

**The Formation of a Community of Practice in
Preservice Teacher Education:
The Interaction of the Classroom Environment and
New Communication Technologies**

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School

University of Missouri-Columbia

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2004

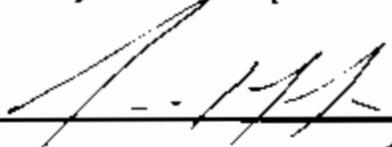
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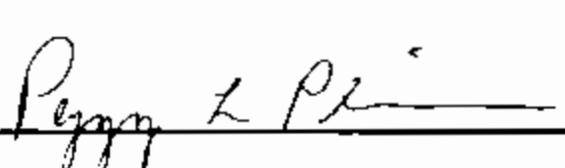
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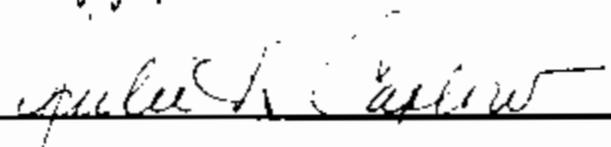
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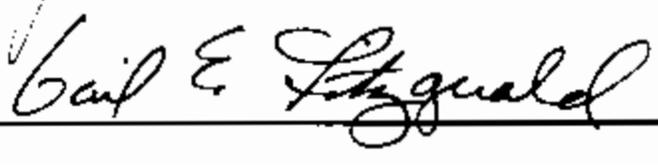
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Acknowledgements

Although the words on these pages are mine, this work was undoubtedly a collaborative effort and could not have been accomplished without the contributions of many others.

First, I want to thank Jim Laffey, who, as one of the primary investigators on this NSF-funded project (REC 9725214), first invited me to participate in this research. As my advisor, mentor, and friend, he provided me opportunities for professional growth and the questions that continued to challenge me and shape my thinking about the nature of communities of practice.

Secondly, I want to thank the other members of this research team, Peggy Placier, Peter Hall, Brad Wing, Christine Patterson, and Kathleen Fitzgerald. Our discussions throughout the four years of the project helped refine my understanding of this community of preservice teachers. I must also thank the other members of my committee, Peggy Placier, Gail Fitzgerald, Julie Caplow, and Michael Porter, for their guidance, support, and patience in reviewing my work on this project.

Of course, this work would not have been possible but for the collaboration of the faculty and preservice teachers in the program who allowed me into their classes and shared their stories with me.

Aside from the intellectual support and guidance of my research team and committee and the study participants, I must also acknowledge the tremendous personal support of colleagues, family, and friends, without whom I would not have been able to finish this work.

I owe a great deal of thanks to my friends and colleagues at the Missouri School of Journalism, particularly Fritz Cropp, Glen Cameron, and Anita Ryan, for providing me endless encouragement, advice, and support in completing this work over the past three years. Without your help, I surely would not be here today to write these words.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the support and encouragement of my two families, my family of origin – my parents (Richard and Thelma), my brother and sister-in-law (Michael and Martha), nieces and nephews (Johh, Aaron, Emily, Sarah, and Hannah) – and my adoptive family, the Froeschles (Kent, Ellis, Paul, Eli, and Benjamin). Your unwavering love and support is what makes this work not only possible but worthwhile.

Thank you one and all!

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**THE FORMATION OF A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN PRESERVICE
TEACHER EDUCATION: THE INTERACTION OF CLASSROOM
ENVIRONMENT AND NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES**

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to examine the development of a group of preservice teachers over three semesters during the second phase of their coursework and fieldwork in the teacher development program at a major Midwestern university. The questions at the heart of the study were whether this cohort of preservice teachers developed community. What markers of community were evidenced? What contextual factors served to support or impede the development of community?

Data were collected through observation of their courses, a series of interviews with a sample of preservice teachers, and archiving artifacts of their coursework such as the course syllabi, reading materials, and their discussions online. Data analysis was grounded in theory about the nature of community, communities of practice, teacher communities, online communities and in a sociocultural theory of technological change.

The findings suggest that these preservice teachers began to form community during their years in the teacher development program. This community began to evolve from a community of practice into a professional learning community as they developed

from college students into practicing teachers. However, the culture of the classroom – the physical arrangement of the room and the importance given to students’ voices in class and online – played a large role in fostering and supporting the development of community.

Chapter 1:

Defining the Problem

“You’ll learn to teach by teaching.”

It is the common wisdom my mother handed down to me when I was finishing my education coursework and beginning student teaching. It is the wisdom one generation of teachers hands down to the next. It is a myth that stands the test of time because it has a germ of truth in it, that we continue to learn the craft of teaching, day by day and year by year, situated in the context of practice. Learning to teach in the context of practice need not be learning in isolation, but learning situated in the context of a school’s culture as well as within the larger context of one’s colleagues in the profession.

Recent mentoring and master teacher relationships encourage learning from those with greater experience. The best mentoring relationships are those in which the apprentice does not simply ape the actions of the mentor, but one in which a true collaborative relationship is formed. The best of those mentoring relationships draws the new teacher out of the isolation of the classroom and expands her horizons, drawing her into a larger circle of colleagues, into the full profession of teaching.

Despite such strategies for encouraging greater collegiality in teaching, teaching remains, for many, a private endeavor. Set against increasing legislative demands for standardization and accountability, teachers struggle to define themselves as professionals, with the same rights of autonomy of practice as lawyers, doctors and other

in professional “practice.” In the past two decades, a number of reform efforts have attempted to overcome the isolation of the classroom. Yet, the culture of “presentism, individualism, and conservatism” Lortie first described in *Schoolteacher* (1975) persists.

This trend toward individualism, some would argue, is deeply embedded in American culture (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton, 1985; Putnam, 1995; 2000). Yet, studies of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) and teacher communities (Calderwood, 2000; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2000, 2001; Westheimer, 1998) demonstrate the potential for teachers to develop effective communities of practice.

New online communication resources provide additional avenues for overcoming the persistence of privacy in the teaching profession. Web sites for local, state, and national teacher organizations, discussion lists, and chat rooms provide opportunities for communication with fellow teachers across town and around the globe. Collaborative relationships no longer need to be limited by geography to a teacher’s school or district. The boundaries of many teachers’ professional communities have expanded. Resources such as Classroom Connect, the Global Schoolhouse, and Intercultural E-mail Classroom Connections (IECC: www.iecc.org) connect teachers and students around the world. Discussion lists such as the World Wide Web in Education list (WWWEDU) and the various lists hosted by professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and synchronous chat spaces such as those hosted by SRI’s TappedIn and Harvard’s Education with New Technologies communities provide virtual places for teachers to meet, collaborate, and continue their professional development

online (Fusco, Gelbach, & Schlager, 2000; Schank, Fenton, Schlager, & Fusco, 1999; Schlager, Fusco, & Schank, 1998, 2000; Schlager & Schank, 1997).

At the same time, new communication technologies are being used with increasing regularity on college campuses, both to provide distance education and in conjunction with traditional face-to-face class meetings. Today's students have ready access to these technologies (93% own their own computer); most are proficient, regular users of email and instant messaging. A large majority (83%) also report experience in using a course management system for accessing course syllabi and readings, submitting assignments, and continuing class discussions online (Caruso, 2004).

We have all heard a good deal of praise for technology in the higher education in the past decade, particularly for newly-developed communication technologies. For instance, course web sites, once the province of only the technology-savvy professor, are now commonplace with the advent of commercial CMS tools. But we have also seen the failures of technology in the classroom: students disengaged by PowerPoint presentations; students who never use the online course tools, never email instructors nor other students in their classes. For all their hype, how can we use these new educational technologies to genuinely engage students and support their learning? In particular, how can they be used to support the formation of a community of practice, in which students become more actively engaged in learning in the context of practice, in collaboration with their peers?

What follows is a report on an ethnographic study of a cohort of preservice teachers, secondary English education majors, who were offered the use of new communication technologies in the context of their education coursework. These

preservice teachers were enrolled in a teacher education program that had recently undergone major revisions that placed increasing emphasis on

- the development of community (PSTs were intended to progress through the program in intact cohorts or teams),
- practice (PSTs engaged in fieldwork every semester, from the time they first entered the program), and
- technology (technology was infused throughout the program, including laptop computers for every PST, a new media lab, networked classrooms and offices, and the Interactive Shared Journaling System).

In this study, I report on their use of these technologies in the context of three semesters of coursework in Phase II of the program, in which they focused on the curriculum and pedagogy of their discipline. The central questions driving my research are: Were these preservice teachers able to form a community of practice? And what contribution did technology make to the formation of community?

The findings of this study should be significant for teacher educators and technology developers alike. Through creating a conceptual model describing preservice teacher communities of practice and the factors that foster them, this study can help teacher educators understand the conditions that support or hinder the formation of professional communities of practice. Likewise, as technology developers continue to create new tools to support online communication, it will be important for them to understand the critical features for an online environment that can foster and sustain professional communities of practice.

This study begins with an exploration of the nature of communities, communities of practice, communities of teaching practice, and online communities, through a review of the literature (Chapter 2). The methodology of the study is set in the context of a larger, longitudinal study of a cohort of preservice teachers progressing through the newly-reformed program (Chapter 3). The next section, which comprises three chapters, presents the findings of the study (Chapters 4-6). The final chapter (Chapter 7) presents a discussion of the findings, implications for practice, and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2:

Review of the Literature

Use of the word “community” and the phrases “communities of practice” and “communities of teachers” have become quite popular in the field of education in recent years. A recent literature search using ERIC (December 2004) reveals frequent use of the language (229 listings for “community” or “communities of practice”; 44 listings for “communities of teachers”; and over 125,00 listings for “community”). Some, unfortunately, simply parrot the language with little understanding or appreciation of the vast body of literature that underlies the concept.

Some of these authors would suggest that the advent of the Internet and global communication have created our interest in the concept of community. Indeed, the fault of many is that they fail to acknowledge over a century of previous research and theory building about the nature of community. In this chapter, I will describe some of the research and theory about communities, communities of practice, communities of teaching practice, and online learning communities and identify a set of common characteristics found in the literature.

Community

The early work of Toennies (1887) and more recent work of Bellah and his colleagues (1985) and Putnam (1995, 2000), make a distinction between geographic communities – what Tonnies might have called “gesellschaft” – and communities of

interest or “gemeinschaft.” Humans have lived in “community” (i.e. society) since the earliest of days, but many of those historic communities were defined by accident of birth and by the norms imposed by city or state. Advances in transportation and communication technologies in the past century have made it possible for people today to more easily and frequently relocate and to communicate with those far away, to form associations bounded by choice, by shared interests, concerns, and practices rather than simply by geography.

Bellah and his colleagues (1985) argued, in *Habits of the Heart*, that community is defined today not simply by sharing some common feature of life (such as geographic proximity) but by *participation* in discussion, decision making and *shared practice*. A further defining feature they put forward is that a community has a *shared history* and is, therefore, a “community of memory” (p. 333).

Putnam’s work (1995, 2000) adds the element of *social capital* to the equation, defining community as a *network of ties* that “constitute our personal stock of social capital” (2000, p. 274). He distinguishes between bridging (or inclusive) social capital and bonding (or exclusive) social capital and lists three measures of social capital: reciprocity, honesty, and trust.

Thus we see some of the key elements of a definition of community emerging from the most influential studies in the field. Community, in general, can be defined as a *network* of people who build *social capital* by *participating* in a *shared practice* and who share a *common history*.

Communities of Practice

The concept of “communities of practice” was first conceived by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger and elaborated in their book, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (1991). The model has evolved over the past decade, from this early theoretical work to Wenger’s *Communities of Practice* (1998) and his more recent work with Richard McDermott and William Snyder, *Cultivating Communities of Practice* (2002), which translates the theory into design principles for developing and sustaining communities of practice. Although their work is primarily grounded in case studies from the business world, it also seems appropriate to translate these implications to the world of education.

The structural elements of their model are the *domain*, *community*, and *practice*. *Domain* refers to the shared interest, concerns, or problems that bring a group together. It is, in a sense, the community’s *raison d’être*. *Community* is the social fabric of the group, the social glue that binds the group together. It is the network of communications, interactions, and relationships between members. They argue that honesty, trust, regular interactions, mutual commitment, and belonging are as important as the intellectual processes of participating in the community. The cohesive forces that knit a community together do not preclude a certain degree of heterogeneity of membership nor disagreement in negotiating the joint enterprise. Indeed, diversity of membership and of thinking can make the community stronger and the negotiated enterprise more productive. *Practice* refers to the practices and associated knowledge the community develops and shares. It encompasses the shared repertoire and history of the community,

the norms of behavior, and the shared stories and documents the community develops. It involves both participation and reification of the knowledge the community constructs in “things” like stories, documents, procedures, and tools, making its practice “visible.”

Teacher Communities

Three key studies that contribute to understanding communities of teaching practice are Joel Westheimer’s *Among School Teachers: Community, Autonomy, and Ideology in Teachers’ Work* (1998), Patricia Calderwood’s *Community: Finding Common Ground in Difference* (2000), and Pam Grossman, Sam Wineburg, and Stephen Woolworth’s study of a community of English and history teachers described in *In Pursuit of Teacher Community* (2000) and *Toward a theory of teacher community* (2001). Each presents an in-depth longitudinal study of a group of teachers learning together through participation in a community of practice.

Westheimer’s study of teachers in two West Coast middle schools illuminates both common characteristics of community and differences in their practices and ideologies. The key common features he finds in teacher communities of practice include *interaction and participation, reciprocity of commitment; shared interests, shared history, shared beliefs, and common values; and meaningful relationships and commitment to each other*. He also argues that true community allows room for disagreement, for individual views to emerge that may differ from those of the majority. This *diversity* enables growth and adaptation of the community.

Through his study of the teachers at these two schools, Westheimer distinguishes between two different kinds of teacher professional communities, what he calls “liberal”

and “collective” communities. He identifies a liberal community as one that “emphasizes individual rights and responsibilities,” one in which members “maintain individualized goals.” In a liberal community, teachers continue to “function autonomously with different goals, strategies, and practices, coming together primarily for mutual support” (p. 128). By contrast, members of a collective community maintain shared goals. “The work that teachers pursue in a collective professional community is interdependent and collaborative” (p. 128). They seek solidarity, rather than simply mutual support for individualized goals. He identifies eight characteristic features of these two kinds of community and concludes that the two schools in his study are not so much polar opposites as two points along a continuum.

| CHARACTERISTICS | LIBERAL | COLLECTIVE |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Community relations | Rights and responsibilities | Caring and interdependence |
| Work and responsibilities | Individual | Joint |
| Teacher discourse | Students, problems, strategies | Purposes, principles, and philosophies |
| School management | Hierarchical, by title | Diffuse, by talent |
| Classroom problems | Private—elicit advice and sympathy | Public responsibilities |
| Voice and dissent | Few voices; dissent is submerged or marginalized | Many voices; dissent transforms the community, is tolerated, or is cause of leaving the community |
| Worth of community | Instrumental | Intrinsic |
| Identity | Anonymity, homogeneity, and conformity | Individual identity |

Westheimer also acknowledges that a number of contextual factors, such as a long history of individuality, teacher autonomy, and competition in schools and in the larger society, may hinder the formation of teacher communities.

Calderwood's study of four learning communities – a Catholic elementary school, an all-girls Catholic high school, an urban middle school, and a remedial writing class in an urban college – focuses on the importance of diversity in teaching communities of practice. Her study acknowledges the importance of such defining factors of community as *shared beliefs, values, norms, practices, history, and goals*. She sees them as “the bedrock” upon which community is founded. Calderwood also notes the importance of *rituals and celebrations*, such as celebrations marking entrances into and exits from community membership or changing status within the community.

She argues, however, that “the basic task of community is not to make common but rather to differentiate...to account for the differentiation of insiders from outsiders to and of insiders from each other” (p. 3). She finds that differences in power, role, and social status are important factors in the evolution of a community. Indeed, she argues, maintaining differences may be as important as sharing commonality. She concludes that the strength of a community is seen in how it responds to those vulnerable moments when differences are made visible.

Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth's (2000, 2001) study of an evolving community of English and history teachers in an urban Seattle high school was first presented as a paper at the April 2000 AERA convention. Grounded in the theory of community that has evolved over the past century (Bellah et al., 1985; Etzioni, 1993; Oldenburg, 1989; Putnam, 1995; Toennies, 1887/1967) and of teacher professional community (Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Perry, 1997; Westheimer, 1998), they argue that communities are characterized by *norms* for interaction, *responsibility* for maintaining those norms, and the acceptance of *distinct voices* and *perspectives*. Like Calderwood,

they see one of the central tensions of community as the tension between commonality and diversity.

“Community and diversity are in constant tension. As individuals forge a common vision, the centripetal forces of community pose a constant threat to the centrifugal force of diversity.”

They maintain that healthy communities evolve from early stages of “pseudocommunity,” in which a few voices dominate the conversation, to full community, in which diverse voices are not only tolerated but encouraged. Diversity is seen as more an asset than a burden as members learn to actively listen and build upon each other’s insights.

Several other shorter studies of teachers’ and preservice teachers’ communities of practice have also emerged in the past five years that highlight some of these same common characteristics of communities of practice. Below, I present an overview of the findings from a sample of five of these studies that seem most germane to this research.

In 1998, Annemarie Palincsar and her colleagues at the University of Michigan described the “birth of a community of practice” in a group of elementary teachers seeking to improve their science teaching. They found that they were drawn together through this common enterprise or *shared goal* of improving their teaching. They found that, over time, they developed a shared set of *values*, a shared orientation toward teaching science. *Trust, shared responsibility, and shared authority* provided the *social context* for teachers to collaborate. Through their collaborative practice, they began to *construct knowledge* about the *practice* of guided inquiry science teaching. The authors concluded that they found evidence of an emerging community of practice in being

“drawn together by a force that is both social and professional” (p. 17) and in the practice of the “negotiation of meaning” (p. 16).

Suzanne McCotter’s (2000) study of a community of K12 teachers who were “committed to exploring issues of social justice in their classrooms” evidences some of these common characteristics of teacher communities of practice. Like other teacher communities, they came together around a *shared* set of *goals* and *values* – exploring issues of social justice. They felt a sense of safety and *trust* within this “sacred space” to honestly voice their ideas. She also notes the importance of *mutual support* and caring for members of the group and the *lack of formal leadership* or power hierarchies.

Judith Warren Little’s (2002) study of a community of English and math teachers at two high schools highlights a number of characteristics of teacher communities. She finds, for instance, a set of *shared values, goals, and interests* in their “orientation to the improvement of practice” (p. 935), an orientation which, she argues, is fundamental to teacher communities of practice. Also characteristic of teacher communities, she finds, are a set of *norms* of interaction. Finally, she notes the importance of *knowledge construction*, of representing and sharing the practice of the community.

Clive Beck and Clare Kosnik (2001) note the emerging trend of cohort programs in preservice teacher education and argue that these cohorts can intentionally and deliberately be transformed into communities of practice. Their study documents the formation of communities of practice within teacher education program at the University of Toronto’s Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE/UT). Some of the characteristics they found were opportunities for *socializing, traditions and celebrations, meaningful relationships*, developing a *shared history*, support for *risk-taking*,

inclusiveness, and *group identity*. They acknowledge, however, that context makes a difference and that “community life was often influenced by factors” over which they had “limited or no control, such as the makeup of the student body, the faculty involved in the program, the general course requirements, and the climate in the school system” (p. 936).

Grounded in Lave and Wenger’s theory of communities of practice, Sasha Barab and his colleagues define a community of practice as “a persistent, sustained social network of individuals who share and develop an overlapping knowledge base, set of beliefs, values, history, and experiences focused on a common practice and/or mutual enterprise” (2002, p. 495). They outline features that are “consistently present” and “requisite to communities of practice”: a significant *shared history*, a shared cosmology (*shared goals, practices, belief systems*, and collective *stories*), a sense of a collective whole, continual evolution as new members are incorporated, a common *practice* or mutual enterprise, opportunities for *participation, meaningful relationships*, and respect for *minority views*. Their study of preservice teacher communities of practice at Indiana University focus on a set of core tensions or dualities found in a community of preservice teachers: the instructor’s dual role as facilitator and gatekeeper; the focus on *learning* theory while *doing* practice; the use of portfolios both to support reflection and to serve as a means of accountability; and stability and change within the program.

What I found in these studies is an emerging set of common characteristics of communities of teaching practice. These groups of common characteristics seem to cohere around three central characteristics that Wenger and his colleagues identified (2002): domain, community, and practice.

| Characteristic | Description | Discussed in |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Domain | The shared interests, beliefs, values, and goals that draw a community of teachers together. This might include a shared interest in a school or community, a shared interest in a particular discipline, or a shared set of values and beliefs about teaching. | Westheimer, Calderwood, Palincsar, McCotter, Little, Barab et al |
| Community | The commitment, meaningful relationships, rituals and celebrations that become the social capital that binds a group together. Community also includes the acceptance – perhaps even the celebration of – differences. As people spend time together and develop rites, rituals, and celebrations, they begin to develop meaningful relationships with members of the community and commitment to each other as well as to the goals of the community. As the community evolves, members develop enough trust to honestly voice their ideas, to express and acknowledge their differences, and to respect minority views. | Westheimer, Calderwood, Grossman et al., Palincsar, Beck & Kosnik, McCotter, Little, Barab et al |
| Practice | The shared norms, rights and responsibilities, practices, and shared history that a group develops. A community of teachers develops a set of norms for expected behavior – some formal and others more informal. Responsibility for the community is shared. Authority is likewise shared; the organizational structure is flattened rather than hierarchical. A community of practice also develops a shared set of stories, a shared history, of how things have been done in the past. This shared history not only helps to codify the norms of acceptable behavior, but also to help shape a community identity. Most importantly, through shared practice, a community of teachers seeks to construct and share knowledge about how to improve their teaching, to create a living curriculum through which they can continue to learn. | Westheimer, Calderwood, Grossman et al., Palincsar, Beck & Kosnik, McCotter, Little, Barab et al |

Do these features of communities of practice carry over into the online environment?

Online Communities

A number of books about building learning communities online have emerged in the past five years. Admittedly, most are more practical than theoretical, grounded in the authors' experiences in teaching online but lacking foundations in previous research and theory on community and communication. Many approach the topic "as if people had never worried about community before the Internet arose" (Wellman & Gulia, 1999). Yet, many highlight some of the same central features of community and communities of practice that have been found in the past.

Four of the works that are frequently referenced deal specifically with learning communities in the context of classes that are taught either wholly online or that use computer-mediated communication as an adjunct to co-present class meetings: Palloff and Pratt's *Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace* (1999) and *Lessons from the Cyberspace Classroom* (2001); the Concord Consortium's *Facilitating Online Learning: Effective Strategies for Moderators* (2000); and Gilly Salmon's *E-moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online* (2000). The nature of these types of learning communities is somewhat different, in that participants come together for the expressed purpose of completing a course of study. Their time together is limited by the constraints of the course; their shared goals and interests are established from the outset rather than negotiated over time. Two of the other works discussed here examine features of other types of online communities – communities of interest – as well as course-constrained learning communities: Jenny Preece's *Online Communities: Designing Usability*,

Supporting Sociability (2000) and Amy Jo Kim's *Community Building on the Web: Secret Strategies for Successful Online Communities* (2000).

Rena Palloff and Keith Pratt's two books about teaching online (*Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace*, 1999 and *Lessons from the Cyberspace Classroom*, 2001) are based on the authors' experience in teaching organizational development and social work online. Following a model from organizational development (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) they outline stages of development of learning communities in their first book: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. In the second book, they adopt McClure's (1998) seven-stage model, drawn from the intersection of systems science, chaos theory, and group therapy: pre-forming, unity, disunity, conflict-confrontation, disharmony, harmony, and performing. One strength in their work is the importance they place on dealing with *differences* within a community, particularly in their latter work (e.g., unity/disunity, conflict-confrontation, disharmony/harmony).

The Concord Consortium's *Facilitating Online Learning: Effective Strategies for Moderators* (2000) is based in the authors' experiences in facilitating the Concord Consortium's Virtual High School, Teacher Learning Conference, and International Netcourse Teacher Enhancement Coalition. Despite the lack of a strong theoretical foundation in community and communication research, the authors highlight some of the common characteristics of learning communities found in previous research, including the importance of *participation, shared responsibility, social dialogue, a culture of caring about each other* (as well as the shared task or work or topic of discussion), establishing a

climate of *trust* in which members can voice honest opinions and room for *multiple points of view* and disagreement.

In her guide to online teaching (*E-moderating: The key to teaching and learning online*, 2000), Gilly Salmon draws on her experiences for the past decade as a moderator for online courses at the Open University. Her model of teaching and learning online follows a five-stage progression: access, socialization, information exchange, knowledge construction, and development. At stage one, participants are simply negotiating access to the computer-mediated communication system being used by this community. During stage two, participants begin to *socialize*, to establish identities, get to know one another, and begin to develop some *norms* and rules of conduct. In stage three, participants begin to share information with each other. In stage four, they engage each other more deeply and begin to construct new understandings. Participants become creators rather than transmitters of information. At this stage, the communication *network flattens*; the online moderator becomes less a traditional teacher or leader and more of a participant in the community. At stage five, participants take on *responsibility* for their own learning and the development of the learning experience.

Preece's *Online Communities: Designing Usability, Supporting Sociability* (2000), focuses on the tension between the common goals and tasks that bring a group of people together and the social interactions that knit them together in community.

Preece's definition of online community includes:

1. People who *interact socially* as they strive to satisfy their own needs or perform special roles, such as leading or moderating

2. A *shared purpose*, such as an *interest*, need, information exchange, or service that provides a reason for the community
3. Policies, in the form of tacit assumptions, *rituals*, *protocols*, *rules*, and laws that guide people's interactions
4. Computer systems to support and mediate social interaction and facilitate a sense of togetherness (p. 10)

This definition has much in common with the features of co-present communities, communities of practice, and communities of teachers discussed above – *social interaction*, *shared purpose* and *interests*, and *rituals* and *norms* for interaction.

Amy Jo Kim's *Community Building on the Web: Secret Strategies for Successful Online Communities* (2000) is also more practical than theoretical in its orientation, based on the author's experiences as an online group moderator and facilitator. She expands her purview of online communities beyond traditional online classes to include a number of communities of shared interest, such as those found on iVillage.com. The first of her key pointers for building community online is to identify the purpose of the group. Her discussion of this point highlights the importance of establishing a group *identity*, an issue commonly found in the literature on community. Other key pointers include:

1. Building a flexible communication environment that is adaptable to the needs of the participants.
2. Creating places for member profiles as a way of establishing *social* presence and member affiliation and ownership
3. Roles and *shared responsibilities* of group members—including shared leadership roles

4. *Norms* and rules of conduct, including boundaries for inclusion
5. *Rituals*, which help establish a *shared history* for the group

In summary, these six works on online community highlight some of the same features commonly found in copresent communities of practice in general and teachers' and preservice teachers' communities in particular.

| Author | Community Membership | Characteristics |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Palloff & Pratt | Students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stages of development: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning • Embracing difference |
| Concord Consortium | Students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation • Shared responsibility • Social dialogue • Culture of caring about each other • Trust • Respect for multiple points of view |
| Salmon | Students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stages of development: access, socialization, information exchange, knowledge construction, and development • Shared leadership |
| Preece | Communities of Interest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared purpose • Social interaction • Rituals and rules |
| Kim | Communities of Interest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social presence • Roles and responsibilities • Norms • Rituals • Shared history |

Online Communities of Teaching Practice

At the intersection of communities of practice, communities of teachers and preservice teachers, and online communities, we find an innovative group of teachers and researchers who cohabitate a virtual online commons called Tapped In

(<http://www.tappedin.org>), developed and hosted by the Stanford Research Institute

International (Fusco, Gelbach, & Schlager, 2000; Schank, Fenton, Schlager, & Fusco,

1999; Schlager, Fusco, & Schank, 1998, 2000; Schlager & Schank, 1997). Tapped In (TI) makes use of a platform-independent, web-based multi-user virtual environment (MUVE) to support teacher professional development. It provides tools that support both communication (e.g., synchronous communication such as chat, whisper, paging, virtual whiteboards, web page projection, and non-verbal actions) and persistence of artifacts (e.g., chat transcripts and shareable documents). Participants can set up their own virtual offices and host online meetings within the TI environment, attend activities hosted by member organizations, or participate in community-wide events.

