge...

Sean

The looking inward journey began with students understanding their own inner motivations and values and then seeking to find if their talents and motivations were satisfied by the teaching life. Would they be satisfied in the teaching profession? Would the basic human needs of survival, power, love, fun, and freedom (Glasser, 1990) be fulfilled? Their focus was themselves, and clearly that is what these students needed to attend to as they explored teaching.
Looking Outward

On the other hand, the students taking an outward journey were ones who come in knowing that the teaching life was what they wanted. In an era when the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose above eleven thousand points and high tech and internet millionaires abounded, students still were drawn to teaching to improve society by making a positive impact on the lives of public school students and to make a difference. Their primary focus was to learn the specifics of the teaching life in the classroom to help students learn. They wanted to plan interesting lessons and have students participate. Joe was such a committed student who wanted to know the details of teachers' lives in the classroom. He wrote in his first Dear Classmates Letter of the altruism that was the foundation for his exploration of teaching.

*I've always wanted to be a teacher. I want to help others and shape young minds. This course will hopefully show me all of what I thought it would be like to be a middle school social studies teacher. I hope to see and understand the daily routine of a teacher. I want to be a part of the class. I want the students to be comfortable and willing to come to me outside and inside the class.*

*Teaching is a hard and noble profession. You are working with and shaping the future of young lives. I really hope that I could be a teacher that students look back upon and think that I really made a difference in their lives. It is not about being the coolest teacher or the funniest teacher. I just want to make a difference.*

*I hope that this is my calling...* 

*Joe*

Divinity students would find Joe a comrade in arms who sought, in his way, to transform students by learning the reality of the life of classroom teachers. There was
little indecision by students on outer journeys in the beliefs in the value of teaching for themselves. They were exploring the specifics of the teaching in order to reach their goals. While the inwardly directed students focused on learning if their motivation was sufficient to teach, the outwardly-directed students seemed to see that they would have a place in American education as they entered this course. With a practical and functional approach to Exploring Teaching, Kate, too, focused on her learning of the role of the teacher in her first Dear Classmates Letter.

...I am taking this course mainly because it is my goal to become an art teacher, and it is required that I fulfill this course before I can go on to other teaching classes. I hope to learn a lot about teaching and what roles a teacher actually plays in a student's life. I want to be a the type of teacher that makes learning fun for students. I believe that students have to be eager to learn, and if the information is presented in an interesting enough way, they will give you their attention. I want to teach all the fun and interesting things there are to learn about art and how beautiful it really is...

Kate

Margaret: On an Inward Journey

Margaret's example was instructive of the inward journey that she took throughout the semester to make sense of teaching in her own life by focusing on herself. Her priority was self-understanding which she believed would help her to decide if teaching would satisfy her basic needs. In her opening Dear Classmates Letter she described a writing workshop with her own fifth grade teacher who praised her writing abilities and was impressed with her creativity. Margaret wrote, It was the first time I can remember feeling that I was good at something, that I had a talent. In the second paragraph of her letter to her classmates, Margaret revealed the self-doubts that needed addressing before she was ready to make any decisions about whether teaching was for her.
...I wonder if I will ever feel that confident in my abilities again. A large part of my insecurity regarding this class stems from the fact that I am treading on foreign territory. My competency in a classroom situation as an authority figure has never been tested, and I have no clue whether or not I'll be good at it. That, however, is precisely why I'm taking this course. I need to know if this is the right career for me, and if I'm right for it. I've had enough bad teachers to feel that it is very necessary to examine your aptitude as an educator before you enter the field. My educational experiences have led me to believe that teaching is complex and challenging, yet tremendously rewarding because it has such an impact on so many lives. And therein lies another of my anxieties about this course. I will have the potential to affect young lives in a very real way and, quite frankly that scares me. I don't think that I will damage them for life or anything along those lines, but that amount of responsibility is a bit daunting. But I hope to learn to deal with that also, and I am looking forward to this semester despite my fears.

Margaret

Until she was more personally settled, Margaret understood she could not be the teacher public school students needed. It was important to note that hers were the anxieties and fears of a student who was an example of "success" (i.e. she had matriculated at a competitive major state university) of the American public school system. Doubts were indeed parts of the lives of "successful" people, but such uncertainty in her own competence needed her full attention. Reflecting in writing on her own autobiography was a necessary preliminary step in determining if who she was would eventually lead her to teaching.

In her second letter to classmates describing her goals, it was quite apparent that Margaret's search for meaning began with who she was and what she valued. For Margaret, questions of how to make good lesson plans or what to say to a small group of kids doing a science lab experiment would have to wait. Her self-examination allowed Margaret to understand what career direction her personality, talents, and interests would take her.
...My first goal is to learn and master the art of reflection. I have realized a need in my life for some serious thinking about the things I do. I could gain so much by reflection on my actions and experiences instead of simply doing something...I can't grow or learn from anything if I don't stop and reflect on it. This involves thinking about the reasons it happened, what new knowledge I can acquire from it, and how it applies to other areas of my life (whatever "it" is)...

The second of my goals is to take account of what really matters in my life and make the important things priorities. Right now the things I consider truly important are my education, my family, and my friends (not necessarily in that order). By recognizing these things (and a few others) as priorities I can make sure I focus my energy on them and try not to let other, less important things take over...

Margaret

Her self-knowledge would give her a more accurate assessment of what future goals to pursue. Her enrollment in Exploring Teaching coincided with her need to take stock and reflect on her priorities. By sorting out who she was and what she valued, Margaret used writing in Exploring Teaching to explore herself. Using writing to develop her interpersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1993), she identified her own strengths and weaknesses. By acknowledging her current status, Margaret focused on the truths of her life as she saw them.

A family outing to Scottish Highland Games where she and her family had begun to explore their heritage was the focus of her portfolio reflection. By watching and listening to pipe and drum bands, shopping among Scottish vendors, seeing athletic competitions, and meeting interesting people, Margaret felt Scottish for a day. She concluded in writing,

...I can't say that I have ever felt any identity with a group, religion, or nationality before so this was a new experience for me. It was the first time I
felt connected to my heritage, which is a good feeling to have. My family has become an increasingly important part of my life, and I think it helps in every aspect of your life to have a strong base, a connection to family, and a feeling of belonging somewhere. The whole experience of exploring my heritage has strengthened the ties I have to my family and given me a stronger sense of self, aside from being educational and enjoyable.

She reflected on her past experiences to support an understanding of herself which was a basic first step for her need for affiliation and love (Lowry, 1973, Ross, 1988, Glasser, 1990) as she explored teaching. Margaret knew that she had to take care of her personal questions about herself in order to learn what life direction she would follow; a by-product of her inward journey might be that she would find teaching something that satisfied her basic needs. But her exploration of teaching was tangential to her thrust of self-understanding.

In her next Dear Classmates Letter, Margaret opened with an important quote that illuminated some of her key beliefs about being "successful."

"Bloom where you are planted."
- Mary Englebert

This quote has a lot of meaning to me. I have always believed that you should make the best of what you have and not waste time wondering why others have it better or worse than you. This does not mean that you can't escape bad circumstances or try to overcome obstacles. But there are certain aspects of your life and self that are inescapable, and you should learn to acknowledge and accept them and make them work for you...

I hope in my teaching career I can help children realize this. They are not bound to the life they were born into, but they should make the best of what they do have. They have to learn from mistakes and develop and grow, and they can't be held back by wondering what life would be like if they only had more of something or less of something else... 

Margaret
As she elaborated on her personal philosophy and then connected those beliefs to the lives of students in the classroom, she addressed herself as much as any future students of hers. Given a half semester opportunity to reflect and write about her personal priorities, Margaret was ready to explore teaching. As she wrote, Margaret was acknowledging her belief and desire to take control over the experiences of her own life (e.g. being more involved in her fieldwork with her students and cooperating teacher) that she encountered before she could make preliminary decisions about her suitability for teaching.

In her mid-semester self-evaluation, she listed her goals which reflected an evolution in her purposes for Exploring Teaching.

My goals are to:

...become part of the classroom community
...learn to "read" the class and respond to them effectively
...always listen, think, and then act.
...take advantage of every learning opportunity I possibly can
...become part of the school community
...make time to reflect on my experiences

updates:

...write in my journal consistently
...make my portfolio a priority
...seek more feedback (from my cooperating teacher, students, seminar leader, and classmates)

Her inward journey understandably used her experiences in her fifth grade classroom to extend her own thinking about herself and any possible role of teaching in her life. Nearly two months into this semester, Margaret wrote a Dear Classmates Letter that focused on the role of the teacher, highlighted by a quote from Haim Ginott.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
As a teacher you have the potential to do so much. This quotation demonstrates quite nicely how much impact a teacher can have:

"I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crises will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized."

- Haim G. Ginott

This is a profound statement, and it is quite true. Teachers make a difference, and it can positive or negative depending on the decisions he or she makes. Each day a teacher makes choices and the outcome can affect lives. This career that we are all interested in is an important one and the responsibilities that we have to accept can’t be taken lightly. We will be very influential people...

Margaret

Her evolution from a focus on herself to where she was beginning to see herself as a teacher in a classroom with students continued. Her writing was evidence of the personal truths she was learning. As she began developing an outward focus from a journey that began within herself, Margaret found the classroom a place for her to both make sense of her own journey but also began to find her place in a setting where she as a teacher who could profoundly affect the individual journeys that public school students themselves were taking.

Throughout the semester, Margaret remained true to her desire to be reflective. But now her reflections were based in the organization of learning and the roles of students and teachers. She personalized her goals to fit the learning that she needed to do first. As the semester ended, Margaret wrote to her classmates in her final letter about the learning she had done thanks to her cooperating teacher and her fifth graders. Interesting,
though, was her attention to personal priorities that harkened back to the beginning of the semester.

_I am beginning to realize the importance of having free time in my life. I have gained so much from my experiences this semester but I am starting to overload myself and it is having an impact on all aspects of my life. I have started working about 30 hours a week, on top of five classes (two of which have labs), and my fieldwork. So my question is what do I do about it? I believe I have to prioritize. I need to figure out what my energy should be focused on and cut out the things that are a waste of time. What I'm discovering is that my fieldwork is at the top of my priorities list. I feel that the experience I am gaining through this is invaluable. I couldn't learn half as much sitting in a lecture as I have from teaching and observing in a classroom..._

_Margaret_

The original personal inward journey was not over for Margaret as her questions and wonderings about her personal motivations would continue to be by her side. The self-knowledge she had gained by reflection in writing was indeed a strength of hers. Writing focused her thinking and made her evolving and complex beliefs about herself known. In her end of the semester self-assessment, Margaret wrote:

_

...I have just begun to participate in the Education program at the University of New Hampshire, but I have been learning my whole life. I have discovered that the best teachers are those that are truly and completely committed to the students and their learning. If there is one thing that I want always to remember it is that each and every student deserves the best that I can give them. Teachers that really cared about my education are the ones who made a difference, and I want to be one of those teachers. This involves paying careful attention to student's progress and knowing who each student is as a person. It is impossible to manage or monitor learning if one is unaware of who the students are, what learning style suits them best, and what they need from you...

Margaret's commitment to her own understanding of herself had her conclude that a similar commitment to and knowledge of students was crucial for being an effective
teacher. With more exploration of teaching, Margaret might have a clearer idea if her motivations and needs would be satisfied by being a teacher.

**Mia: An Inward Journey of a Different Sort**

In her opening Dear Classmates Letter, Mia revealed elements of her self.

> My ultimate career goal for my life is to become an English teacher, but I am still not sure what grade I would like to teach. I feel this would be a rewarding career for me...

> Through my educational experiences I have found that for the most part I learn best in a hands-on learning environment, versus learning through just reading. I excel in areas that require more time to prepare such as things like projects and papers. I am not a very good test taker. I seem to have incredible difficulty when being evaluated by exams. I have been diagnosed with test anxiety and ADD. I enjoy realistic topics and course work that I can relate to...

**Mia**

Mia's focus was on what she would need to be successful. Willingly and forthrightly she shared her inadequacies and self-doubts. If she was going to achieve her goal to teach she needed to grapple with her self-definition. One month into the semester, Mia opened up in writing to her classmates.

> I am having a hard time trying to write to you today. I have so many things to do and found it very hard to actually sit down and concentrate on this letter. I am not sure I really have a lot to say about our reading that we have done for today. I did pick a quote, but it was not very easy. At one point, I felt like I could say a million things about a great deal of the reading. At one point, I felt like I really wasn't sure what I wanted to say, and if what I wanted to say made much sense to anyone other than myself.
The quote that I chose to talk about is one that grabs a place of my heart and motivates me to want to be a better teacher than some of the ones I have had. The quote states: "they need to be seen as real people who care, have strong beliefs, live fully in the world." This quote means a lot to me because I think that more so than often, when I was in public school my teachers very rarely seemed to be real people. I always felt that they were different than the rest of the world...

(Speaking of showing emotions such as crying to students) I think it is OK now, and I think it allows your students a chance to open up to you and see you as a person. I think it could create a more comfortable learning environment and might make the students trust you a little more because they see that you are an honest, true person. Just like them.

Mia

Seeking focus, Mia used writing to her classmates as an audience to help her sort out her personal confusion. Through her writing, she might meander, but her articulation in print had her making connections with her present personal questions to her specific personal exploration of teaching. With passion, resolve, and commitment to being a teacher, Mia strove to be a real person for herself, who in turn could be real for her students. She made sense of her plans to teach by making sense of her current inward journey.

At mid-semester, Mia again welcomed us into her personal life as she, in the end, again made connections to her exploration of teaching.

I have recently had an exam in my philosophy class. I studied for this exam with Sean and another friend from our class. We studied really well together and then called it a night. On the way home Sean and I talked a little bit about myself and how I was having trouble sleeping. So Sean, being the nice guy that he is, gave me a suggestion to try that he thought would help me sleep. I was very appreciative to him for that and wished him a good night. He wished me luck.

When I got home, I continued to work on my exam and eventually fell asleep at around 6:00 a.m. I got up at 9:00. I didn't try Sean's suggestion
because I was worried that I would waste the opportunity for it to really work knowing that I didn't have a full night to sleep. I went and took my exam and I think I did OK. I was very tired and didn't look very well.

My mother has having surgery that day, so I went home for the night to take care of her with my father. She finally settled in and went to bed at 11:00. I knew at this point, I was very tired and not going to be much help if I did not sleep. So I tried Sean's exercise. It worked! I slept until the next morning. The whole way through. But, this exercise not only helped me to sleep, it helped me learn something so very important about myself. It first taught me to let go, and then it gave me some of the most valuable information I have ever received in my life. It showed me how very important school really is to me, and how much I really love to teach. For the first time in my life, school was not something that was bothering me...It was quite a relief to notice this. It was one of the nicer things I have noticed about myself lately. It is a good change. Thanks Sean!!

Mia

Willing to share the details of her personal life and struggles, she engaged her classmates and me in her detailed account as she began to understand her personal life; in turn she was understanding her commitment to teaching. Telling some of the specifics of her personal life made the meaning of those experiences clearer to Mia. Her autobiography's ramifications influenced her exploration of teaching.

In her mid-semester self-evaluation, Mia concluded with more self-knowledge.

...I know how much I love children and how much I enjoy teaching them, I could only hope that my own children, in the future, will have teachers with the same characteristics. I think it is only fair that we give our best to the students we teach and influence. They deserve no less than the best, and should have the opportunity to make their own dreams come true. I think teaching is not only aiding the students in learning facts and information, but it creates a process for them to learn about themselves and their own lives. If I had a few more teachers in public school that cared as much as I do, I don't think I would have struggled as much as I did. I have a lot of regret toward those times in my life. It is a for sure thing that I won't let any of my students feel that way about things I teach them.
Reinforcing her personal commitment to students, Mia returned to her autobiography to make sense of her present moments in Exploring Teaching. She reflected on her own experiences to make sense of her place in the world of teaching in a general sense. It was not the details of lesson plans and managing students that would confirm whether teaching was truly for her; it was the sense making of her prior experiences that would lead her on her inward journey to being that successful teacher she wanted to be.

In speaking to her classmates about an ideal classroom, Mia wrote...

_I guess overall, my idea of the ideal classroom would be to have a group of students in which allowed me to deal with them myself. A classroom where the parents would put their trust in me to develop their child. I would like it if those parents who are ignorant to what is best for their child, would leave it to me to do my job and educate their child to the best of my ability..._  

_Mia_

It was not the details of the classroom such as varied approaches to address the multiple learning styles of students or the use of technology and multi-media that Mia addressed in being a successful teacher. It was the self she was understanding and that was most valuable to her students. Neither teaching methods nor engaging techniques of instructions were what mattered to Mia at this point in her development as a preservice teacher, it was the person she was who had overcome difficulties in her own style of learning and inadequacies of her public school education to be the real human being that students needed.

In her end of the semester self-assessment, Mia made a leap in thinking from focusing concerns of herself to her concerns for student learning.
I noticed as the semester went on, I really took on an interest with the students and their learning. Even though I was only attending the class one day a week, I make it imperative that during the time I was working with them, they had my undivided attention and concern for their learning. I noticed that my thoughts outside of the classroom were revolved around how I could help the students learn...

In concluding, Mia wrote:

I think the most valuable thing I can take from this exploring teaching course is the new knowledge I have acquired from the experience. I have found another passion in my life aside from hockey. For such a long period of time in my life, I was missing a career choice that would demand from me, every day, my BEST. I knew I wanted to help others, I knew that in order for me to be completely dedicated, I would have to love this career as much as I love hockey. I also knew, it would have to love me. Through my experience this past semester, my career search has ended, and the decision is confirmed; I would pursue a career in teaching and share a new passion in learning and educating. I truly want to live every day of my teaching career, learning as much as I teach!

It was not the specifics of the classroom, but that teaching addressed her basic need to self-actualize that motivated Mia's exploration of teaching. At this time in her development, Mia believed teaching success relied on a self that was committed and passionate. The necessary inward journey she has taken this semester has led her to dedicate herself to be a teacher who would make a difference in the lives of students; as she needed when she was a public school student. A strong self made a successful teacher. Through her writing, Mia began to identify that strength in herself.

Lynn: An Outward Journey

In contrast to Margaret's and Mia's self-reflective inward journeys to explore teaching, Lynn was quite clear from the outset that teaching was for her. She spent little
time thinking whether she would fit in and be successful. Rather Lynn looked to get immediately involved in the classroom with students to learn the ways of successful teachers. Her unsatisfactory history in schooling drove her to look to the needs of students to make a difference by being a teacher who made learning interesting. She included in her first Dear Classmates Letter some of that history.

...There was almost nothing that one could call inspirational about anything that was taught in my high school English classes. We read the book, the teacher told us what to think, we wrote a paper, and moved on. No one attempted to make these novels real, to get us excited about them, they just wanted us to read and report. Looking back now, I realize that it would have been a simple task to get me interested. All I needed was an opportunity to make the literature my own. Any creative project, or involvement with the curriculum, could have sparked my interest. Instead, the teachers I had seemed to have a knack for ruining every story, every plot, and every character...

English isn't just reading books, it's learning how to be articulate, it's artistic, there is something for everyone. I can't wait to try my hand at making it interesting, challenging, and inspirational.

   Lynn

Fueled by the fire of past personal injustices in education, Lynn was on a mission. At the outset of Exploring Teaching, her mission was to right past wrongs and understandably centered on the key role she could play in making learning interesting and meaningful. As she saw it, the teacher was primary to successful student learning. While the inward looking students had elements that matched up with Fuller's stage two (concerns about self) of development of preservice teachers, outward looking students were a better match for placement in stage three (concerns about the role of teachers).

In her next Dear Classmates Letter, Lynn's goals were no surprise for someone who wanted to be immersed in the classroom life of teachers and students. They were: (I)
becoming as involved as possible with the students and what they are learning, (2) discovering effective methods of teaching, and (3) learn from students what is important to them. Involving students as she teaches, Lynn was determined to be the teacher she didn't have in high school. Her last paragraph of her second Dear Classmates Letter revealed that she hadn't wasted any time getting started in making a difference.

...My first two classroom visits have already provided me with opportunities to begin achieving my goals. I have volunteered to lead a gifted and talented book group, and this Thursday I will be reading a section aloud to the classes and doing a short activity. I must admit, I am a little nervous about taking the reins in the classroom, because what I read and do is completely up to me (with approval of course). I truly hope that I can capture their attention and allow them to enjoy learning. I imagine that after a few experiences like this, I will become more aware of the interests of this sixth grade group.

Lynn

Lynn's autobiography continued to fuel her passion to learn the ways of teachers and make schooling meaningful for her students. Returning to her past schooling history and including a quote from a woman's author she studied and later introduced to her sixth graders, Lynn was driven to teach in ways far different than how she was taught.

"They will not know I have gone away to come back. For the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot get out."

Sandra Cisneros

I picked this quote up recently while studying this particular writer. She writes stories about a young girl who grows up in poor, Hispanic neighborhoods. I compare her experiences with my disappointment in my high school English education. Though I am glad that I have escaped that system, it still shapes who I am as a future teacher. Like the character in Cisneros's writing, I have "gone away to come back." I'm hoping that I can use my bad experiences to my advantage, and to that of my students...

Lynn

76

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Though her focus was on effective teaching methods, in her next Dear Classmates Letter she progressed as preservice teaching into beginning to focus on the needs of students. Lynn's central tendencies of focus on the role of the teacher still dominated, but she was maturing as a preservice teacher. In her letter just before the mid-semester conferences, Lynn wrote of her full immersion into the teaching life.

...The first day I taught, I taught four different classes. Two of them, I read aloud and had the kids play roles in the story and pantomime as I was reading. They loved that, and many of them have asked if I will do another lesson with pantomime. In the other two classes I read aloud from Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* and followed it with some discussion and a few short writing assignments. My first experience was really successful, and the kids were great...

Last week I started a Shakespeare unit with them. One class voted to read *Hamlet* and another class voted on *The Tempest*. After I finish reading the stories aloud to them, I'm going to have them get in small groups and write scenes from the play that they will perform. I hope to allow some of the students who asked to do some drawing create some scenery for the plays. I plan on having two or three small groups in each class. Each group will be responsible for writing and acting a particular portion of the play...

Lynn

Again it was her vision that the role of the teacher mattered greatly and that assumption propelled her to be such a meaningful teacher. She remained consistent in her thinking that the key to learning was held by the teacher. Her frequent use of the first person singular in her letters revealed the responsibility she felt was hers as teacher and that she embraced. Driven by her autobiography, Lynn's initial assumptions about the primacy of teachers were understandably emphasized as her exploration of teaching began quite naturally with the act of teaching.
In her mid-semester self-evaluation, Lynn was accurately aware that she was meeting her Exploring Teaching goals and doing all that she could to eventually complete her long term goal of teaching full-time in public schools.

...I feel that I have taken great strides to achieve goal number one (becoming as involved as possible). I taught my first lessons on my third classroom visit, and have continued to make my own lessons and teach them to two or three classes each week in my language arts classroom. I have also observed and then taught a math class for sixth graders, and substituted for an eighth grade math class. This week, I also start my To Kill A Mockingbird book group for gifted and talented seventh and eighth graders. I feel that I've done a really good job of diving in and getting my feet wet.

Observing the two Language Arts teachers on my "cooperating team," has given me an opportunity to observe two very different teaching styles. I attempt to learn from the way these teachers deal with the students and apply it to my own methods...

Lynn

Focused and directed, she offered up two teaching ideas in her next Dear Classmates Letter that would be useful to a first year teacher, but might beyond the scope of some of her classmates who were taking the inward journey as they answered the question, Is teaching right for me? As she matured professionally, Lynn expanded her definition of the role of teachers to include the importance of collegiality. She shared in her letter that she was keeping a card file of good ideas she had seen during her fieldwork experience. In addition, she had another idea that when she taught full-time she would require reader responses from her students on a daily basis. Her ideas were just the practical techniques that could make teaching days flow successfully.

In this same Dear Classmates Letter, she wrote metaphorically about teachers to make greater sense of her evolving definition of what a teacher should be.
I think that choosing a metaphor is very difficult. Teaching is a profession that stands alone. Certain aspects of teaching could be compared to other things, but doing so seems to reduce what teaching is. I was thinking that teaching was like a spiritual leader. The spiritual leader guides his or her followers to a certain emotional and intellectual destination. The leader provides guidance but ultimately the journey must be made by each of the followers. This notion reduces teaching in the sense that there is a desired destination that the spiritual leader pulls the followers toward...A good teacher attempts to take the student's focus and broaden it, to encompass many different ideas. The teacher doesn't attempt to make the students move in one particular direction; rather he or she encourages them to examine all directions and choose the one that fits the individual student...

Lynn

Her analysis two months into the semester was thoughtfully aware of the complex relationship between teaching and learning with an emphasis on her concerns about her role as teacher. Her next Dear Classmates Letter hid none of the excitement she felt as she taught sixth graders.

...Just a little update on the Shakespeare unit I'm doing with my sixth graders. I wrote to you a little while ago about my plan and explained my goals. I've finally finished reading the Shakespeare stories to them and last week I gave them a mini-lesson in Drama. We talked about what tools are needed to write a play. We discussed plot, characterization, dialogue, staging, theme, and format. After the lesson, I explained the assignment, and they all got into groups. They were so enthusiastic and excited...Hopefully, on Tuesday when I come to class, I can pick up the drafts and review them. That way when I go in on Thursday, I'll have already targeted what I want them to work on. I can't wait to see how they come out...

Lynn

Lynn's focus on the role of the teacher continued late into the semester which seemed quite reasonable as her learning began with finding her place in the classroom learning community. With experience and success, she might become confident in her abilities as a teacher and willing and able to begin her lesson preparation to promote greater student responsibility and initiative in their own learning.
In her last Dear Classmates Letter, she returned again to describing her active teaching classroom life and the continued focused on the teacher in student learning.

An update from my fieldwork:

Last Tuesday, I got the student's first drafts of their plays. It was such fun to read over them and comment. Rather than writing on their drafts, I used small, colorful post its and stuck them on as needed...Most of my comments required them to go back to the text of the story and review the details to make the information more accurate. I also made lots of suggestions about adding dialogue to help with characterizations...On this Tuesday, I will be able to get their second drafts and make more comments for their final drafts. I can't wait to see what they've done...

Lynn

Throughout the semester Lynn continued to write about the prime responsibility for student learning that teachers had. Her attention to the details of teaching by her use of post-its was further evidence that Lynn had immersed herself into the teaching life and could benefit from many more experiences in the classroom. Though her graduate teaching internship was still two years away, Lynn fortunately had a class in the English Department that placed her weekly in a local public school the following semester.

Clear of vision and purpose, Lynn focused on the act of teaching in her final self-assessment

...My basic teaching philosophy includes five words: intrigue, engage, inspire, challenge, and I listen...

As teachers, we must know our students, not just their names but where they are coming from, and where they're headed. We have to understand their needs, and their strengths and weaknesses. Knowing the students well requires a lot of extra work on the teacher's part, but it is mandatory for an effective education...
I've learned that teaching truly is a journey, rather than a destination. A teacher must be prepared to travel with his or her students, being a consultant along the way. I want to be the kind of teacher who measures my students by how far they've traveled, not just where they end up.

Each of her five words in the first paragraph restated the primacy of the role of teachers in students learning. As a first timer to the classroom as a teacher, that focus was both understandable and appropriate. Exploring Teaching gave her a setting to try out her beliefs and get involved. In this one short semester, she had already begun to move along the teacher focus/student focus continuum to focus on students that teachers steeped in learner-centered pedagogy move to. But that would take time and growing self-confidence. Acknowledging her past schooling in writing, Lynn clarified her motivations to teach.

Carola: Another Outward Journey

In her opening Dear Classmates Letter, Carola listed her past experiences as a teacher in Hispanic language and culture at the university level and as a substitute at a local high public school. She then concluded with her purpose for Exploring Teaching.

I do not look at ED500 (Exploring Teaching) as a way to explore teaching because I am already convinced that this is the right career for me. I consider ED500 to be one of several indispensable building blocks for becoming a successful teacher in my field of study. I am therefore looking forward to being at the public school, sharing my experiences with you, and learning from yours as well.

Carola
Her focus was clear and her plan was in place to be thoroughly involved in her fieldwork. In fact, in her very next Dear Classmates Letter she wrote how she was already fully immersed in her Spanish class at the middle school and was ready to teach.

I have had 3 very exciting days observing my cooperating teacher and recording in my journal everything I possibly can about her teaching style and the type of interaction she has with her students and the feedback she receives from them. The students ask me if I was writing a report about their behavior and if I was going to give it to their principal. I laughed and assured them that I was just writing down what I am learning from them and their teacher. They told me that was a very silly thing to do.

After every class my cooperating teacher asks me what I think about the class and if I have any suggestions for her regarding the subject matter or if I would like to try teaching a class myself. Well, I decided to dive right in and do the real thing. I will actually teach all 5 sections of Spanish myself on Tuesday. My cooperating teacher has given me the material to be covered and much freedom to organize it and present to the students. Basically we are reversing roles, after every class she will give me feedback as to how I did and how the students responded to my teaching style...

Carola

Methodically and purposefully, Carola, an example of Fuller's stage three of preservice teacher development which focuses on the role of the teacher, collected data in her journal as any good apprentice would. To get a full sense of the classroom, she clinically noted both students and teacher behaviors. As a confident and engaged preservice teacher, Carola was given great leeway and personal choice by her cooperating teacher who clearly understood her stage of development. Her focus was clear - to do what teachers did as soon and as often as possible.

One month into the semester, Carola's focus was on the life of the teacher in the classroom.
Last week, I spent two hours with my cooperating teacher learning about the administrative duties teachers have to do besides teaching. I used to think that the school secretary is the one that fills out students’ grade reports, notices, complaints, etc. I learned that it is actually the teachers who do this type of work for each individual student and also has to keep her own records as when and why anything was mailed out to a parent. We went over every form in detail and I got to keep blank copies of each for my portfolio.

My cooperating teacher suggested that besides working with her in the classroom, I should also observe another foreign language teacher whose style is quite different from hers, but just as good. I thought that was an excellent idea. We have made arrangements with the French teacher and I will be observing her all day on Tuesday. I can tell the French teacher is also an excellent one because she has already given me her agenda for that day and also an evaluation sheet so that I can evaluate her teaching style. She said to me that she does this on a regular basis with her own students to get some feedback as to whether or not she should improve or change a particular lesson or project. I am really looking forward to this experience. I am fortunate to have such great guidance from two well qualified and experienced teachers.

Carola

Ever the thoughtful researcher and with a practical touch, Carola collected artifacts that she might in fact use when she taught one day in her own classroom. As a learner who understood her own commitment to teaching, she was open to a variety of experiences to make the most of her time in her middle school. Whereas students on inward journeys might be hesitant to for the sometimes harshness of evaluative feedback as they took tentative steps to explore teaching, Carola brought the self-confidence of a committed preservice teacher to seek feedback.

In her mid-semester self-evaluation, Carola noted the importance of actual experiences of teachers for her.