Grounded in current research in teacher professional development and communities of practice, Schlager and his colleagues argue, like Little (2002) and others, that teacher communities of practice come together because of a *shared commitment* to develop better teaching practices. They come together to share and to *build knowledge* through informal interaction and dialogue. The fundamental difference here is that such interaction and dialogue takes place online, which makes it possible to interact with others at a distance. For instance, social studies teachers from across the U. S. are no longer limited to interacting with geographically co-present colleagues or waiting to attend that once-a-year regional or national conference. They can interact with others across the country and around the world in weekly discussions through After School Online sessions at Tapped In.

Social norms for interaction also have evolved over time in TI. Community elders serve as guides to newcomers. Community-wide activities also help to incorporate newcomers. The weekly After School Online discussion series provides regular opportunities for hour-long real time discussions on a range of topics, led by volunteers

from the community. One of the norms that has emerged from study of TI participation is an evolution in communication patterns over time. Schlager and his colleagues (2000) have found that most of the communications in TI can be considered as oriented around meeting management; technology; social exchanges; or the business, task, or topic of discussion. Over time, the number of interactions around meeting management, technology issues, and social exchanges diminishes; the majority of interactions focus on the topic of discussion.

Summary

Across these studies of community, communities of practice, teachers' and preservice teachers' communities, online communities, and online communities of teaching practice, some common characteristics have begun to emerge. The schema outlined by Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder is a useful framework for organizing these characteristics.

- *Domain*: A community of teaching practice – whether of inservice or preservice teachers, whether copresent or online – comes together around a shared purpose: most centrally, the purpose of improving teaching practice. Community members often share a constellation of other interests, values, and concerns.
- *Community*: The social capital that binds a group of teachers together into community grows out of the traditions, rituals, and celebrations, the commitment to the community, and the meaningful relationships that are formed within the community. Over time, members develop enough trust to risk honest expressions of their ideas, even when sometimes that means voicing a minority view. Social

dialogue is especially important during the formation stages of community, but often ebbs and flows over time as the community evolves to focus on knowledge building.

- *Practice*: Over time, a community of teaching practice develops a shared practice. Members develop a set of norms, rights, and responsibilities for interaction most often manifested in a flattened organizational structure. Communities also develop a shared history, a shared identity, and shared knowledge. In online communities, much of this shared practice can be reified and preserved in a set of persistent shared documents and archives of communication.

Appropriation of Tools for Community

Finally, I approach this study through the lens of Wertsch's sociocultural theory. Wertsch argues that all human action is mediated by cultural tools. Changes in the tools we use force changes in human action. For instance, Wertsch notes in *Mind as Action* (1998), that the change in the nature of the materials from which poles were created for pole vaulting changed the nature of the sport. Records set with bamboo poles lasted until the late 1950s, when the introduction of the stronger and more flexible steel and aluminum alloy, and later fiberglass poles, led to a change in vaulting styles and the heights that could be reached. We might argue, in a similar fashion, that the changing nature of electronic media in the past decade has changed the nature of working and learning together, both in person and online, expanding our capabilities in communication and collaboration.

Wertsch argues that human action occurs within cultural, institutional, and historical contexts. The context within which we act influences that action. The circumstances, roles, and relationships of agents in any context have an effect on what actions are taken and how they are perceived. Wertsch's view of the inextricable linkage of the agent, tool, and context of any action forms the theoretical perspective of the current study.

Too often in the past we have examined patterns of technology use in education in isolation from this complex web of factors – the cultural tools, the agents, and the contexts within which the tools are used. We have, for instance, counted the number of schools with Internet access without examining the context of use, looking to see whether that access is in the classroom or only in the computer lab. We have counted the number of classrooms with computers and Internet access, but failed to look more closely at the context, to know more about what kinds of computers and what kind of Internet access they have. How old are the computers? What kinds of software do they have? How fast is their connection? We have failed to look at the contexts in which technology is used in the classroom. How many computers are in the classroom? What kind of technical support does the school have?

We have failed to look at the pedagogical contexts of use. How are the computers used by the teachers and students? And we have failed to ask questions about the agents themselves. What are the teachers' pedagogical beliefs? How much of their classroom activities are devoted to individualized instruction, drill, and mastery exercises and to collaborative work? How much training and experience do they have in using technology?

This complex web of factors – the tools, the contexts, and the agents – affects technology use in higher education as well as in K12 schools. The tools available to preservice teachers, the context of how technology use is modeled by their teachers on campus and in their field experiences, and the experiences, training, and pedagogical beliefs of the preservice teachers all have an impact on their use of technology. The emphasis of this study is on the context in which new technologies are being used in teacher education. In what ways and under what circumstances are technologies appropriated for building and sustaining communities of practice?

Conclusion

I began with the initial driving questions:

Did these preservice teachers form a community of practice?

What effect did the use of technologies have on the formation of community?

I can now refine those questions to ask more specifically:

How do I know that they formed community? What are the markers of community evidenced in their interactions in class and online?

Finally, acknowledging the importance of context noted in several of the studies of teacher communities and in Wertsch's theoretical perspective for understanding the appropriation of tools, I can ask:

What conditions, in the technologies they used and the context of their teacher education program, contributed to their ability (or inability) to form community?

Chapter 3:

Methods of Research

Context for the Study

In 1993, the College of Education (COE) at the University of Missouri began a major revision of its curriculum that resulted in a new Teacher Development Program first implemented in fall of 1996. One of the goals of the program revision was to move more toward an apprenticeship model of learning, with an increasing emphasis on situated cognition about learning and teaching. This goal was accomplished through placing preservice teachers (PSTs) in field experiences from the very first of their course of study in education, in their freshman year, and concluding their program with a capstone semester-long internship experience in student teaching. Two key values of the new program, inquiry and reflection, were to be integrated into the curriculum through action research projects each semester, based on observations, reflections, and inquiry into questions that emerged from their field experiences. Grounded in the cohort model (Beck & Kosnik, 2001) found at schools such as the University of Wyoming, the redesigned program organized PSTs into teams that were intended to matriculate through the program together.

At the same time, the COE began a substantial restructuring of its technology infrastructure. The general goal of the new technology infrastructure plan was to create an immersive environment with ready access to high quality technology and support for all (Laffey, Musser & Wedman, 1998). The goal of the technology infrastructure was to:

1. assist in the general implementation of the reformed teacher education program; and
2. create an environment for technology use and technology services that would support the development of technology-using teachers.

The new technology infrastructure included:

1. laptop computers for all PSTs entering the program, as well as their instructors, to provide equity of access to all;
2. networking and connectivity, both within the College and across partner schools;
3. The Reflector, a state-of-the-art computer lab;
4. new forms of technology support to provide support at the time and place most appropriate to the need; and
5. the Center for Technology Innovations in Education, a research and development center that created, among other tools, the Interactive Shared Journaling System (Laffey, Musser, & Tupper, 1998), intended to facilitate preservice teachers' reflection on and communication about classroom and field experiences.

The implementation of technology in the new program might best be described as moving from a model of teaching *about* technology, through a single course, to a technology infusion model, in which technology was to be infused into the curriculum of every course. Teachers were expected to model technology use in their teaching and require PSTs to use it in their work. At the same time, PSTs' ability to use the technology was to be assessed according to the standards set in the program's criteria for success, both at the level of individual courses and in the review of PST portfolios as they passed through the four phases of the program.

As the new program began enrolling its first class of PSTs in 1996, several faculty members within the College of Education and the Department of Sociology began pilot research studies of the PSTs' attitudes toward technology and their technology practices in the context of this new technology infrastructure (Laffey & Musser, 1998). In the fall of 1997, this interdisciplinary team was awarded NSF funding to launch a longitudinal study of the technology infrastructure in teacher education in this newly reformed program (<http://www.coe.missouri.edu/~sti>). The team focused its research on the class of 2001, gathering survey data from the entire cohort, observing and interviewing a set of preservice teachers within that cohort and interviewing a set of faculty, instructors, and administrators working within the program. This dissertation research study is but a part of that larger research effort.

Study Design

Participants. This study is situated in the context of a larger longitudinal study of the entire class of 2001, funded by the National Science Foundation, to study the integration and impact of technology in the University's teacher education program, conducted by an interdisciplinary team of researchers. The methodology described here encompasses only that part of the study included in this dissertation. (See Appendix A for a more complete description of the methodology of the larger study of which this was a part).

This dissertation is an ethnographic study of a single cohort within the program: preservice teachers in secondary English language arts education. An ethnographic study was selected as the best approach, based on the sociocultural theory driving this study, to

understand the context of the development of a community of practice -- both the technological context and the context of the program.

My original intent was to study two cohorts in order to compare PSTs in two disciplines that seem, to many, to differ greatly: science and English education. I reasoned that the different contexts of these two courses – the differences in the instructors, the structure of the courses, and the culture of the two disciplines – might lead to differences in the learning communities they created and their use of the online resources to foster and support communities of practice. Although I gathered data for both cohorts, the wealth of data I confronted when beginning data analysis suggested a strategy of first developing a deep understanding of each cohort before making a comparison.

This dissertation includes only the English education group because changes that occurred across the three semesters – in the course instructor, the location of the class, and the technologies used – resulted in sufficient difference for within cohort comparison. Three further reasons drove my selection of this cohort.

1. *My engagement with preservice teachers in secondary English education in my portion of the primary case study sample.* My role in the larger study was as one of five graduate research assistants who followed a cohort of preservice teachers through their education coursework, observing their education courses and interviewing them over their years in the program. I followed six PSTs in a primary case study sample, all who were middle school or secondary education majors. One of those intended to become a high school journalism teacher, but, since there was at the time no journalism education sequence, he elected to become an English education major. I

- also followed six PSTs in a secondary case study sample who were English education majors. Field observations of their education coursework placed me in English education courses; interviews with this group of PSTs engaged me in discussing issues relevant to English education.
2. *My own background in English education.* I had completed coursework, student teaching, and secondary teaching certification in English education myself, albeit nearly 20 years before beginning this research, and I had grown up as the daughter of an English teacher. I felt comfortable with the content of the coursework and the issues of discussion and believed that this familiarity would help me establish rapport with the PSTs in this cohort and therefore establish a level of trust that would allow for more in-depth interviews. I also hoped that this background would help me in understanding and interpreting the data collected.
 3. *The teachers' use of technology.* Finally, the fact that the faculty member in charge of this sequence of courses had established a pattern of using technology in his teaching, particularly an online course management system, guided my selection of this cohort. This group seemed to provide a good opportunity to study preservice teachers using technology to support their learning and developing teaching practices.

Data Collection and Analysis

Observation and Interviews. This study draws on the data from the secondary English education cohort over the course of three semesters: fall 1999, winter 2000, and fall 2000. My data set includes field notes from the three semesters of classes I observed (44 class observations); artifacts from the classes themselves, such as the course syllabi

and handouts; transcripts from interviews with members of the case study sample (two interviews with one member of the primary sample and one interview each semester with each of the six members of the cohort in the secondary sample); and archives of their online communications over the course of the three semesters.

Reliability

Reliability in a qualitative study is, of course, much different than in controlled, experimental research. Ethnographic studies of a naturally occurring phenomenon can never be exactly replicated by another researcher. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) have outlined a number of ways of enhancing the *external* reliability of ethnographic research, through addressing such issues as the status or role of the researcher, informant choices, and the social situations and conditions for the data collection. *Internal* reliability may be enhanced through a variety of strategies, including low-inference descriptors such as verbatim accounts of conversations, peer examination, and mechanically recorded data.

The Role of the Researcher. I gained secondary teaching certification in both mathematics and English in the late 1970s, nearly two decades before this study began. During the time of the study, I was a doctoral student in education in the newly-created School of Information Science and Learning Technologies. I had completed all coursework by the time we began the study, so I was able to dedicate the majority of my time to this research.

During the first semester on the project, I also served as a clinical associate (CA) in the first semester of Inquiry into Schools, Community, and Society. Students taking

the course that semester were in the “transition” program, bridging courses and requirements from the old and new education programs. I bowed out of the course in subsequent semesters because of concerns about my serving as both an instructor in the program and researcher, but I continued to maintain the course web site for another two semesters, until the COE transitioned to using Blackboard’s CourseInfo software.

My association with the COE, both as a graduate student and as a CA, gave me access to information and connections with students, other CAs, and faculty in the COE. During the first two years of the study, I knew many of the CAs and considered some as close friends. Casual conversations in the hallways of the teacher education building were frequent. I was often invited to social gatherings with students and CAs and, thereby, informally gained greater access to information and insights. In the classroom, I was often included in discussions as another member of the group.

My role in the classroom, though, was sometimes confused. Given my role as a CA and as a graduate student in the COE, I was sometimes asked to fill in for a teacher, to lead a class or group discussion. I always refused these requests. Given my role as a student in educational technology, I was sometimes asked to provide technical support. In most instances, I obliged these requests. I also tried to point them to other resources in the College, such as the staff at the Reflector and their students and peers. I believe, however, that I was often seen as a technology “expert” and technology “advocate” in those first two years of the study, in the early years of the new program.

My relationship with the faculty in the latter two years of the study, the two years that this dissertation focuses on, was more distant. In part that was intentional, to avoid some of the complications I had found in Phase I; in part it was an artifact of the physical

structure of the College at the beginning of Phase II. The teacher education building was in the midst of renovations and so classes and offices were scattered across campus. Gone were the casual water-cooler conversations that came from a simple stroll down the hall; gone were the casual talks with CAs or students, lingering after class. Classes were now scattered across campus. Interlopers in alien territory, they packed up and moved out as soon as class was over.

My involvement in the English education cohort waxed and waned over time. During the first semester, we sat in a traditional classroom arrangement with chairs in rows facing front. There was limited opportunity for interaction with the students when they occasionally moved into small group activities, such as reader response groups. Otherwise, my only interaction with the PSTs was with one primary case study informant in the group. There was little opportunity to interact with the instructor or the teaching assistants before or after class.

During the second semester, a doctoral student in English education taught the class. Although still in a traditional classroom, she asked students to arrange their chairs in a circle for each class meeting and insisted that I be included as a member of that circle. From the first class introductions, I was included as a member of the group in class activities. The instructor and I knew of each other through mutual friends in the COE and in the English department, and we began to develop something of a collegial relationship over the course of the semester. We discovered, through our talks before and after class, that we not only had friends in common, but we also shared beliefs about teaching and had common research interests.

Although the one remaining member of the primary case study cohort in this group changed majors this semester and subsequently left the program altogether, I began to interact with other members of the group outside class through interviews with members of the secondary case study sample. Shortly after the end of the semester, I was included in a social gathering of the class at a restaurant near campus.

Another doctoral student led the group at the beginning of the third semester, while the faculty member in charge of the sequence finished an exchange semester abroad. Interactions with PSTs in class were more limited than in the second semester, but I continued interactions outside class with those in the secondary case study sample, through interviews. I had little interaction with the faculty or graduate instructor outside class. I began to feel, once again, like less of a participant and more of a non-participant observer in this cohort, feeling more removed from both the instructors and the PSTs.

Conditions for data collection. Initial contact with the instructors of the classes I observed was made by the primary investigator of the larger study. I followed up with personal contact with each when I began class observations. None of the instructors I interacted with during the dissertation study expressed any concerns about my presence in the classroom. As noted above, some included me in activities more than others.

I usually tried to invite participants for interviews through face-to-face contact in conversations before or after class meetings; occasionally, I resorted to email contact. Initially, I tried to establish a comfortable, informal atmosphere for conducting interviews by arranging to meet in a social setting on campus, such as the student commons or the student union, or off campus at a nearby coffee house. Feedback from transcribers about

problems created in screening out background sound on the tapes led me to schedule later interviews in a quieter office setting.

The interviews often ran long, sometimes as long as 2 hours or more, and frequently wandered from the interview guide to explore other issues participants raised or connections made to observations in class. One participant described the interview experience as “just like having a conversation” (interview 1, May 2000). Some of the participants extended their connections with me beyond class time and scheduled interviews. Some even continued contact beyond the end of the study.

Recording of Data. Interviews for this study were recorded on audiotape. Tapes were transcribed by independent transcribers into word-processed computer files, providing verbatim transcripts of their responses to questions and other comments they shared during interviews. Handwritten field notes from class observations proved to be too extensive to reasonably convert to electronic form. I also collected printed artifacts from classes, such as course syllabi and handouts and samples of student work. Artifacts of online communications are in hard copy and digital format, converted from CourseInfo files to word-processed documents for sake of archiving and later retrieval.

Data Analysis. Given the fact that a large portion of the data were in hard copy only as well as the sheer volume of the data I was working with, I elected to do the coding by hand rather than electronically, using marginal notes and Post-It notes as flags. Some coding categories were driven by the literature review, while others emerged from the data as I read through the observation field notes, class artifacts, interviews, and archives of the online discussions. Coding categories that were driven by the literature review included shared values; traditions, rites, and rituals; meaningful relationships;

commitment; trust; respect for minority views; rights and responsibilities; norms; and negotiation. Categories that emerged from the data included codes for the shared values that were manifested in the course syllabi and online and class discussions (learning comes through practice and through social exchange with peers; shared values about what to teach and how to assess learning; the value associated with technology) and the group norms that were evidenced over time (patterns of behavior in dress, seating arrangements, and how time is spent in class; patterns of discussion (eg, Q&A, IRE, “what does the teacher want?” vs. “there is no right answer”).

| Codes | | |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Markers of community | From the literature | From the data |
| Domain | Shared values | Learning through practice Learning is social What to teach How to assess learning Technology |
| Community | Traditions, rites, and rituals Meaningful relationships Trust Commitment Respect for minority views | |
| Practice | Rights and Responsibilities Norms Negotiaion | Dress code Use of time in class Seating arrangements Discussion patterns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q&A, IRE, • what does the teacher want?; • there is no right answer) |

Data from the field notes included in the manuscript were transcribed by the researcher. Data from the interviews, online communications, and some classroom artifacts were imported from the electronic documents.

Peer Evaluation. Reliability in this study has also been enhanced through peer review of the data collection and analysis process, both through my colleagues on the

research team and through peers in the larger research community. Members of the research team met on a regular basis over the course of the four years of the project and maintained a web site and an electronic discussion list for communicating between meetings and sharing documents. We collaborated in establishing a protocol for data collection and regularly shared insights from our observations.

I also presented preliminary findings from the larger study and from my own research at a number of national conferences. In particular, I presented preliminary findings from my research and received feedback from other researchers in the field at

1. Computer Supported Collaborative Learning conference, Doctoral consortium, Palo Alto, CA, December 1999
2. American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA, April 2000
3. Center for Innovative Learning Technologies conference, Washington, DC, October 2000

I published preliminary findings from my research in proceedings of two conferences at which my papers were accepted for presentation:

1. Computer Supported Collaborative Learning, Boulder, CO, January 2002
2. European Communication Association Conference, Munich, Germany, March 2003

The latter is in press as a contributed chapter to a text resulting from the conference.

I have also collaborated with Minjuan Wang, a graduate of the program, now on the faculty at San Diego State University, in writing a number of articles about the design of online learning environments and building online learning communities (Wang, Poole, & Chan, 2003; Wang, Poole, Harris, & Wangemann, 2001; Wang, Laffey, & Poole, 2001). Each opportunity to write about and share what I have learned to date about this research

about online learning communities has helped me refine and focus my research.

Feedback from my presentations and subsequent conversations with peers has also helped shape my thinking and sharpen my vocabulary to describe the phenomenon of forming online learning communities.

Validity

Questions of internal validity address concerns about whether the study describes what it purports to describe. These concerns can be addressed by discussion of the effects of history and changes over time in the study, observer effects, selectivity, and mortality in the sample. Questions of external validity address concerns about whether the observations are applicable across other groups or are simply unique to the sample and setting of the study. Researchers address these concerns through discussion of the possible effects of the sample and setting of the study.

Internal validity. The larger study evolved over the course of four years; this particular study evolved over the course of 2 years. There were a number of changes in the program, in the technologies used, in the physical setting of the classes, in the instructors, and in the PSTs themselves over this time. Effects of their maturation as developing teachers must be distinguished from the effects of other factors in this study.

There can be no doubt that as an observer, I had some effect on the development of these PSTs. The questions I posed during the interviews may have sown seeds of reflection that shaped their perspectives. The relationships we formed and their view of the purpose of the study may have also influenced how they responded to questions and how they represented themselves to me during interviews.

For the broader study, we attempted to develop a representative sample of PSTs for observation and interviews. Since the issue of representativeness within the English education group was not considered at that time, it is possible that the sample in this study was not representative of all. It is possible that my findings reflect the kinds of experiences of those drawn to teaching secondary English.

College students change majors often, so it is difficult, if not impossible, to select a sample of students who would all persist in the program, from their first class to the last. Less than half of the primary sample who began the program in fall 1997 continued through student teaching and graduation in May 2001. None of those in the English education secondary sample who began the program in fall 1997 graduated in May 2001. Many transferred into other programs by the end of Phase I; many of those in Phase II had transferred into education later in their course of studies, through a summer or winter immersion semester. Therefore, many of them had additional coursework to complete before graduation. Is the data representative of those in a typical teacher education program? This is difficult to know.

External validity. There is, of course, always the possibility that the sample of PSTs I selected to observe and interview was skewed in some way. The larger research team attempted to select PSTs representative of the whole cohort. Was it better to select participants based on observations or simply upon the data they gave in responding to a baseline questionnaire? We used both methods, the former with those in the primary sample, the latter with those in the secondary sample. Attrition led to a different sample in the end, those who were at least more persistent students.

Sampling is also present in the data collected. Some of the interview questions were shaped by my research interests. It would be impossible to get at every aspect of their development as teachers or every aspect of their relationships with other members of their cohorts. My observations in the classrooms, too, is limited by the perspectives I brought to the classroom, the things I attended to while observing their classes. There is, of course, always the trade off between depth and breadth. Had I only focused on one or two PSTs, I might have gained more focused data and a more in-depth understanding of these PSTs' experiences. I traded that depth of study for a greater breadth of focus on several individuals and the context of their experiences in the program.

The setting itself, of course, may have led to limitations on the extensibility of the findings. Although the majority of the studies reported on in the literature review are grounded in communities of practicing teachers, the focus of this study was on preservice teachers. Conditions of the limited time frame of their coursework and field experiences, the context of being thrown together as a "group" simply because of being enrolled in a class together, the context of sharing the experience of a class with given assignments, as well as the larger context of the university itself may have had considerable influence on their ability to develop community in the classroom and online. Therefore, these findings may not be valid beyond the context of similar preservice teacher programs.

Summary

This study is a retrospective, in-depth analysis of data I gathered from a group secondary English education majors. This data includes observation field notes from three semesters of classes; artifacts from the courses, such as course syllabi and handouts,

artifacts of their coursework; transcripts of interviews with participants in the study; and artifacts of their communications online. As an ethnographer in the field, I was engaged in ongoing analysis and reporting of the data as I collected it (Poole, in press; Poole, 2003; Poole, 2002; Poole, Laffey & Wang, 1999; Poole & Laffey, 2000; Poole, Laffey, & Lin, 2001). Through in-depth content analysis of their postings online, comments made in their interviews, artifacts of the courses, and observation field notes, I sought to answer these research questions:

1. Was this group of preservice teachers able to form a community of practice? What markers of community are evident in their face to face and online interactions?
2. What conditions, in the tools they used and the context of their work together in the teacher development program, facilitated or served as barriers to community formation?

In the following three chapters, I present a chronological analysis of the findings by semester, examining observation field notes, archives of the online discussions, and comments the PSTs made about issues related to communication and community during the interviews. In the final chapter, I discuss the findings thematically and address these research questions.

Chapter 4:

Teaching English Language Arts I

The instructor in the first semester of the sequence was Dr. Fischer, the faculty member who had designed the curriculum for the Teaching English Language Arts (TELA) sequence. The cohort in the first semester included 19 PSTs. Fifteen were juniors or seniors and four were post-baccalaureate or graduate students who were returning for additional teaching certification. Fifteen were females and four were males. One was an African American male (Kevin); the remainder of the cohort were white.

| Name | Class |
|----------|----------|
| Amy** | Junior |
| Beth** | Junior |
| Emily** | Junior |
| Jean | Junior |
| Jim | Senior |
| Jordan | Junior |
| Karen | Junior |
| Kevin | Junior |
| Laura | PBS/Grad |
| Linda | Junior |
| Melanie | PBS/Grad |
| Mindy** | Senior |
| Rachel** | Senior |
| Sarah | Senior |
| Tracy | Junior |
| | |
| Diane | PBS/Grad |
| Mark* | Junior |
| Martin | PBS/Grad |
| Pam** | Senior |

A core group of 15 PSTs who progressed through all three semesters of the TELA sequence together was comprised of 13 undergraduates and 2 PBS/graduate students. Thirteen were female and 2 were male.

One member of the TELA I cohort, Mark, was part of the primary case study sample that I had followed from his entrance into the program during the summer immersion program in 1998. Six others were selected as members of the secondary sample that I subsequently followed through the remainder of the program: Rachel, Emily, Pam, Amy, Beth, and Mindy. These PSTs were selected in collaboration with the larger research team to meet the goals of the larger project (see Appendix A). In general, members of the secondary sample were selected to be representative of the race, gender, and disciplinary interests of the PSTs in the program. We attempted to select study participants who, we believed, would not be lost due to attrition: those who appeared to be sufficiently committed to be likely to complete the program. Non-traditional PBS/graduate students were excluded from this secondary sample, as they were not considered representative of the cohort who would progress through the entire program.

Domain

During much of the first semester, the values and beliefs that appeared to dominate were those of the instructor, made visible variously through the course syllabus, classroom activities, and explicit statements made in class. The values expressed in the syllabus were those of a democratic classroom in which students

- learn through practice (writing, teaching, and field experiences),
- learn through social exchange with peers, and

- are assessed through wholistic assessment techniques.

Learning through Practice. One of the key elements of the philosophy of education that governed this sequence of courses, made explicit in the syllabi, was learning by doing, grounded in the theory of Dewey:

“the most dominant line of thinking stems from John Dewey’s notion that we learn best by doing – by actively engaging in purposeful activities – not solely by listening to lectures or by reading about writing, language, or literature, but by actually **doing** these activities (TELA I syllabus, Fall 1999, emphasis original).

This philosophy was operationalized in three central activities: writing, microteaching, and field experiences.

Learning to Write by Writing. During the first semester, the emphasis was on writing. Indeed, writing activities counted for 60% of their grade, through formal written papers (25%), informal journaling and in-class writing activities (20%), and a written final exam (15%). The implicit goal was for the PSTs to gain a better appreciation of learning how to teach writing through engaging in writing activities and reflecting on the writing process. In-class writing activities and follow-up discussions about the process made more visible the importance of engaging in the practice of writing. During these in-class writing activities, *everyone* (including the instructor, the teaching assistants, and the researcher) wrote. In class free-writing sessions began as early as the first week of class and continued throughout the semester, often leading into the more formal class papers written outside class. Comments made in class revealed the value they saw in free-writing.