...Working with my cooperating teacher is also an invaluable hands-on source of experience. Observing how she prepares and delivers the lesson plans, how she manages classroom behavior, and how she interacts with the students have been particularly enlightening to me. Namely, I have learned that teaching requires a great deal of self discipline, extreme patience, much
knowledge not only of one's subject matter and its methodology, but also of theoretical and applied psychology.

Quite naturally as someone who saw herself as a teacher, Carola focused on her cooperating teacher's behaviors in the classroom. Her in-depth inquiry suggested someone who was aware of the many facets of teachers' lives, not just the organization and presentation of lessons one. In her following Dear Classmates Letter, Carola wrote of specific techniques and methods that would help her teach.

Requesting students to keep a portfolio of their writings from start to finish, and take it home to their parents engages both students and parents in the learning process. Some people might argue that writing cannot be implemented across the curriculum. It can! There are many good books written on the subject. The one I have is called Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum by Lawrence Behrens and Leonard J. Rosen, (Fourth Edition) 1991. It is an excellent book and well worth having. If anyone wants to take a look at this book I will be glad to bring it in.

Her preparation for being a career professional by building her library was evidence that her commitment to teaching allowed her to make a broad examination of successful teaching. Even her efforts of collegiality by her willingness to share her resources indicated a preservice teacher who was maturing and learning the importance of supportive colleagues to successful careers in teaching.

In her final Dear Classmates Letter, Carola reflected on the nitty gritty of dealing with a student under difficult circumstances.

...On one occasion, the students were given a short project to work on with a list of guidelines on what library resources to use and what information to include in their research. They were to present their findings at the end of the week individually or in groups. One of the students - who preferred to do the project individually - did a terrible job during his presentation. It appeared as if he had earned an F, he kept laughing, and making excuses
about the lack of library resources, and wise remarks about the project. He was basically entertaining the class.

My cooperating teacher asked him and myself to stay after class. She spoke to him about the assignment and his behavior. As it turned out, he had completed the project well but when he got in front of the class, the poor kid had experienced some kind of stage fright beyond his control (the teacher already suspected this). The teacher did not give him an F, rather she gave him an opportunity to do his presentation again the following day. She also gave him some words of encouragement, and tactics on how to breathe and pace himself when he feels the nervousness coming on. I was personally impressed by this and will never forget this lesson. I felt that classroom with a wonderful lesson in human compassion....teaching is indeed a humane profession...

Carola

Her evolution through the semester had taken her from being primarily concerned about the roles of teachers into concerns about the roles of students in their own education. Such commitment and immersion that Carola had exhibited made this move not surprising. In her final self-assessment, Carola outlined six priorities of hers when she worked with students.

A few important priorities to develop together with my students are:

1) classroom rules by which all will abide in order to make the classroom environment safe, efficient, and comfortable for all.

2) I will strive to develop my students self-esteem, and mutual respect in order to empower them in the learning process.

3) I will tap into my students multiple intelligences in order to provide them with creative, effective, and challenging activities to stimulate their learning, and to convinced them that there is no limit to their imaginations.

4) I will also campaign for making my students' learning relevant to real life, by interfacing them with the surrounding community: organizing field trips, enhancing the subject matter by inviting their parents and/or other guest speakers to the class, etc.
5) I will also solicit other effective ways to teach from my colleagues, especially those who will have been in the teaching profession longer than myself.

6) I will also endeavor to test my own knowledge of the subject matter and my teaching style by assisting to teacher seminars and attending college courses that will ultimately maximize my teaching abilities...

Jumping in with both feet in her focus on students in the teaching act, Carola showed evidence of her maturation as a preservice teacher. Her outward journey to explore teaching began with a focus on the life of the teacher in the classroom as she immediately dealt with the teacher's role in learning and dealing with the struggles of the classroom.

As an introductory course, Exploring Teaching was just the first step in becoming an excellent teacher. As classmate Del said in his final self-assessment, *With seventy hours of Exploring Teaching experience, I can confidently say that I am looking forward towards a career in teaching. However, I do not feel that it is enough time for me to have learned how to define myself as a teacher. I believe this is a continual process that cannot be attained after visiting a school or several hours one day a week.*

Right he was. I made no assumptions about the teachers Margaret, Mia, Lynn, and Carola would become. Though they had started a journey at different stages, I was very hopeful for their future success. They each had immersed themselves in the journey they selected for themselves. Students had knowledge of their own questions and needed opportunities to get those questions answered as they journeyed in the complex world of becoming a teacher.
CHAPTER FIVE

CHANGING OR CONFIRMING EXPECTATIONS:
WHAT EFFECT DID EXPLORING TEACHING HAVE ON STUDENTS’ UNDERSTANDING OF THE PLACE OF TEACHING IN THEIR OWN LIVES?

Did Exploring Teaching make any difference in the attitudes and beliefs about the place of teaching in the lives of students from the beginning of the semester to the end? Or did it just confirm the expectations of students? Those that knew they wanted to teach concluded the semester knowing just that, and those that began with uncertainty left with that same sense of indecision. Was Exploring Teaching all just an elaborate self-fulfilling prophecy masquerading as an introductory course to teaching? Would students just find what they expected to find?

Students who enrolled in Exploring Teaching were no random sample of college students as they had self-selected themselves into this course due, in part, to a certain attraction teaching had in their lives. As I identified in the last chapter, my Exploring Teaching students enrolled either to primarily learn about their own motivations to teach or, clear that teaching was for them, they wanted to learn the specifics of being a classroom teacher. What did their writing reveal of their journeys this semester to either confirm their original beliefs or change their perspective as to the role of teaching in their lives?

An examination of my research data revealed that seven of thirteen of my students had the Exploring Teaching experience confirm their original expectations that they
wanted to be teachers. Mia's first line from her first Dear Classmates Letter and citations from the last paragraph of her final self-assessment were indicative of the journeys of students who have confirmed their certainty to teach.

At the beginning of the semester

_My ultimate goal for my life is to become an English teacher...I am hoping that this course will help me to decide the grade level I would like to work with and if I should pursue this career goal upon graduation..._

At the end of the semester

... _Through my experience this past semester, my career search has ended, and the decision is confirmed; I would pursue a career in teaching and share a new passion in learning and educating. I truly want to live every day of my teaching career, learning as much as I teach!_

Though Mia by the end of the semester had reached no decision what grade level and was still waiting to hear if her Olympic Games ambitions would be realized, she had traveled her one semester journey in teaching confirming that her original decision to teach was a correct one for her. In her writing, there was no evidence, as there was not for any of the other six students who had their expectations for teaching confirmed, any evidence that one or two dramatic events in the classroom made the difference in their confirmation that teaching was for them. Their letters showed attention to their fieldwork experiences, issues from the class, and reflections on the course text, not an aha! moment that galvanized their decision to teach.

Two examples, Bob and Alane, revealed in their writing the noteworthy experiences they had to confirm their belief that teaching was indeed the career for them. Their letters highlighted their individual paths as they reflected, planned, and had experiences. Since they started Exploring Teaching without the uncertainty if teaching was right for them, they each had an advantage in the own journey in education because their commitment to teaching was already in place.
Bob: Confirming his Expectations to Teach

In his opening Dear Classmates Letter, Bob wrote of a significant former teacher who made it quite clear that we were not to learn the "stories" in our history book but to attempt to learn the truth about the lessons within them. In two subsequent letters to his classmates, the same issue of the importance of addressing lessons in depth (echoing Sizer's (1992) belief that less is more) reemerged. Mid-semester, Bob recounted the middle school textbook version of the role Hernando Cortes had in the Spanish colonization of the Americas. His conquest of the Aztecs focused on the growing world power of Spain in the Sixteenth Century and the gold and other raw materials that made their way back to Spain. But the absence of a greater depth of information disturbed Bob immensely. What they (students) never learned was what happened to the original inhabitants of Hispaniola, the Native Americans of the Arawak group, and how they eventually became extinct as a result of exploitation by the early Spanish colonists and how they were then replaced by slaves to care for the all important Spanish imports. With his commitment to teaching confirmed, Bob had time to delve into the meaty issues of the content of the curriculum.

Near the end of the semester, Bob wrote about a historical simulation based on European colonization of North America where students acted out the part of colonists. In correcting the assignments based on an understanding of the relationships among the Puritans, the Pilgrims, the Chartered Companies, and the English King, Bob revisited his original frustration.
In correcting these homework assignments, I am finding that many students pull specific sentences from the text to answer the question yet often seem to miss the overall point that is being addressed. Similar to those that do not accomplish the homework, many do it as a matter of requirement and not as an additional tool to understand and learn...

What...ways are there to motivate students to learn if they and their parents are not concerned about the report card grade as an end product of evaluating their learning? I do not see my cooperating teacher as failing in any way—he is extremely knowledgeable in the subject area, maintains the students' attention very well while they are in the classroom and continuously shows his concern by speaking to the class as a whole and students as individuals concerning this issue. ANSWERS or INSIGHT ANYONE??

Bob

His reticular activating system (the system of the brain that highlights information that relates to a recently studied or introduced set of facts) returned Bob to his original question in his first Dear Classmates Letter of the dubious value of merely exposing students to facts rather than fostering a depth of understanding. With his decision to teach definite, Bob focused on the issues that he would face as a teacher. As a preservice teacher, Bob came already engaged to the idea that the details of the classroom need to be addressed if he was going to succeed as a teacher.

In fact, a review of his letters revealed that he wrote about the issues of the classroom that he would face because he clearly saw himself as a classroom teacher. He reported and reflected in writing on:

1. feeling unprepared to teach because of his twice a week status in the classroom; he was not on top of what students had been doing the previous days in class.
2. how his cooperating teacher works the classroom to maintain student interest and control.
3. the value of group presentations and making them work.
4. involving students in the lives of their community.

90
5. valuing differences and noticing how even in homogenous suburban New England students were excluded and isolated by differences.

6. the importance of standardized testing to establish norms and standards.

7. getting students to do homework.

These were all questions that would help him succeed in the classroom, but would never have been asked if he was searching for answers whether teaching was right for him or not. Coming to Exploring Teaching to confirm his decision gave him a great opportunity to deal with the relationships of students and teachers and making that learning meaningful. As an addendum to a Dear Classmates Letter in the last month of the semester, he included his observations again primarily focusing on the roles of teachers called "Notes from the field." These observations included:

*Teams - Children working together - weaker/stronger teams may result in the stronger member doing more of the work and the weaker not learning the lesson...*

*Clear instruction on what is required for assignments!!!...*

*Write large enough on the board for all to read - use black/blue (red is hard to read)...*

*Be careful not to insult the general intelligence of students by making statements or gestures of "I don't know why you didn't get this" - they did not because the transfer did not go well - did the instructor ensure the lesson was taught? Blame has no place in the classroom - it is a place of learning...*

Another recurring focus of Bob's writing was his attention and reflection to major issues of education that come from his reading of the Perrone course text (*A Letter to Teachers*, 1991). Whether the issue was the school and community, valuing differences, standardized testing, or the economics of being a teacher, Bob, as a committed educator, found value in such reflection and synthesis. Since Bob was committed to teaching, his
journey was not about himself, but the issues, the relationships, and the curriculum which further excited him and promoted his commitment to teaching. Bob needed an Exploring Teaching course that met his needs to explore the curriculum and the implementation of curriculum in depth.

**Alane: Confirming her Exceptions to Teach in a Slightly Different Way**

Though Alane's journey was similar in that she was confident that teaching was for her, she approached it with a greater sense of needing to know than Bob what the day to day life of a teacher really entailed. Her opening Dear Classmates Letter, revealed a self who hoped that her nature and skills would match those skills needed to teach.

...I am a rather shy person - I don't often speak up in front of a group, so I guess it would seem a little odd that I have chosen a career that involves being the center of attention for a good portion of the day. I can't really offer a clear-cut explanation for this choice, but I do know that I love history, and that someday I would like to be able to share my love for the subject, and what I know about it with students...

(Speaking of things she wants to learn.)...How do I make up a lesson plan? How can I keep the attention of the students and make the material they are learning a little more enjoyable? How do I most effectively teach students when many of them have different learning processes?...I plan to ask my cooperating teacher at York a lot questions, and to take copious notes in my journal, but I am also starting to pay closer attention to some of my classes at the University of New Hampshire...

Alane

With some self-knowledge, pertinent questions, and plans to confirm her conviction, Alane proceeded to confirm if teaching was right for her. As I reviewed her writing, she had a three prong attack to learning about teaching to put her decision to
teach on solid ground. In her writing, she first noted the style and qualities of teachers in her past and present experiences in schooling. Next she focused on experiences that gave her the opportunity to play the role of a teacher. Finally, she continued to ask questions and seek out new learning situations to deepen her understanding of the teaching life.

In a Dear Classmates Letter after a month into the class, she observed her cooperating teaching in action and wrote.

"When dealing with junior high school students, sometimes you just have to be "outrageous," my cooperating teacher told me. "It allows the kids to loosen up."...He'll crack a few jokes while he's lecturing, sometimes talk in a silly kind of voice, or perhaps, do some good-natured teasing. Since he's created a casual and fun atmosphere for his students, the kids have a little more confidence and don't feel so uptight about answering his questions...

Being "outrageous" in the classroom has another benefit. In addition to boosting his students' confidence, his teaching style keeps their attention. Certainly, students will retain far more listening to a teacher who adds a little flair to his or her lectures, rather than just listening to a teacher who drones on and on in a monotone...

Alane

Alane was becoming the observant student of teaching that she needed to be to learn the reality of the classroom. For only in the reality of the classroom would her assumptions about teaching find their truths. As she became a serious observer she looked to answer the very questions that had started her inquiry into teaching at the beginning of the semester. Being a critical observer was a key characteristic of students grounding themselves in reality to confirm their decision to teach. Alane followed in her next letter with further observations about effective teaching and connected them to a teacher in her past.
...she was very enthusiastic about her classes. She wasn't the type of teacher who would just drone on and on as they lectured - she delivered her lessons in an animated (and still very professional) manner. You could tell that she really liked the subjects that she was teaching...

She also made the learning an experience for her students, rather than a 90 minute block of time where everyday they sat and took notes while she lectured. She employed several different kinds of teaching techniques in order to do this - she would bring in artifacts to show the class that were relevant to the material being covered, often invited guest speakers to come in, had several hands-on projects for the students to do in class, and organized many field trips...

...she did her best to deal with all of her students on a personal level...

Alane

Becoming an observant teacher in training, Alane had taken her first step in confirming her belief that teaching was the course for her.

The second prong of her inquiry into learning about the reality of the classroom was her refocusing at mid-semester of the questions for her search. Sharpening and focusing on the specifics she wanted to learn, she wrote, *I want to find out several things about teaching - how to make up a lesson plan, how to deal with trouble making students, how to keep the attention of the students - the list goes on...right now, I feel fairly confident that this is a career for me. Her commitment to taking stock was followed up with the very plans she needed to feel to make her exploration personally meaningful and tailored to her specific situation. In her next Dear Classmates Letters she revealed her self-initiated plan. Concerned that her middle school placement was not giving her enough exposure to the teaching of high school students to tell if she wanted to be a teacher, she wrote,*

*...I have contacted a high school teacher that I knew was familiar with the Education program at the University of New Hampshire and asked if she would mind if I came to observe her classes for a day. The first day went well, and we decided that I should come back again next week. To make a long*
story short, I now have two cooperating teachers at two different schools...I have already found several differences between the two schools, and I really enjoy being able to compare my experiences at one school with the other...