Inst: So what did you think of the free-writing experience?

PST 1: I think of myself as a good writer. So much of the time, I only have time to write one draft for a paper and that has to be the final version.

PST 2: I see that you get more ideas flowing when it's unstructured.

PST 3: It helps you make tangible the ideas that are in your head. You remember them more (field notes 9/2/99).

The value they placed on free-writing was also evident in their practice of in-class writing activities included in their own microteaching sessions. Many of the sessions I observed included a period of free-writing in their lesson plans and class activities.

Learning to Teach by (Micro-)Teaching. Microteaching activities counted for 20% of the grade for TELA I. Over the course of the first semester, PSTs designed and delivered mini-lessons about one of six novels that might typically be taught in a high school English class: *Huck Finn*, *Catcher in the Rye*, *Ordinary People*, *The House on Mango Street*, *The Woman Warrior*, and *Toning the Sweep*. The focus of the microteaching activities was on learning through writing.

In practice, it is not clear just how much the PSTs actually valued the opportunity to learn about teaching through the microteaching activities. Their tone was casual and informal. They never dressed the part of a professional teacher while “teaching” in class. Rather, on those days, they dressed much the same as they did on any other day, as students, in jeans and t-shirts or sweaters. While they may have learned something about the work involved in designing a lesson plan or a curriculum unit, they did not appear to take seriously the *performance* of teaching.

Learning to Teach by Teaching (and observing) in a Real Classroom. Each PST was assigned to a field experience site in an English teacher's classroom in one of the community's junior high or high schools. They were expected to spend a minimum of 20 hours in the classroom. The guidelines provided by the instructor suggested that they avoid "fragmenting" this experience into a series of one-hour visits. "Aim for at least 2 hours per day, over consecutive days." They were to develop a question to investigate through an action research project – through observation, student interviews, and analysis of student work – and develop a written report to be submitted to their instructor at the end of the semester. This report counted for 20% of the grade for TELA I.

The detailed seven-page handout on field experiences and reports suggested that the instructor had given a good deal of time to thinking about and planning for field experiences and inquiry projects in the field that would provide valuable learning experiences for the PSTs. For instance, he included a number of suggestions for classroom activity and inquiry, ranging from teaching a lesson and reflecting on it to analyzing classroom interaction to developing a case study around a single student.

That value, however, was not made manifest in his communications in class. Both the lack of time devoted to discussion of the field experiences in class and explicit comments he made suggested just the reverse, that he did *not* value the field experience component of the program and saw it more as an interruption or distraction from his class time. Of the seventeen class sessions I observed, there were only five references to field experiences during class, and most of those were only brief mentions of procedural issues, such as where they were assigned to do their field work and what was expected in the final field report.

For instance, in one class early in the semester, the instructor noted, about 20 minutes into class, that he would “have to stop in about 35 minutes to talk about some field experience information.” It seemed clear that he saw this as an interruption in the activities he had planned for the day: “I hate to take up the time, but I have to” (field notes, 9/2/99). He devoted only 8 minutes at the end of class to talking about their field assignments, clarifying assignments and the schedule for orientation sessions. A couple of weeks later, again at the end of class, the instructor brought up field assignments. “Field placements. Let me get to this quickly” (field notes, 9/21/99). Again, the talk was merely about procedural issues, clarifying expectations about where and how often they were to be in the field.

Only twice during my observations were there any substantive issues raised about the field experiences; in both instances, the issues were raised by the same PST. Once, she noted the difficulty she was finding in getting copies of student work (9/16/99); the other time, she noted that she had had little opportunity to interact with students, since they were most often reading rather than writing during her time in the field (9/28/99). The second instance may have been the only time when discussion of field work was more than perfunctory. The instructor reflected the PST’s concerns back to the class to ask how many had been able to engage with students in the field. Only four raised their hands. The instructor then encouraged them to “Demand it. Insist on it” (field notes 9/29/1999).

Learning is Social. Another of the dominant values expressed in the syllabus was that learning is social. “The development of literacy is *social* in nature”; such learning

“demands consistent, active interaction with our peers and other diverse groups” (TELA I syllabus, Fall 1999, emphasis original). In the first semester, this belief was operationalized through the use of reader response groups and microteaching groups. Although the syllabus outlined a plan for social learning in the field experiences, by working in teams and delivering reports to the class, neither of these intentions was fulfilled. Only one “team” was formed and it appeared to be an anomaly, as noted below; field reports were written and submitted to the instructor, but not shared with the class.

Reader Response Groups. PSTs were assigned to one of four reader response groups composed of four to five PSTs. Over the course of the semester, the syllabus outlined a plan for 16 opportunities for PSTs to meet together for part of the class in reader response groups to provide peer feedback on the various writing assignments. Ideal in design, these groups were of limited usefulness in practice. They did not occur as often as intended; when they did, they were often limited to the last 20 minutes (or less) of class because the whole-class direct instruction had taken more time than the instructor estimated. Of the 17 class sessions I observed, the PSTs met in small groups only nine times. Only four of those small group sessions lasted more than 20 minutes.

The group I observed throughout the semester did not appear to work well together. One PST, Diane, an older, non-traditional PST, appeared to dominate and direct most of their discussions. She already worked in the public schools and was apparently returning to campus to gain additional certification in teaching English. The difference in age and experience may have led her to assume a leadership position in the group. In the sessions I observed in which they were to read and solicit feedback on their formal papers written outside class, she was always the one to go first. When the

sessions were directed to brainstorm ideas, she was always the one to lead the discussion and serve as scribe for the group.

Team Microteaching. The collaborative group nature of the microteaching experiences in this first semester provided an opportunity for PSTs to learn from and with one another as they researched and developed their unit. However, the limited time PSTs had to develop these units, sometimes as little as 2-3 weeks, limited this experience in collaborative group learning. My key informant in the group, Mark, noted that, when they met together outside class to develop their microteaching activities, one group member took control of the session and he “didn’t get to do much” (memo, 10/4/99). The short time they had to work together allowed little time for group formation, development of trust, roles and responsibilities, and shared work on the assigned task.

Field Experiences. The syllabus mentions the intention that the action research reports generated from the field experiences were to be done in teams and reported out to the entire class.

“In consultation **with your partner** and your cooperating teacher, develop a question that you would like to investigate”.....” “Follow the guidelines for writing up your **report given in class**, which should include samples of student writing, analysis of student’s written products and processes, transcript and analysis of interviews, etc. **You and your partner** will collaborate on this report and submit one document” (TELA I syllabus, Fall 1999, emphasis mine).

Yet only one team emerged, and that appeared to be an unanticipated anomaly, rather than the norm.

PST 1: “_____ and I are in the same class and we collaborated on this.”

Instructor: “Just explain that in your report.”

PST 2: “Should we turn it in together?”

Instructor: “Oh, yes. I misunderstood. Yes, but make a copy so you each have one for the future.”

PSTs never presented their field reports to the class; indeed, there was no room provided in the schedule outlined in the syllabus for this to take place. There was little discussion of field experiences in class at all and little opportunity to learn from their peers in this activity.

To Know as You are Known. Of course, one of the keys to social learning is for learners to know each other so that they can build the trust needed to learn from one another. The instructor made an obvious point of trying to learn the names of the PSTs by calling roll at the beginning of each class during the first few weeks of the semester. My field notes show that he was still calling role and working on name-face recognition as late as the sixth week of the semester. They were all new to *him*; hence his need to work on name-face associations. But he assumed they all *knew each other* already and needed no introductions. There was no explicit activity or strategy in class designed to help the PSTs get to know each other. The instructor indicated through brief comments and questions he made early in the semester (“Weren’t you all in ED100 last semester?” field notes, 8/31/1999) that he assumed that they already knew each other from their previous experience in the teacher education program.

But they didn’t know each other. Even at the end of the semester, Mark admitted to me, during an interview, that he did not know all the PSTs in the class, even some who were in other classes with him.

“Let’s see, there’s Jim. I like Jim. And Martin. Martin distracts me up the wall. I don’t know Kevin all that well. Jim is the only guy in there I can even half way relate to, and I don’t even talk to him. And Beth. And those other three girls. Let’s see, Sarah. She’s in my geology class. And Mindy. And Amy. Who else is in there? The girl with the short blonde hair who always sits next to Sarah.....
(2nd interview with Mark, FS 1999).

Values about What to Teach. Another set of values for this group – perhaps most often implicitly rather than explicitly expressed – had to do with what literature was appropriate for young adult readers. The values expressed in the reading choices on the syllabus included both classical and contemporary literature, ranging from Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* to Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*, although the bias was clearly toward more contemporary literature (most of the other readings – *Catcher in the Rye*, *Ordinary People*, *The House on Mango Street*, and *Toning the Sweep* – were from the latter half of the 20th century). Most of the PSTs appeared to agree with the dominant values expressed in the syllabus, but at least one PST had a different view. Only once, however, in the discussion about teaching *Catcher in the Rye*, did this difference become apparent.

PST 1: Would you teach it?

PST 2: Yes. I like the “coming of age” theme in it.

PST 3: It has too much profanity. It’s profane. I think its age appropriate for older students. I wouldn’t teach it. I would stick with mythology and the classics.

PST 1: Yes, it is often banned.

PST 4: Yes. But there's a lot of stuff on the banned list that shouldn't be.

Assessment. Another set of values around which there was some disagreement was in relation to student assessment. The dominant values expressed in the syllabus were consistent with Dewey's theory of learning through practice.

You will consistently practice assessing others (and being assessed) **not** by using numbers (or letters indicating numbers), but by using language. While there are many reasons for doing this, a primary reason is that language is far superior to numbers when it comes to judging what students in English/Language Arts do. Language is by far the most appropriate symbol system for articulating shades of difference about students' proficiency with symbols. (TELA I syllabus, emphasis original).

The class was largely silent and complicit in accepting this set of values for the first two months of class. Differences of view did not erupt until early November, when the instructor's comments about the importance of providing written comments launched a half-hour discussion about assessment.

PST 1: How do we know where we stand?

Instructor: With the portfolio system, I am looking at changes made on the drafts. I put the most weight on the best papers.

PST 2: With reformulating – when do we turn it in? Do we turn it in or just put it in the portfolio?

Instructor: You can turn it in anytime you want. Period. I expect you to revise and play with these papers. If you want comments, turn it in. It takes a while getting used to.

PST 3: I don't like it at all! I want to know where I stand.

Instructor: It's not random at all. I find it more specific than assigning points. I'd be happy to put a grade on any paper, if you'd like. From my view, you've had enough of that in other classes. I think of you as English teachers. Try out what you want to do in your classes.

Martin, one of the older, non-traditional students attempted to back up the instructor:

PST 4: It's wrong to give the idea that grading is an exact science. Even an "A" paper can be revised. It's better to learn to live with the ambiguity. It's not easy to grade. It's not exact. It's better to learn to write, not for a grade.

But the rest of the class continued to disagree:

PST 5: But we *do* get grades – and a B+ translates to a 3.3 and figures into a GPA.

Instructor: There are two separate symbol systems – numbers and words don't jive. I agree, it's not an exact science. One of the things we'll do in this course is look at different evaluation systems. Translating words into numbers isn't justified. NCTE [the National Council of Teachers of English] has recommended no grades on writing courses. They see them as irrelevant. The best kind of feedback on language is other language. My own belief is in language, not numbers. Else I would have been an engineer.

In these three courses, we're using language to talk about things. That's what language is for. Numbers won't save the world. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here.

I understand wanting to know where you are. But this class is different.

One of the joys of teaching here is getting top-notch students. If you're here and trying to write, you'll get an A. Where I want you to focus is writing better. And convincing your students that words are more important (field notes, 11/4/999).

The conflict between the values held by the instructor within the domain of his classroom and the values of the larger ecosystem within which the PSTs had to work – the whole teacher development program (which required a certain GPA as one of the criteria for progression from one phase of the program to the next) and the university grading system as a whole – was never resolved. For the time being, the values of the instructor dominated. The final piece of resistance may have been expressed in the closing question posed that day:

PST 1: Are you teaching this class next semester?

Value of technology. The value of technology in this first semester of the TELA sequence was expressed more in its absence than in any explicit statements made about it. In class, the only “modern” instructional technology used was an overhead projector. Although they did a good deal of writing in class, such writing was done with paper and pencil; the laptops they had been given when they entered the program were nowhere in evidence. Further, there was no web site for the course, although the instructor had used one before. Indeed, his history of technology use was one of the reasons I had selected this cohort for my study. In conversation after class early in the semester, the instructor

noted that he had decided to abandon the course web site because “it was just too much work to keep it up” (fieldnotes, 9/2/1999).

Nor was there any class email discussion list until late in the semester. In mid-October, at the end of one of the early microteaching sessions, he apologized for the lack of a discussion list:

“In the past, we shared these [peer evaluations] on a listserv. This semester, I’m just not doing a listserv. This makes it harder to share, I know” (fieldnotes, 10/7/1999).

By the next class, he had obviously changed his mind.

“We’ll be setting up a listserv and I’d like you to post your ideas for topics for the next paper there” (fieldnotes 10/12/1999).

A week later, the instructor continued to advertise the benefits of the soon-to-be-launched email list, even while apologizing for it not being available yet.

“When it is, you can post ideas there. It’s a public forum. A place to say whatever you want. But remember that it does go out to the whole group.” (fieldnotes, 10/19/1999).

Yet, once it was up and running, it did not prove to be a true “public forum” or a place to “say whatever they wanted.” The number of posts was low (39 messages; see Table 1) and most were in response to instructor assignments. The majority (21) were posted during the first week in November in response to the instructor’s assignment to write an imitation of a paragraph read in class. Three other messages were from PSTs, suggesting paper topics for paper #4, again, in response to a request from the instructor. The remaining messages were information posted by the instructor (5) or one of the

teaching assistants (2) to the PSTs, PSTs sharing information with each other (4), requests for assistance (2), or social (2).

| Table 1. TELA-I Types of Email | | |
|---|----------|----------|
| Topic/Category | N | % |
| Paragraph Imitation (students and instructors) | 21 | 54 |
| Instructor information | 5 | 13 |
| Students sharing information | 4 | 10 |
| Paper Topics, Paper #4 | 3 | 8 |
| Teaching Assistant Information | 2 | 5 |
| Student requests for assistance | 2 | 5 |
| Social | 2 | 5 |

The limited use of the discussion list seemed to validate the value placed on it by the instructor. It appeared to be an unnecessary appendage, an afterthought, rather than an integral part of communication for the class. For the most part, it became a means for submitting homework to the instructor and a broadcast medium for the instructor to broadcast information to the class rather than the true “public forum” for an exchange of ideas that had been advertised.

The only explicit statement made about technology in class came shortly before the Thanksgiving break. At the opening of class, the instructor spent some time denigrating technology as something that “works to fragment and interrupt life.” He encouraged them to “resist it.” Further comments appeared to equate technology with bureaucracy.

If I did everything everyone wanted me to do – filling out forms – I would give all my life over to it. Your job is to be *with the students*. The other stuff is *not your job*. Throw it in the trash. Throw your coat over it. Whatever it takes to ignore it. One of the things that technology has done is to throw work in someone else’s

lap. Paperwork that used to take me 2-3 minutes now takes 3-4 hours online!
(fieldnotes, 11/16/1999).

Comments such as this, of course, did little to help those hoping to promote the integration of technology into the teacher development program.

Community

Traditions, Rites, and Rituals. The few traditions or ritual patterns of behavior that emerged in TELA I were those of most traditional classrooms. Although there was no assigned seating, within the first couple of weeks, a recurring pattern emerged. The instructor remained in the front of the room and the PSTs gravitated toward sitting in the same chair or same general area each day. A certain few – the most vocal PSTs in class – sat in the classic front and center positions, while others traditionally sat in the back of the room. Kevin, the one African-American PST in the cohort, often slipped in to the back of the room about ten minutes late. I frequently noticed him sitting in the far back corner of the room, sleeping during class. On the other hand, Mark admitted that he most often sat front and center “so I don’t fall asleep...’cause if I sit in the corner, I find myself struggling to stay awake sometimes” (1st interview with Mark, FS 1999).

In about half the class sessions I observed (9 of 17), the class moved into reader response groups for a period of time at the end of class. Even then, the groups tended to gather their seats in the same general area.

The other ritual common to the group this semester was the structure of how they used their time. The first five to ten minutes of class were almost always devoted to what we might call “housekeeping” – checking attendance and clarifications and revisions of

assignments and the schedule of activities. Analysis of my field notes from TELA I show that in 13 of the 17 sessions I observed, checking role and discussion of assignments and changes in the schedule took up anywhere from 5 to 20 minutes at the beginning of class. Occasionally, but not often (6 of the 17 sessions observed), class ended with a parallel frame, with the instructor giving brief reminders about what they would be doing and what he expected them to be ready for at the next class meeting. More often than not, however, the end of the class was marked simply by the PSTs collectively packing up their gear and leaving at the end of the period. Once, the instructor varied the routine by making announcements at the end of class, as he handed back papers. At the beginning of the next class session, he explained the difference.

Inst: I handed back papers at the end of class last time. Why do you think I did that?

PST 1: If you hand them back at the beginning, students will spend all their time reading the comments.

Inst: Yes, that's always a good practice.

He went on to use this housekeeping time to announce changes in the syllabus, commenting on scheduling practices they would want to use in their own classrooms.

Also, did you notice that you had two things due at once? How did you feel about that? Not good, right? Yeah. That's not a good idea to do to your students. So I've changed the due dates for one of your assignments. (field notes, 9/16/00).

Meaningful Relationships. I found no evidence of meaningful relationships emerging between PSTs in this group during the first semester of TELA I. If anything, what I

found was just the opposite: that at the end of the semester, many PSTs still did not know each other by name. In my field notes, I was still referring to some individuals by description rather than by name.

During an interview with Mark that semester, I learned that not only did he not know everyone in his class, but also that he still found he had more meaningful and lasting relationships with the students he knew from Phase I.

I see some of them in my other classes....like Beth, she's in my 17th century English lit class, but she doesn't sit by me. I sat by her one time and tried to have a conversation with her before class and she just replied with one word answers. I don't know. Maybe it's me....In Phase I, we were just calling, I don't know, three or four times a week. We would just go eat and hang out and watch TV and do whatever. We studied sometimes and worked on our presentations. We made really good friendships. I still stay in touch with some of them. I've written to Stephanie several times, and Amanda..... I need to get in touch with Regan. Regan and I were very good friends all throughout last year. (1st interview with Mark, FS 1999).

Later in the interview, another of the PSTs in the class walked by our table and, while he recognized her and said "Hello," he acknowledged to me that he didn't know her name. "It will come to me...That's terrible. I should know everybody's name by now." He concluded that the reason for this lack of connection was the lack of any community building activity in class.

“I find there’s been very little attempt...to build community in class. I don’t know. Maybe he just assumes we already have it...I feel more connected to the people that I knew in Phase I” (2nd interview with Mark, FS 1999).

Commitment. There was little evidence of commitment to the group in this first semester. One of the obvious signs of this was in the irregular class attendance. Although I did not take roll at every session, I did frequently (in 12 of the 17 sessions) make note of the absence of a number of PSTs, late arrivals, and early departures. Usually, there were only one to two absences, but occasionally, there were as many as three or four missing from class; one or two people consistently arrived late or left early. When the time for reader response groups was limited to the last 10 minutes of class, the whole class sometimes simply used this as an opportunity to leave class early.

Trust. There was limited evidence of trust in the group during this first semester. Since the focus of TELA I was on writing, much of their “communication” this semester was in written form. They did free-writing in class and wrote formal papers outside of class, which were, for the most part, shared only with the instructor.

The PSTs did have some opportunity to develop trust among their peers in getting and giving feedback on their writing in the reader response groups. However, these reader response sessions were few and far between, occupying perhaps less than 20% of their class time. I noted only nine instances of meeting in reader response groups at the end of class in the 17 sessions I observed. Those sessions lasted anywhere from 5 to 40 minutes; most were 20 minutes or less.

In three of the actual paper reviewing sessions I observed, several of the PSTs used the excuse that they had forgotten to bring copies of their papers to share with the group. They did not seem to trust each other enough to seek peer evaluation of their writing. When they did get around to reading and responding to each other's papers, most of the comments seemed to be perfunctory praise rather than a genuine and helpful critique.

"I liked the details."

"I liked the conversational tone."

"I thought you did a good job of humanizing her."

"I liked the short sentences – they were like flashbacks of images in a movie."

"I don't have any comments on your writings. They're all good."

Mark noted, during an interview:

"reader response groups.....they're not where they need to be. I don't think you can...you can't just read a paper once and then give a critical analysis of it. It's impossible to do that" (1st interview with Mark, FS 1999).

They did not appear to trust each other enough to seek out substantive feedback on their writing. They were only seeking a grade.

Another sign of the limited trust in the group was in the discussion about the grading of papers, referenced above. The PSTs obviously did not trust the instructor, nor the new plan of narrative feedback as much as traditional numerical scores or letter grades. They wanted to "know where they stood." The power the instructor held over them in assigning their final grade for the semester obviously outweighed the "trust" he

hoped they would develop in the more substantive feedback he could give them by providing comments and nearly endless opportunities to revise and resubmit their papers.

Respect for minority views. The group cohesion in TELA I was also obviously not strong enough yet to embrace minority views. This was visible in two ways. One was in the failure of the group to include one PST who was clearly in the minority. Kevin frequently arrived late, sat in the back of the classroom, and seldom contributed to the discussions, either in the whole group or small group settings. Even in the class discussions about issues that touched on racial inequality, such as in the discussions about teaching *Huck Finn*, he did not speak up, nor did anyone attempt to draw him into the discussion.

On the opposite end of the spectrum was another male student who was quite vocal. Martin was an older, non-traditional graduate student in English who was seeking teaching certification. He made frequent reference to his advanced experience in teaching (he was a graduate instructor in English), writing, and international travel. Rather than providing validation of his “expertise,” however, these references to his experience seemed to set him apart from the group as someone who was overcompensating, trying to prove himself. His contributions to class discussion were frequent and extended. Rather than engage him and include him in the group, however, most of the PSTs appeared to intentionally ignore him and tune him out when he began to talk. Frequently, the instructor was the only one to engage him. For instance, in the following discussion, Martin engaged the instructor in a dialogue about teaching poetry.

Martin: This poem is like a riddle. You either get it or you don't. It's like an exercise in perceiving. But the thing is, once you solve the riddle, what does it mean beyond that? It clearly demonstrates to a student the kind of ways of interpretation. You have to get to first base before you can go on. Some students never get that far. To get beyond children's poetry – stuff that just rhymes – you have to know how to get into complex perceptions.

Inst: But there is no "right" answer. But I need to go on.

Martin: You say there's no right answer. But I'd be hard pressed to say it's about...say...Davy Crockett. Interpretation demands high precision and thoughtfulness.

Inst: But my point is that you want to have students believe that there is no one *right* answer. If they say it's about Nazi Germany, then you ask them to explain. "What about it make you say that?"

No one else participated in this discussion. Indeed, during most of it, I noticed signs of the other PSTs intentionally tuning out, rubbing their eyes, yawning, looking at their notes or other papers. Even the instructor tried to cut him off to return to the topic at hand, but he seemed to ignore the cue.

Martin did not offer room for debate, nor attempt to engage others in discussion. More often, he simply made pronouncements that did not invite a response, and then reinforce them with references to other experiences he had had, such as during the discussion about grading.

Martin: It's wrong to give the idea that grading is an exact science. Even an A paper can be revised. It's better to learn to live with the ambiguity. It's better to

learn to write, not for a grade. It's not easy to grade. It's not an exact science. I took a creative writing workshop. This kind of grading system works well in this kind of class, unless you write by formula and make it a mechanical process. But then you get students who don't care (field notes 11/4/99).

Martin did not appear to make an attempt to fit in with the group, nor did the group make any attempt at incorporating him.

Practice

Rights and Responsibilities. The formal *responsibilities* of this group were, for the most part, the standard responsibilities of students in a college class, established by the instructor and outlined in the syllabus, including the responsibilities for the various papers and projects to be turned in for the class:

- 1) a portfolio of work, including four papers and all prewriting, revisions, and reformulations
- 2) an action research project based on their field experiences
- 3) a dialectical journal of reflections on class readings
- 4) a teaching guide and a mini-lesson
- 5) a final in-class exam

As in most college classes, they were expected to attend class regularly, show up on time, participate in class activities, and hand in their work on time. Indeed, the syllabus outlined stiff penalties for absences:

three absences can result in lowering of final grades by one-half letter (e. g. from a B to a C+), six absences (3 weeks) by one letter, etc.

and late papers:

Work turned in after the due date (at the beginning of class on the date assigned) will be penalized (TELA I syllabus, Fall 1999).

At the same time, the syllabus provided a rationale for these responsibilities grounded in the expectation that they were not just students, but also developing as professionals:

Teaching is an ancient, demanding, and valued profession. Not just students but everyone you encounter will judge our profession on the basis of how you interact with her or him. Hence, it is extremely important to be “professional.”

Professional characteristics on which you will be judged include punctuality, attendance, fairness, rationality, collegial attitude, and participation. Because this class relies extensively on discussions and other class interactions, attendance is crucial to your success and that of your colleagues. If you are ill or an emergency occurs, contact a clinical associate prior to class. Otherwise, be in class on time every session.

Note also, in a paragraph on the importance of punctuality, under “Course Policies”:

Please arrive on time. Being on time is basic professionalism. Ducking in late (as well as other breaches of etiquette and professionalism) communicates a lack of commitment to your colleagues and to your chosen life’s work. Turning in work on time is also basic professionalism (TELA I syllabus, fall 1999).

As developing professionals, these pre-service teachers were also given more *rights* than most college students. One of these rights was the opportunity to revise any of their papers. While the syllabus outlined the expectation that “one paper may be

revised to raise its grade (due to the instructor the week after you receive it back from us),” in actual practice, later in the semester, the instructor explained that they could revise *any* paper any time they wanted over the course of the semester.

PST 1: With the reformulating – when do we turn it in? Do we turn it in or just put it in the portfolio?

Inst: Any time you want. Period. If you want comments, turn it in. There are no set dates.

PST 2: So anything I turn in, I can revise and pretty much be guaranteed to get an A?

Inst: Yes. Of course, there are a few other things, like coming to class and doing the reading. But I want everyone to get an A.

PST 3: When is it too late to turn in revisions?

Inst: Only after the due date for the portfolio at the end of the semester (field notes, 11/4/99)

Shared responsibility and authority. Other rights that these PSTs enjoyed in the TELA sequence might be better understood as elements of shared responsibility or authority for the class. One of these “rights” or shared responsibilities that began in TELA I and continued through the sequence was the practice of microteaching, that is, developing curriculum guides and trying out some of the activities by teaching mini-lessons to their colleagues in class.

In TELA I, PSTs worked in groups of three to four to develop a curriculum guide and practice teaching one of the young adult novels in the curriculum that semester, *The*

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Catcher in the Rye, Ordinary People, The House on Mango Street, The Woman Warrior, and Toning the Sweep. PSTs were responsible for designing the lessons and teaching the class on the day scheduled on the syllabus. As noted above, though, the PSTs did not seem to take this responsibility very seriously. Rather than being viewed as an opportunity to practice teaching, it appeared to be just another assignment as a student.

Another “shared” responsibility was that of providing peer review of their colleagues’ writing in their reader response groups. As noted above, the instructor set aside time at the end of class for peer review and discussion in these small groups in about half the classes I observed (9 of 17). Many of these sessions turned out to be much shorter than intended. Whole class activities often ran longer than planned, so that the time left for the reader response groups was limited. At other times, when more time was given to the small group sessions, PSTs simply took the opportunity to simply leave class early, as in the session on November 16. They were given most of the class session to work in small groups to brainstorm topics for paper #4 and finish peer review of paper #3. The group I observed met only briefly, discussing a few ideas for topics for paper #4 and briefly commenting on one last paper in the group for paper #3, and then adjourned at least half an hour early (field notes 11/16/99).

PSTs were also given the opportunity for shared responsibility in the class in choosing the topics for their papers and in suggesting questions for the final exam. In several instances, the instructor offered them freedom of choice in not only the topic, but also in the genre they chose for their written assignments. For instance, at the end of

September, in clarifying the expectations for the second assignment, the instructor explained:

Paper 2 is due October 7. We'll trade them in class in your reader response groups. The topic is up to you, as you did with paper 1. It can come out of our readings so far. It's your choice. Or from the list we came up with in class a few weeks ago. Do some pre-writing. List, cluster, free-write. It's up to you.

Basically, the assignment is a short piece – one page typed, double space. Explode a moment. Or at least no more than 2 pages for the original. Then do two reformulations of the original.

Later in class, he expanded with further suggestions on how to get started with the reformulations.

If you're stuck, go to an author's voice you well, or a film character or even a cartoon character....or think of it in musical metaphors: waltz, pop, jazz. Mad talk vs. sweet talk. Whatever works for you. There are different voices to get you started (field notes 9/28/99).

When it came time for the next paper, he asked the group to brainstorm paper topics and post ideas to the new class discussion list online. Responsibility for coming up with ideas was shifted to the group, but each PST still had the freedom to choose his or her own topic. "If we get 8 or 10 topics and you don't like any of them, that's ok. You can come up with your own. Preferably on *Ordinary People*, but possibly on the books we have already read, *Catcher* or *Huck Finn*" (field notes 10/12/99).

Later in the semester, the instructor argued for the importance of choice in motivating student writing.

PST 1: Ho do you get kids to enjoy the process?

Inst: Give them a lot of choice. Exercise ownership. We've all had papers to write on topics that are given to us. Ownership goes a long way (field notes 12/7/99)

Near the end of the semester, the instructor asked students to suggest possible final exam questions via email. It became apparent, however, in reviewing the list of study questions in class, that only one person had taken up that opportunity for shared responsibility. PSTs complaints that the set of questions seemed weighted toward the novels read near the end of class led to this brief exchange:

Inst: Yes, I asked for suggested questions and only one of you sent any in.

PST 1: So if we put some up, you might use them?

Inst: Yes. I *might* use them.

PST 2: But we wouldn't have to *write* on them?

Inst: Right. You'll have one or two required questions and then some you can choose from (field notes 12/7/99, emphasis original).

Again, the emphasis was on freedom of choice and shared responsibility for shaping the content of the exam. This shared responsibility was one the PSTs were frequently not comfortable in assuming. As noted in this instance, only one PST took the opportunity to suggest final exam questions. Throughout the semester, PSTs posed questions for clarification of assignments, often in the vein of "But what do *you* want?" (emphasis mine). These questions often reflected more of a focus on the mechanics of their *responsibilities* as students, rather than on their *rights* as developing teachers, as developing writers, and as members of this learning community. For instance, note this exchange in September about an upcoming assignment.

PST 1: So you want the list of images *and* the poem? Typed?

Inst: Yes. If typing helps you revise. I got an email the other day asking, “should I turn in my pre-write if I chose another topic?” Yes. Even that decision, to change topics, is relevant. And date and number it. It makes a difference if time goes by (field notes 9/21/99).

A week later, after a lengthy explanation and demonstration about reformulation and how it differs from simple revision of a paper, there was one lone question from the class. “So are all three versions due on October 7, or just the one?” Understandably, the instructor sighed before responding, “All three” (field notes, 9/28/99).

Even at the end of the semester, in a review session for the final exam, the focus sometimes seemed more focused on the mechanics of student responsibility than on the responsibility, as developing teachers, of thinking about what they had learned that semester. The instructor announced his intentions for the review:

“What I wanted to do for review was just go through these questions and ask you to brainstorm things you might say.”

Instead, the PSTs first responded with questions about the mechanics:

PST 1: Should we bring a blue book?

Inst: That’s good, but lined paper is fine.

PST 2: So we can bring one page of notes?

Inst: Yes. I’m not a big exam guy, in the “circle the right answer” kind of stuff.

Doing the one sheet will help you to compile and condense. That will do you as much good in reviewing as anything. (fieldnotes, 12/7/99).

Norms. In addition to the more formal and explicit rules for expected behavior in this group – the rights and responsibilities spelled out in the syllabus and enacted day to day, there were a number of more informal norms that remained unspoken but nonetheless important in the life of the group. One was the “norm” of casual dress, the campus dress of students, rather than the more formal dress of (developing) professional teachers. The instructor modeled this norm from the beginning, wearing shorts and sandals to class, much like the students. Only occasionally did I note, because of its exception to the norm, that the instructor appeared in oxford shirt and tie (e. g., field notes 9/21/99).

The PSTs dressed casually as well, usually in jeans and t-shirts or sweatshirts. Even on the days when they were teaching the class, leading their microteaching sessions, they did not adopt a more professional style of dress, but came dressed as they did on other days, as college students.

Another implicit norm or assumption in the class was that of tolerance of different points of view and different voices. The rule of “there are no right answers” was often conveyed by humor, as in the following instance. In mid-September, the instructor introduced the idea of using verbal scales in response to literature, to engage students through their affective as well as their cognitive response to a piece of literature. For instance, in response to *Catcher in the Rye*, a teacher might ask a student to respond to this statement:

In his relationships with other people, Holden is....

| | | | | |
|---------|---|-----------|---|-----------|
| Very | | Somewhat | | Very |
| sincere | | insincere | | insincere |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

After presenting a series of such statements for the PSTs to respond to on their own, he called time and announced:

“The answer for #1 is 4; the answer for #2 is 3. No I’m just kidding. Of course, they’re all open to individual response. That’s why they’re good to use, because they elicit the students’ responses to the literature without conveying the idea that there *is* a right or wrong answer” (field notes 9/16/99).

A few weeks later, the instructor asked for a couple of volunteers to model a “think-aloud” process of interpreting a poem, “Southbound on the Freeway.” After the two PSTs talked through their interpretation of the poem in front of the class, they turned to the instructor and asked for the “real” interpretation of the poem. Again, he made the joke, “Let’s see. I had the right answer in my pocket somewhere,” suggesting, of course, by way of humor, that there *was* no “right answer” (field notes 10/12/99).

Yet, even in this instance, there is a shadow of another unspoken norm – the expectation that there *is* a right answer and that the teacher *does* hold the right answer, evident in the PSTs’ turning to the instructor for the “real” interpretation of the poem. The communication patterns in the classroom and even the seating arrangement itself continued to reinforce the transmission model of teaching, in which the teacher is the resident expert who transmits his knowledge to the students. Brief analysis of the patterns of communication in class show that they often followed either a simple question-and-answer (Q&A) pattern (where the students pose questions and the teacher answers) or the inquiry-response-evaluation (IRE) pattern, where the teacher poses a question, a student responds, and then the teacher evaluates the response. Note, for

instance, this excerpt from class field notes from early November, when they were discussing different approaches to traditional literary analysis.

PST 1: I don't really like doing writing analysis.

Inst: Yes, and if you get more involved, more invested in this way, it shows.

PST 2: I did an interview with the author, but I felt compelled to "do research" on the author. I felt somehow guilty if I had just "made it up."

PST 3 (to the instructor): How would you get the whole class to do something like this?

Inst: That's an excellent question. But it doesn't have to constrain writing. You can either give them an open choice or give an extensive list of options. I have certain assignments I really believe in, but I also believe in the writer's choice. I couldn't write a book if I didn't want to.

PST 3: But I don't want the students to "fake it." They really have to *know* it.

Inst: There are a variety of ways of "really knowing it." This might be a first step before doing a critical analysis. Either a precursor or a substitute for a formal analysis. Any other responses?

PST 4: I wrote one like this, from Beth's point of view. She is so repressed. You don't get as much of her point of view in the book [*Ordinary People*.]

Inst: Anyone else?

PST 5: The best thing was that I didn't think people could be critical of my point of view.

Inst: Right. There is no one right answer. You've all been taught by people who ask questions where there is only one right answer. How old is Conrad? Where do they live? It's much richer if you ask open-ended questions.

PST 6: I do this even with younger students.

Inst: Yes. I hope you have had experiences like that. The open-ended questions let the person enter into the world of the book. They're more likely to read it again (field notes 11/11/99).

It is somewhat ironic that, in the midst of a discussion in which the explicit message is that "there is no one right answer," the instructor's frequent use of evaluative comments (eg. "right"; "yes"; "that's an excellent question") suggests quite a different norm. The instructor asks for comments and then evaluates how closely they fit his model for the best way of teaching. Small wonder, then, that the PSTs should adopt the typical student question, "What do you want?"

One other unspoken norm of interaction in this group, in keeping with the norm of tolerance of different voices, was that everyone should have an equal opportunity to speak and that no one voice should dominate. This norm, perhaps, became more obvious when it was *not* observed. One of the older, non-traditional PSTs, in particular, was noted for his frequent and lengthy expositions. Indeed, I noted instances of Martin's lengthy expositions in 11 of the 17 class sessions I observed, both in whole group and small group activities. For instance, early in the semester, during one of the reader response group sessions, his voice boomed out over the others in the room: "But can you pull this off? Is there an overriding narrative here?" Another PST argued, "I don't think

she needs that.” But Martin countered, asserting his age and experience to lend authority to his argument:

When I lived in Venezuela for six months, I had a sense of living two lives. I had these two perspectives on the life I was living.... Have you heard of the mock epic before? Chaucer? It’s like the Canterbury Tales as mock epic – the correspondence of the trivial and the larger.... I still think there needs to be an overriding narrative.

Finally, he concluded, a bit self-consciously, “I’ll shut up now. I talk too much.” (field notes, 9/14/99). Unfortunately, he did not often maintain this self-reflective filter. All too often throughout the remainder of the semester, he launched into similar lengthy expositions, ignoring the implicit norm that no one should talk “too much” more than the others.

Negotiation. What also stands out in Martin’s lengthy expositions is his insistence on being right. Rather than engaging others in discussion and negotiation of ideas with his colleagues, he most often took a position – often counter to the position of the instructor and most of the rest of the class – and then argued its merits at length.

Note, for instance, this dialogue between Martin and the instructor on the topic of teaching writing without teaching the rules and terminology of grammar. As usual, Martin took the opposing view:

Martin: How can we talk about grammar without the terminology?

Inst. You talk about the basics – subject, verb, comma splices – but you don’t need a lot. You can talk about these things without wading deeply into

terminology. You learn to write by writing. You learn much less by the naming of the parts of speech. You don't learn the label in isolation from the context.

We're starting to turn the corner with performance-based assessment.

Historically, grammar terminology picked up steam when we stopped teaching Latin as a way to learn English. The focus now is much more on learning by doing – participating, rather than through reified knowledge. It's like learning to drive. You can learn the parts of a car from the book, but you have to finally get behind the wheel if you want to learn how to drive. To be a writer, you have to write.

Martin: But what about all those people who are writing, but *can't* write, can't spell? They use creative spelling. I've hear a lot of criticism about that.

PST 2: I'm in a class where that is going on. But the fact is that their writing is great. If you mark their papers up, they won't write again.

Martin: From my prior tutoring experience....

Inst: I'm not saying there isn't a place for that. But it comes *after* they have something to work with, after the interest in writing is generated. What I'm opposed to is excessive terminology. We'll come back to this on Thursday, but I want to give you some time to work in your groups today (field notes 10/19/99).

Martin continued the argument much longer than the instructor had intended, thereby shortening the time remaining for the class to work in reader response groups. He insisted on being right, and was about to play his trump card, asserting his prior experience, when he was cut off by the instructor. The debate was, for the most part, one

between Martin and the instructor, something of a contest of power and authority, rather than an open negotiation of meaning by the larger group.

True negotiation of ideas was seen infrequently in TELA I; most of the in-class dialogue took the form of question and answer or inquiry-response-evaluation exchanges between individual PSTs and the instructor. One notable example of the failure of the group to negotiate was in the discussion about the grading system in TELA I. The instructor began and ended the discussion reiterating his belief that his narrative feedback was a better form of assessment than traditional grades. He began by saying,

“Marks are not as important feedback as comments. But if you want a grade, we can do that.”

When PSTs responded that they didn't like the absence of grades,

“I want to know where I stand,”

the instructor argued again the value of his system:

“It's not random at all. I find it is more specific than assigning points.”

Again, he conceded,

“I'd be happy to put a grade on any paper,”

but then argued

“from my point of view, you've had that enough in other classes.”

It appeared he was trying to move them out of the role of students and into the role of professionals:

“I think of you as English teachers. Try out what you want to do in your classes.”

Even after continued argument on the part of the PSTs that they were still students in

college, not practicing teachers, and still had to contend with issues of GPA, the instructor continued to insist,

“There are two separate symbol systems – numbers and words don’t jive.

...Translating words into numbers isn’t justified...The best kind of feedback on language is other language. My belief is in language, not numbers.”

After further discussion, he concluded,

“I’ll say it again. I believe in language more than numbers. Else I would have been an engineer. In these three courses, we’re using language to talk about things. That’s what language is for. Numbers won’t save the world. Otherwise I wouldn’t be here.”

He admitted,

“I understand your wanting to know where you are.”

But continued to argue his point:

“This class is different. One of the joys of teaching here is getting top-notch students. If you’re here and you write and revise, you’ll get an A. Where I want you to be focused is on writing better, and convincing your students that words are more important.”

In the end, there was no real negotiation. The instructor’s assessment system stood.

Chapter 5:

Teaching English Language Arts II

The instructor for this semester was Jean, a doctoral student in English education, who was in her final semester at the university. Dr. Fischer was her doctoral advisor and she had taught this course with him before, so she was familiar with and adopted most of his pedagogical framework. The class met in a classroom in the business school; the class met once a week, on Wednesdays, from 5:00 to 7:30 pm.

In TELA II, the cohort consisted of 18 PSTs. Fifteen members of the cohort returned, including five of the six members of the secondary case study sample. Mark, the one member of the primary case sample who had been in this cohort, had left the program between semesters. Three PSTs from TELA I did not return: two of the non-traditional, older students (Diane and Martin) and one of the undergrads (Pam). They had already completed TELA II earlier and rejoined the group in the third semester. Three other PSTs joined the cohort in TELA II: two undergrads (Jay and Brett) and one non-traditional PBS/graduate (Ellen) who was returning for additional teaching certification. Fifteen were undergraduates and three were PBS/graduate students. Fifteen were females and three were males.

| Name | Class |
|----------|----------|
| Amy** | Junior |
| Beth** | Junior |
| Emily** | Junior |
| Jean | Junior |
| Jim | Senior |
| Jordan | Junior |
| Karen | Junior |
| Kevin | Junior |
| Laura | PBS/Grad |
| Linda | Junior |
| Melanie | PBS/Grad |
| Mindy** | Senior |
| Rachel** | Senior |
| Sarah | Senior |
| Tracy | Junior |
| | |
| Ellen | PBS/Grad |
| Jay | Junior |
| Brett | Junior |

Domain

During the second semester, the values and beliefs of the cohort began to change.

The values made explicit in the syllabus in TELA I remained in TELA II:

- learning through practice
- learning as social
- wholistic assessment

But the ways those values became manifest in the class activities differed, as did a number of other more implicit values.

Learning through Practice: Discussing Literature. Learning through practice remained an important value for the cohort this semester. However, the focus of practice shifted from learning to write and learning through writing to learning through discussion and learning how to lead good student discussions. There was an intentional shift in focus

from literacy to “oracy, or engaging in presentational and exploratory talk” (TELA II syllabus, WS 2000). Reader response groups were replaced by small group and whole class discussions as the dominant form of “practice” in the classroom.

Perhaps to facilitate this shift from learning through reading and writing to talking, the instructor re-oriented the physical context of the classroom from the very first class meeting, asking the PSTs to rearrange their chairs to form a large circle. This arrangement seemed to help in leading whole class discussions, since the PSTs could now see and talk to one another. This classroom arrangement predominated in all class sessions, except when they were engaged in small group activities.

There was also much more “talk” online this semester. The instructor and the PSTs exchanged 460 messages through the online course discussion board. The use of the class discussion board will be examined in more detail below.

Learning through Practice: Microteaching and Field Experiences. Microteaching and field experiences remained important venues for learning through practice this second semester. Each counted for 20% of the course grade. PSTs worked together in teams of two to four members to develop curriculum units around the young adult novels they read (Cormier’s *The Chocolate War*, Sachar’s *Holes*, Myers’s *Monster*, Block’s *Girl Goddess #9*, Hesse’s *Out of the Dust*, and Burgess’s *Smack*) and practice teaching to their peers in class. As in the first semester, however, their approach to microteaching remained fairly casual. There was obviously less pressure involved in teaching to and being evaluated by their peers than in teaching in a “real” classroom. The “practice” they engaged in was more about developing and trying out classroom activities with their peers than authentic practice with actual students.

Field experiences remained an important part of learning and became more integral to the class, with frequent discussion of issues confronted in the field talked about both in class and online. As in TELA I, many of the early references to the field experience component of the class were brief references to procedural issues, such as a handout of field assignments (1/26/00) and encouragement to get into the field as early as possible and begin to look for a research question (2/2/00). The instructor cautioned them to collaborate with their cooperating teachers rather than appear critical of them in their inquiry. “Be tactful. Be conscious of how things might be perceived. For instance, if you’re doing a survey, you might have them look it over first” (field notes, 2/2/00).

But by the next week, the PSTs were beginning to draw on their experiences in the field in class discussion. For instance, their conversation about how to facilitate good classroom discussion and good models they had seen in the field led to a modification in the syllabus in order to accommodate a visit from one of their cooperating teachers to talk about using the Socratic seminar method.

PST 1: We start the sentence and let them finish. We help them become more critical readers. I remember in high school, by the end, we were carrying the discussion and the teacher didn’t say much.

Inst: What do you do if the students don’t respond or haven’t read the material? A talking classroom doesn’t just happen. It develops. Maybe a “I didn’t read today” card. Or maybe start with journaling might be a way to get started, but not every day. Maybe small groups.

PST 2: I saw a teacher in a field experience do something really crazy. She only had discussion once every two months. And no one participated!

Inst: How do you get it going? Q&A isn't discussion.

PST 3: I am in a classroom where we are using the Socratic seminar method, where you start with a question and try to encourage everyone to participate in the discussion.

Inst: You're in Dan Smith's classroom, aren't you? Yes, he's really good at that.

He even has done some presentations on doing Socratic seminars. I could talk to him about coming to meet with us sometime this semester, if you'd like (field notes 2/9/00)

Two weeks later, comments on their field experiences led to a discussion of the effect of seating arrangements on class interaction.

Inst: Have you all been to your field experiences by now? Good. There have been some good questions posted on the discussion board for inquiry topics. How many of you have an idea by now?

PST 1: My field experience is going so well that I can't find a question.

Inst: It doesn't have to be a problem. You might ask yourself "Why is it going so well?"

PST 2: I'm noticing the teacher's attitude differs from one hour to the next.

Inst: You could do a project around that, but be careful how you frame it.

PST 2: I notice a difference in language – in the way the teacher addresses the students.

Inst: You could frame it as a difference between classes. It could be several factors, not just the teacher. What stands out?

PST 2: I think seating is important. The whole idea of sitting in rows seems so strange. In the real world, you never do this.

PST 3: It's a matter of control. In a circle, we all share.

Inst: But sitting in rows, the students are less exposed.

PST 4: How do you get students to talk to each other, not just to the teacher?

(field notes 2/23/00)

Similar questions emerged in their online discussions, grounded in their field experiences. One of the ongoing themes of discussion was centered around this issue of how to engage students in discussion in class. In this entry in early March, one PST shared with the group what she had learned from her experience in helping to lead a class discussion. She was beginning to learn that the teacher doesn't always need to respond; indeed, sometimes it is better to remain silent and let the students carry the discussion.

Current Forum: What you know, need to know, want to know

Date: 07-Mar-2000 16:11:03

Author: -----

Subject: teaching literature

Today in my class the students were reading an essay by Russell Baker. I brought in Growing Up, and we compared his description of Morrisonville summers to his description of a summer in the essay they were reading. The teacher and I posed the question of: How is his writing different in the two texts even though he is talking about the same thing? For a second, no one responded, but then we started getting some very insightful comments. The students pointed out things that I hadn't realized. It was great! After the class, my teacher said something to me that really ties in with all of the discussion we are having about reader-response and how to teach literature. He said, "As a teacher it's very hard to read something and then not say anything about what you just read or the question you posed. But it's important to just let them go and see what they come up with. Sometimes you're not going to get any responses, but more often than not they'll come up with more ideas and comments that are very thoughtful and interesting when you don't say anything than when you do." I think this is a great observation and something we can all learn from!

Another common thread of discussions was on how to decide what literature to present to their students to read. Note these two entries from early in the semester:

Current Forum: What you know, need to know, want to know

Date: 27-Jan-2000 00:57:31

Author: -----

Subject: Literature Selection

We've briefly touched on this in class, but I still have a few questions about how teachers determine what to use in the classroom for different age levels. Specifically, who decides what books will be used for particular grades (for instance, Romeo and Juliet is often taught to freshmen and then Julius Caesar to sophomores; likewise, To Kill a Mockingbird is often a sophomore book)? How does a teacher determine what books to start with at the beginning of the year (prior to knowing much of anything about the students)? Are there lists detailing what books are usually taught at specific grade levels?

Current Forum: What you know, need to know, want to know

Date: 27-Jan-2000 13:24:30

Author: -----

Subject: Re: Literature Selection

Along the same lines, I want to know WHY teachers chose the books they do? What types of things should we look for when choosing a book to use in the classroom? Last semester, my field experience teacher had her class reading "They Cage the Animals at Night" and she told me that she felt this book had no literary merit, but that the kids loved it and even reluctant readers would like it and then want to read the rest of the course's required books. Is this a good enough reason to choose a book? It seems strange to me.

By the end of the semester, the PSTs appeared to have a better handle on answering this question themselves, based on their field experiences. One day, in the midst of a heated discussion about whether they would teach the young adult novel of the day (*Girl Goddess #9*) in their classrooms, several PSTs drew upon their grounding in the realities of their field experience classroom and the surrounding community to support their point of view.

PST 1: My students could handle it.

PST 2: Mine too. I did a survey. They said they would rather have assigned books that challenge them.

PST 3: But those are AP students.

PST 4: I taught at Appleton [a small, rural district]. No way.

PST 5: No way would I do it with my class at Longview.

(field notes, 4/19/00)

Learning is Social. The value of learning as a social activity remained important in TELA II. The syllabus repeated the statement found in TELA I, that “the development of literacy is social in nature” and requires “consistent, active interaction with our peers other diverse groups.” This is the one set of values that appeared to grow in importance the most from TELA I to TELA II. A number of factors seemed to have an effect on the social climate of the classroom.

Physical context. One factor was the physical context of the classroom. As the PSTs themselves noted, in the discussion cited above, when students are seated in a circle, facing each other, they are more likely to participate in the discussion and more likely to talk to one another rather than only to the instructor. One PST noted the importance of the setting for opening up discussion during an interview that semester, contrasting it with the classroom setting the previous semester.

Last semester it was different. I think it was how the class was set up. Now we all sit in a circle where you can see everyone and it’s more open to discussion. I don’t think I said two words last semester and most of it because he almost intimidated me sometimes. I didn’t really talk. It’s almost like we didn’t have as much opportunity for discussion (interview WS 00).

Another PST posed the question about the effects of seating arrangements on class participation as her action research question from her field experience.

Current Forum: "Burning Questions"

Date: 16-Feb-2000 13:46:55

Author: -----

Subject: students willingness to participate

I would just like to post something I observed in my first field experience yesterday. The class I am in is a junior AP composition and literature class. The kids in the class are very self-motivated and seem to enjoy the class. One thing I found very interesting that happened during the lesson yesterday was that while having a discussion about the novel they are reading, *All the Kings Men*, they were in a circle half the time and in rows the other half. While the kids were in a circle there was a lot of lively discussion. The teacher barely had to say a word; the kids were even asking each other questions and directing their comments to each other. It was wonderful. Then Mr. B. had them get into rows so he could use the overhead to post significant points from this one chapter. He still wanted to have the students continue the discussion, just based on the overhead prompts. When they were in rows, the talking just died. Kids rarely raised their hands and it was like pulling teeth to get them to talk. My question is--does this have to do with the setup of the room? Are students more willing or do they feel more comfortable talking when the room is setup in the relaxed circle format as opposed to the standard rows? I think the answer is yes.

To Know as you are Known. A second factor may have been the presence of a new instructor, which gave cause for them to make introductions at the start of class. The instructor asked each person to create a nametag to post on his or her desk, clearly visible for her to see, so that she could begin to associate names with faces. She also asked them to use the online discussion forum as a place to introduce themselves to one another.

Discussion Board

[Introduce yourself!](#)

Post a message introducing yourself--share anything you would like! Also, tell us about a book you remember reading in high school and why you remember it. . . [31 Messages]

PSTs responded early and often on this forum. All but two of the PSTs posted introductions and reflections on their high school reading within the first couple of weeks of class.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| my introduction | 06-Jan-2000 |
| A Little About Me | 13-Jan-2000 |
| ----- in 732 words or less... | 13-Jan-2000 |
| in a nutshell | 13-Jan-2000 |
| ME | 13-Jan-2000 |
| hello | 14-Jan-2000 |
| Hi | 14-Jan-2000 |
| Sum of the parts | 14-Jan-2000 |
| All about Sarah | 17-Jan-2000 |
| I forgot!!! | 17-Jan-2000 |
| Hello! | 17-Jan-2000 |
| Hi | 17-Jan-2000 |
| my life | 17-Jan-2000 |
| HeLIO tO eVeRyOnE! | 18-Jan-2000 |
| Hello Everyone | 18-Jan-2000 |
| are you kidding me? | 18-Jan-2000 |
| Introducing Myself | 18-Jan-2000 |
| Abridged song of myself | 19-Jan-2000 |
| ----- Intro... | 01-Feb-2000 |
| ----- Remembered YA Book... | 07-Feb-2000 |
| Me | 20-Apr-2000 |

Interestingly, it was two of the three males in class who were late in making these introductions online, perhaps valuing the relational aspect of this learning experience less than others. Their introductions were posted later in the semester, one on February 1 and the other not until April 20, more as a means of completing an assignment than as a form of introduction to the group.

Breaking Bread Together. Yet a third factor in the social milieu of this class may have been created by the context of the meeting time: 5:00-7:30 in the evening. This

meeting time around the dinner hour offered the opportunity for socializing around food. At the halfway point of class, somewhere between 6 and 6:30, depending on class activities, the group took a break. By the end of the first class, PSTs had already created a sign-up sheet to schedule who would be responsible for bringing food each week. Food ranged from delivery pizza to homemade brownies (with the recipe posted online afterwards). The food break also created time for socializing. PSTs talked about other classes and other things going on in their lives. This social aspect of the cohort was so highly valued that the group had a closing celebration in May, gathering at a restaurant adjacent to campus, to celebrate the end of the semester, the instructor's graduation, and the birth of a child to one of the PSTs.