Alane

Alane's confirmation of her desire to teach was rooted in the initiative she had taken to observe, reflect, and plan for the learning she needs. Confirmation of teaching as a career choice was no passive self-fulfilling prophecy, but an active exploration to find out the realities of the classroom. Making the commitment to learn experientially, she used the structure the Education Department provided for Exploring Teaching students as well as the extra placement she found for herself to deepen her understanding of teaching. Other Exploring Teaching students of mine in the past had made other such active, going-above-and-beyond commitments to increase their learning. They had completed one hundred plus hours at their fieldwork site, substituted for their cooperating teacher and others in the school building when they are ill, and gone on field trips after the semester was over. For Alane, confirmation to teach was a very active process in Exploring Teaching.

Her third prong was a concentrated effort to get involved in the classroom lives of students and teachers. She wrote to her classmates after mid-semester about her middle school classroom. So far, my experiences with the 7th and 8th graders have been positive ones. I have enjoyed working with the students a great deal, and last week, when I got to teach for the entire day, I had an absolute blast. I couldn't have asked for it to have gone better...

As the semester wound down, she focused on her efforts to learn the roles teacher play at her high school placement.
Last week, I got to help chaperone a field trip to the Superior Court at the state capital. Trying to herd 45 high school freshman and sophomores around the courthouse (where there was only one other teacher chaperoning beside myself) proved to be quite a task. We did manage to keep things under control, however, in talking with my cooperating teacher, I learned a lot about what it takes to organize a field trip...which trips require permission slips and which ones don't, what teacher needs to be notified and how much advance notice needs to be given in, whose responsibility it is to get the buses, etc....

Alane

In a well-coordinated commitment to her own learning, Alane returned to her semester long concern about discipline and classroom management issues. Though shy by self-assessment and confirmed by my class observations, Alane was transforming herself as she noted in her writing and as I observed her incremental, but steadily greater participation in class discussions throughout the second half of the semester. She had taken the active role (e.g. to establish order in the classes she is in) she proclaimed to her classmates in her second Dear Classmates Letter that she needed to take in order to make the most of her Exploring Teaching experience.

She had not had time to consider the learning needs of students that lessons need to be worthwhile, not just fun and that students need to have responsibility for their own behavior for learning to occur. Those beliefs for effective learning and classroom management were ones she would learn when her focus naturally evolved from Fuller's stage three to stage four of concerns about students' learning. They were not realizations that beginners often realized as they understandably were at the point of development as a thinker about teaching where maintaining order was paramount. What is crucial to Alane's developing success as a teacher was her ability to identify what she needed to attend to as she grew as a teacher. Alane opened her end of the semester self-assessment, ...I was always pretty sure that teaching was the career for me, and I still am. Her commitment to articulating in writing of her knowledge of self, her asking of personally relevant...
questions, and creating educational experiences for herself was the foundation of her confirmation of a teaching life.

Through their writing, Alane and Bob had identified the themes to which they attended to confirm that their choice of the teaching life was the correct one for them. Exploring Teaching with its emphasis on the individual allowed each student to address what they needed to learn based on the stage of development they were at.

**Joe: Uncertain and Hopeful to Start and Still So at the End**

Though seven of thirteen of my students like Bob and Alane came and left Exploring Teaching certain that teaching was for them, the other six could best be described as uncertain. They came seeking answers to their own personal assumptions about the teaching life rather than focusing on the details of classroom teachers with students. Four of the six came believing that teaching held great possibilities for them. These students left still seeing possibilities for themselves in education, but in need of more experiences in education to commit to the teaching life.

Joe, as one of the four, had a deep desire to learn about the art of teaching. He began his first Dear Classmates Letter with *I've always wanted to be a teacher...I hope that this is my calling.* In this same first letter, Joe who was hopeful that teaching was right for him, did elaborate on the worries he had for Exploring Teaching.

...What worries me about a course of this nature is that I will not be able to find all the resources to help me make the most of this class. There is so much that I could pull from this class, I just fear that it will all go by too quickly for me to grasp. I see myself relying heavily on the outside support of the permanent staff at the school...I am also looking for guidance of the
teacher here in Education 500 (Exploring Teaching) to help me make use of all of the valuable resources that lie before me. I will also be looking toward my classmates to share their experiences and ideas and help me grow as a better teacher...

Joe

Different from many students, Joe came to Exploring Teaching looking for support in his inquiry into the teaching life and to make sense of his classroom experience. In my section of Exploring Teaching, his was no solo journey, but one where the learning in community he sought would be the foundation for any success he would have. His three goals were: (1) to find out if teaching is what he wants to do for the rest of his life, (2) to have a positive impact on students, and (3) help his cooperating teacher. He was committed to knowing his middle school students on a personal level and to make a difference.

Wide-eyed, Joe did not see the trouble that awaited ahead for there was no reason for him to expect conflict. During the first month of the semester, he had been mostly observing his cooperating teacher demonstrate the instructional paradigm (focus on teacher behavior and methods, not student learning) which was dominated by the use of textbooks and worksheets. Joe saw only positives from his conversation with his cooperating teacher in his letter that started the second month of class.

Today I was talking to my cooperating teacher, and we were discussing what I would be doing in the weeks to come. It was great to learn that he felt comfortable enough to encourage me to teach in the next class. To some of you this may be nothing, having taught in the class from day one, but it is a big deal to me. I'm excited! I'm pretty comfortable with the students and enjoy the classroom atmosphere that have been created so far. I feel the students aren't bothered by my presence in the classroom and are ready for me to play a more active part; I know I'm ready to try my hand at teacher...
Knowing Joe's fieldwork situation, I read the next paragraph of his letter with the suspicion that Joe was becoming aware that all was not right in his classroom.

...What will my first day as "teacher" be like? I would like to think it would be a day of learning for all parties involved. I hope by the end of the day I will have learned how to conduct a class and keep the respect I've earned. I know this will not be easy...Maybe a different teaching style that is more appealing to certain students...

Joe

As Joe explored teaching, he was about to bump into the reality that his teaching style conflicted with that of his cooperating teacher's style. To support Joe, I let him talk in conference about the possibilities for his own classroom, if he were the one in charge. I believed he needed to be reinspired after he found much of the traditional teaching going on at his fieldwork site was not to his liking. I then asked if he saw possibilities for his way of teaching for I wanted him to come out of our meeting hopeful. Throughout the semester Joe did remain hopeful. Though I was skeptical whether he would find contentment, I knew he needed my encouragement, not the strong self doubts about his placement situation that I had.

Joe's self-evaluation suggested that what he wanted to do in the classroom was clearly was not what he was seeing done there.

...I feel that I am not relating the classroom material to their lives very well. I think that I need to be more creative in my lesson plans and dig deeper beneath the surface of just the facts to come up with new and inventive ideas that will really get the children thinking and create a fun and exciting learning environment.

In his cooperating teacher's classroom, Joe was not seeing his vision of good teaching at all. He knew that all was not right, but students did seem to like their
cooperating teacher. It was easy to imagine that his fieldwork site confirmed Ted Sizer's (1984) assessment that many classrooms were genial places where there was an unspoken contract between students and teachers that if the students didn't make life difficult for teachers, the teachers would not make too many academic demands on the students.

Learning more and more of the details of Joe's fieldwork placement through his letters, I encouraged him to dream, not settle for what he believed was unsatisfactory teaching and to bring his personality into any lessons he taught.

As a motivated learner, Joe met with me to talk about the first lesson plan of his own creation that he would be teaching. He recounted in his Dear Classmates Letter that he had volunteered to teach three times during a week when he usually only came to his middle school classroom once a week. He noted that he checked with me on this possibility of a change of schedule, and I embraced this opportunity since it would fit into Joe's schedule. In our discussion, Joe wanted to know how to hook the student's in the beginning of his one week unit and what hands-on activities could he use to teach lessons on Ancient Rome. Joe agreed to my suggestion that we bring these questions to the next class for his classmates, which he did, to give him some feedback. He concluded his letter:

...I really want to be able to capture the students' attention and have a very interactive and enthusiastic lesson...I would appreciate any suggestions that you all have on lessons for Rome as well as any ideas that you might have for grabbing and holding a sixth grade social studies class's attention.

Joe

As Joe was waiting for the schedule to open for him to teach his unit on Rome, he had the chance to observe in an eighth grade class. His sweeping generalizations about the difference between sixth and eighth graders were understandable since his Exploring
Teaching experience had been confined to one sixth classroom with one cooperating teacher.

...The sixth grade is more lecture oriented than the eighth grade. In the eighth grade you can have discussions and get them into groups. They are able to work on their own...They do not have to be spoon-fed. In this aspect the eighth grade is more independent and free thinking than the sixth grade.

For his full letter, Joe sang the praises of the learner-centered teaching environment in this one eighth grade class. Joe saw teaching as it could be, but unfortunately his conclusion was that it was because of the age of the students rather than the instructional style of the teacher. As Joe finished his semester he wrote in his self-assessment, Education 500 has been a great class for letting me see if teaching is what I really want to do. I have thought for many years that teaching would be the job for me. So it's not a surprise to me after taking this course that I would really like to continue this education track.

Placements for Exploring Teaching students at Joe's middle school were done by the principal after a ten to twenty minute interview. Preferable to random assignments, this process still could be hit or miss when matching cooperating teacher to Exploring Teaching student. At Joe's very middle school fieldwork site, one cooperating teacher has had an ideal match in the fall semester and a poor one the following spring. The structure of my section of Exploring Teaching which emphasized the individual learner allowed me to mitigate ill-suited matches as Joe's and support students personally during the Exploring Teaching experience.

Though Joe did not have all the resources that he stated in his goals that he wanted (i.e. a classroom with a cooperating teacher who inspired him and demonstrated a learner-
centered approach to teaching) and could have been discouraged and dismayed, he was not. Though his spirit could have been broken, he remained resilient and positive. The silver lining of his experience in Exploring Teaching was that he did sharpen his vision of what needs to happen in classrooms for learning and teaching to flourish. In the end he was still willing to explore teaching, and by any measure that was a successful outcome of this experience for Joe.

Ruth: Doubting Coming In, Doubting Going Out

Uncertain and doubtful, Ruth came to Exploring Teaching wondering if she was ready to teach. Coming from a family with two parents as teachers, she knew of the teaching life, but had many questions if that life was for her. Was a family tradition of teaching her legacy? In her writing, she noted that her family had been her most significant teachers. Would their influence guide her search to become a teacher? She wrote in her first Dear Classmates Letter. I have always thought about being a teacher, and I would like to teach at some point in my life, but I am not sure when, soon after college or years after. The focus of her journey was filled with questions and an answer by mid-semester.

In her very next letter to classmates, Ruth wrote of the questions that filled her mind as she began as a teacher assistant in a sixth grade classroom.

...I really want to look at teaching this semester in the classroom, such as: does the teacher show her interests and how, what has she made up in the curriculum and what is the school's part of it, how are the subjects related to each other, and how are they related to the students’ lives, what is the community's place in the classroom, the depth vs. range of subjects, different
ways of teaching children, and how sixth grade was different than mine because I can remember mine quite a bit...

Have a good week and listen to the small things around you throughout the day.

Ruth

As with Margaret profiled in the last chapter as a seeker of the inward journey, Ruth's last line seemed as much directed to herself as it did to her classmates. She was reminding herself of what she needed and sharing that personal insight with others in the class who might be on a similar journey themselves as they explored teaching. Writing served her well as a place for organizing those important questions she faced. Since she came with an open mind, she asked personally engaging questions beyond the mundane ones of, say, effective seating arrangements and getting students to line up properly. Ruth was not burdened by the little details in her search because she was looking to know students, teachers, and the classroom life as well as her place in that mix.

Even in her portfolio reflection which was a poem by Shel Silverstein "Dancin' in the Rain," Ruth connected this poem about a girl free to dance naked in the rain to her questions about her fit in the teaching life.

...One thing that I worry about if I am to be a teacher is that I don't know enough. I feel like I don't remember enough about what I have learned over the years, even just basic things. Maybe the reason I feel I would like to be a teacher is to just let my personality teach the children. I have always wanted to be a person with life wisdom, someone who people look up to and admire. I guess that is what I remember most about past teachers, their life and who they were, not as much about what info. they taught me. I guess that is proof of how I can use my personality to inspire me, but I still worry about not having what it takes, especially enough subject knowledge.
Was there a place at the inn of education for such a person as Ruth? Through her writing, Ruth was identifying an important question about herself that she wanted to see if just being Ruth would be good enough to be a teacher. A focus on lesson plans, curriculum, and classroom management were the questions of other students; Ruth wanted something else or so it appeared to me. Already she seemed to be confirming that her personality needed something other than a traditional classroom.

Ruth’s next two letters identified more roadblocks she saw for such a person as herself to teach as her inquiry in writing helped her make sense of the reality of the classroom as she was finding out. Her intellectual hunt was confirming that teaching had significant hurdles for a person like herself. In her letter at the start of the second month of class, she wrote about the importance of teaching students the value of knowing about their community:

...I like looking at things deeper so much now that I would love to teach it. But how? I can’t just get a job at a school and decide to teach through community. It requires so much team work of all the subject teachers and the whole school really. It has to be an agreement on everyone’s part, plus the goal’s need to be set. The states have their own ideas of what children need to know by the time they graduate that sometimes there seems to be no room for creativity and change...

Ruth

Then her next letter, Ruth wondered more about becoming a teacher to sixth graders.

...I am finding myself having trouble transitioning my college level thinking down to 6th grade age level and a teacher’s mind. Everyday daily life here is so different for me than in a middle school, I think about different issues and things. It’s been a while since I’ve been around different age levels, college has just engulfed my mind the last few years. I haven’t had the mind track of being a teacher as some of you who may have known that you want to be a teacher. It makes me wonder that teaching might not be my thing
right after college, but rather in a few years after I do something else that interests me more at this time.

Ruth

Her writing speaks of what she couldn't do in the present system, not what could be done with the current reality in schools. Her commitment to searching, not commitment to teaching, brought up the impediments she would face. If she were committed to teaching, she might see these roadblocks as opportunities.

By her mid-semester, Ruth's need to have her personality infused in a curriculum of greater depth had not been satisfied by her experiences in her fieldwork. One of her university classes held her in its grip as she wrote in her self-evaluation that confirmed what she had suspected since the beginning of the semester that she was not ready to teach.

...I look to see all the different things the teacher has to do. Can I do all this, I ask myself? Yes I believe I can, but I realize I can't know the full extent of it all till I become a teacher myself. I have also realized that I am not ready to teach either. It's not that I am not prepared (or couldn't be), but it is that my dreams and inspirations are not for teaching right now. I really want to be a teacher some day because I know it is in me to be one, but not yet.

My other classes, anthropology classes mostly, make the dreams that I want to follow right now. I could see myself working with kids in some way fairly soon in my life, maybe in a school setting somehow, but not teaching yet. I am glad to have realized this because earlier in the semester I was thinking it is what I wanted soon, but now I think that I have been pressuring myself to look for a career that I can get a job in right after school without a lot of dilly dally. But dilly day isn't bad, and plus I shouldn't force myself into doing anything that my whole heart isn't there for.

Whether she evaluated her experiences in light of this unconscious fait accompli decision or was truly open to becoming a teacher was not the issue. Exploring Teaching had enabled her to have experiences to help her find answers that confirmed her original
suspicions about teaching. Might her ruminations just be an avoidance of the reality that
teaching in public schools would never really match her personality? Perhaps so, but that
was an answer unknown to everyone, including Ruth until that date a few years hence if
and when she reexamined teaching. Maybe she would find an alternative, charter, or
private school that would allow her full personality to shine as a teacher.

During the rest of the semester she stayed committed to her sixth graders with
regular attendance and participation in her fieldwork as well as stayed involved in our
class. Near the end of the semester, Ruth came to me for an hour planning
session for a unit on Irish culture that she eventually taught to sixth graders. In her final
self-assessment she confirmed her mid-semester evaluation that teaching still was not for
her. As a distinct minority in our class to the majority that is enthralled and/or committed
to teaching, Ruth's resolve to maintain her course of saying no to teaching for the time
spoke well of her. Though Exploring Teaching confirmed Ruth's suspicion about the
place of teaching her life, she now was ready to explore other directions in her life.

Lisa: Uncertain, but a Decision Made

Though her twelve classmates came into the semester in the same state as they left
at the end, Lisa did not. Insecure and doubtful, her letters revealed two areas of focus that
drove her exploration of teaching: (1) acknowledging doubts and (2) making connections
by having teaching experiences.

In her first Dear Classmate Letters, Lisa offered up her present state of mind
towards teaching as the semester began. *I'm a senior and a science major with little*
direction. I've always thought that teaching was something I would be unable to do. I'm doubtful of my ability to communicate information. Like, I can't give directions...

With such doubts, it was not surprising that what she noticed in her fieldwork site was the walls, not the windows and doorways to being a successful teacher. In her second letter to classmates, she observed two lectures and three lecture/lab classes and concluded, *I got my first glimpse of how hard it must be to be a good teacher.* As she watched her cooperating teacher seek to gain control of the classes, Lisa noted, *...it just seemed like a struggle just to get the information out there. It was exhausting, and I was merely observing...* Her commitment to explore was strong for she ended the letter with reflections on her day which were not negative judgments about teaching or her place in education. She asked, *Am I making the classroom an interesting place to be? Are the students thinking or memorizing? Am I teaching the right stuff? Are we having fun?...*

Her doubts had Lisa's writing in her next letter continue to focus on the impediments to learning and teaching. The limitations of a mere fifty minute period were increasingly annoying to me...I watch the students try to settle down as the teacher tries to teach and then complete an activity. Forget it. The activities are designed to be fun and instructional. More often than not, they are a headache and must be repeated at the start of the next class period. What repeats in Lisa's writing was that she ended the letter in hope. In her last letter it was reflective questions, this letter with a possible solution. *I wonder about dividing the day into thirds or halves, in which only two or three subjects are taught per day.*

I thought that the key to Lisa's successful exploration of teaching was that the problems hit her in the face, but she was not dismayed and used her intellect to understand what was going on and consider possibilities. As Lisa sought answers during her
exploration, her second focus in exploration was to make connections in reading and by working with students to construct meaning for herself. Early in the semester she wrote,

...I loved what Perrone says on page 2. He mentions art and music being separate from basic curriculum. "Further the belief that art and music - the esthetic aspects of life - call for a special talent and are therefore, open to a few rather than being fully accessible to all is to ensure an uninspiring education..." This really hit home for me. I consider devoid of creativity. I've never had that side of me nurtured...

Lisa

These constructions of meaning to her personal life made her reading fit into the learning she was doing both in our class and at her fieldwork classroom. Mid-semester Lisa wrote, I have worked with students on an individual and small group basis. Last week I went to my school for two full days. This made a lot of difference in my feeling comfortable with the students. Their names came much more easier to me, and I felt like I could easily talk with all of them... By participating in the lives of students, Lisa was also making connections in her writing to what she would need to do to make her experience meaningful. When I stand before a group of young people, I can't expect them to listen to me and work for me if I don't know at least a little something about them. I wouldn't be real...I'm forging ahead to planning a lesson... Her active involvement to make connections was crucial for her exploration to give her meaningful information upon which to base her decision.

As Lisa prepared for her first lesson at the end of the semester her doubts met her desire to make a connection to the teaching life by teaching a lesson.

...I am really nervous. As I said in my PS last letter (her PS - I'll be teaching a lesson on genetics this week. I'm really nervous. I just have this fear that I'll be standing up there and they won't know what I'm talking
about.) I'm afraid they'll ask me a bunch of questions that I won't be able to answer. Worse than that, I'm afraid they just won't get what I'm trying to say.

I've been thinking about this a lot. I kept saying that I should have done this earlier. If I had, then at this point I might know how to plan effective lesson and get the information across. Also, I've been feeling really bad about my role in the classroom. I've felt that I haven't taken on enough responsibility (especially when I compare myself with others in seminar)...

The old compare-myself-with-others-game had little merit for it either makes people vain or bitter (Ehrmann, Desiderata, 1927). That Lisa has doubts arise was understandable for her journey was different than others. She was a member of class who had more than half of her classmates who knew they wanted teaching to begin with. Lisa wasn't at the point. I felt pleased with her baby steps into making sense of the place of teaching in her life, though she, on the other hand, was quite self-critical.

As has been Lisa's case throughout the semester, she concluded her thoughts on teaching this lesson by writing of hope, of possibilities, not roadblocks or reversals. ...

noticed that my nervousness was only about doing a good job. It wasn't about getting up and being the center of attention for 50 minutes, which would normally be my biggest fear. I realized that this was because I've spent a lot of time getting to know my students.

At the end of the semester, Lisa wrote, The Education 500 experience has been amazing...As a result, teaching has become something more to me than a possible job. It has become an intended career. Exploring Teaching could provide a home for such doubtful students as Lisa to have them change from uncertain to certain. Her two prong focus on her own self-doubts followed by active reflection with her connections to her reading and by experiences had given her the information to choose to teach. She gave herself a fair chance to learn about teaching. In this case, Lisa chose teaching.
Confirmation of a career choice is a most useful function of Exploring Teaching. Matching reality with their expectations provides students with corroborating evidence that they are actively ready for the next step in their preparation for becoming a teacher. As well, Exploring Teaching provides an opportunity for uncertain students to muck around in their exploration of teaching life. With no expectation that students will "know" if the teaching life is for them, Exploring Teaching with its experiential focus is flexible in intent and opportunity to accommodate whomever enrolls in Exploring Teaching. With its focus on the individual, Exploring Teaching handles the certain and uncertain with aplomb.

If most preservice teachers are not changing their orientation to their individual perspective of the suitability of the teaching life after a semester in Exploring Teaching, some of what they are learning about effective teaching is the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER SIX

WHAT DID PRESERVICE TEACHERS LEARN
ABOUT THE EFFECTIVE ROLES OF TEACHERS?

If, as the data in chapter seven suggested that most students left Exploring Teaching as they entered it, what indeed did students learn about teaching during the semester? What sort of teaching were they endorsing when they explored teaching? Since my students were the outsiders, the guests in their fieldwork classrooms, it was likely that they would put a high priority on fitting in. Was being liked and making learning fun crucial to Exploring Teaching students as it had been to some of my preservice teachers in the past? Wilson and Cameron (1994) reported that student teachers perceived that effective teachers catered to all levels of student performance and used reinforcement and praise. Their research indicated that student teachers began as egocentric and teacher-centered, then evolved into a pupil-centered focus. In their study, control was a key concern for these novice educators. Was it a similar concern of my students?

When I supervised interns, I worked in a middle school classroom where memorizing fifty-five prepositions was deemed important. I never heard it explained to the students or understood myself the value of such an assignment or how it improved writing, but this was the assignment. Since my intern was a guest in the classroom and worked at the pleasure of her cooperating teacher, she had little reason or opportunity to challenge this practice. As her supervisor, I cringed and offered my reservations, but, as a once-every-two-week visitor to class, chose not to rock the boat. The intern gave it her best shot and chose to make the exercise "fun for her students. She had the students sit in
a circle and write a sentence with a preposition. Once all the students were done, they each passed their sentence to the person to their right. They in turn, wrote another sentence that supposedly went along with the first, and then in mass passed the papers again to the right. This passing and adding of sentences continued until each student had their original paper back in hand. Fun? Kids loved it. They laughed and hooted. The focus was no longer on prepositions since many sentences didn't have one, but rather on creating sentences which were more ridiculous than the previous one or which included put-downs of others in the class. At the end of the lesson, there was no sense that students were any closer to learning the fifty-five prepositions. But they sure had fun.

My intern was just trying to survive in a low level class made up of eighty per cent boys and three silenced girls which was scheduled as the last period every day of the week. Trying to survive is a reality in some classrooms, especially for the novice (Fuller and Bown, 1975). I myself have opted for emphasis on fun when my teaching objectives were murky at best. As a fifth grade teacher, I taught twenty spelling words from a textbook each week, and on Friday gave tests where I used students names in the sentences. My students had so much fun as they loved my creativity and the pause for them tedium of writing their words five times each and putting them each in sentences. Such a focus on fun without a learning context was how I tried to survive when I first began teaching in public schools. As one of William Glasser's (1990) five basic human needs, survival drove my teaching decisions as a novice educator (the other four were love, power, fun, and freedom). I wondered, is there evidence that survival and being loved were so important to Exploring Teaching students? If so, did my students focus on the need for effective teachers to be liked and make learning fun? In their initial letters to classmates, some of my students did mention the value of making learning fun for middle school students.
In her opening letter Kate wrote about previously working with a seventeen year old girl with brittle bone syndrome who she initially helped make a bookmark with designs.

For the next project I decided to do something a bit more difficult, constructing puppets. I really think she liked doing this project a lot. She ended up making a puppet with multi-colored spiked hair, it was really cute...I want to be the type of teacher that makes learning fun for the students...I want to teach all the fun and interesting things there is to learn about art and how beautiful it really is.

In establishing a relationship with the young girl, Kate focused on the girl's enjoyment and making learning fun. As a novice, Kate valued an idealistic notion of teaching which revolved around being a teacher who made her student happy. Four weeks into the class, Kate returned to her focus on fun with a little something more.

Kids are always learning, but we as teachers can make it much more interesting and fun when we develop hands-on, critical thinking. Kids aren't going to learn the right things if teachers just sit in front of the classroom and rattle off a bunch of facts and figures.

How fun is that really for a kid who probably doesn't even want to be in school in the first place? We have to make the environment fun for the child. We have to make it so they want to be there and want to learn. Kids should be introduced to creative ways of solving problems. I think in the long run it makes learning much more enjoyable for the kids and rewarding for the teachers...

Fun mattered to Kate. Perhaps, as a teacher assistant in an art class that made sense, since middle school students might see art class as a break from the routine of reading, science, social studies, and mathematics. Though finding fun important, Kate was now aware that it would take more than just fun to be effective as she included the need for problem solving and being creative, two higher level thinking skills. And a further review of her writing throughout the semester revealed that until her final self-assessment,
she didn't mention fun again. In her final self-assessment, she highlighted respect and commitment first as crucial to teacher effectiveness before adding in a later paragraph, *The happier they are in their surroundings, the more they are going to learn. Children are going to learn the most where they feel the most comfortable. I believe that it is the teacher's responsibility to make the classroom into a learning atmosphere where the children want to learn.* Over the semester, Kate's thinking had evolved from an emphasis on fun to the pleasure of learning that comes with students using their higher level thinking skills and the importance of teachers creating a classroom where students actively were interested in learning.

Describing a favorite teacher in sixth grade, Lisa wrote in her first Dear Classmates Letter, *She used to read to us just for fun (something our fifth grade teachers never did).* In her very next letter, she wrote about the reflective importance of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb and Fry, 1975) by listing her questions. *Am I making the classroom an interesting place to be? Are the students thinking or memorizing? Am I teaching the right stuff? Are we having fun?* The following week she wrote about field marine science experience on the Isles of Shoals in the Gulf of Maine. *We had a range of reasons for being there. Some of us needed to take a field course to graduate. Some of us just wanted to have fun.* In her very next letter describing the constraint of enough time for science labs in middle schools and having the students behave she wrote *I watch the students try to settle down as the teacher tries to teach and then complete an activity. Forget it. The activities are designed to be fun and instructional. More often than not, they are a headache and must be repeated at the start of the next class period.*

After an initial focus on the importance of fun in learning (yet, never again in her writing after these first four weeks did she write about fun), Lisa began to learn of the conflicting natures of fun in the classroom and the need for discipline. Fun was important,
but it needed to have a place in the context of meaningful learning. With increased sophistication in thinking about successful classrooms and effective teachers, she concluded by the end of the semester that effective teachers see themselves as learners, involve their students in decision making, and make learning experiential.

Lisa's classmate Lynn noted in her writing the need, too, for more than just creating a fun atmosphere for teachers to be effective. Lynn, who was mentioned earlier as an example of an Exploring Teaching student on an outward journey, wrote goals that bridged her thinking about student enjoyment and effective teaching. Her opening goals were: (1) becoming as involved as possible with the students and what they are learning, (2) discovering effective methods of teaching, and (3) learn from the students what is important to them, what kinds of things are they interested in learning. Engaging students was crucial to what effective teachers did. Highly motivated and engaged herself as learner, she wrote at mid-semester about her students' reactions to the role playing and pantomiming she had kids do as she was reading. They loved that, and many of them asked if I will do another lesson with pantomime. In the other two classes I read aloud from Sandra Cisneros' The House on Mango Street, and followed it with some discussion and a few short writing assignments. My first experience was really successful, and the kids were great.

Well-behaved and engaged students pleased Lynn and was the foundation for her satisfaction. Lynn's evolution in her thinking about effective teaching continued in her mid-semester self-evaluation when she wrote about her third goal of learning from students. Now, when I choose an activity, I can go back to the survey (of suggestions and ideas what students would like to do), find the students who may not enjoy what I've planned and attempt to alter it slightly to fit their desires. I realize that I can't please all of the kids all of the time, but at least don't feel like I'm in the dark.
Often thinking of her students, Lynn had much more than fun in mind when she wants students to enjoy their schooling. She wanted to know about her individual students to tailor the learning, within reason, to their individual needs. As she wrote near the end of the semester, her focus was active engagement as well as fun when she described in a letter about a Shakespeare unit that included teaching middle school students the tools of playwriting such as plot, characterization, dialogue, staging, theme, and format. They were so enthusiastic and excited! Her last letter of the semester continued in that vein as she described more about students being involved in writing and performing Shakespeare. It was almost as if they couldn't contain themselves, they were so excited. Lynn's final self-assessment spoke of engagement rather than fun when she wrote, My basic teaching philosophy includes five words: intrigue, engage, inspire, challenge, and listen. As with her classmates Kate and Lisa, Lynn had evolved in her thinking from believing that learning must in the main be fun to believing that learning must be relevant to her students, and they must be actively engaged. Fun complemented learning, but was not sine qua non.

Contrasting with the notion of the primary importance of making learning fun, Bob was a counterpoint to his classmates. He wanted more. At the start of the second month of class, he was concerned that lessons taught to the middle schoolers about Cortes and the Spanish colonization of the Americas never mentioned the high price the natives paid in the European's quest for wealth and quicker trade routes to India and the Orient. What was not explained was the price that humanity paid for the near extermination of the inhabitants of these lands, he wrote. His writing brought a depth of awareness to his classmates about the importance of a commitment to a complete and thorough approach to student learning. The product as well as the process mattered to him. The following week Bob's thinking again dove beneath the surface in a class discussion about the
importance of valuing differences to valuing likenesses would bring people closer together in much more understanding than is possible now. I guess it is just a matter of where you decide to attack the beast. Going beyond survival and being loved in the classroom, Bob returned to focus on a depth of understanding by teachers of what students need.

Two weeks later he was challenging Perrone's (1991) assessment that standardized testing's value is meager and of no "diagnostic value." He wrote,

Does this mean that we should not accept the citywide, statewide, and/or national tests? If these bureaucratic systems have no way to gauge performance as institutions should they economically support them? Where would our schools be today if the only revenue they had to survive on was from the district—what would your property taxes look like? Without this bureaucratic standardization would it be OK if the district in your hometown decided it was OK to employ revisionist history, teach that the Holocaust never happened, and the Nazi's may have had the right idea?