Participation. The shared value in learning through interaction with each other became manifest in the frequency and quality of participation in class and online. In both, the PSTs often responded to each other, without need for facilitation or intervention from the instructor, demonstrating the kind of discussions they hoped to make possible for their students. Although they talked about trying to figure out how to *lead* good discussions, they already knew how to *engage* in them – how to learn through interaction with one another – and clearly valued this form of learning over teacher-led didactic lessons.

Shared values about what and how to teach. As the semester unfolded, other shared values of this cohort became apparent through in class and online discussions. One of the common themes of discussion was centered around the question of “Why teach young adult literature?” in general and “Why teach this novel?” in particular.

As early as January 19, the group was discussing the value of teaching literature.

Why do we teach literature?

PST 1: For the diversity of ideas, to find people and ideas that are different.

PST 2: And to find people *like* you.

PST 3: It helps you make connections with people – not just the author, but others who have read it.

PST 4: It's important to know your students, to know what to recommend.

PST 5: What are they ready for?

PST 6: It also teaches you how to write.

PST 7: The key thing is making it relevant to the students' lives.

The next week (1/26/00), they continued the discussion, refining the question by focusing on the debate about teaching the classics versus teaching contemporary works.

Through brainstorming a list of characteristics of the classics and of young adult literature, they began to see that the distinctions between the two are often simplistic and artificial. There are works that can be considered as contemporary novels appropriate for young adults and at the same time, considered classics, such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Huck Finn*.

The following week (2/2/00), the discussion continued. The group compiled a list of reasons why and why not to teach young adult literature:

| Why? | Why not? |
|---|---|
| Student interest | YA is trash, pulp fiction, simplistic |
| Relevance to their concerns | Characters are often stereotyped |
| Expose them to a variety of experiences | It doesn't expose them to higher issues |

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Improve their reading skills | It's not needed for college |
| Increase their desire to read | The issues are too controversial |

Many of these issues continued to surface throughout the semester, as they considered whether or not they would teach a particular novel in their classrooms. For instance, when they talked about the value of teaching Sachar's *Holes* in March, the discussion centered around the advantages and disadvantages of it being a simple novel. At what age would it be appropriate? Is it overly-simple for some? Might it engage other readers and help them to improve their reading skills? Are there other ways of approaching the novel? The discussion began online and continued into the class meeting on March 15, and then continued online in the following days.

Current Forum: Holes
Date: 12-Mar-2000 14:21:13
Author: -----
Subject: Holes!!!

I have really enjoyed this book!!! It is fun, easy to read, and a great book for a wide range of ages and grades. Last week I subbed in a fourth grade classroom and several students were reading this book. I've also seen 8th, 9th and 10th grade students reading this book. I love how their are so many sub-plots that come together in this book, and I like the wide range of characters. Even though I really like this book, I feel that it is not a very challenging book for high school students. I think it would work "best" in a junior high setting. However, it is also a good book for high school students who have difficulty reading.

Current Forum: Holes
Date: 13-Mar-2000 09:04:46
Author: -----
Subject: Holes

I really enjoyed this book. I had the same feeling about age level as M----- did. I think it is a little easy for high school students. But I do think it is a good book and worth reading in a high school classroom.

I used to love it when a teacher gave us a "break" book in between the hard ones, like reading the Chocolate War in between Wuthering Heights and A Tale of Two Cities. I think Holes could be used that way. I think there are also a lot of ways to make reading Holes worthwhile for older students. Maybe it could be an introduction to mixed plot lines and changing time periods. The students could try their hand at writing a story with double plot lines. There are lots of ways to make Holes "appropriate" for older students--other than the fact that it is just a good book.

Current Forum: Holes

Date: 13-Mar-2000 16:56:39

Author: -----

Subject: Holes

I thought this book was cute, but I don't think I would teach it to my high school class. It seems too simplistic to me. I was kind of hoping the book would have more depth to it, but it never really did. I liked how it tied in the historical aspects of Stanley's and Zero's lives, but it all seemed a little too ironic for my taste. I think it would be something most middle school kids would enjoy, and I would consider using it in a 7th grade class. It is a real self-esteem booster, which is something that all middle schoolers need. The underdogs save the day basically, so it promotes positive outcomes. The use of symbolism was cute, but it, again, seemed way too obvious to me. I am interested to see how the Holes group presents this book to our class on Wednesday.

The in-class discussion echoed these concerns about the simplicity of the book. Some found that factor beneficial, while others expressed concern that it would not engage their students. A couple of the PSTs argued that the book was more complex than it appears at first and that creative teaching strategies could be used to engage students with this book.

PST 1: I liked J---s comment online about using it as a "breather" book. I think it would have a place in a 10th grade curriculum.

PST 2: This book is perfect for kids in my field experience who are trying to pick a free-reading book.

PST 3: In my class, they're so much more advanced than this. I would probably use it for 7th or 8th graders.

PST 1: You could pull out parts – sub-plots – and work with them.

PST 4: Like the ending. It was well-crafted. You could do different things with it.

PST 5: You could focus on the justice system.

PST 6: In my field experience last year, we did a simple novel. I talked with the teacher. She said it was a good place to begin. But I think there's more to its literary merit than that.

PST 7: Yes, I think it has a lot more complexity than we are giving it credit for. It reminds me of *Like Water for Chocolate*. I don't know how you would bring that out. Maybe do a unit on folklore.

PST 3: Or on symbolism.

After class, several others followed up on the discussion online, arguing the value of the book as a young adult novel.

| |
|-----------------------------------|
| Current Forum: Holes |
| Date: 16-Mar-2000 13:02:10 |
| Author: ----- |
| Subject: Realism |

Last night, we kept coming back to how *Holes* is not a very realistic story - that we kept saying to ourselves, "Come on! That couldn't happen!" In other words, we all seem to say this story is not very plausible.

Here's my question: Does it matter if this isn't a very realistic work? Did Sachar intend it to be? He also wrote the *Wayside School* series, and if my memory serves me well, weird, unlikely stuff happens in those books as well. Does the "realism" of a book determine whether or not it is a good book? I'm not sure that it does. If we limit stories to whether or not they are realistic, we are severely limiting the amount of imagination and creativity that we find in many children's, young adults, or even adults' novels. Maybe the problem isn't whether or not the book is realistic, but whether or not we think the author is trying to pass it off as realistic. In this case, I think Sachar is just trying to tell an interesting, inventive, imaginative story, and he seems to have succeeded.

Current Forum: Holes

Date: 22-Mar-2000 15:08:17

Author: -----

Subject: I loved this book!

Okay, after my little soapbox thing last week about this book, I was going to get on here last Thursday and post my reaction to this whole thing. However, I'm a bum and didn't get around to it.

So, anyway, this book was completely awesome. I've already made myself pretty clear about that. Not to mention the fact that I've also compared the book to *Like Water for Chocolate*. You've got to read that book! The thing that interested me so much in this book was the interweaving of the family history, the tall tale, and the symbolism. Those characteristics are what made the book so well-written, intricate, and, need I say it again(?), complex. I was fascinated as I was reading the book because I couldn't wait to figure out how all the things fit together.

As I said in class, the great thing about literature is the many ways you can teach the vastly different books. For instance, teaching *Holes* in a classroom may be a way to reach those that don't like to read and those that think the book is simple. How many of us have read a book and thought it was simple only to find out that the book had multiple layers underneath that we never noticed? For instance, I didn't even think about the justice thing in *Holes*. I've also done a lot of classics that I read and didn't understand the underlying themes.

A perfect example--I read *Animal Farm* in high school because I wanted to read it. My good friend thought I was stupid. He said, "It's just a dumb book about animals talking and trying to walk." Okay, so he didn't get the political underplay in the book. Could he still have enjoyed the book and gotten something out of it? I think so. It's this kind of thing that I'm talking about when I say we can teach the books differently for different groups of students.

Anyway, there's my two cents worth again! I'll stop harping on it now.

The online discussion of Myer's *Monster* the following week, by contrast, focused more on the difference in genre in this work.

Current Forum: Monster

Date: 17-Mar-2000 10:20:35

Author: -----

Subject: Monster

Wow! Talk about different! I didn't intend to read this book so quickly, but I just couldn't put it down. I loved how the author approached the book through the eyes of Steve as a movie director. I have never seen a novel written this way. I also liked how little journal clips were included throughout the book, to allow the reader to get inside Steve's head. I think this book would go over really well in a high school classroom. Not only does it provide the opportunity to act out the book because of its format, it allows students to see the other side of punishment through the eyes of a 16-year-old. I also liked the courtroom setting. It gave me a better understanding of how the law works. It's one thing to watch a courtroom scene on TV; it's another thing to actually read it as it occurs.

| |
|--|
| Current Forum: Monster |
| Date: 19-Mar-2000 23:44:50 |
| Author: ----- |
| Subject: Meanderings on Monster |

Wow! This is an amazing book - very intelligent, well-crafted, and gripping. I flew through it in a couple of sittings. I could see the movie playing in my head as I read the camera angles, stage directions, and dialogue. I even developed what I thought the character looked like throughout the play and could see all the details in the courtroom. I was so concerned about being surprised at the end, that I read it line by line, covering up the rest of the page so I wouldn't accidentally see the verdict if I glanced over.

Parts of the novel really stood out for me. One was the page in which he had written "monster" and the attorney crossed it out several times when that was what he had been talking about on the page. It was like I had his actual manuscript in front of me, sort of momentarily bridging that gap between fiction and reality, which is a somewhat jarring experience. I thought that was just brilliant.

I also enjoyed his commentary on the courtroom and the non-courtroom scenes he included. This sort of framed the story, showing his character, interests, etc. I see the journal as getting inside his head and the screenplay as the medium for relaying events. At one point, he includes a scene from his youth to make him look less like a monster, and he tells us this. For some reason, this scene struck me in particular. At the time, I wondered if he was guilty and that was his motive for including the scene or if he was innocent and wanted to boost himself a little.

Another moment that struck me was toward the end when he cuts to the film class and his teacher tells him about how having fancy effects/tricks with the camera technician usually indicates that the filmmaker is "worried either about his story or about his ability to tell it" (214). Immediately after that, Steven opts for a split screen effect - kind of interesting in light of what he just showed his film teacher saying. What exactly are we to make of this?

The ensuing discussion in class, however, centered on whether or not they would want to introduce such controversial issues in their classrooms. In general, they appeared to concur that this would be a good novel for introducing the issues of racism and abuses of the justice system.

PST 1: I don't think the rape scene is explicit or graphic enough to be a problem.

PST 2: What would be your cut-off age for using this?

PST 3: I'd use it for older students, say 9th-12th grade.

PST 2: I'd aim it for about 16 year olds.

PST 4: It gets them into something serious, into real issues.

By contrast, the online and in-class discussion revealed that many of the PSTs appeared to dislike *Girl Goddess #9* for what they saw as its simplistic way of addressing controversial issues (field notes 4/19/00).

Current Forum: Girl Goddess Number 9
Date: 18-Apr-2000 12:17:59
Author: -----
Subject: Girl Goddess

OK...so I'm thinking that this book is not going to find a place in my future lesson plans. The fact that it dealt with so many controversial issues dealing with sexuality among young adults (old as well) was a great topic but I feel like this book did a poor job of dealing with these issues. Like J--- said, I felt like this book was somewhat of a let down and I think that if I was going to try and "tackle" the issue of sexuality/homosexuality/dual sexuality in my class I am sure that I could find some other book for my students to read. I of course would make this book readily available for students on my shelves, I don't think that it is a bad topic, just not a great book.

Current Forum: Girl Goddess Number 9
Date: 19-Apr-2000 09:22:16
Author: -----
Subject: Not what I expected

Somehow when I started GG#9, I thought it would be powerful and make a statement, and make me mad or something. When I was done, I thought, "Oh was that all it was?" I found nothing worthwhile in the book to teach. Of course it has a point and reading it would be fine (so I would put it on my bookshelf) but I wouldn't teach it. It's not that the issue is controversial, I just think that if I were going to tackle that issue, I could find something more powerful and well written.

PST 1: I wouldn't use it, at least not all of it, because it reinforces stereotypes.

PST 2: It almost seems like she is writing a book to prove how cool she is.

PST 3: It wasn't so much that it was shocking. It was that it was exploring these issues so shallowly, almost like a pulp novel.

PST 1: But I went online and found that there are a million girls out there who *love* it.

PST 4: Did anyone here like it? I liked it.

PST 5: I like it, but that doesn't mean that I would teach it.

PST 6: I think it can be good for reluctant readers. I know one who is pretty much a non-reader who got into it and bought her own copy.

Later in the discussion that evening, emphasis shifted to whether or not they would be willing to introduce the issues raised in the book: peer pressure, promiscuous sex, and drug use. It is interesting to note that even the PSTs themselves skirted around the problem of explicitly identifying the controversial issues, failing to answer the question the first time the instructor posed it.

PST 1: I wouldn't teach it, but I would have it available in the room. I wouldn't want to get into all those issues.

PST 2: I might use some of it, but not the whole book.

PST 3: I would like to use it; I'd like to talk about some of those issues. If it got too emotional, I'd tone it down by using an exercise that focuses on their senses.

Inst: What issues?

PST 4: The thing about introducing issues is that some books might be better written. How many of these issues could you deal with here? Peer pressure? Is this pulp fiction? There seems to be a stigma attached to romance.

PST 1: What about the identity thing? She's cool....according to who? And what is cool? You could do a lesson on breaking down barriers.

PST 5: Could you do that honestly?

PST 6: She seems like she's on a crusade, making more of an issue, but doesn't really deal with it.

Inst: Let's get it out on the table. The issue is homosexuality.

PST 4: Not necessarily. I think it's more about promiscuous sex and drug use.

PST 7: The problem is that she uses these cardboard characters.

PST 8: I figured out why I didn't like it. It seems to condone teenage sex. It know it happens, but I don't want to appear that I condone it.

PST 6: But why *would* you teach it? Not that I'm afraid of teaching it.

PST 8: I might suggest it for a choice for free-reading. I know my students in my field experience this semester could handle it.

This theme of student choice in the curriculum appeared frequently throughout the semester, not only around the issues of what books to teach, but also in the very structure of the course itself. Nearly half (6 of 14) of the class sessions were led by the PSTs as they led their peers through a series of microteaching activities centered around one of the young adult novels in class.

This shared belief in a student-centered curriculum was also reflected in the discussion early in the semester in class (1/19/00) and online around "what you know and what you want/need to know." Issues that arose during the in class discussion included:

- How do you engage students, particularly those who have trouble in reading and writing?
- How do you decide what to teach?
- How do you design curriculum guides and daily lesson plans?

Most of these expressed needs and wants were addressed through subsequent class activities, through discussions in class and online and the design, delivery, and feedback on their microteaching lessons, as noted above.

Assessment. There were few changes in the pedagogy for assessment or even in the relative weighting of activities in the grading between TELA I and TELA II, as shown in Table 2. The biggest differences – the decreased weighting on formal writing assignments and increased weighting on participation and discussion in class and online – were in keeping with the shift in emphasis from learning through writing (TELA I) to learning through discussion (TELA II). There was also a change in final assessment, from a formal in-class final examination to a final combination of a take-home exam and a reflective essay on what they had learned in TELA II. This shift from the reification of learning (formal papers) to participation (in class and online discussion) and the change in the final assessment may have contributed to a more relaxed attitude about student assessment in TELA II.

| Activity | TELA I | TELA II |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Formal Papers | 25% | 10% |
| Microteaching | 20% | 20% |
| Field Experience and Action Research | 20% | 20% |
| Dialectical Journals | 20% | 10% |
| Final Exam | 15% | 20% |
| Web Board Discussion | | 10% |
| Attendance and Participation | | 5% |
| Final Course Reflection | | 5% |

Explicit discussion of student assessment only surfaced once, in the 8th week of class. The instructor raised the issue of using rubrics for assessing student work. Subsequent discussion that day focused on the advantages and disadvantages of using rubrics and the larger cultural forces that require the use of grading in the first place. Comparison was made between “wholistic assessment” in which the teacher gives a written response to a paper, without a rubric, and use of rubric-based feedback. One PST

noted one advantage of giving rubrics was that students “would know what was expected of them.” Another PST argued that just giving comments without using a rubric “doesn’t give rich feedback – you could be good in one area and not in another.” He further noted that rubrics allow students to “see realistic benchmarks.” A third PST noted that assessment without rubrics “just leaves it open for a teacher to give an A if he likes it and a B or a C if not.”

One PST raised a concern about the use of rubrics leading to excessively marking down a paper because of mechanical errors, such as spelling errors. Another responded that this could be addressed by “weighted criteria, reflecting what your values are -- the mechanics versus the strength of the prose.” In general, the PSTs appeared to agree that the use of assessment rubrics was valuable, particularly when confronted with one of the realities of secondary teaching: “grading hundreds of papers.”

PSTs noted that there were places where schools were moving away from grades and scores, citing a college in California that had recently announced a change towards using narrative assessment. But they also acknowledged larger cultural forces beyond their control that put an emphasis on grades, such as competition for scholarships.

PST 1: But realistically, we’re talking about high school. They’re training for college.

PST 2: Even the A+ schools – the very language of it suggests these standards.

Inst: Yes, there’s that threat of “when you get to college.” We build up that rewards system. The very language we use does make a difference.

PST 3: I want to teach without grades. It fascinates me that people obsess about grades.

PST 4: Yes, I'd like to encourage them to strengthen their inner sense of being able to assess their own work. Maybe use more peer editing, explaining that you're trying to foster a sense of being able to evaluate your own work.

PST 5: But I think of trying this out in my field experience – not giving a grade on an assignment – and I think they students might not think it's as valuable. I don't think I will try it.

Inst: But who is ever motivated by a low grade to do more?

PST 6: I got a C on a paper and I revised it.

PST 1: Yes, but was it the grade or the feedback that made you revise it?

PST 7: I had a teacher who used comments to motivate. We exchanged papers anonymously. The person who got my paper ridiculed it. It made me mad, so I tried harder.

PST 6: Grades matter for things like scholarships.

PST 1: But do they make you happier in life? It got so bad in high school that I quit for a while. It's not the end of the world.

PST 8: You know, in the 17th and 18th century in England – in places like Oxford and Cambridge – you just read the canon, talked to your profs, and then they decided if you got a degree.

Inst: Yes, the liberal arts education. But most of us wouldn't even get in to a school like that. It's a good thing that more can go to college today, but the flip side is that the increase in numbers has moved us to more of a factory model. Our whole culture is so materialistic today.

PST 9 (to PST 4): I think what you're talking about is getting students thinking differently – about learning, not just about grades.

PST 10: It's a matter of whether you're there just to fulfill the requirements or there to learn.

In general, it appeared that they had moved beyond personal concerns about their own grades to concerns about the affect of different assessment strategies on their students. (Note that the final comment cited in the discussion above was made by the same PST who had been such a vocal opponent to wholistic assessment in TELA I.)

Technology. There also appeared to be a shift in the value placed on technology in TELA II. The presence of a Blackboard CourseInfo website for the course from the beginning of the semester made the use of technology more visible. The site provided standard course information such as the course syllabus, contact information for the instructor, a roster of students, announcements, course readings, and assignments, as well as a document outlining expectations for their field experiences and action research project and a web-based discussion board for the group.

From the first week of class, there was an explicit expectation that the PSTs would log into and regularly use the site to get course information and to interact with each other online. The expectation made explicit in the syllabus was that they were to each post “at least one time per week.” The objective was to use the discussion board “to communicate with each other, bounce off each other's ideas, use the list as a place to continue class discussion after we run out of time in Wednesday nights.” In addition, PSTs were to post six to eight dialectical journal entries online in response to the class readings.

The instructor realistically acknowledged problems in getting on the site early in the semester.

Inst: Are you having problems getting onto the site? It can be slow sometimes with the number of people now using it. Has everyone been online and posted something? (1/26/00)

Inst: Is it going any better this week?

PST 1: Yes, although it seems to depend on what time of day you log on, and where you access it from. (2/2/00)

However, she regularly encouraged them to make regular use of the site, encouraging them to “read things online; make fewer printouts” (2/2/00) and to “get online sooner so you can continue the dialogue” (3/8/00). And they did. Participation on the discussion board this semester was high. Overall, the PSTs posted 460 messages across 33 forums on the TELA II discussion board.

telall: Teaching of English/Language Arts II

Discussion Board

1

[Introduce yourself!](#)

Post a message introducing yourself--share anything you would like! Also, tell us about a book you remember reading in high school and why you remember it. . . [31 Messages]

2

[images of students and teachers](#)

Continue our discussion last night about societal images/stereotypes of students *and* teachers and the effects (positive and negative) that they have. Has anyone thought about this since last night? [4 Messages]

| | | |
|----|--|------------------|
| 3 | <u>General questions and comments</u> Please post any questions or comments here. | [3 Messages] |
| 4 | <u>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</u> Discuss the novel here. | [31 Messages] |
| 5 | <u>Dialectical journals/Reading responses</u> Post DJ/response #7 here about one of the four articles on reserve in the R. | [140 Messages] |
| 6 | <u>What you know, need to know, want to know</u> about teaching English. Post more here if you would like. | [18 Messages] |
| 7 | <u>Why use YA literature?</u> Ramble on/be profound about this subject here. | [10 Messages] |
| 8 | <u>Language as "power, bondage, and imagination"</u> How does Angelou use language in her memoir as a means of power, bondage, or imagination? In other words, can you think of specific examples from the book when language is used for the purposes of displaying power, oppressing others, or being creative? If so, what are they? | [4 Messages] |
| 9 | <u>Growing Up</u> Discuss the book here. | [7 Messages] |
| 10 | <u>Language in Baker</u> Start talking here about how language is used for "power, bondage, and imagination" in Baker's book. | [3 Messages] |
| 11 | <u>"Burning Questions"</u> After you start going to your field experiences, post questions, comments, ideas for action research projects here. | [32 Messages] |
| 12 | <u>Rachel's questions</u> What is the role of the English teacher? Why are we teaching literature? Ponder these questions here. | [14 Messages] |

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| 13 | Comments/Questions about Language Papers which are "in progress" here! Talk to me and to each other. | [No Messages] |
| 14 | "Situated Performance" Post here your response to the "situated performance" given out in class last night, i.e., teaching <u>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</u> . | [14 Messages] |
| 15 | Socratic Seminars So, what do you think? | [4 Messages] |
| 16 | THE CHOCOLATE WAR Discuss the book here. | [11 Messages] |
| 17 | Progress of Action Research Discuss the progress of your research here, ask questions, etc. | [11 Messages] |
| 18 | Reponses to Chocolate War group Please post responses to the group teaching last Wednesday, here. Also--group members, you can post your self evals here, or send them privately to me. | [8 Messages] |
| 19 | Holes Post responses to *Holes* here. | [14 Messages] |
| 20 | Reading Workshop Questions Questions that came up in DJ's that we can address here: 1. Is it okay to allow students free choice in books to read? How often/when should we assign books? 2. How does reading workshop satisfy curricular requirements? Like MAP standards? 3. How do you feel about taking class time for silent reading? 4. What to do with those kids who talk and "act out" during free reading time? Explore these ideas! | [6 Messages] |
| 21 | Responses to *Holes* Group Please respond to their teaching here. Also, self evals can be posted here, or sent privately to me. | [9 Messages] |

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|----|--|-----------------|
| 22 | Monster | [10 Messages] |
| | Respond to *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers here. | |
| 23 | Responses to Monster Group | [6 Messages] |
| | Post here, please. | |
| 24 | Out of the Dust | [16 Messages] |
| | Discuss the book here, please. | |
| 25 | Responses to Out of the Dust group | [1 Message] |
| | Post here | |
| 26 | Girl Goddess Number 9 | [12 Messages] |
| | Post here! | |
| 27 | Smack | [5 Messages] |
| | Talk here! | |
| 28 | Ideas for take-home final exam | [6 Messages] |
| | What are you thinking about for your "pairings" of books for your final? Ideas? Share them here! | |
| 29 | Responses to Girl Goddess Group | [6 Messages] |
| | post here. | |
| 30 | Brainstorm list of questions for student teacher panel | [3 Messages] |
| | here. | |
| 31 | Final Reflective Response | [18 Messages] |
| | Think back on the semester and write about what you think you have learned. Have you learned anything about your "teaching self"? | |
| | You might concentrate on any of the following themes that have reappeared throughout the semester. Or you can talk about other issues you found significant. | |
| | --visual thinking/learning | |
| | --YA and classic books | |
| | --why use literature? | |

--what are our goals as lit teachers?
 --is it important that kids relate to books?
 --how do we choose books to use?
 --are some books just better than others?
 --how do we use reader response theory in our classrooms? Is a response-centered curriculum something we desire? To what extent?

32 ▼

[Responses to Smack Group](#)

Post here.

[No Messages]

1 ▼

[Post Final Exams here](#)

if possible. Then, everyone can print a copy for themselves. They might come in handy! And it is interesting to see how everyone else handled the assignment.

[3 Messages]

A little more than half of the forums (n=19, 58%) were topics driven by the syllabus – introductions (1), one for each of the novels they read as a class (8) and one to provide peer feedback on each of the microteaching sessions (6), the dialectical journals (1), and forums for the final exam (2) and final course reflection (1). The remaining forums, however, were generated in response to topics that emerged in discussion in class, such as the forum titled “Rachel’s Questions,” established to continue the discussion about questions that one PST raised in class on February 2: What is the role of the English teacher? And Why are we teaching literature? This discussion continued online for another three weeks.

| Table 3. TELA II Discussion Forums | | |
|--|-----------------|------------------------|
| Topic | Number of posts | Number of Participants |
| Introductions | 31 | 18 |
| Discussions of the Young Adult Novels & Microteaching Experiences | | |
| <i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i> | 31 | 17 |
| <i>Growing Up</i> | 7 | 7 |
| <i>The Chocolate War</i> | 11 | 7 |

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| Reponses to <i>Chocolate War</i> group | 8 | 8 |
| <i>Holes</i> | 14 | 13 |
| Responses to <i>Holes</i> group | 9 | 8 |
| <i>Monster</i> | 10 | 11 |
| Responses to <i>Monster</i> group | 6 | 6 |
| <i>Out of the Dust</i> | 16 | 9 |
| Responses to <i>Out of the Dust</i> group | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Girl Goddess #9</i> | 12 | 7 |
| Responses to <i>Girl Goddess #9</i> group | 6 | 4 |
| <i>Smack</i> | 5 | 5 |
| Responses to <i>Smack</i> group | 0 | 0 |
| Dialectical Journals | | |
| DJ 1 | 34 | 17 |
| DJ 2 | 20 | 16 |
| DJ 3 | 22 | 16 |
| DJ 4 | 13 | 13 |
| DJ 5 | 16 | 14 |
| DJ 6 | 15 | 14 |
| DJ 7 | 20 | 16 |
| Field Experiences and Action Research | | |
| Burning Questions | 32 | 14 |
| Progress of Action Research | 11 | 6 |
| Topics emerging from discussion | | |
| Images of Students and Teachers | 4 | 2 |
| General questions and comments | 3 | 2 |
| What you know, need to know, want to know | 18 | 9 |
| Why use YA literature? | 10 | 7 |
| Language as power, bondage, and imagination | 4 | 3 |
| Comments and questions about Language paper | 0 | 0 |
| Language in Baker | 3 | 3 |
| Rachel's questions | 14 | 11 |
| Situated Performance | 14 | 11 |
| Socratic Seminars | 4 | 4 |
| Reading Workshop Questions | 6 | 4 |
| Brainstorm list of questions for student teacher panel | 3 | 3 |
| Final Exam | | |
| Ideas for Take Home Exam | 6 | 4 |
| Post Final exams here | 3 | 3 |
| Final reflective Response | 18 | 11 |
| Total/Average | 460 | 8.3 |

Some forums were used more heavily than others, such as the introductions (31 posts; 18 participants), the dialectical journals (ranging from 13 to 34 posts; 13 to 17

participants), and the forum on Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (31 posts; 17 participants). Only two forums were never used, one created to post comments and questions about the paper written early in the semester, on the use of language in Russell Baker's *Growing Up* (most of this discussion seem to be carried on two other forums: "Language in Baker" and "Language as power, bondage, and imagination,") and one created for peer response to the group that taught the final novel for the semester, *Smack*.