Running counter to those students of mine who thought of the need for teachers to make learning fun, Bob focused his attention on accountability, appropriate curriculum, and skeptical thinking about the status quo. Yet, even for the students concerned about fun, something more than creating a fun and enjoyable atmosphere was at work in my students' assessment of what made for effective teaching. A continued review of student writing revealed that nearly half the thirteen students never mentioned fun in the classroom as being important for student learning and teacher effectiveness. And those that did tended to have their direct comments on fun confined to the beginning of the semester. In fact, student enjoyment and fun was ignored by eleven of my thirteen students in their final self-assessments as crucial to teacher effectiveness. So what did students see as crucial for teacher effectiveness?
Examining student writing after the mid-semester self-evaluation, I drew upon the synthesis of learning that students had done during the semester to date as well as the inevitable learning about effective teaching which they brought to class. In many cases, I drew on what they were doing as teachers with students and what they highlighted as exemplary in their cooperating teacher. As it turned out, eight of thirteen students felt interactive, experiential learning where students were actively engaged was crucial to effective teaching. Far more important that making learning fun so students were merely happy and not disruptive, Exploring Teaching students believed that active participation in learning brought out the pleasure in learning by public school students.

Blending his own needs to have students enjoy lessons with the students' need for active learning, Del constructed a lesson at the end of the semester that he described to his classmates in a letter:

*I came up with an interesting way for my students to learn about organic farming. I decided I'd lecture for like twenty minutes and then do some hands-on stuff. I set up two trays each with two apples and two pears. One group was organic and one was conventional (grown with pesticides and chemical fertilizers). I sliced up some of the apples so they could perform a taste test between the two groups. I had asked them to decide which was organic and which was conventional. I had given them the way to figure it out the answer in lecture...*

*The next assignment I had them do was to design their own farm and chose what they grow as well as how organic or conventional...The lesson was a big success. The students really took well to it. They were very enthusiastic about creating their own farms. Even some of the ones that I was losing during lecture rebounded and got excited for the taste test and designing their own farm...*

His classmate Alane wrote in her final self-assessment that *I've learned how much I really dealing with students, and how much I would like to teach. I've learned about a lot of other things as well - the importance of active learning,...* Their classmate Joe spent
the semester with ambiguous feelings about his cooperating teacher's reliance on worksheets and the textbook when planning his own idea of an effective lesson said, *I really want to be able to capture the student's attention and have a very interactive and enthusiastic lesson.* Ruth wrote in her self-assessment, *Having a curriculum with different types of learning such as hands-on, visuals, reading, art, group work, discussions, and the regular worksheets helps for all the kids who learn differently.*

Though various Exploring Teaching students focused on the importance of the active engagement of their students, some went a step further and wrote about the need for interactive learning to be based in a holistic context, relevant to the students' lives, and/or within a social commitment to the betterment of society. Not surprising given the previous excerpts from Bob's letters that he believed the context of successful teaching was holistic approach by noting the relevancy of classroom learning to the lives of students.

*The most important concept I have to offer as a Social Studies teacher is that I want to approach the subject in its entirety. That is, to use history, politics, economics, geography, anthropology, psychology, and sociology to teach the daily lessons within the classroom and to continuously find was within these studies to make the lesson relevant to the student—to make the educational experience interesting and memorable!*

In her final self-assessment Carola echoed those sentiments for relevancy. *I will also campaign for making my students' learning relevant to real life, by interfacing them with the surrounding community: organizing field trips, enhancing the subject matter by inviting their parents and/or other guest speakers to the class...* Ruth added at the end of the semester, *Knowing the goal of your lesson is important (as is) its relevancy. These students have looked to place the day-to-day workings of the classroom in a larger context to have the curriculum meet the needs of students once they leave the classroom.*

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
A review of all the final self-assessments noting the comments about the characteristics of effective teachers, only two of thirteen mentioned the importance of knowing the subject matter. When it was mentioned, it was almost in passing as when Lisa wrote, *This means that the teacher must be resourceful as well as knowledgeable.* Perhaps Exploring Teaching students thought being knowledgeable about subject matter was understood or a given, but it was clearly not an emphasis in their writing. What was a focus of students when thinking of effective teachers was the need to have the freedom to be a learner oneself and not have the burden of having to play the role of Answer Woman or Answer Man.

Del wrote *teachers do not always have to have the answer, but they do need to possess the ability to think laterally.* My lateral thinking allowed me to create an analogy and answer her question (about the biological difference among orangutans, monkeys, apes, chimpanzees, and gorillas). Lisa wrote *I fully understood the idea that to teach we must always be learning.* A willingness to be constantly learning - a desire and love of the sharing of knowledge and experience is what I believe to be the core of an exceptional teacher. Carola's commitment to being a knowledgeable professional is grounded in her vision of herself as a learner. *I will also endeavor to test my knowledge of the subject matter and my teaching style by assisting to teacher seminars and attending college courses that will ultimately maximize my teaching abilities.* The focus on the learning about effective teaching by my Exploring Teaching students was not one that the more knowledge one had the better one was as a teacher, but on the hows of teaching, the importance of relating to students well, and seeing oneself as a learner.

Contrasted with these more general notions of effective teaching in the classroom, Lynn used the metaphors of *spiritual guide* and *consultant* to focus her thinking and
writing on the importance of the teacher in the learning mix. Late in the semester in a letter to classmates, she wrote of the importance she attaches to active teacher involvement in learning.

I've finally finished reading the Shakespeare stories to them and last week I have them a mini-lesson in drama. We talked about what tools are needed to write a play. We discussed plot, characterization, dialogue, staging, theme, and format...Hopefully, on Tuesday when I come to class, I can pick up the drafts (of the plays they have written) and review them. That way when I go in on Thursday, I'll have already targeted what I want them to work on.

When Lynn wrote of her basic teaching philosophy includes five words: intrigue, engage, inspire, challenge, and listen, she reinforced the active and initiating role for effective teachers. In her mind, the interactive experiences students have must be complemented by an equally engaged teacher. Del agreed in his final self-assessment,

..the teacher needs to be an active part of the classroom. My experience has taught me that you cannot just sit at the head of the class. You need to be active and move throughout the room. The view from behind a desk at the front of the room is definitely not the best vantage point to view students. It is beneficial to sit beside them occasionally rather than just standing or sitting in front of them.

Though Exploring Teaching students believed that interactive and relevance was key to effective teaching, the drum beat of how to manage classrooms and discipline students that Fuller and Bown (1975) emphasized as important to preservice teachers reverberated in the writing of my students. Since interactive learning focused on student talk and student interaction, maintaining some semblance of order so that learning occurred concerned these Exploring Teaching students so that they would survive. A review of the goals of my students revealed that only one of my students had discipline
and classroom management on their mind at the outset of the semester. Carola was that one and wrote,

    My second goal this week is to look up and exchange with my cooperating teacher information regarding behavior modification in the classroom. It isn’t something that I have to do, but because there have been a couple of students engaged in disruptive behavior in the classroom, she has asked for my opinion/suggestions as to how to go about handling this type of situation that’s naturally present in a junior high classroom. I did find a great book Managing Classroom Behavior by Joel Macht.

In contrast to Carola, Mia's and Joe's goals were examples of what was most important to learn in the minds of my students. Mia's goals were:

1. To become as familiar as I can with each of my students and try to make a positive impact on their lives and the things they do...

2. I would like to keep a very elaborate and detailed portfolio of the things we do in class and the things that I learn in the classroom I am assigned to...

3. My third goal is to try and teach as many lessons as possible and most importantly in teaching these lessons I would like to learn at least ten major things from the students that I did not previously know about...

For Joe, his goals were:

1. My first goal for the upcoming semester in Education 500 (the course number for Exploring Teaching) is to gain a better understanding of the profession of teaching. I really want to know if this is what I want to do for the rest of my life...

2. My second goal for Education 500 is to have a positive impact on the students, the teacher, and my classmates. I want to be able to walk away from this class with the feeling that I made a difference in the lives of students as I would want to when I become a teacher...

3. Lastly, I want the teacher who I am working with to know that he has a helping hand to aid him in anyway possible inside and outside the classroom.

122

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Interesting to note that some students in their goal writing were already believing that rather than a focus on classroom rules to maintain discipline, they suggested that an engaging curriculum would promote order in the classroom. Sean wrote, *Keeping students interested is one of my biggest fears as well as hardest challenge... The idea of learning teaching techniques without having any practical experience seems dull and perhaps useless.* Alane asked in her goal writing letter to classmates, *How can I keep the attention of the students and make the material they are learning a little more enjoyable?* Del added, *Some children need to be challenged in order to be motivated, while others need positive reinforcement.*

As the semester progressed Joe's writing in his final self-assessment was an example of the concern that discipline and classroom management were coming on to my students' radar screens.

*MOST STUDENTS DON'T ENJOY A BORING CLASSROOM, AND THAT MAKE THE SUBJECT MATERIAL BORING AS WELL. MOST STUDENT NEED AN ELEMENT OF FUN IN THE CLASS TO CATCH THEIR EYE AND THEN THEY ARE READY TO LEARN. THE STUDENT ALSO NEEDS TO KNOW THE BOUNDARIES IN THE CLASS, IT CAN'T BE ALL FUN. THERE HAS TO BE RULES IN A CLASSROOM OR THE STUDENTS ARE NOT GOING TO KNOW WHEN TOO FAR IS TOO FAR.*

On occasion, references to discipline techniques emerged in the letters. Del recounted, *In order to maintain order in the classroom I would call on students who were talking and being disruptive to read. I also walked around the classroom and I would sit with the students at their tables. If one group was being particularly disruptive I would sit beside them. As a neophyte, Del was dealing with the symptom, not the cause of the problem. Even so, he was beginning to understand how important classroom management was going to be to any future teaching success he would have.* Bob noted his cooperating
teacher's method for regaining the attention of students. I was careful to take note on the control factor. He never raised his voice and often simply said "excuse me" to regain the attention of a student who had fallen off task. As with Del, Bob was learning a non-confrontational approach to maintaining order from his cooperating teacher. The heavy hand of sending them to the principal or making them serve detention after school was nowhere to be seen in the writing of Exploring Teaching students.

David, too, had a non-confrontational approach to disciplining that needed the test of time in his own classroom to see if this technique would be effective.

In one of our class the idea of a contract would be brought up. I think that it is a good idea. If you them what you expect of them had have them agree to it. They feel more in control and I think a lot of the troublemakers would be able to be handled that way. I would require that their parents look at it. It would be quite legal about it with a copy for me and one for the parents and one for the students. I would also post the requirements and expectations in the room. I feel that if I treat my students like they are responsible enough to handle my rules then most of them will be.

For the most part these students were dealing with discipline and classroom management in the abstract or from second experience watching their cooperating teacher run the show, but due to circumstances beyond his control, Sean was thrown into action as a substitute when his cooperating went home because of a family emergency.

The first class period was hell on earth. Half the students were done with their projects 45 minutes into the period so I had to find something for them to do while I helped the low skilled students complete their projects. This class also has the most behavioral problems out of my cooperating teacher's four classes and my assertiveness was put to the test. The volume of talk needed got a little out of hand a few times and the support of the other faculty came in handy. After the class period I was a nervous wreck and so happy that it was over.
Sean concluded that being better prepared and more assertive, both which are reasonable and accurate conclusions, would have made his day as a substitute go better. He wrote later in this letter to classmates, *I was scared, shook up, and a little disturbed, but the principal and I shook hands as I left. He thanked me and told me I was a big help.* Tested unlike any of his classmates, Sean learned more during the very following week when he had a companion opportunity to help a substitute teacher who admitted to Sean that he had no mathematics background and was happy to let Sean teach.

*Every time that I have been in front of the class I have had trouble being assertive and keeping control of the class. In the situation that I was in last week I had the substitute right there. Being an ex-Special Forces Sergeant Major he kept the students in line very well while I taught the lesson.*

*I fumbled over explanations, spoke too softly, and used some terms that the students had never heard. I realize that teaching is a practice and it will not come all at once. For now the most important things that I need to learn is how to prepare a lesson concisely.*

Unlike his classmates, Sean has been welcomed to a side of teaching that his classmates had not experienced and had used writing to classmates to acknowledge his fears and shortcomings and began to craft solutions. Students not paying attention would have a way of getting a preservice teacher's attention. But without such real-life experiences where the regular cooperating teacher was not in the classroom, there was little chance to address the reality of classroom management.

Returning to Carola, who was the one Exploring Teaching who had written of wanting to learn about classroom management in her goals and who had many opportunities to teach with her cooperating teacher in the classroom, she wrote in her final self-assessment that first on her list of six priorities to develop together with her students was *classroom rules by which all will abide in order to make the classroom environment*
safe, efficient, and comfortable for all. She progressed from a focus on modifying the students' behaviors to including them in the conversation. For Carola, with building students self-esteem and mutual respect, attention to multiple intelligences, and learning that was relevant to real life, classroom management was another integral block in her development as an effective teacher, but not one that dominated her thinking.

In contrast to the students who focused on mitigating discipline problems, Mia had a different take on the thinking she had done about classroom management issues by embracing them as ways for students to deal with the real world after schooling.

I feel it would be great if I had a class full of students who really wanted to learn. I think some students are just there to fulfill their duties because they have to be. A classroom with all students who respect one another and the teacher as well. A room full of students who ask a lot of questions and put forth a grand effort to learn. But, I think without any conflict and behavior problems, we miss out on learning. Children do learn through other's actions. They learn to be respectful. They learn what is not acceptable. They learn about conflict management. These are important areas to develop in a child to help them in their future.

Mia's counterpoint to using conflict to learn strategies in dealing effectively with others ran counter to the need of some of her classmates, quite understandably, to want to control students and reduce disruptive behavior. As Mia offered a new way to look at disciplining, so too did her classmates tie the importance of healthy relationships with students to effective discipline. Del opened this line of thinking in his final self-assessment when he wrote about discipline First and foremost, I believe the most important part of classroom management is consistency. Students will not respect a teacher who is unfair and arbitrary. A respectful relationship between teacher and students might reduce conflicts in the classroom. Amy echoed and developed Del's thoughts about the need for respect.
I believe that a classroom environment should be one of mutual respect. I would like my classroom to encourage the participation of all. I hope to discipline in a way that respects the students' feelings while respecting the classroom rules. I think allowing students to participate in making class rules, and reasonable repercussions for breaking the rules, is a way to achieve this. If they have determined the consequences, they feel more responsible for their own actions.

They were not the only ones to connect classroom management with respect as Bob wrote in a letter to classmates, Be careful not to berate any one individual for failures in behavior - generalize the problem and make the situation a learning process.

Alane added,

In my fieldwork, I've learned a lot about classroom control and dealing with trouble-making students. My cooperating teacher had a couple of rowdy classes that proved quite challenging to handle. Earning the respect of the students was key - if students don't have any respect for their teacher, then controlling the classroom becomes impossible. I think that one of the main ways to win respect of the students is to show those students that you respect them first.

Adding to the need her classmates identified as being important in handling discipline through building relationships, Lisa had a number of suggestions how to do just that.

I would like them to feel a responsibility towards the classroom and involve in decision making early on...In order to manage and monitor student learning, I would incorporate a system of constant feedback into my teaching role...Different concepts must be presented and examined in different ways to reflect the needs of the group or the individual...I learned how important composure is when trying to get people to pay attention to you and remember what you are saying.