Overall, it appears that both the instructor and the PSTs highly valued the use of technology for continuing their in-class discussions online, since many posted far more than the minimum number of required messages and journal entries. Many thoughtfully read and responded to each other online.

The instructor also read and responded to the messages and journal entries, both online and in class, often using the discussions online as a means of launching discussion in class. As early as the second full class (1/26/00), she was displaying copies of journal entries on the overhead projector to launch discussion about the class readings. This became a common practice for the first few weeks. By the first of March, however, the instructor and PSTs simply made reference to the postings without needing the visual reference. Presumably, most were regularly reading each other's postings online. See the examples of an in-class and online discussion from the first week of March.

Inst: Ok, I'll jump in. Arielle talked about current events (referencing the posting below from the earlier that afternoon). What else from current events could you bring that makes this real?

Discussion Board

Current Forum: Situated Performance

Date: 01-Mar-2000 14:49:37

Author:

Subject: Of Course I'd Teach it!

I would definitely go ahead and finish this unit. How would be quite a thing, I think.

I'm pretty sure the worst way to approach this situation would be to hurry up and finish the book just to get it over with. I would rather quit teaching the book than admit that people hated it and just hurry through. I think the first thing I would do would be to slow the pace down. Look at the issues that are going on in the book. Try to find some current event stories that are happening that have to do with the world today. For instance, Maya's parents are divorced and she's living with her grandmother. How many students in that class are living in a non-nuclear home? Look up some statistics and hit them with them. Explain that even though they in particular aren't going through what Maya's going through, others are. How about the dentist scene in which the dentist refuses to work on Maya's teeth? What's happening today that could be like that? How about the Texas dragging death of the black man or the homosexual beating when the college kids left the guy for dead on a fence? How about something as simple as looking up how many people have medical insurance and how many can't afford to go to a doctor? How about the people who have to travel four hours to get medical help because the hospital in town won't work under their insurance?

There are a lot of ways to approach a book that doesn't speak to the students. Make the unit about something besides the book. Turn the book into a way to look at other things in the world. That would be my suggestion.

Community

Traditions and Rituals. The group this semester, for the most part, sat in one large whole-class circle. There was no noticeable pattern in who sat where from one week to the next, other than that the instructor usually sat on the side of the room nearest the blackboard and overhead project, in case she needed to step out of the circle from time to time to make use of these tools. The group did break into small groups for a portion of time during the majority of the sessions (seven of the eleven sessions I observed), but these small group activities were usually fairly short and there was no

consistency in the groupings from one week to the next. Group membership was usually determined by convenience – three or four people sitting near each other. Ties seemed to be to the whole group rather than to members of smaller subgroups.

As in TELA I, one of the ritual behaviors of the group in TELA II was in the pattern of how they used their time together. The opening few minutes of each session were most often used in housekeeping and management issues and the closing few minutes were often used for reminders of upcoming assignments. One difference was that rather than these times being devoted to one-way broadcast announcements from the instructor to the PSTs, many times the PSTs used the time to make announcements to the class – about an upcoming meeting of the MU Council for Teachers of English (MUCTE) and other events and opportunities for engaging in the larger community of the profession. For instance, in one session mid-semester, (3/1/00), one of the PSTs told the group about the Teach for America program and encouraged them to look into it.

Of course, another significant difference in the pattern of the class session this semester was the break they instituted midway through each 2 ½ hour class session for sharing food and for some social time together. The break generally lasted no more than five to ten minutes, but it became an important tradition for the group. During this time, the PSTs shared information and concerns about their classes and field experiences as well as other things going on in their lives.

Trust. There was a perceptible deeper level of sharing that spilled over from their discussions in class to the online discussion in TELA II. During an interview, one PST reflected on the greater comfort and trust with her classmates and how that led to more

discussion. “Now that I know everyone a little more I’m more comfortable with talking.” (Interview WS 00).

During a number of the discussions, PSTs shared personal experiences that not only required a deeper level of trust, but also helped to establish greater trust within the group. For instance, in late January, during a discussion about teaching literature that touches on difficult issues, one of the PSTs shared a story from her high school years. She told the group that one of her classmates had died. It had been a difficult time for all of them, she noted, but the teacher had the class read a novel that dealt with the death of a teen, which made it easier for them all to talk about and deal with their loss (field notes 1/26/00).

The next week, the sharing went a bit deeper. In a discussion about Russell Baker’s *Growing Up*, the instructor posed the question “Does any of this relate to stories for you?”

PST 1: I invented a language of my own when I was a kid.

PST 2: There were four girls in my family. We made up words that were kind of like a secret code that only we knew.

PST 3: Baker certainly paralleled my life. I had a single mom and one brother. I remember the sense of stigma we felt when we went on welfare.

This tapped a floodgate of seven more stories from childhood that the group shared, ranging from issues of the use of language and nicknames to finding out they were adopted.

Meaningful Relationships and Commitment to the Group. Many of the PSTs shared a common experience in the program, taking many of the same classes both in

education and in their discipline of English literature. As one PST noted during an interview at the end of the semester:

I think that I've formed more friendships through my methods class, now; because these are people that are in the same field with me. We have to talk about the same topics. We have to work in groups together all the time, and in the general settings where you're with so many people, it's just harder, because sure you might all be high school teachers in one sense, but you're all going to be teaching so many different things and there are certain conflicts that arise when, you know, you're not teaching the same thing.....I guess a lot of the people that have been in my English methods classes appeared in my other English classes. So, it's kind of you see a familiar face, and you're like ooh yea, you know, someone to talk to, someone to, you know, study with and that type thing. Last semester, especially at the beginning, I didn't know anyone in that class. I knew Rachel only because she was in that summer school with me and I didn't know anyone else and I think that a lot of other people didn't really know everyone else. But now, since everyone has to take all these classes, it's like, yeah, I see you in education but I also see you in our English class, because we're all taking the same ones. And so I think people kind of know each other more. (interview WS 00).

Yet, there was still not much evidence of strong or meaningful relationships that extended beyond the boundaries of their time together in class this semester.

No, I can't really say that we get together and go out and have fun together ... I wouldn't say that we just go out on a day to day basis. I feel comfortable enough

to talk to them about just about, you know, anything, but we're still just "classroom friends." (Interview WS 00).

At the same time, there was a stronger sense of commitment to the group, evident in more regular attendance. Seldom did I note any absences in class in my field notes. When I did, it was usually accompanied by an explanation, because the PST had already shared with the group the reason for his or her anticipated absence. For example, one evening in February, I noted the absence of one of the PSTs, but then also noted "Terry working at MS benefit" (field notes, 2/23/00).

Respect for minority views. Several times the issue of racism emerged in discussion of the readings, and many of the PSTs acknowledged that they had grown up in very small, rural towns where everyone was white and held fairly conservative views. But, for the most part, they seemed to concur that they had now expanded their world view and were not only able to embrace differences, but eager to do so. Note, for instance, the views in this discussion early in the semester in which they talked *about* embracing difference.

PST 1: I was surprised to hear in the news last week about a community where the schools didn't close for the Martin Luther King holiday. That seems so racist.

PST 2: In my hometown, everyone was white. There was a lot of racism. But I wouldn't worry about that in how I choose what to teach. What I worry about is how openly to discuss these things in class.

PST 3: I did a field experience where I taught *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*. I thought they needed to be exposed to that.

PST 4: What is our role as educators, if not to bring up these issues? (field notes 1/26/00).

A month later, the topic resurfaced.

PST 1: I grew up in an all white community like that. But you can't just force it on them and say "this is life and this goes on and racism is bad." That only makes it worse.

PST 2: I grew up in an all white community, too. We did a book that was controversial and people were really making racist comments. But when they did, they began to see how stupid they sounded. This was a really memorable experience for me.

Inst: So would you force them to defend their views?

PST 2: Yeah. I would make it clear this kind of behavior isn't tolerated.

PST 3: Almost all of you say you came from small towns. I had a class of 22. There were only 589 people in town. Talk about culture shock! I had people running home scared.

Inst: So how do you engage kids to read these kinds of books?

PST 4: You have to build community first – build a sense of trust. Start with small groups. Write poetry.

PST 5: Do role playing, based on the text.

PST 2: That can be dangerous. You can fall into stereotypes.

PST 5: But then you can talk about it directly. (field notes, 3/1/00)

In terms of their own practice, they also grew in their ability to embrace difference. For instance, over the course of the semester, they began to find a way to

include the one African American PST (who had been noticeably silent in TELA I) in their discussions and other class activities. One day in mid-March, there was a notable breakthrough. The class, led by a team of the PSTs, was exploring different strategies for teaching Cormier's *The Chocolate War*. After watching a portion of a movie based on the book, the class was directed to work in small groups to "storyboard," to draw a scene in the novel. When the class regrouped as a whole to share their work, there were several comments on the quality of Kevin's artwork.

PST 1: Wow! That's really good!

PST 2: Yeah. That's really well done.

PST 3: I'm kind of embarrassed about ours. It's pretty much just symbolic. (field notes 3/8/00).

Thereafter, I noticed that not only was Kevin more alert and engaged and more likely to participate in the class discussions, but also the other PSTs made greater attempts at engaging him, particularly when they wanted to call upon or recognize his artwork. For instance, when he was part of the group teaching Meyers' *Monster* later in the semester, PSTs commented on and praised his digital artwork in the cover of the teaching guide. During the class break, I noted, he explained to others how he had scanned the cover of the book and manipulated the image to create the image of a "monster" (field notes, 3/22/00). By early April, they were anxious to see Kevin's artwork during activities exploring Hesse's *Out of the Dust*. They were given the opportunity to either sketch or write about their favorite image from the book. I noted that they laughed at other's drawings while saying "I can't wait to see Kevin's!" (field notes 4/5/00).

PSTs also acknowledged that both the discussion board and the in class discussions gave them a forum to express different points of view.

Oh yeah, the discussion boards that we have. If you have a certain opinion that you didn't get to say in class, you just write it up on the discussion board and someone will read it.... There are some people that speak up more than others, but I don't think they're trying to hog, you know, the attention. I don't think their ideas necessarily reflect the view of everyone else either, but I think... usually when people have something to say, they say it. They don't really feel uncomfortable talking about it. (interview WS 00).

They also credited the instructor with establishing a culture in which it was possible to voice differing points of view.

I think Jean's pretty...pretty liberal in everything. She's pretty willing to speak on any idea, and she can definitely see very varied perspectives. I think that's really cool, because not everyone has the same opinion. (interview WS 00).

Practice

Rights and Responsibilities. The responsibilities for the students in TELA II outlined in the syllabus were much the same as those in TELA I. There were a set of assignments they were expected to accomplish:

- 1) A set of dialectical journals and informal reflections
- 2) A paper on the use of language in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Russell Baker's *Growing Up*.
- 3) An inquiry project based on their field experience

- 4) A mini-lesson based on one of the young adult novels read in class
- 5) Posts to the online discussion board
- 6) A final take-home exam
- 7) A final course reflection

Regular attendance and participation were also expected and contributed 5% of the course grade. As in TELA I, there was a statement of penalties to be assessed for excessive absence:

Since class only meets once a week, missing four times means missing a quarter of the classes. Therefore, attendance every time becomes even more important and missing even a few classes could seriously affect what you learn and the quality of your work. Hence, three absences can result in the lowering of final grades by one letter, six absences by two letters, etc. (TELA II syllabus, WS 00).

There was also a statement encouraging regular attendance and promptness based in a model of professional practice.

Please arrive on time! Ducking in late communicates a lack of commitment to your colleagues and to our chosen life's work. (TELA II syllabus, WS 00).

Shared Responsibility and Authority. These PSTs took on more shared responsibilities and were given more rights as developing professionals in TELA II. From the first of the semester, the instructor for TELA II conveyed the message that the responsibility for the class would be shared, in a number of ways, from the physical arrangement of the classroom (chairs arranged in a circle, with the instructor as a “member” of that circle) to explicit statements made about her expectation for everyone’s

participation in the discussions: “I’d like to see real interaction in class and on the discussion board, to each other, not just to me” (field notes 1/19/00).

As in TELA I, they shared the responsibility for teaching the class through their mini-lessons. However, with fewer, but longer class meetings this semester, the mini-lessons that the PSTs led constituted a much larger portion of the class in TELA II – six of the fourteen class sessions.

The PSTs also had a share in designing what would be taught and what issues would be addressed in class and online. In one of the first classes of the semester, the instructor invited the PSTs to tell her:

1. What do you know?
2. What do you want to know?
3. What do you need to know [to be a good teacher]?

Issues and concerns that emerged included how to design curriculum guides and plans for daily practice in the classroom, how to decide what to teach, how to engage students, how to teach kids who have trouble writing, and how to assess student learning. This discussion spilled over onto the discussion board that week. Many of the issues and concerns they raised continued to shape the curriculum of TELA II, in the selection of topics of discussion and activities in class the remainder of the semester. For instance, the question of what to teach – both the general debate about teaching young adult literature versus the “classics” and individual decisions about whether to teach individual works – continued as a theme of ongoing discussion throughout the remainder of the semester.

In several instances, the PSTs initiated or shared in the responsibility of negotiating changes in the schedule. For instance, in late March, one of the PSTs announced in class that she had a scheduling conflict with the evening that her team was to do their mini-lesson and asked if they might trade with the team scheduled the week before them. With several weeks advance notice, the group was quite willing to accommodate the change (field notes 3/22/00). Later, in early April, the instructor was the one to report that she had a scheduling conflict and needed to be out of town to attend a conference later in the month. She presented the group with several options – to double up lessons, with two mini-lessons in one week; to invite the faculty instructor from TELA I to lead the class, which would require them to meet later in the evening; or to simply push the schedule back a week. After some discussion, ruling out the first option (they couldn't see how they could double up two lessons in one session) and the second option (they didn't want to meet without her), they opted for the pushing the schedule back by a week.

As noted above, because the class met for an extended period of time during the early evening hours (5:00-7:30 pm), the PSTs initiated the idea of bringing food to share each week during a brief break in the middle of class. Each PST signed up for a week to bring food; some weeks, they doubled up and two PSTs brought food to share. This practice, too, gave evidence to shared responsibility for the group.

PSTs often initiated discussions in class that then emerged as discussion threads on the class discussion board on the CourseInfo site. Over the course of the semester, nearly one third (eleven of 36) of the discussion board threads were generated from in-class discussions (see Table 4). These threads generated 83 posts, nearly 20% of the

messages posted in TELA II. These discussions peaked twice: 1) early in the semester, around the topics of what they wanted and needed to know and the debate over whether to teach young adult literature and 2) mid-semester, in response to Rachel’s question in class about the role of the English teacher (2/2/00) and as a continuation of the discussion about teaching literature to broaden culture in a tiny, conservative, rural community (Situated Performance) (3/1/00).

| Table 4. Online topics emerging from in-class discussion | Posts | Participants |
|---|--------------|---------------------|
| 1. Images of Students and Teachers | 4 | 2 |
| 2. General questions and comments | 3 | 2 |
| 3. What you know, need to know, want to know | 18 | 9 |
| 4. Why use YA literature? | 10 | 7 |
| 5. Language as power, bondage, and imagination | 4 | 3 |
| 6. Language in Baker | 3 | 3 |
| 7. Rachel's questions (what is the role of the teacher?) | 14 | 11 |
| 8. Situated Performance | 14 | 11 |
| 9. Socratic Seminars | 4 | 4 |
| 10. Reading Workshop Questions | 6 | 4 |
| 11. Brainstorm list of questions for student teacher panel | 3 | 3 |
| Total/Mean | 83 | 5 |

Yet another way in which it became evident that these PSTs were transitioning from the assigned responsibilities of students to the assumed rights and responsibilities of the profession was in the number of outside class professional responsibilities they engaged in. For instance, in early February, the instructor told the group about the opportunity to participate in a youth writing conference that is part of the Missouri Writing Project (field notes 2/9/00). The all-day workshop took place on a Saturday in March. Later in the semester, on the first meeting after the workshop, two of the PSTs reported on working at the conference.

PST 1: It was great to see students willing to go out on a Saturday to work on their writing.

PST 2: Yes, and the interaction between students and teachers in that workshop setting was good to see (field notes, 3/22/00).

That same day, another PST reported on activities in MUCTE, the MU chapter of the National Council of Teachers of English. She noted that four of the PSTs in this group had been elected as officers at the last meeting and announced the next meeting time. Another PST asked for ideas for guest speakers, noting that it might be possible to get some funding from the student government association on campus. The instructor suggested the possibility of a group from MUCTE attending the regional NCTE meeting (field notes, 3/22/00).

Norms. One of the norms maintained from TELA I that gave evidence to the fact that they still saw themselves more as college students than practicing professionals was the casual dress of the PSTs. They continued to dress as college students – usually in jeans – rather than as practicing professionals, even on the days that they led their mini-lessons.

Another of the norms of expected behavior within the group this semester was an expectation of participation, both in class and online. The instructor made this norm explicit early in the semester. “I am expecting at least one posting a week. Your first posting online should be something of a brief bio – why you are in English education. I’d like to see real interaction to each other, not just responding to me” (field notes 1/19/00). However, there were few reminders of it nor, evidently, much need to remind them of it.

The majority of the PSTs regularly participated in the discussions, both in class and online.

The online discussion increased dramatically over the limited participation in the first semester. PSTs posted 460 messages in 37 forums in the discussion board. The number of responses ranged from 1 to 34. The mean number of respondents was 9; participation ranged from 1 to all 18 PSTs (see Table 3 above).

Most of the discussions only lasted a week, from one class meeting to the next. The forums in which the largest portion of the class participated were those early in the semester (Introductions, N=18; *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, N=17) and for the dialectical journals (participation rates ranged from 13 to 17 PSTs). While, admittedly the dialectical journals were required, several weeks, many students posted far more than the required number of entries. In the first week, for instance, 17 of the 18 students posted an average of 2 entries each. The next most popular forum was one that provided opportunities for the PSTs to talk about their field experiences and action research projects (N=14 participants, posting an average of over 2 messages each).

In class discussions frequently involved the majority of the PSTs. Further, the dynamics of discussions this semester were more often peer-to-peer and seldom followed the instructor-governed IRE (inquiry-response-evaluation) pattern. Note, for example, this excerpt from a class discussion early in the semester, in response to a reading about teaching young adult literature.

PST 1: It seemed like they just focused on what you need to *sell* a young adult novel. They could have done more with how young adults respond to literature.

PST 2: I feel like I resent those categories and distinctions.

PST 3: I had only read two of these books in high school.

PST 4: I had only heard of five of them.

PST 5: I had read a lot of them in junior high school. I know it got me interested in reading, but I honestly don't even remember what they're about.

PST 6: Me, too. I don't remember what they're about.

Inst: I don't remember some of the stuff I read last month!

PST 7: *Native Son* is another good one. I have a friend who was insulted to hear that *Caged Bird* is considered young adult literature. It's much more than that.

Some may be offended by our choices. For instance, I hated *Ordinary People*.

There were just too many classic situations – the suicide attempt, his parents, the isolation. It seemed too simple. It wasn't authentic.

PST 8: What about independent reading? Do you, as a teacher, have to read them all?

PST 9: I was in a classroom where one of the students chose *The Scarlet Letter* as part of her free reading. The teacher hadn't read it, so she referred her to me.

Inst: You can't read everything! (field notes 1/26/00).

Fully half the class participated in this brief discussion. For the most part, the dialogue was peer-to-peer. When the instructor entered the dialogue, she entered as peer participant, rather than as the traditional "teacher" who poses questions, provides answers, or evaluates student responses.

In another example, later in the semester, one of the PSTs posed the question of how to get students involved in the discussion, particularly those who are the most shy, the most reticent to speak. Several others concurred that this was a problem for them as

well as for their students. Note that, midway in the discussion, it is the PSTs themselves (rather than the instructor) who begin to provide strategies to overcome the problem.

PST 1: How do you get some students to talk? I have one who refuses to talk.

Even when she was doing a slide presentation on the 20's, she still wouldn't talk.

PST 2: I have one who also has a fear of talking. She says she would rather fail than talk in front of a class.

Inst. We have the tendency to think that it's no big deal because we're up in front all the time.

PST 3: There's a big difference between writing and speaking. I don't write for an audience of the whole class.

PST 4: Yes, and for so many years before they get to us, they have been *praised* for being quiet and just doing their work.

PST 5: I subbed in a 2nd grade classroom. Every kid was excited to get up and go to the map. Will they be the same by the time they get to high school?

PST 3: But kids in high school – the hormones – all the changes going on. They're so self-conscious.

PST 2: And there are a lot of differences in this class.

PST 4: Yeah, there are some troubled kids in this class.

PST 6: I used to be really shy, but now I talk a lot. Small groups helped me a lot.

PST 2: But there's a difference between talking on the spot and doing a presentation you had to prepare. Some people think their thoughts are private.

Inst: And some who are the most silent in class write the most online. Different outlets.

PST 7: Could she present just to the teacher?

PST 2: That's a possibility.

PST 8: But isn't there sometime when she'll need to talk in front of others?

PST 9: I think it also comes with maturity.

PST 7: You know, there are a lot of classes where they can get by...like lecture classes in college.

Inst: This goes back to what Jay said – the old system that puts students in rows and tells them they have to raise their hand to have permission to talk – it's hard to break those habits. (field notes 3/1/00).

Half the class participated in this discussion, offering suggestions and commenting on the underlying issues – both of student maturity and a culture that encourages students to be silent. Note that the instructor's only "evaluative" comment came at the end of the discussion, as a way of summing up the discussion and transitioning to the next topic. For the most part, she either remained silent or entered the discussion as another peer participant.

This same peer-to-peer discussion dynamic was often apparent online. PSTs, for the most part, posed questions and responded to each other, rather than to the instructor. Note, for instance, that in the Dialectical Journals forum, only 13 of the 140 (less than 10%) postings were from the instructor. Her postings in this forum were most often very brief, and, although they often included some evaluative comments ("great question" or "good post"), they also included questions to facilitate further discussion of the topic at hand. Note, for instance, her response to a couple of entries on reader response theory.

Current Forum: Dialectical journals/Reading responses

Date: 01-Mar-2000 11:23:56

Author: -----

Subject: Delta Juliet 5...do you read me?

I guess I'll take the honest approach and tell you all that I'm bored of this Reader-response talk. I mean...I think its great and it is the way to go, but lately I'm just reading this stuff going "uh huh...uh huh." There seems to be no more possibility for expansion in the sense of my understanding of it except by beginning to apply it in a classroom. As a matter of fact, the biggest introduction of new thought on the subject has come with the Socratic seminar exploration. At least we had some new rules and guidelines to become familiar with instead of doggedly responding "uh huh."

I know we are supposed to review what material was in the articles during these DJs, but what could I possibly include that hasn't been ingrained in the heads of all of you? Well, I did think that the author's brief exploration of the censorship issue had some significance. I mean, we've obviously approached the issue in class, but I think we have failed to do it justice. Depending on our chosen district, this could be the most pressing issue you face in your career. On that note, the author discusses how we, as a society, have learned to insist upon reading for a moral. In addition, he/she discusses the many levels at which this censorship occurs. Authors censor their own work before publishers censor it to be passed on for teachers to select from (also a form of censorship), and finally to be rejected by communities. These are all important stages to express to our students as well.

The other day I was in class at ----- and the teacher was doing a section in which the students watched the television show "The Real World." The focus was upon how differently the characters may have acted had there been no cameras. Not one student mentioned the fact that these people are living together for 24 hours a day 7 days a week, yet the viewer sees an hour of edited footage. What an incredible example of how censorship is so ingrained in the arts of our society that we blindly accept it.

The rest of the reading basically covers the role of the teacher "if literature is exploration." Well...it is. So how should a teacher be involved without tainting the results of that exploration? Be a resource, not THE resource. Be un-accepting of surface answers or comments. Be open to other opinions. Most important of all, and seemingly all inclusive, make students comfortable and confident.

Well, sorry to have sounded like a sourpuss, but it just seems rare to hear a new idea in the argument for reader-response.

Current Forum: Dialectical journals/Reading responses

Date: 01-Mar-2000 13:06:38

Author: -----

Subject: Re: Delta Juliet 5...do you read me?

I must say that your DJ#5 was a nice change to most ordinary responses. I agree with you on the idea that we've had this "reader response" stuff ingrained into our brains to much. I do think reader response is "good" I guess, and I'm glad to find out that it may actually work, but what about other forms of response? I think this is something we as future teachers really need to think about. Are we going to use reader response methods in our classrooms, or are we going to be sick of it by the time we are actually teaching? I don't know; just a thought.

Current Forum: Dialectical journals/Reading responses

Date: 01-Mar-2000 13:20:28

Author: (Instructor) -----

Subject: Re: Delta Juliet 5...do you read me?

These are good questions. As far as other methods, I think other methods can be seen "under the umbrella" of reader response (i.e. historical approach, psychological approach, new critical approach).

Let's move on to talk about the *how's* more than the *why's*--how would you teach such a classroom? What strategies would you use? What are you thinking about doing for your mini-lesson in class? How are these things compatible with reader-response?

Although the PSTs did not always make use of the discussion board's threading feature, they did frequently read and write in response to others' posts. Note, for instance, this series of posts about choosing good young adult literature.

Current Forum: Dialectical journals/Reading responses

Date: 27-Jan-2000 21:31:35

Author: -----

Subject: DJ#1

In general I was pretty disappointed by the chapter. And, I am still turning the concept of YA literature over in my mind. At one point the text states, "Because of the newness of the concept and practice, there are no longstanding traditions as in children's lit, opinions vary on whether there is even a need for a specialized approach to teenage books." I also wonder--where is the need, what is the need?. I mean it sounds often like they (ooh mysterious) are trying to diagnose adolescence like something ailing and the cure=YA Lit. In fact, there is a recipe. First add one fifteen year old, no better make that 13 because high school sophomores don't read. Next separate that child from the parents--like removing the yolk from the white. If you want to address as many as possible better make it short and sweet (just can't count on YA attention span).

I have to keep reminding myself not to be such a snob and to try to keep an open mind. My first thought is Sweet Valley when I hear the term YA Lit, which may have been what the author of the LC-J meant--flabby in content, mediocre in style, narrowly directed at the most trivial of adolescent interests. However, if I am to consider Caged Bird and call it YA Lit, then I am totally in favor. As a reader I never felt duped. If she was writing to a YA audience, I never once that she was talking down to that audience. That is my huge fear with considering YA Lit as its own marketable genre. I am afraid when any author writes to something and not from it. I would honestly be interested in reading Robert Cormier's books starting with The Chocolate War and moving forward to see if his voice changed from book to book. Angelou, given she was writing with the maturity of an adult memory, kept something very true to the experience. In comparison there are certain other novels that are written for YAs that lose the authentic quality of the voice. I feel kind of guilty about being so negative so I am going to try to refocus--just say what I've been trying to say in a more positive way.