Relationships. Dealing with students as individuals and demonstrating respect to them proved on my further examination of student writing to be the focus of many of my
Exploring Teaching students. Though discipline and classroom management concerned my students, they believed effective teachers built bridges with their students. A knowledge of students as individuals was fundamental for teaching success as twelve of the thirteen students believed. Margaret in her final self-assessment wrote:

*Teachers that really cared for about my education are the ones who made a difference, and I want to be one of those teachers. This involves paying careful attention to student’s progress and knowing who each student is as a person. It is impossible to manage or monitor learning if one is unaware of who the students are, what learning style suits them best, and what they need from you.*

Sean echoed those sentiments at the end of the semester.

*A teacher must know their students. Problems outside of school definitely affects behavior at school. By knowing our students we may be able to make decisions on whether a student needs discipline or help. I have bad days, it is not unreasonable to expect that students that I might be teaching have bad days. If a teacher knows their students then they can make a more informed judgment on what to do if a student is exhibiting bad behavior. In dealing with behavior problems when one child hits or yells at another child, again there is a judgment call. The fine line between punishing someone for standing up for themselves or was the incident unprovoked. Again know your students, only a teacher who can tell you that it is against a child’s nature to do something can find the truth.*

The first thing on Lisa’s list of her thoughts on an ideal classroom related to the importance of teacher’s knowledge of students.

*Class size must be small. It is imperative that a teacher get to know his students. There are countless other reasons that make it important that a class has a limited amount of students. Students get to know one another and may be less intimidated when it comes to participation. Supplies and resources may not be so limited. The teacher can spend less time correcting/evaluating and more time planning interesting lessons. Each student can receive more personal attention.*

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
In her final Dear Classmates Letter, Carola wrote about a specific example that showed the importance of knowledge of students and the need to build meaningful relationships with them.

*Besides learning effective ways of teaching a subject matter, the relationship between teacher and student has been a very important issue for me. I have learning during my stay at my school that it is very important for teachers to know their students' individual personality in order to engage their learning and evaluate them appropriately...*  

*On one occasion, the students were given a short project to work on with a list of guidelines on what library resources to use and what information to include in their research. They were to present their findings at the end of the individually or in groups. One of the students-who preferred to do the project individually-did a terrible job during his presentation. It appeared as if he had earned an F, he kept laughing, and making excuses about the lack of library resources, and wise remarks about the project. Basically, he was entertaining the class.*

*My cooperating teacher asked him and myself to stay after class. She spoke to him about the assignment and his behavior. As it turned out, he had completed the project well but when he got in front of the class, the poor kid had experienced some kind of stage fright beyond his control (the teacher already suspected this). The teacher did not give him an F, rather she gave him an opportunity to do his presentation again the following day. She also gave him some words of encouragement, and tactics on how to breathe and pace himself when he feels the nervousness coming on. I was personally impressed by this and will never forget this lesson. I left that classroom with a wonderful lesson in human compassion...teaching is indeed a humane profession.*

Del came to class telling stories from his autobiography that detailed the importance of a personal knowledge of himself and students he had dealt with to learning. In his very first letter to classmates he wrote about his history teacher who was most influential in Del's attention to explore teaching. Asking students who thought they would get an A, Del's hand was one that was raised. His teacher said that Del was going to be a sleeper and that I would surprise everybody by how successful I was going to be. It was
the first time anyone had publicly endorsed me like that. Him believing in me really got me focused on my studies.

In his very next letter, Del again wrote of the personally touch he used to help his roommate succeed in an economics class. Following that letter Del wrote in his portfolio reflection wrote of the significance of helping his young cousin to work with a toy computer which he chose to do rather than go out to a nightclub with his friends. At the end of the semester in a letter to classmates, he synthesized his past experience with his current fieldwork and wrote:

Something in one of Dan's letters struck me. It was the part about not really knowing students. The section about not realizing that they have other stuff on their mind, like a sick family member, etc. The section made the point that we as educators must get to know are students so we can help them through turbulent times. It is important to realize that the classroom is the microcosm of the students' world. It is just a portion of the larger picture.

When I think about it a child probably spends more time during the week with their teachers than with their own parents. I know when I was in high school my mother worked second shift. When I arrived home from school, she had already left for work. My teachers and coaches were the only adults I saw on a regular basis. I know this may not be the case for the majority of students, but educators need to realize this and plan accordingly.

In her final assessment, Alane quoted Del to summarize the importance she gave to knowledge of one's students.

I've also learned a few things about what it takes to be able to teach one's students. A teacher can't just get up in front of the classroom, spit out information, and expect their students to learn. A teacher has to know their students. As one of my classmates said, "The classroom is a microcosm of the student's world." There are issues and events that occur in the students' homes and outside of school that can affect their learning, and teachers should try to establish some type of rapport with their students so they can be aware of these issues, and help them to learn better.
One Lynn's goals was to learn from the students what is important to them, what kinds of things are they interested in learning. One month into the semester she connected the writing of Lorraine Hansberry in A Raisin in the Sun to the need to know students as individuals. She began with a quote from Mama and then elaborated in a letter to her classmates.

"When you starts measuring somebody, measure him right, child, measure him right. Make sure you done taken into account what hills and valleys he come through before he got wherever he is."

This is a quote I picked up in high school. It's from A Raisin in the Sun. I believe this quote says a lot about human nature. We often attempt to measure people by the point at which they are standing. However, anyone can tell you that in order to measure anything, the knowledge of two points is required. This quote is also directly applicable to teachers. I think it is important that we remember that every student who walks into our room is making a different journey. Some students will have a long and hard road to travel before they can even meet the minimal standards. Other students will walk into the classroom already meeting our expectations. Does that mean that these students are exempt from the journey? We should expect just as much improvement from them as from any other child.

Once Exploring Teaching students were aware of the importance of knowledge of their middle school students, the contract between teacher and students was sealed with respect and a mutual understanding of each other's needs, rights, and responsibilities. When teachers faced contentious situations with students, the respectful attention to the students as individuals was the bridge to effective teaching that my Exploring Teaching students identified. Eight of the thirteen students specifically mentioned respect as a crucial building block in establishing successful relationships in the classroom. After mid-semester Sean repeated its importance time and again. In a letter to classmates, he wrote I guess my ideal classroom is (a group of student with) a variety of skill levels, where every student and myself had respect for each other. Later in another letter, in reflecting on visit by a classroom teacher who responded to questions about discipline and classroom
atmosphere, Sean wrote, *I have some of the same ideas, the concept of mutual respect being a foundation for learning.* In his final self-assessment he elaborated further on the importance of establishing relationships with students based in fairness and compassionate justice.

*I feel very strongly about mutual respect in a classroom setting. It is a responsibility of the teacher to treat his or her students as they themselves would want to be treated. It may not be necessary to make an example of all students that break classroom rules, instead a better rule of thumb is to pick your battles. As well, the humiliation of a student by yelling at them in front of a class is not conducive to the relationship of respect.*

Relentlessly in the self-evaluations, students wrote how respect was a vital piece of DNA in the building block of successful classrooms and effective teachers.

**Ruth -** *I think when kids feel important and respected for who they are, they are more willing to try and have respect for others.*

**Carola -** *I will strive to develop my students' self-esteem and mutual respect in order to empower them in the learning process.*

**Alane -** *Earning the respect of the students was key - if students don't have any respect for their teacher, then controlling the classroom becomes impossible. I think that one of the main ways to win the respect of the students is to show those students that your respect them first.*

**Lynn -** *I believe that a classroom environment should be one of mutual respect.*

**Kate -** (Speaking of her cooperating teacher) *I can see that his students respect and trust him. I believe that it is one of the most important aspects of teaching that the teacher respects the students and the students respect you in return.*

The final self-assessments which meld a lifetime of prior experiences in education with the current fieldwork of my Exploring Teaching students were testaments to the
importance of building meaningful relationships among teachers and students to make classrooms centers for learning and effective teaching. After a semester, the ideals of my students remained in tact, but their experiences as teachers in training were largely in the abstract.

With a structure to nurture and support these students in their exploration of teaching based in public school classrooms, Exploring Teaching can keep their dreams to teach alive. Rightfully so, they have been protected and provided with a safety net by their cooperating teachers. The role of Exploring Teaching is to provide an atmosphere for students to reflect on the teaching life as they dip their toes into the shallow end and wade into public school classrooms. Yet, in no way have their theories and beliefs, largely idealistic, been sufficiently tested to see if they hold water. Their exploration of teaching is far from over. They need additional opportunities to learn about the teaching life to build on their initial experiences which supports John Dewey's (1938) belief in continuity of experiences for meaningful learning.

In the next chapter, the implications for teacher educators based in the writing of students exploring teaching for the first time are outlined to help teachers educators to rethink the substance and sum of teacher education for preservice teachers.
CHAPTER SEVEN

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS

At the University of New Hampshire, the post-baccalaureate fifth year program for teacher certification in the Education Department was a visionary framework for educating teachers when it was established in the 1970s (Andrew, 1974). As a graduate program of professional teacher education, it focuses on an internship which includes a two semester fieldwork practicum and weekly seminars. Prior to this graduate study, students on the undergraduate level major in academic disciplines such as that mathematics, history, science, art, physical education, etc. and take the Exploring Teaching course to be introduced to the teaching life.

My conclusions from the data suggest that the additional emphasis on building and supporting the role of the cooperating teacher in the Exploring Teaching course would improve the mentoring and supervision that students receive in their fieldwork and during their total experience. With the information teacher educators at the university have learned in this study about motivations and orientations of students, they can provide guidance for cooperating teachers to better meet the individual needs and explorations of Exploring Teaching students.

After a one semester practicum, students have not been sufficiently challenged their beliefs about effective classroom management, the reality of building relationships with recalcitrant and angry students, how to engender respect from such students, and the necessary energy and creativity it takes to make a classroom learner-centered. Therefore,
a transition course would offer opportunities for students to further match the reality of the classroom with their evolving beliefs and idealism. With the addition of a transition practicum course between Exploring Teaching course and the Masters level internships, I would rename Exploring Teaching to Exploring Teaching I and call the transition class Exploring Teaching II. To meet the mentoring needs of students, Exploring Teaching II teacher educators would use the data from this study that indicates that preservice teachers believe that engaging their middle school students in active learning, building relationships with students, and having classrooms that demonstrate mutual respect are important characteristics for good teachers. To test these hypotheses, students must have additional opportunities to experience varied classrooms in order to have a richer and varied experience and learn more deeply about the ramifications and implementations of such beliefs. Exploring Teaching II would be constructed based on the needs that the data suggests that students need to further test their assumptions about the teaching life in the classroom. Exploring Teaching II course enables teacher educators to allow students to put their idealism, validated in Exploring Teaching I, to the test.

In the cocoon of Exploring Teaching I, students have not had their beliefs of respecting students as a way to handle classroom management challenged and adequately tested. Just because they give respect doesn't mean they will get it back from public school students. Finding the time to build relationships by knowing students, while all the time addressing the curriculum, is no simple task. Kate needs to learn if her assertion that if students are happier than they are going to learn more is indeed true. Lynn's semester has gone along swimmingly, but another semester with new students may deepen her understanding of her teacher-led and student-centered philosophy and what role students may have in determining methods and strategies for their own learning. Beyond what is customary for Exploring Teaching students, Bob dove in body and soul into the semester
with a large time commitment to dealing with students one to one and grading essays. His understanding of limits on his professional and personal time need further attention.

Moving students who began with inward journey to greater engagement with the teaching process and students of the outward journey to greater focus on student learning in the teaching is a necessary development for preservice teachers in taking over more responsibility in the classroom. As they prepare to effectively take over classes on their own, they need to further understand the building of relationships with students, planning lessons, and handling discipline situations. If not given such opportunities to test and strengthen their teaching philosophy and idealism, they may fall victim to a survival strategy of teaching (i.e. they will teach as they were taught rather than teach what they have learned).

Learning about the motivations of students in Exploring Teaching as described in this study gives teacher educators much needed information about: (1) the varieties of stages of development of preservice teachers and (2) the mentoring necessary to meet their needs. From the data, it is apparent that many students, in this case nearly half, came to Exploring Teaching on an inward journey exploring their motivations and inclinations to teach. Such students were focusing on personal growth of learning who they are and why they value as well as their need for teaching to be personally satisfying. In their writing, they consciously attended to their fears, doubts, and insecurities which helped them deal with their current stage of development. This journey of the self could dominate the student's writing for most of the semester as it did with Margaret and Ruth throughout the semester; though, as the semester progressed, each woman made forays into experiencing what it means to interact with students in classrooms. Rather than pushing them to participate in the classroom as I have done with all my students in the past, I have learned to first encourage them to observe more of the classroom dynamics.
and focus on journal keeping to connect their experiences with their individual questions. In time, I would nudge and prod such students to get more involved with students to experience the electricity that comes with dealing with students in public schools. The addition of Exploring Teaching II would give such students on inward journeys the opportunity to more deeply test their assumptions about teaching.

Other Exploring Teaching students came with an outward journey focusing on learning the details of the teaching life. The students on outward journeys were interested in the specifics of how to teach, what to teach, and how to have students pay attention and learn. As they came committed to making a difference in the lives of public school students as a way to improve society, they sought out many opportunities to deal with students in small and large groups. As a teacher educator, I have learned from the data that I needed to be aware at the outset of the semester of the purposes of such directed and confident students as Lynn. She came to Exploring Teaching with a willingness to get involved and learn as her focus was learning about the act of teaching. For students such as Lynn, teacher educators can challenge them to go beyond a focus on the act of teaching to an emphasis on the learning of students.

These outward journeys, too, were not stages, but explorations that were recursive and overlapped as students reflected on their individual needs for personal satisfaction and growth as well as attending to the needs of students, their learning, and the various roles of teachers in the classroom. In times of stress, students who were primarily on outward journeys may return to a prime focus of the inward journey as they make sense of new teaching situations. As a new professor at Eastern Connecticut State University, I spent the summer prior to my first year in that position idealistically think that college teaching would be a stimulating environment with motivated students and without problems. Though a teaching veteran of more than twenty years in public school and college...
classrooms, my journey for the first months of this job was an inward one as I dealt with surprises and some resistance. I wondered if higher education were for me and could I motivate the recalcitrant and passive among my students. The focus was me. Similarly, preservice teachers may have their idealism or self-interest dominate their thinking at various times during the semester, even though they had previously focused on the teaching act and the learning of students.

It is significant for instructors to know that even in one semester the interests of preservice teachers develop as they wonder and examine the lives of teachers in the classroom. Stage theory of preservice teacher's development is a helpful tool to organize the thinking of teacher educators by identifying the dominant stage at entry of students in introductory education classes, then giving students experiences to make sense of the point of their development. Stage development theory of preservice teacher educators is no incremental strait jacket nor clearly defined progression, but an awareness of the evolving home base of students as they explore teaching throughout the semester that regularly returns to reflective self-thought of their motivations to teach.

As a teacher educator, I need to use the data to know the kinds of journeys my students are initially embarking on and give them opportunities to write to make sense of that preliminary step in their journey. These initial steps may take a week, a month, or more, but they need the students' full attention so students are ready for the next step in their seeking of personal answers in understanding their possible role in the world of schooling. My awareness of the various kinds of journeys students take allows me to nudge and encourage them appropriately to make significant steps forward in their exploration of teaching. Teacher educators who are not aware of inward and outward journeys can waste time trying to guess how to best mentor their students to meet the individual needs. I myself assumed that my students came to Exploring Teaching to learn
about the specifics of the teaching life to change the world and the lives of students. As such, I focused on providing them with as many opportunities to teach and deal with students as I could. I now realize from the data that some of my students were not ready for such a focus and needed to observe and reflect more in the beginning of their fieldwork before they venture into a more active role in the classroom.