Although Huck Finn may be considered one of the 'classic' young adult novels, I don't think 12/13 [year-old] boys were the audience he was writing for. Similarly, I think the reason so many young people connect with Catcher in the Rye is because of the authenticity of the voice. I bet it would have been a completely different story had Salinger been 52 and writing to specifically address an audience of 17 year olds.

Now I wonder if it is just me. Meaning that I want to be aware of my own prejudices and I don't want to hold back future students based on my own preferences. One reason the text offered for the rise in YA lit was that teachers were encountering students who "couldn't or wouldn't" read the classics. I can see that--but I'm not totally convinced it is better to be reading anything...

Current Forum: Dialectical journals/Reading responses

Date: 02-Feb-2000 09:32:18

Author: -----

Subject: Re: DJ#1

In response to D-----.

I agree with you. The term YA lit calls to mind series books like Nancy Drew or the Hardy Boys. But when you define it (like the book does) as anything people age 12-20 choose to read, I like it better.

I guess that means that Nancy Drew can be YA and Ordinary People and Woman Warrior and on and on and on. That makes me feel better.

What I worry about is relying too heavily on one group. In senior lit, we read "A Tale of Two Cities", "Wuthering Heights", "The Chocolate War", "Beowulf", "Grendel", and "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest". I think it was a good mix. I had a break from reading the "classics" and could relax while reading. And it challenged me.

I guess as teachers, the best we can do is provide as many opportunities for students to read good YA lit, the "classics", and something they WANT to read.

Current Forum: Dialectical journals/Reading responses

Date: 02-Feb-2000 16:13:55

Author: -----

Subject: Re: DJ#1

This is both a response to your journal and a reply to J-----'s response, although this is not an effort to kill two birds with one stone. I don't have the throwing arm to do that.

I'm similarly torn between YA Lit and the Traditional Canon, because for me, I'd imagine myself to be a completely different person if I hadn't encountered some of the 'Classics' that often seem to be complained about. At the same time, YA Lit definitely ignited my love for reading-- still, going through that list, I saw two or three books that I had completely forgotten about reading. What does that say about the amount of thought necessary to read them?

Yet there are YA books that we've read over these past two semester that I've enjoyed a good deal and taken things from-- Maya Angelou's work exemplifies how YA Lit can break the traditional boundaries by ignoring them. It was written before YA Lit was a 'genre,' and I think it escaped many of its constraints because of that -- you can enjoy the book on so many levels, something that I don't think you can do with Ordinary People.

And here's the moment where I trip over the microphone cord on my way to the podium...

I think one of the most important thing we can do as future teachers is changing the standard curriculum -- as students, we know which works we got something from, and which ones we didn't. Sometimes I think I'm too narrow-minded -- should it really be my goal in life to get Beowulf outlawed from the High School classroom? But on a larger scale -- outside of the individuals we influence and so on -- I think it's necessary for us to not accept the 'classics' given to us, but instead incorporate works that will affect and develop students' love of reading more.

Negotiation of Ideas. This high level of participation in discussion and the free flow of ideas between PSTs created ample opportunity for negotiation of ideas. Over the course of the semester, their focus narrowed from questions about “Why teach literature?” to “Why teach young adult literature?” to “Why teach this *particular* young adult novel?” Note, for instance, the two discussion excerpts above, as well as excerpts from discussions about teaching *Monster*, *Girl Goddess #9*, and *Holes*, cited earlier. In the excerpt below, PSTs negotiated differences in understanding and attitudes about Hesse’s *Out of the Dust*.

PST 1: Did you like it? Would you teach it?

PST 2: Yes, but it seemed more like a journal than poetry. The poetry was lost on me.

PST 3: Did you notice the special arrangement of the words on the page on page 13? The staging – it looks like a piano.

PST 4: I mentioned this online. I have a 6th grade nephew who is reading this.

Inst: I think this is ageless.

PST 2: The historical aspect of it – I was studying the dust bowl in another class just last week.

PST 5: It doesn't shock me that a 6th grader would read this. The poetry didn't grab me. It tells the story very well, but I thought it felt more like a junior high book.

PST 1: It's the first book we've read from a female point of view. Does that matter?

Inst: Someone asked that the other day online – do we need to consider our own personal taste in teaching?

PST 6: That was me. I was talking about *Monster*. As a white female, I felt alienated from it.

PST 7: But if we only teach books we like, we are pretty limited.

PST 8: And that changes over time.

Inst: Maybe you could pair it with a book for boys.

PST 7: Did anyone think of *The House on Mango Street*?

PST 8: At least it was easy to read in chunks. I probably wouldn't use it in high school, except as a prompt for writing. (field notes, 4/5/00).

In this discussion, as in so many others, they negotiated differences of opinion – about whether and how to teach *Out of the Dust*, what age level it would be most appropriate for, and some of the criteria for deciding what to teach. There was freedom to express and negotiate differences, but no pressure to come to any consensus of opinion by the end of class. Again, the instructor acted more as a participant in the discussion than as an evaluator of their responses.

One of the most extensive online negotiations emerged from a discussion in class one evening in March, around a set of questions about the role of the English teacher. The forum created for continuing this discussion was labeled “Rachel’s Questions.” At first, the discussion seemed to center around the debate on whether to teach young adult literature or the classics.

Current Forum: Rachel's questions

Date: 04-Feb-2000 16:00:32

Author: -----

Subject: role of teachers

What is our role as English teachers? What is our purpose in teaching literature? These were awesome questions. I am trying to think about this in terms of teaching YA literature, since we discuss this issue so much in class. I do agree that some YA lit should be taught for a huge number of reasons, some of them being: to get kids to enjoy reading, to allow them to read a book that they will be able to "connect with", and because these books deal with issues that they are facing in their lives. However, this question made me ask myself, to what extent it is our job to expose kids to or have them continually read about the struggles of adolescence? Is it our job to discuss these issues frequently in our classroom? I do agree that as teachers a large part of our job involves teaching kids how to deal with real life issues and about developing morals and values; however, I think we have to be careful not to get too caught up in teaching books that only address issues/problems teenagers face. Part of our job as English teachers is to expose kids to classical literature, and I think in our discussions we sometimes lose sight of this. I think teachers need to teach "classics" maybe even a little more than or at least as much as YA lit to prepare kids for college, to prepare them for the ACT/SAT or other tests, and just to make them more worldly and educated about literature.

Wrapped into the discussion is the tension between teaching the content vs. teaching students, particularly young adult students, using literature that is relevant to their lives and the issues adolescents face.

Current Forum: Rachel's questions

Date: 05-Feb-2000 12:20:28

Author: -----

Subject: roles

I can't imagine how many roles an English teacher plays. Or has the possibility to play. As much as we hate the stereotypical, awe inspiring Dead Poets Society teacher who devotes his life to his work with little respect, why is it that that particular image pops in my head when it comes to the "role" of the English teacher? I have been brainwashed, but I'm slowly coming into reality

each day I attended H----- High. The role of the teacher is stacked with papers to grade, lessons to make, seminars to attend, students to reach, and families to see. In all of that differences can be made in the lives of your students, but how? I want to be prepared for this role and to do the best that I can at this role; however, I know I will never be ready. I can take every course at this university they want me to take in order to "make" me a teacher, but these roles we talk about have to formed, and not everyone will respond to your role as a teacher the same way. Some ask if I'm joking when I say I want to teach secondary English. Others joke about the money; I do too, but I can't think of another field where your role as a person has the possibility to change and form, fail sometimes, then succeed at others.

Current Forum: Rachel's questions

Date: 06-Feb-2000 20:21:45

Author: -----

Subject: Roles???

What are our roles as English teachers???? I have no idea? I think I will be satisfied if a student of mine, ten years after graduation, looks back and says "Miss W----- sure did play a large role in my English education." So, I guess I should start figuring out what role I want that to be. Is it inspiring reading/composition? Is it teaching what students want to know or need to know? I think it is a little of everything. My role will be as a mentor, a teacher, and hopefully, in a way, a friend. I want to create an environment where my students are comfortable with themselves, one another, and me, so that open conversations can take place. This is the only way to keep a fair and flowing environment going in a class.

They talked about the role of the teacher as a mentor or guide. Yet they also raised the issue of the need to teach the basics of writing, the "tools" of language, grammar, and communication skills, in an English class.

Current Forum: Rachel's questions

Date: 07-Feb-2000 13:47:30

Author: -----

Subject: English Teachers

I think English teachers serve as guides to students, to lead them on their journey through literature. Teachers introduce students to a variety of books in hopes they will be inspired in one way or another. Teachers should reveal their opinions and thoughts about certain books and ideas, but let the students interpret literature on their own. Writing is essential, and teachers should allow students to express themselves, even if it is not in the most standard essay format. Teachers should provide literature that the students can connect to. When students get up into upper-level classes, the emphasis is placed more on the "classics" and the typical interpretation of that "classic."

Teachers should teach English because it is the basis of our communication. Writing is a key to our inner soul, and students have the opportunity to shape words and put them in patterns to

express their deepest thoughts. English teachers provide this basis as well. Sure, grammar lessons aren't the most fun, but students learn the basics of writing in order to do it themselves. Reading books expose students to different forms of writing, thus their knowledge of literature expands. Reading introduces so many thought provoking ideas and images, that it is a necessary to teach English.

Current Forum: Rachel's questions

Date: 04-Feb-2000 16:18:51

Author: -----

Subject: role of ENGLISH teachers

I also think that it is the role of the English teacher to present the tools for use in language for communication as well as instruct students in the finer nuances of English which inspire our love for literature. Does it matter how we do it? As long as we're effective (Rosenblatt would say affective), does it matter if the students read Y.A. lit? Will they not appreciate satire if it is not presented in a "classic?"

In essence, they are raising the questions of the value a college education. Is it to provide a liberal arts education, to broaden perspectives, or is its purpose to train students with functional work-place skills? Rachel hints at this issue in her comments on Newman's essay.

Current Forum: Rachel's questions

Date: 10-Feb-2000 00:56:09

Author: -----

Subject: Re: Why teach literature?

In class tonight, I said I would go back and read Newman's essay and try to explain what I meant. "Now bear with me, Gentlemen, if what I am about to say has at first sight a fanciful appearance." That's the first line. Appropriate, yes?

This essay is an argument for Liberal Education--"I have been insisting...on the cultivation of the intellect, as an end which may reasonably be pursued for its own sake." People don't get paid to read books and discuss theme or characterization or meaning. It simply isn't productive; it doesn't grow corn or build bridges.

But Newman argues that cultivation of the mind does do something: "University training is the great ordinary means to a great BUT ORDINARY END (I made this caps because it is not an argument for elitism). It aims at raising the intellectual tone of SOCIETY (is this what we mean when we say we want to expose our students to broader perspectives, open doors for them, teach them about choice and freedom in hopes that they will make good decisions?) at cultivating the PUBLIC mind, (is this why everyone is required to go to school?) at purifying the national

taste...at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power,(so we elect Presidents who keep their pants on and our interests at heart) and refining the intercourse of private life."

Question: Newman says the cultivation of the mind for its own sake is a worthy enterprise because from that 'good' more good can come--better leaders, better voters, better businessmen, happier people. But is he advocating the study of literature for its own sake or for the purpose of developing a rational mind? To me there appears to be a difference. What would Newman say about reader response? Or would he just agree that it is the first step in an authentic analytical response? (I think this is the closest I have ever come to writing a real dj--all this flip-flopping is making me dizzy and I can't stop yet because I don't know what I think)

But there is another quote--"And again, such training (liberal education) is a matter of rule; it is NOT mere application (this I think is in line with Rosenblatt's argument for reader response) however exemplary, which introduces the mind to truth, nor the reading of many books, nor the getting up of many subjects, nor the witnessing of many experiments, nor the attending many lectures. All this is short of enough; a man may very well have done it all, yet be lingering in the vestibule of knowledge." _____the parroting of empty words?

One last thing "I only say that Knowledge, in proportion as it tends more and more to be particular, ceases to be Knowledge." This can happen with literature as easily as it can happen with "the mechanical arts."

Another PST tried to summarize and draw the discussion to a close, landing on the side of the purpose of teaching English as helping to mentor adolescents as they “discover themselves.” He argued, from his own experience, that “the most important thing I learned in high school was establishing an identity.”

Current Forum: Rachel's questions

Date: 09-Feb-2000 01:20:55

Author: -----

Subject: My bucket of water, polished at 1:00 in the morning...

This horse at times seems way past dead, but I think it's interesting to see how each of us is subtly applying our own biases into our individual answers. Those of us whose funny bones were tickled by Chaucer's ramblings are the first ones to declare war against the anti-classicists-- sure, we see the point in YA Lit, but isn't that for younger kids? And returning our volley, the rest of us talk about how we're turning kids off to reading. Are we teaching English just to get this all sorted out?

Probably not, but I am tired.

People discover themselves in High School. Maybe not completely, but you're handed at least half of the puzzle pieces in those years. Kids toss out their Britney Spears CDs (hopefully), they

give up on James Van Der Beek and date somebody who doesn't exist on a poster on their wall. And whether they want to admit it or not, they look for something in a teacher or coach and hopefully become better through that relationship.

As English teachers, we have an irreplaceable opportunity to help students discover themselves... and we have the best tools. A book is miles more effective than the Pythagorean theorem... so is a pen (or a word processor for the techno-savvy.) Only Course Info is less effective than Sir Pythagoras (sp?), but we can blame that on someone else.

If someone can leave my classroom at the end of the school year and feel more comfortable with who they are and where they are going, then my job is done-- and ideally I won't have to act like Robin Williams to get them there.

Sure, I want them to do well on tests and make big names for themselves, but now that I'm in college, I realize the most important thing I learned in high school had nothing to do with all that. It was establishing an identity, a strong (well, not too strong unfortunately) sense of self, that was most important. And personally, I think if a student is connected like that within your classroom, they're going to fulfill their academic potential as well.

Another PST responded, even more concisely sorting out the tensions between teaching YA literature and the classics, and arguing that the important issue is not so much *what* literature you teach but *who* you teach and your responsibility to “help them make themselves better.”

Current Forum: Rachel's questions

Date: 16-Feb-2000 11:52:59

Author: -----

Subject: Re: My bucket of water, polished at 1:00 in the morning...

I think you struck an important chord here. Everyone in these education classes loves to punish others with their story of that teacher who was more than a teacher and is probably the reason they are here today. So, just to ensure that I'm not kicked out of the school of education, I'll relay a quote from my "that teacher."

"My goals are for students to come out of [her] classroom with more acceptance of themselves, a tolerance for those different from themselves, a certain cynicism, an appreciation of life, and a little better knowledge of standard English, in that order."

I think what I'm trying to say, and what she is trying to say is that we have responsibilities greater than deciding between YA and classical lit. We are with these developing people for the majority of the time they are awake each day. We have a responsibility to help them make themselves better. I'm not just talking intellectually, but in all facets of mentality, and emotion. Luckily, and thanks to "that teacher" we are a group of people who understand that responsibility. We've chosen the path less traveled by so that we can be "that teacher," and we will!

Shared History and Formation of Group Identity. Although there was no strong sense of shared history or group identity evidenced in class, there were a couple of references made in discussion to their shared history in TELA I. One reference was made in the discussion of assessment strategies. When the instructor noted that one strategy is to teach a course without grades, until the end of the semester, one of the PSTs noted, “Dr. Fischer did that last semester” (field notes 3/1/00). But they made no additional comments on their opinion of that strategy.

The only other statement made in reference to their shared history in TELA I was the laughter evoked by the announcement in class one evening, late in the semester. that “Dr. Fischer will be here at 6:30 to talk for 15 minutes about what to expect next semester.” The humor, obviously, was in reference to the expectation that he would *only* talk for 15 minutes, since they had come to learn that he frequently talked longer than what he planned.

In the “final reflective response” posted at the end of the semester, some common themes emerged that hinted at the beginning of forming a group identity. One noted, at the end of her reflection, the importance of creating a sense of community, as well as the importance of trust, fellowship, and food.

Current Forum: Final Reflective Response

Date: 30-Apr-2000 15:22:56

Author: -----

Subject: What I've Learned

....Last but not least, creating a community amongst my students will be my ultimate goal. It will be the base for the success that I want in my classroom and with my students. In order for them to give their all they will need to be comfortable enough to do so and the only way for that to happen is for them to trust me and one another. Also...SNACKS, snacks are great and should not be forgotten about after kindergarten.

Another echoed the importance of learning from her peers.

| | |
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| Current Forum: Final Reflective Response | |
| Date: 30-Apr-2000 17:40:34 | |
| Author: ----- | |
| Subject: final reflection | |
|Overall, I have had a lot of fun this semester and have thought, struggled and responded to some great questions posed by my peers. I like how the questions seem to continue... | |

Several referred to this as their favorite class – either for the semester or for their entire education program. One attributed that to several factors: the readings, the discussions, the sense of community, the instructor’s involvement in the discussions as a participant more than a traditional teacher (“trying to find answers to the same questions” rather than providing all the answers), and the seating arrangement.

| | |
|--|--|
| Current Forum: Final Reflective Response | |
| Date: 01-May-2000 00:48:45 | |
| Author: ----- | |
| Subject: Final Reflection... | |
| This class was one of my favorites this semester. For the most part, I liked the books we read and the questions we pondered intrigued me. I think J----- really helped give the class some kind of “atmosphere” of community. And, it was great that she was almost “indirectly” teaching us, because she was trying to find answers to the same questions we were. *Always* sitting in a circle demonstrated to me that arranging the desks like that actually does help in discussion. I’d never had a class where we sat in a circle all the time, I’d definitely want my students to arrange their desks like that. | |

Another, who described it as both her favorite class of the semester and the best English experience in her college career, attributed the appeal of the class to the level of trust and comfort in class discussions and in knowing one another.

Current Forum: Final Reflective Response

Date: 01-May-2000 23:53:43

Author: -----

Subject: Final Reflection

It's true- this was my favorite class this semester. Not only did I learn wonderful teaching techniques, but I felt comfortable discussing all sorts of topics in class. I liked hearing the different perspectives of different issues, and I think it opened my mind in many ways. I never felt like I was going to this class to learn; it seemed more like a group or club meeting, where everything is laid back and everyone pretty much knows everyone else.

...
I really did enjoy this class. I think it has been the best "English" experience I've had in the past 3 years, and it has inspired me to keep at it. When I went to class, I never thought I was actually being taught, yet I learned so much.

Another described it as a “student-centered classroom.”

Current Forum: Final Reflective Response

Date: 01-May-2000 14:01:01

Author: -----

Subject: Final Reflection

Apart from literature, I learned about the importance of a student-centered classroom this semester. Until this class, I have never been involved in a classroom that was student-centered. I was amazed of how well it went and how much I got out of it. I, as a student, felt responsible for the way the class went and the things I learned or took out of the class. I think this is great. I would love for my students to have that kind of ownership over their high school English classes!

Yet another talked about the relaxed classroom atmosphere that led to greater trust and the ability to explore new ideas.

Current Forum: Final Reflective Response

Date: 02-May-2000 15:44:42

Author: -----

Subject: Final Reflection

Overall I fell I really learned a lot this semester! I loved the relaxed classroom atmosphere that we had. I think we all felt comfortable speaking our mind and exploring new ideas :)

By the end of the second semester, it was obvious that a sense of a class identity was emerging around a set of shared values and shared experiences.

Chapter 6:

Teaching English Language Arts III

In this third semester, the class was able to move back into the newly-renovated education building. The class meeting time moved back to a twice-a-week schedule, meeting from 1:00 to 2:15 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The faculty instructor in charge of this sequence of courses took over the class again mid-semester, after an international exchange visit. The graduate instructor who had led the class in TELA II had graduated and moved on to a faculty position elsewhere, so another graduate instructor, Louise, began the semester with this group.

The fifteen members of the core group who had begun in TELA I all returned, along with one who had joined the group in TELA II (Jay) and three PSTs from TELA I (Diane, Martin, and Pam). Another non-traditional, older PBS/graduate student (Melinda) joined the cohort this semester, resulting in a group of 20 PSTs.

| Name | Class |
|-------------|--------------|
| Amy** | Senior |
| Beth** | Senior |
| Emily** | Senior |
| Jean | Senior |
| Jim | Senior |
| Jordan | Senior |
| Karen | Senior |
| Kevin | Senior |
| Laura | PBS/Grad |
| Linda | Senior |
| Melanie | PBS/Grad |
| Mindy** | Senior |
| Rachel** | Senior |
| Sarah | Senior |

| | |
|---------|----------|
| Tracy | Senior |
| | |
| Diane | PBS/Grad |
| Jay | Senior |
| Mark | PBS/Grad |
| Melanie | PBS/Grad |
| Pam | Senior |

Domain

Many of the common pedagogical values of the TELA sequence, made explicit in the syllabus, remained consistent in TELA III, particularly the emphasis on learning through practice and through social exchange of ideas. But changes in the focus of the course as well as changes in the context of the class translated into other changes in the shared values of the cohort.

Learning through Practice. Learning through practice continued to be a shared value for the group, made explicit in the course syllabus and activities. The syllabus for TELA III repeated the teaching philosophy of previous semesters:

These three courses rely upon experiential and constructivist theories of learning and language development (e. g. Dewey, Bruner, Vygotsky, Freire, Britton, Moffett, and Berthoff). That is, students construct meaning by actively using and immersing themselves in language – not by listening to lectures about language and literature.

However, the ways in which they “actively used and immersed themselves in language” this semester changed, as TELA III shifted its focus from “oracy,” learning through discussion, to “mediacy,” learning through the use of media. In-class activities looked much the same as in previous semesters, with a mixture of small group and whole

class discussions and microteaching activities. But the “texts” they examined included song lyrics, advertising (both print and video), and clips from television shows and movies as well as traditional print sources such as short stories and poems.

The real heart of the course was in the PSTs’ work developing four teaching guides to guide students in exploring a combination of texts, drawing on a variety of genre and media. Each guide was to be designed for a unit of three to five class periods, with one day’s activities fully developed.

Guide 1: One print text with one music text or painting

Guide 2: One print text with one television program or film

Guide 3: Two print texts (a short story and a poem) with one television commercial

Guide 4: Two print texts (a short story and a poem) with one magazine ad and one media of choice (TELA III syllabus, FS 2000)

Microteaching activities this semester made use of these teaching guides; each PST taught one of his or her lessons sometime during the semester. The teaching guides counted for 40% of the course grade. The in-class activity of leading the class with the teaching guide was assessed by the instructor on a pass/fail basis.

Field Experiences. PSTs continued to learn about teaching through their field experiences. As in previous semesters, each PST was expected to spend at least 20 hours in the classroom to which he or she was assigned, observing, interacting with the cooperating teacher and students, and, at times, teaching a lesson. This semester, the graduate instructor for the course was also responsible for supervising the field experience, making classroom visits and talking with PSTs and cooperating teachers.

PSTs were expected to “use the discussion board on CourseInfo to talk about field experiences,” focusing on “specific situations, students, curriculum, or problems encountered” and then to “write a final reflective entry that summarizes and evaluates what you have learned in your field experience overall, as well as in your communication with others online and face to face” (TELA III syllabus, FS 2000).

Field experiences were made more visible early in the semester. The College’s field experience coordinator, Karyn, made two visits to the class (8/24/00, 9/1/9/00). Communication during both visits, however, focused simply on the mechanics of where and when they would do their field work and their teaching internships in the following semester.

There were a few mentions of current or past field experiences in class early in the semester, but these seemed to diminish over time. On the first day of class, one PST raised a concern about only serving as an observer in the classroom, with no opportunity to teach. She wanted this semester’s field experience to be richer than what she had experienced in the past.

PST 1: My past field experience was more like “observation.” Even if I had wanted to teach, I wouldn’t have had the chance.

Several others nodded or murmured in agreement; this had been a problem for them as well.

The instructor assured them that the coordinator for field experiences was working with cooperating teachers to improve the field experiences.

Inst: She is explaining to them that ‘this is what they can do’ and working to find teachers who want to make use of your abilities. If there are problems, I can work with you. (field notes 8/22/00).

In other instances, PSTs drew upon their past work in the field as a resource for supporting ideas during a discussion. For instance, during the second class session, in the midst of a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of showing movie clips in class, another PST praised a teacher from one of her past field experiences who “does this a lot” (field notes 8/24/00).

A couple of weeks later, during a discussion of the use of media to address gender and racial stereotypes, another PST called upon a past field experience as an example of another kind of “stereotype.”

PST 1: One of the teachers I observed had a Black Studies class. His argument was that there are no minorities in this century. He said that if we were to go to Africa, we would *all* be viewed as Americans.

PST 2: He was saying America is a melting pot.

PST 1: I think he’s trying to tell them to all *be* the same. You have to have respect for *everyone* in the classroom.

Inst: He’s saying we’re all the same. End of story. No room for difference. (field notes, 9/7/00).

There was considerable discussion about the field experiences online this semester. Indeed, the majority (71%; 62/87) of the posts on the discussion board were about the field experiences. Overall, most of the PSTs appeared to be much more satisfied with their field experiences this semester.

One commented,

“A field experience I feel connected too. Third time is a charm.”

Another echoed the praise of her classmates,

“It sounds like many people are having really good field experiences, and I am definitely in that category as well. I am in a 10th grade Honors World Life and Lit block course. It pairs honors history and lit and it's a blast.”

Another noted,

“I'm having a great time. This is definitely my most beneficial placement as of yet.”

One of her classmates responded,

“I'm working with the same teacher--I do like the fact that she gives us so much opportunity to interact with the students and teach.”

Many commented on this satisfaction of getting more opportunities for teaching practice. Some posted simple “here is what I did today” reports.

| |
|---|
| Current Forum: field experiences |
| Date: Sun Oct 15 2000 8:36 pm |
| Author: ----- |
| Subject: Not Much |

Well, the students took a test this week, so I really didn't do much. However, they were assigned a really cool project. They are to design their own theme park! They're broken up into groups of seven or eight students, and each group was given a region of the thirteen colonies. They're supposed to come up with everything that a theme park entails, and then literally make it. It sounds pretty cool. Also, they're really doing great with analysis. Mrs. G----- is trying to incorporate artwork with their colonial studies. They have to look at artwork and analyze the details of the art, and decide how that connects to the time period. It's great!

Many others reflected on creative lessons and teaching strategies they were seeing in their field experiences and posed questions that began to emerge from their practice. Note, for instance, another PST's comments on the English/Colonial history unit and exercises that helped encourage student engagement.

Current Forum: field experiences
Date: Mon Oct 2 2000 1:46 pm
Author: -----
Subject: narrative stories about Jamestown/Roanoke/Plymouth colonies

V----- and her team teaching partner have students writing narrative stories suitable for a second grade audience about J/R/P colonies. They are scheduled to read the stories to students at B----- Elementary later this week. The class was divided into groups of two, and each group picked their subject out of an envelope. You could tell that some of the students were not thrilled by the pairings, but as the class progressed, most students were beginning to come up with a plan or storyboard. This seems to be an excellent exercise to "encourage" students to write to learn in an entirely different and very creative way.

Another described her interdisciplinary English/Biology class and how she had been able to contribute to it, drawing both on her own minor in biology and her previous experience in the TELA sequence.

Current Forum: field experiences
Date: Fri Oct 6 2000 10:28 am
Author: -----
Subject: fun times at H-----

My field experience has turned out beautifully so far. First of all, the classes I am with are sophomores with an English/Biology link. Well, that works wonderfully for me, because I actually will have a minor in biology. Therefore, I can really help them connect some solid scientific evidence with their reading.

Currently, they are reading a Michael Crichton book called The Andromeda Strain. I think they like it pretty well. I do know that they are learning a lot about the scientific method and they are also learning how to analyze literature.