Given the opportunity to write to classmates, Exploring Teaching students were open about their successes and "failures" (which were in fact not failures, but learning experiences) with themselves and the rest of us in class. Writing became a means to share an individual's learning with classmates and learn that often one student's concerns were similar to those of other students. The wisdom of having a course such as Exploring Teaching prior to the commitment of a fifth year allows students the freedom to explore their doubts and seek solutions and possibilities. Once the high stakes financial and time commitment for a fifth year graduate study is made, doubts and reservations may be suppressed and silenced because of the already heavy investment. Through writing in such an introductory course, teacher educators who can be aware of student frustrations and self-doubts and tailor their mentoring accordingly.

An examination of student writing revealed the importance of students' autobiographies and their influence on the student's current experience in the classroom as they construct meaning. With twelve to fifteen years of prior experiences in schooling, the data reveals that Exploring Teaching students came with strong opinions of what was good teaching and what was not. Their past schooling experiences were the starting points for making sense of what was going on in the classroom and influences on what approaches Exploring Teaching students first chose to use when they taught in their fieldwork classroom. This self-knowledge which they expressed in writing was a place for teacher educators to challenge or reinforce the wisdom of these past experiences of
students in light of current practices they observed in the classroom. I am reminded of the ideas of Ellin Keene and Susan Zimmerman (Mosaic of Thought, 1997) that readers make sense of text by connecting literature and exposition to their own past experiences, their own past readings, and the knowledge of how the world works. So too, my students would make sense of experiences by using writing to connect to their past.

As teacher educator, I am learning that letters of dismay in this study from students are signs that they are short circuiting their own thinking and their potential to problem solve solutions. Writing by students tunes me into the need for individual intervention with students who see teaching as chasms and roadblocks, not opportunities and challenges. Again, the letters indicate that my mentoring can be keyed to the individual concerns of my students. As well, I need to write in my class letter regularly of the various journeys students take in this class. Believing there is no prescriptive right way to explore teaching, I want to mentor them to trust themselves to follow their own paths. That trust is something they will need to succeed in schools where they will see master teachers whose skills have been honed over years, but who are much needed sources of inspiration and guidance to them. Both affirming and challenging their individuality and self-selected choices, teacher educators can make their own educational beliefs explicit, preservice teachers get a more balanced from of preparation for teaching (Weinstein, 1989).

In light of this information about students motivations and orientations from this study, teacher educators have a responsibility to use their insights from this data to inform and communicate with cooperating teachers on these matters. By and large, cooperating teachers are a dedicated and committed group of educators who rarely have training in supervision. Their reasons for taking Exploring Teaching vary from those who want to please the principal, hope to earn staff development credit, or take "early retirement" by
turning over the class to the college student to those that genuinely want to be a part of the education of America's future teachers and have a regular student/colleague for feedback and conversation throughout the semester that so few classroom teachers have. The lack of understanding and experience in supervision of Exploring Teaching students compromises the cooperating teacher's ability to meet the needs of the individual students that they are mentoring. Elevating the place of the cooperating teacher education, as described later in this chapter, is an important step in meeting the needs of individual students so the classroom can be a place where students can succeed, feel satisfaction, and discover if teaching has a place in their future.

Though twelve of the thirteen students in this study confirmed their original intentions with which they began Exploring Teaching, the varied journeys are important for teacher educators to be aware of when mentoring students. Hence, teacher educators need to meet in conference students regularly to listen and collaborate on solutions of those individual problems. The variety of journeys makes the need for conferences to challenge erroneous assumptions like Joe's when he felt that the reason he liked working with eighth graders rather than sixth graders was because of their ability to have discussions and engage in problem solving; when, in fact, the problem was his cooperating teacher's reliance on worksheets and the textbook. This study reveals that writing identifies the variety of elements of student journeys and enables teacher educators to support the individual issues of their students when appropriate and to challenge when necessary. Finding out this information through student writing early in the semester allows teacher educators to learn of the major moments when doubts, frustrations, uncertainties, and confusion occur and turn them into opportunities to problem solve and seek solutions.
For Exploring Teaching students, making learning fun and enjoyable did indeed matter. But their writing indicated that it was to be done in conjunction with creating a meaningful curriculum, making learning relevant, and engaging student learners to make learning pleasurable. Though the data indicated that students did not have disciplining issues dominate their thinking, the attention to classroom management and a sense of order was an occasional concern. Probably due to a lack of experience with being in charge, Exploring Teaching students had an innocence about the issues of classroom management. Though Sean in his experience as a substitute learned of the depth of the of concerns that arise when being in charge on one's own, many students only saw the tip of the discipline iceberg. Attention to the needs to operate orderly classrooms can be addressed by the creation of Exploring Teaching II, as described later in this chapter.

The writing of Exploring Teaching students turned out to be remarkably accurate in the need for teachers to build relationships with students by gaining a knowledge of them as individuals and creating a classroom atmosphere of mutual respect. With the diverse population in public schools and the increased identification of special needs students, new teachers will need to know and understand students as individuals. In general, the evidence from the data revealed that their thinking on building relationships was done based on a modest number of classroom experiences. As such, Exploring Teaching students need more fieldwork experiences to learn the specifics and details of how to build successful relationships with public school students. The awareness of the need to see students as individuals is important, but translating that into a classroom learning setting is an important task which can be addressed in Exploring Teaching II. Balancing meeting the needs of students with the personal needs of teachers to maintain their good health and relationships outside of schools is crucial.
Exploring Teaching as it is constructed is rightfully not student teaching nor an internship. The once a week attendance in classrooms makes building rapport and relationships difficult. Students see snapshots of the year, but do not learn the day-to-day dynamics of the classroom that build or destroy relationships between teachers and students and address how classrooms are effectively managed. The creation of Exploring Teaching II is an important step in having an understanding of the motivations of preservice teachers and the varied journeys they take dealt with. Further attention to classroom management, the details of engaging learners, and building relationships becomes an important role in Exploring Teaching I and II prior to the fifth year graduate study.

As for changes for the original Exploring Teaching course which will now be referred as Exploring Teaching I, they revolve around the need for the cooperating teachers in public schools to have the information that the teacher educators at the university have. At present, there is no specific training or qualifications for public school teachers to be cooperating teachers. In my case, I, as many of the Exploring Teaching teacher educators, have a knowledge of good teachers in public schools that we deal with and do our best to assign Exploring Teaching students to those teachers. When selected cooperating teachers have to drop out at the start of the semester, last minute changes are inevitable. At one of my schools, the principal matches cooperating teachers with Exploring Teaching students. But assignments can be for a reward for helping the principal out in some way or to spread around the mentoring opportunities for teachers in the building, and not necessarily to the most qualified ones to mentor students. Many times both methods of selecting cooperating teachers work, but in either case there is not a consistent organization and set of expectations used for mentoring Exploring Teaching students by the cooperating teacher.
Twice during the semester, I called my cooperating teachers to check in with them about the progress of the Exploring Teaching student. My calls were to deal with issues before they became problems and to prod the cooperating teachers to give the students as many opportunities to teach as appropriate. Cooperating teachers expressed their appreciation at my attention to them and making them feel like they were part of the mentoring team with me. But in no way did I have clear guidelines for them other than the memo to them at the beginning of the year that is reproduced below.

Dear Cooperating Teacher for UNH student in Exploring Teaching,

Thanks a million for taking on an Exploring Teaching (ET) student this semester. This experience is neither an internship nor student teaching, but an opportunity for students to participate and learn. Your ET student will call you to set up the first meeting time. At that meeting, let the student know what would be helpful. Give them some idea of the school culture and what is appropriate dress for adults at your school. It is from this experience that students begin to find out first-hand whether teaching is for them.

During the first few weeks, I recommend that the ET student immediately begins working with individual students or small groups in support of your teaching. After mid-semester, if you think the student is ready (this is not a requirement), the student may lead a lesson or two or three. I urge you to give your student as much responsibility in the classroom as you feel she/he can handle. From the university’s point of view, the more teaching-related tasks that a student experiences, the better. Hopefully, she/he will be of some real assistance to you in the upcoming months.

Previous ET students had these suggestions for cooperating teachers to make the experience fruitful

* On the first day, introduce your ET student to the class (explain the ET student’s role to your students), have the ET student tell about herself/himself, and let the students ask questions.

* Understand that ET students are learning and need regular positive feedback as well as suggestions.

* Remember the ET student is the outsider and needs your acceptance to feel a part of the classroom.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
* Share the classroom with the ET student.

* Encourage the ET student to participate, but at her/his own pace.

* As much as possible, set aside 10-30 minutes during each visit to update the ET student about what's going on and answering her/his questions.

* Give ET student clear guidelines what she/he is expected to do.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at home.

Dan Rothermel

Such a memo and two calls to check in are not enough in light of the knowledge gained of student motivations to teach, the varied journeys that Exploring Teaching students take throughout the semester, and the commitment that Exploring Teaching students feel is necessary to build relationships with public school students.

**Exploring Teaching I**

The recommendations to meet those needs to educate cooperating teachers in Exploring Teaching I follow:

1. Create an application and screening process for cooperating teachers that outlines the commitments and responsibilities such teachers have. Rather than relying on the good intentions of cooperating teachers, educate them into best practice for mentoring. Teacher educators from the university should scour the local school systems to address faculties to recruit high quality teachers by elaborating on the advantages of mentoring students (having a legacy by participating in the education of the next generation of teachers, giving back to a newcomer as someone gave to them, earn the
status as evolving master teachers, having a weekly dialogue with an interested and
dedicated student/budding colleague, etc.).

2. Compensate these cooperating teachers with a stipend and free college courses.
Explore having school boards give teachers credit on salary schedules for their mentoring.
Presently, cooperating teachers mentor for their own personal reasons and are not
compensated monetarily.

3. Have the teacher educator meet with all the cooperating teachers prior to the
start of the school year to explain the nature of these learners' motivations in taking
Exploring Teaching I and the varied journeys they take. Mentoring expectations are
explained and questions are answered.

4. Three weeks into the semester, have all cooperating teachers and Exploring
Teaching students meet for one hour during the regularly scheduled class period to build a
sense of community, share stories of fieldwork experiences in small and large groups,
answer questions, and problem solve issues. Food is provided for one and all.

5. Nine weeks into the semester, again have all cooperating teachers and Exploring
Teaching students meet for one hour during the regularly scheduled class period to have
discussions about giving Exploring Teaching students opportunities to deal with discipline
and classroom management situations, if it is appropriate for the stage of the students.
These experiences are designed take the unknown out of the disciplining dynamic of the
classroom for Exploring Teaching I students.

6. Have writing for Exploring Teaching I including Dear Classmates Letters,
portfolio reflections, and self-evaluations be distributed to the cooperating teacher as well
as to the university teacher educator to inform them of the Exploring Teaching students' autobiographies, evolving motivations to teach, emphases that students are making on their journey to explore teaching, and concerns about teaching engaging lessons and dealing with classroom management.

7. Rather than meet with Exploring Teaching students alone, have teacher educators organize a three-way conference mid-semester and at the end of the semester with the cooperating teacher and the Exploring Teaching student in the cooperating teacher's classroom. Meeting in public schools establishes a comfort level for the cooperating teacher and a respect and appreciation by the teacher educator of the cooperating teacher's time and commitment and is an attempt to mitigate the distance and estrangement public school teachers can feel towards university faculty who don't understand what it's like to be in the trenches day after day.

8. Organize an end of the year celebration in the public schools to acknowledge the contributions of the cooperating teachers in another attempt to build a strong, capable, and appreciated cadre of teachers who find mentoring an important part of their teaching life.

**Exploring Teaching II**

Such ideas become starting points for the evolution to strengthened the knowledge base of cooperating teachers and develop partnerships between universities and public schools to meet the individual needs of Exploring Teaching I students. Crucial to addressing those needs further is the establishment of Exploring Teaching II. Since many students taking Exploring Teaching are sophomores or juniors, they do not have another
practicum experience in the Education Department until they finish their baccalaureate
degree that can be one to three years away. Though students who successfully complete
Exploring Teaching are able to take additional education courses, none are field based.

Exploring Teaching II can provide an additional practicum based experience prior
to the fifth-year graduate program for students to test their assumptions about handling
discipline, creating engaging lessons, and knowing students as individuals. As a ten-credit
course, Exploring Teaching II will have students making a commitment of fifteen hours of
fieldwork which is done on a daily basis, either in the mornings or afternoons. The daily
commitment of such a practicum addresses the need for students to learn the dynamics of
relationship building with students and the establishing of rapport that informs students of
its place in classroom management by being more involved in the daily lives of teaching
(attending team meetings and parent conferences, supervising lunchrooms and study halls,
and visiting the other academic and related arts classes of their students).

In addition, for two weeks during the middle of the semester, students in pairs will
each spend a week in the other's classroom. The paired observation and participation first
in one student's class and the following week in the other's class has the potential to
promote a dialogue of varying styles of teaching and different approaches to learning
among students and cooperating teachers.

The establishment of a field based Exploring Teaching II course will enable teacher
educators to address the needs of students that this study has established: greater and
more individualized mentoring to address students' evolving motivations to teach and to
challenge their assumptions and preconceived notions about the teaching life. Rather than
a two-hour course, Exploring Teaching II meets for three hours per week with the first
two hours similar to Exploring Teaching I with its focus on small and large group
discussions and student writing. The third hour would be used for fifteen-minute conferences between the teacher educator and students for: (1) the continued examination and learning of the developing motivations of students to teach and their implications as they explore teaching and (2) problem solving of individual and shared troublesome situations with public school students and, perhaps, colleagues. Some of these conferences would be held individually and some would be done in clusters of students based on commonalities such as motivations for taking the course, similarities or differences in the journeys they are taking, or commonalities in grade level or subject area concentration. The other students would meet in small groups to plan and collaborate in creating lessons for their fieldwork classes as well as for their classmates in the Exploring Teaching II weekly class.

A continued emphasis of developing training and support for cooperating teachers would be implemented. By making the initial invitation to their public school colleagues, teacher educators at the university can build a meaningful bridge with public school teachers. Well-meaning cooperating teachers can be limited by their ability to give good feedback because of their lack of experiences and knowledge of successful mentoring. Therefore, a one-credit course taught by the teacher educator for the cooperating teachers is crucial in developing the knowledge base of cooperating teachers. Five times per semester, the teacher educator would teach them on current educational research such as stage development theory of preservice teacher educators and research into the motivations and journeys of such students. In addition, successful mentoring practices and frustrations of both students and cooperating teachers would be discussed and problem solved. Learning experiences such as preparing and teaching interdisciplinary units, planning and carrying out a field trip, and arranging and holding a back-to-school night of student exhibitions and demonstrations of learning for parents would be suggested and recommended to challenge the Exploring Teaching II students.
Exploring Teaching II offers students the opportunity to extend their exploration teaching and allows teacher educators to meet the needs of their students in their individual journeys within the learning community of the classroom.

Let the exploration continue.
REFERENCES


The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research has reviewed and approved your request for time extension for this protocol. Approval is granted for one year from the approval date above. At the end of the approval period you will be asked to submit a project report with regard to the involvement of human subjects. If your project is still active, you may apply for extension of IRB approval through this office.

The protection of human subjects in your study is an ongoing process for which you hold primary responsibility. Changes in your protocol must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to their implementation. If you have questions or concerns about your project or this approval, please feel free to contact me directly at 862-2003.

Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this project. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB.

Kara L. Eddy, MEA
Regulatory Compliance

cc: File

Tom Newkirk, English - Hamilton Smith Hall