My teacher has created tons of opportunities for me to be active in the classroom. I have been grading student essays and conferencing with them to let them know what they have done well and what they can improve on. I am going to be teaching next week and I am so excited. I have chosen a science fiction short story that we will analyze using BINARY OPPOSITES! Does that sound familiar?

Another PST described strategies her cooperating teacher uses to create a positive learning environment in her classroom.

Current Forum: field experiences

Date: Tue Oct 10 2000 4:45 pm

Author: -----

Subject: markers and glitter

For any of you who really know me, you might know that I am pretty silly - and as far as teaching, that typically translates into goofy songs, lots of stickers and some sarcasm.

My cooperating teacher has been teaching for 27 years, but, guess what? She's pretty silly too! She put stamps of the students' mid-term reports that said things like "Totally outrageous!" or were in the shape of a giraffe. The past few days she has been using mini-grammar lessons on the overhead as a warm-up, and when the students get them all right she says "perfect" with a hop and draws big smiley faces on their papers.

Some of this may seem too "kiddy" for them, the big freshmen, but secretly they love it! You can tell because today, for instance, we overheard one boy telling another he did a "perfect" job on their group assignment. That was cute.

Anyway, I mention this because today they were working on visual representations of metaphors from the novel/autobiography "They Cage the Animals at Night." Which basically means that they got to use markers and glitter on poster board. At their request, the teacher played "brainwave" music - like classical, but specially recorded to stimulate creativity.

And creative they were! Just to give you an example of their projects - one group went outside to hunt for leaves because they were using the metaphor of a tree (shedding bad experiences and growing); another cut out little red circles as pepperoni on a pizza (life experiences are like toppings and when people you love die or hurt you, they take a piece away).

The teacher could go into some big deal about right-brain left-brain, but she justifies this activity in her own way. She says it is fun, which is a good change of pace, but also the students (literally) construct meaning in a social environment. She didn't have to convince me. I love projects, and any work that resembles play.

One final comment:

At the end of the hour, for those who didn't finish, the teacher said, "exchange phone numbers so you can call your BUDDIES tonight and make a plan to finish." She made a point to tell me that she refers to them as "buddies/pals" intentionally, so that they can consider themselves just that - rather than just classmates.

She is deliberate in her encouragement and has effectively established a positive learning environment!

Many of the PSTs also posed questions that were beginning to emerge from their field experiences, including questions about how to grade student writing, how to teach grammar, how to communicate with and negotiate differences with cooperating teachers. There were, however, far more questions than answers.

Current Forum: field experiences

Date: Thu Nov 9 2000 1:57 pm

Author: -----

Subject: A late-comer to courseinfo

The biggest problem I see is that the class is so large. There are sixty-one or two kids in the class and it can get really chaotic. The teachers also have a difficult time grading things and getting them back in a timely fashion. Any tips on how to expedite the process of grading 62 ten-page papers? :-)

Current Forum: field experiences

Date: Sun Nov 5 2000 1:17 pm

Author: -----

Subject: fair grading

How the heck do you "grade" journals and what not? My field experience teacher last semester would have me grade journals and I was never really sure how to grade something like that. I would usually just write questions to the kids from different angles that they maybe hadn't noticed etc. just to get them thinking in other ways. And then, I would take into account who wrote the journal, was it a kid who I knew should do a good job and just wasn't trying on this journal or whatever, or was it an awesome entry by a kid who couldn't care less about school, let alone this journal...but that doesn't seem fair, because what about the kids who then you wouldn't expect much from--would they get a 10/10 for less/poor work just because we didn't expect them to write anything great? and then, don't people tend to only do/live up to what you expect of them? Hmmmm....would a rubric be needed so kids knew they were being graded "fairly"?

Current Forum: field experiences

Date: Tue Nov 7 2000 1:29 pm

Author: -----

Subject: communicating with cooperating teacher

It is so important to communicate with our cooperating teachers - especially during our student teaching internship.

I notice this in class when the students ask me a question or ask me to read over their work and

ask if they did it right. I can offer my professional opinion, and make a good guess, but sometimes I have to be careful not to contradict something the teacher would say. I usually try to go in early and stay after too to talk to the teacher about what they are doing and what she expects, but there isn't always time. Fortunately it hasn't been a big deal yet, because I can confer quickly with the teacher in order to answer the students' questions.

I guess during student teaching we will be spending a lot of time conferencing and planning with the supervising teacher, and will eventually be the "authority" figure regarding expectations for the assignments we have created. But I have a question, more of a concern really. I know the teachers who I will be doing my student teaching with, and I greatly admire them. But what's the best way to communicate with them when you disagree with something they do or say? Sure, it depends on how severe the disagreement is. But, in general, I am nervous about approaching these effective teachers with my own ideas, for fear that they will either not like the idea or that they will take offense at my having suggested it.

Is this a normal apprehension that will fade once we really start working together? Other comments or advice?

Some also reflected on things they were learning about their own teaching practice, such as this PST's comment on learning that she needs to leave more time for students to respond to questions.

Current Forum: field experiences

Date: Mon Nov 13 2000 4:39 pm

Author: -----

Subject: I did a lesson!!!

Today I did a mini-lesson on "Huck Finn" in the U.S. studies class at R-----. It went really well. I was a little apprehensive at first, but the class was so good. I did a mini-lesson on why Mark Twain put the book down for three years after writing chapter 16. The class is an honors class and the students are so smart and insightful. I was surprised at some of their thoughts and I learned from them. These students never cease to amaze me. Something I noticed as a teacher that I need to work on is "think time." I need to give students more time to think when I ask them questions. I get so nervous when there is silence. I'm sure this is something I will get better at with time. Anyway, just thought I'd share.

To be fair, it must be acknowledged that not all were complimentary about their field experiences this semester. One PST complained that she seldom had any opportunity for input into the class and "saw few new ideas at my [field] experience this semester."

Current Forum: field experiences

Date: Sun Oct 29 2000 8:42 am

Author: -----

Subject: participation and late work

Overall, I learned very little and saw few new ideas at my experience this semester. However, this is not the first time I've had a weak field experience. (They mostly know to put me with the crazy teachers who either need a gopher for photocopying, or who want someone to keep the seat at their desk warm while they're lecturing). But I digress, I liked the teacher I worked with, but the problem was that he was a first year teacher. He had no clue, and neither did I. At times, he'd ask me for my input but then shrug off my ideas (and I'm not saying I have these excellent ideas, but he didn't really even consider them). I saw him do this with his class also, because there were a few times when he would say to the class "Help me out here, what would be the best way to do this?" or "what do you guys think we should do today?" and when they would say "well, can we read our book report books," the teacher would say "yea, but I'd rather do...blah blah..." So??

Another complained about the overall uneven quality of the field experiences in the program.

Current Forum: field experiences

Date: Wed Dec 13 2000 8:30 pm

Author: -----

Subject: Field Exp.

I really have very little to say other than how disappointed I am with my experience. I feel like this entire program has placed me in classrooms of vastly different activity level (on my part), yet failed to do so in some logical order. I didn't have more interaction now than in the past, and I feel like I have spent a semester "out of the game" in many ways. Maybe it is to be expected, I mean, the classrooms and teachers are bound to be different. I just think that there should be some amount of coherence. I have enjoyed the students, and learned about some very important issues that affect the classroom, but I can't say, with good conscience, that this experience was some overtly wonderful opportunity. That being said, I apologize to you folks for not having a more fruitful experience to relate.

In-class discussion of field experiences, either problems they were encountering or things they had learned, diminished over the semester. Late in the semester, with the end of semester drawing near, the instructor brought up the topic of field experiences. He acknowledged his lack of attention to their field work this semester.

Inst: Let's talk. First about field experiences. I haven't been into the CourseInfo discussion board lately. I've been focusing on 340 [TELA I, which he was teaching concurrently]. Do you have any concerns now?

Their responses suggest that the PSTs were more concerned about their final field experience *report* than about the quality of what they were *learning* in the field.

PST 1: My only concern is about the report. Am I just supposed to take my CourseInfo entries and write up a synopsis?

Inst: Yes, just a reflection. I will get in there soon.

PST 2: To be honest, we haven't done that many entries on CourseInfo.

PST 3: I have lots of notes, but not much in the way of entries.

PST 4: I could do a reflection on my experience, but I don't have much in the way of entries.

Inst: The entries are not so important. I admit, I'll take part of the blame for not reading them and encouraging more use of the discussion board. Who has notes? (Show of hands shows that about half the class does.)

PST 5: I do. For instance, in the last three days, I led discussion every day.

Inst: (to the others who do not appear to have notes) How can you remember what you said or did? [Pause] If you don't have notes, reconstruct what you did. That's fixable. (field notes, 11/16/00).

Learning by designing media: PSTs also learned about media through practice by designing media for teaching during TELA III. The final project for the semester, which counted for a fourth (25%) of their grade, was a PowerPoint presentation.

This interactive presentation should be one that you would definitely use with your OWN students, in teaching them how to critically analyze magazine ads, cartoons, posters, etc. Your presentation should be interactive and contain many questions about the ads shown, so that you pause and discuss this with your students as you go. It should also make full use of the zoom-in feature to examine parts of visual texts. In short, exploit the bells and whistles! This presentation should lead students to 1) closely read and analyzed the texts; 2) link the text to American values; 3) link the text to the culture and time period from whence it came. (TELA III syllabus)

In mid-November, one entire class period was given over to a model presentation of such a project, presented by a practicing teacher from one of the local schools. She had developed an extensive PowerPoint presentation on the history of cigarette advertising. The actual work of designing the presentation was transparent, or at least invisible in the classroom. Other than the tips presented by the guest speaker, little was said about how to design and produce the presentation. The instructor told them they could get help with the technology at the computer lab (field notes, 8/22/00).

The final projects seemed to fall somewhat short of an experience of “learning through practice.” The model presentation was extensive, spanning two zip disks for storage, something the teacher could obviously use to teach an entire unit on advertising. Although the syllabus suggested that this project would result in an authentic product they would be able to use with their students, in the end, PSTs were encouraged to limit their files to 15-17 slides, and to use only still images rather than video clips. They were encouraged to end up with a file that could be stored on one floppy disk (1 Mb) (field

notes, 11/16/00). And, although the original schedule had set aside three days at the end of the semester for everyone to present their projects to the class, in the end, they only had time for six presentations across two class periods.

Learning is Social. The introduction of a new instructor to the course necessitated new introductions at the beginning of class. During the first class meeting, the instructor asked them to tell something about themselves, particularly about their future career plans, in their introductions. It was interesting to learn that, by this time, several had already decided that they did not want to go directly into the classroom when they completed the program. Some had opted for graduate school to pursue advanced degrees and certification in school administration. One expressed interest in pursuing a law degree so that he could focus on school policy.

Nametags also helped the instructor with names, although it appeared that the PSTs had already established connections with each other, through their time together in TELA II. Two of the three “newcomers” were already known to the group, as members of the cohort in TELA I. Indeed, they were two of the most vocal members in TELA I, so their identities had been firmly established by the end of that semester. The only true “newcomer” to the group entered class late, on the second day of the semester. Missing the introductions on day one may have been one of the factors that left her somewhat on the outside of the group all semester. I will explore other factors in this dynamic below.

The new classroom made it somewhat easier to arrange the setting for social learning. Rather than individual chairs for each PST, the room was equipped with small tables, each of which accommodated two to three PSTs, which could be easily arranged

in one large circle or several small groups. On the first day of class, PSTs arranged the tables into a full circle, including all 18 PSTs, the instructor, and me (field notes, 8/22/00).

This seating arrangement evolved over the course of the semester, however. By early October, an audiovisual cart with overhead projector, VCR, and other AV equipment was located at the “front” of the room, displacing PSTs on that side of the circle (field notes, 10/3/00). By mid-November, the opening in the circle had become larger and two to four PSTs were forced to sit on the outside of the circle at the back of the room (field notes, 11/16,00). By the end of the semester, the circle had become two rows or concentric semicircles, facing front, with fully half the group on the outer ring (field notes, 12/7/00).

The syllabus for TELA III also seemed to put much less emphasis on the social aspect of learning. The statement that “the development of literacy is social in nature” and that “such learning demands consistent, active, interaction with our peers and other diverse groups,” which had been present in TELA I and TELA II, was noticeably absent from the TELA III syllabus. Participation counted for only 10% of the grade and was broadly defined to include attendance, punctuality, “possible quizzes over assigned readings, informal talks, demonstrations, participation in class discussions, writing responses to peers’ work, etc.” (TELA III syllabus). And, while in-class discussions frequently made use of informal small group work, there was no design for any sustained teamwork over the course of the semester. Even the microteaching activities were individualized this semester, rather than developed and presented by teams.

Both the graduate instructor and the PSTs made references to collaborative teamwork as problematic. On the first day of class, in response to a question about whether microteaching would be individualized or done in teams, the graduate instructor replied, “The group thing is such a headache” (field notes 8/22/00). Roughly a month later, when they were planning for their first microteaching sessions, the question about teams arose again. This time, it was the PSTs who noted the problems with teamwork.

PST 1: The problem with collaborative work is that it just takes so much time!

PST 2: I agree. I’ve found that, too.

PST 3: Yes, me too. (field notes, 9/19/00)

The frequency of small group work also diminished this semester. Over the course of the 17 classes I observed, only 5 of them involved small group activities. Two of the five were classes were led by the PSTs as part of their microteaching activities.

The change in meeting time, back to a twice-a-week 75-minute period in the early afternoon, of course, eliminated the time for the ritual break in the middle of class and the opportunity for social time over food that they had instituted in TELA II. One of the PSTs did bring food to share twice during the semester, in early September, for her birthday, and at the end of October, for Halloween. However, no time was set aside for socializing during class and there was no end-of-semester celebration.

The value of Technology. A number of signs gave evidence to an increasing value placed on technology, a value shared by most, if not all of the group. For one thing, a number of modern technologies were much more visible in TELA III than in TELA I or TELA II, whether as a result of the changing focus of the class towards teaching with and

about media or as a result of the move back into the newly renovated education building. The new classroom, adjacent to the College's media lab, was furnished with an audiovisual cart with a standard overhead project, computer workstation, and VCR connected to two television screens in the front of the room. The shift in focus toward a study of media made the television screens quite useful, since a frequent class activity was watching and analyzing clips from television programs, movies, and televised advertising. The instructor reserved use of one the College's Smart Boards on the days when they wanted to view digital media, such as the PowerPoint presentations referenced above.

Another sign of the increasing value placed on technology by the group was the more intentional use of the CourseInfo site in the course design, both as a repository for the outside readings for the class and for links to other sites recommended by the instructor.

External Links

Current Location: External Links



[R. Fox's Testimony to U.S. Senate Committee Hearings on Channel One TV](http://www.essential.org/alert/channel_one/fox.html) (http://www.essential.org/alert/channel_one/fox.html)

This testimony basically summarizes findings from HARVESTING MINDS (Fox, 1996), a study which examines the effects of mandatory in-school TV commercials on the language, thinking, and behavior of students. You will find testimony from Ralph Nader and others at the website for Commercial Alert.



**[Canadian Assoc. for Media Education Organizations](http://Interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/FE/CAMEOHomePage)
(<http://Interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/FE/CAMEOHomePage>)**



**[Jesuit Communications Project](http://Interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/FA/MLDirectory)
(<http://Interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/FA/MLDirectory>)**



[The Media Foundation/Adbusters](http://www.adbusters.org/adbusters/)
(<http://www.adbusters.org/adbusters/>)



[New Mexico Media Literacy Project On-Line](http://www.aa.edu) (<http://www.aa.edu>)



[The Youth News Network \(Canada\)](http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/class/edissue/yinn6.htm) (<http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/class/edissue/yinn6.htm>)



[Center for Commercial-Free Public Education](http://www.essential.org/alert/)
(<http://www.essential.org/alert/>)



[Stay Free!](http://www.stayfreemagazine.org) (<http://www.stayfreemagazine.org>)



[Salon](http://www.salon.com) (<http://www.salon.com>)



[Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting \(FAIR\)](http://www.fair.org) (<http://www.fair.org>)



[Directory of Media Literacy Organizations](http://Interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/FA/MLDirectory)
(<http://Interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/FA/MLDirectory>)



[The Missouri Writing Project](http://www.missourir.edu/~mwp) (<http://www.missourir.edu/~mwp>)
The MWP, directed by Roy Fox, is a site of the National Writing Project and is located on the campus of the University of Missouri-Columbia. The MWP offers several summer institutes and other programs to enhance the teaching of writing in all discipline areas and at all grade levels, K-College.



[Missouri Writes 4 Kids](http://www.redrival.com/mowrites4kids/) (<http://www.redrival.com/mowrites4kids/>)



[Missouri Association of Teachers of English](http://www.umsl.edu/services/gwp/mateintro/html)
(<http://www.umsl.edu/services/gwp/mateintro/html>)



[Media Matters site](http://www.ntc-school.com/mediamatters/index2.htm) (<http://www.ntc-school.com/mediamatters/index2.htm>)
This site contains specific lesson plans for various topics within media literacy. I cannot vouch for all of them. YOU decide!



[The "Bad Ad" Contest for Students](http://www.nmmlp.org/badad2000/)
(<http://www.nmmlp.org/badad2000/>)
This site explains how students can talk back to advertising sponsors by entering the "Bad Ad" contest, sponsored by the New Mexico Media Literacy Project.



[Persuasion Analysis](http://www.govst.edu/users/ghrank/) (<http://www.govst.edu/users/ghrank/>)

For many years, Hugh Rank has created materials for helping students combat persuasion in media. This site focuses on the language of advertising.



[Just Think](http://www.justthink.org) (<http://www.justthink.org>)

Print resources for teaching about electronic media.

When PSTs requested more information about something, such as where to learn more about the MOSTEP standards for teacher certification, the instructors seemed much more likely to say “I’ll post that on the website” than to bring a handout to class. The PSTs also contributed sites for more information and for examples of propaganda during discussion in class. Note, for example, this brief exchange early in the semester:

PST 1: Have you been to freecountry.com? They use the flag and the whole red, white, and blue thing and the idea of “freedom” just to market clothing!

PST 2. Yeah, I’ve seen their stuff.

PST 3: What about the virtual mall, where a portion of the profits from online sales go to the RNC? [Republican National Committee] (field notes 9/7/00).

Later in the semester, a question about student access to technology arose in the context of discussing the design of teaching units (field notes 10/5/00). Increasing levels of access seemed to be driving changes in attitudes about the use of technology.

PST 1: Should we assign homework that requires them to go look things up on the Internet? What if they don’t have access?

Inst: My leaning is to stick with it. Access is growing.

PST 2: And if you give them 2 or 3 days to complete it, they can go to the library or the computer lab sometime on their free hour and look stuff up.

In many ways, technology was becoming ubiquitous; the use of technology was becoming transparent, as a tool for learning rather than a subject to be taught apart from

the education curriculum. For instance, when the PSTs were assigned to use PowerPoint to design the semester's final project, there was little talk about the technology itself. The questions that surfaced had to do more with the instructor's expectations for content, length, and the mechanics of which media to use for storing and transmitting the file than about *how* to produce it.

Inst: It should all fit on one disk – 15-17 frames. Not a lot of text.

PST 1: Will we turn in a script with it to show how we would use it in class?

Inst: Yes, there is a way of incorporating notes in there.

PST 1: Would you suggest putting video in PowerPoint? Is it possible?

Inst: Yes, it's possible, but not required. Remember that it takes up a lot of memory, so be sparing in how much you use.

PST 2: Yeah, I've done it before. You need to think about how much you can do in one class period. (field notes 11/16/00)

The discussion about the final project continued a couple of weeks later, after the Thanksgiving break.

PST 3: Is there written material to be handed in with the disk copy of the presentation?

Inst: Yes, your notes can come printed out. And I would prefer these saved in a Windows format.

PST 4: Is it ok to hand it in on a CD instead of a disk?

PST 5: I thought you said just a disk –that it should be short enough to fit on a disk.

Inst: A disk or a CD or a zip disk are all ok. (field notes 11/28/00)

Two tools in the CourseInfo web site, as it turns out, were not readily adopted by the PSTs this semester: the repository of course readings and the discussion board. Early in the semester, PSTs complained about difficulties in downloading the readings.

Course Documents

Current Location: Top



Intensify/Downplay Schema

[Word File](#) (2038272 Bytes)

This simple schema should be practiced by students until the "opposite response" becomes automatic. For example, if a reader detects that a message or part of a message is being "downplayed," then that student should respond in kind, by "intensifying" and finding out more information.



How to Analyze Ads

[Word File](#) (31280676 Bytes)

This is another approach to evaluating advertising, a bit more complex than Intensify/Downplay.



Propaganda Techniques

[Word File](#) (15614 Bytes)

These 28 techniques are highly practical, useful, and easy for students to learn and apply to a variety of messages.



Semiotics Summary

[Word File](#) (13530 Bytes)

Items 1-6 are the most important to understand. In short, we must think of meaning as something that easily rubs off of one thing and onto another thing, nearby.



America's Values are Changing

[Word File](#) (745782 Bytes)

For a quick summary, go to the table, "Changing Values." Note how each traditional value (e.g., "hero worship") appears in the left column, and its emerging counterpart (e.g., "Love of ideas") appears in the right column, as "New Values."



Eclipse (short story)

[Adobe PDF](#) (29337185 Bytes)

"Eclipse," a short story by Elizabeth Enright, is a classic story of young women coming of age. We will analyze it in class, for practice.



Two Propaganda and General Semantics Articles

[Adobe PDF](#) (6480465 Bytes)

These two articles, "Understanding Propaganda from a General Semantics Perspective" and "The Iconography of Propaganda" explain very basic tools which help people

"deconstruct" and analyze verbal and visual messages. Make sure that you read these carefully and understand the concepts!



Some Television, Some Topics, and Some Terminology

[Adobe PDF](#) (1752552 Bytes)

This article by John Fiske (from TELEVISION CULTURE, 1987) demonstrates how a simple scene from an old TV program ("Hart To Hart") embodies values of America's "dominant ideology" and hence promotes this group's social and political interests. This article is crucial for understanding how one "reads" television and other visual texts.



Flavor Crystals as Brain Food

[Adobe PDF](#) (350528 Bytes)

This article (by Roy Fox) summarizes how students respond to mandated TV commercials in the classroom, as viewed in Channel One schools. Also included is a brief review of Fox's book-length study, HARVESTING MINDS.



Popular Signs

[pdf](#) (1354484 Bytes)

The subtitle of this article is "Everything You Always Wanted to Know about American Culture (But Nobody Asked)." The article explains basic semiotics--through the example of shoelaces. Yes, image really IS everything, even shoelaces....



Making Meaning Visible: Critically Reading TV

[pdf](#) (784750 Bytes)

This article from ENGLISH JOURNAL contains some specific approaches for guiding students in analyzing television shows.



Dominant American Values

[pdf](#) (232035 Bytes)

Here, briefly described, are 15 dominant American values. You should know these thoroughly, since ANY text--print, music, imagery--carries values, which are explicit or only implied or suggested. Note that for each value noted, its OPPOSITE, is also a value.



MoSTEP STANDARDS

[pdf](#) (390406 Bytes)

During your final semester of Student Teaching Internship, you will create a "Certification Program Portfolio." In this portfolio, you will LINK or CONNECT each of these standards (aka "Quality Indicators")to specific teaching artifacts, such as a lesson plan you've used. You must clearly explain how the lesson plan or artifacts represents your ability to actually DO what's described in the QI or standard.



Consuming Passions: The Culture of American Consumption

[pdf](#) (757325 Bytes)

This chapter will show you how to apply principles of semiotics to actual events, such as . . . bottled water!

The graduate instructor provided a solution by making copies available for check out at the reserve desk at the media lab.

Inst: Have you had any problems getting the texts for the class?

PST 1: Yeah, I've had problems downloading the readings from the web site. I keep losing my connection before I can get it all downloaded.

PST 2: Yeah, me too.

Inst: I have copies of all the readings. I'll put a set on reserve in [the media lab].

(field notes, 8/24/00)

The discussion board on the CourseInfo site appeared to be valued much less this semester than in TELA II. Only 87 messages were posted over the course of the semester.

| TELA III Discussion Forum | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Topic | Number of Responses | Number of Respondents |
| Introductions | 12 | 7 |
| Cultural Mythologies | 5 | 3 |
| Teaching Units | 8 | 5 |
| Riley | 0 | 0 |
| Field Experiences | 62 | 14 |
| Total/mean | 87 | 7.25 |

The majority (62) were reports on their field experiences. This was the one required use of discussion board for the semester, as outlined in the syllabus. Even so, five members of the group never posted a single entry in this or any discussion forum all semester. The graduate instructor established four other forums as well: one for introductions, one to discuss their teaching units, one to continue a discussion begun in class (cultural mythologies), and one to discuss Secretary of Education Riley's talk on campus. Three of the four were seldom used; no one posted a single comment on the Riley forum.

What to teach. The other dominant value that appeared to be shared by most of the cohort this semester centered around the content of TELA III. The announced topic

was teaching media, that is, designing lessons that “use systematic methods for analyzing both print and non-print texts or artifacts” (Instructor’s syllabus, TELA III). The list of readings and external web links (see above) give a flavor of the curriculum.

The graduate instructor’s overview of the course made the implicit values much more explicit.

What are we doing? Cultural Studies.....Our job as teachers is to prepare our students to be independent, productive citizens who can make informed decisions. The world they live in is saturated with media and cultural messages that are often laden with political, economical, gendered, racial, and class values. These values are what influence decision-making. It is our job to help students know how to read and interpret these messages for themselves so they are the ones in charge of the decisions they make.” (graduate instructor’s course overview, TELA III).

In short, the instructors’ stated values were that media is laden with values that influence our thinking. We need to be alert to how the media can influence our thinking and to empower students how to be alert to these influences. The implicit value that seemed to run as an undercurrent was that this influence of the media is intentionally manipulative and harmful.

The comments made during class discussions suggest that most of the PSTs seemed to share this same set of values. They, too, questioned the values being marketed by the media. For instance, note the critique of network television programming in the following discussion.

PST 1: What about those “Survivor” shows?

PST 2: Yeah. How often is it on? Once a week. You know they have to have selected what to present.

PST 3: I was thinking about presenting that kind of show to a class. How do you pick a part of it to show?

PST 4: You end up picking a part that is scripted.

PST 5: But you present it to them and help them deconstruct it, help them see that it is really a game show, not reality.

PST 3: You could do a whole series on that (field notes, 10/5/00).

Another discussion later in the semester centered around advertising for a beauty product that claimed to make women look younger. Note the apparent consensus of opinion about the power of such advertising to shape our culture's values, to intentionally manipulate our thinking by "play[ing] on our fear of getting older."

PST 1: Which side do you prefer?

PST 2: The blonde woman. A whole industry is centered around this. It bothers my mother that I have gray hair already.

PST 3: If you look at powerful women, if they aren't beautiful, too, we make fun of them. Just look at Janet Reno.

PST 4: I think it's because of her policies, not because of her looks.

PST 5: Oh, no. It's not about her policies. Just look at that SNL skit!

PST 1: Who do you think has power *because* of her beauty?

PST 3: Jackie Kennedy.

PST 5: Princess Di.

PST 1: Look back at the ad. Would you take it?

PST 6: I'd say no, but if you look in my bathroom at all I use...

PST 1: I'm 21 and I've already been using anti-aging serum for 2 years!

PST 3: I don't like how I look now. But older men – like Sean Connery and Michael Douglas – do seem to get younger women.

PST 1: You know the most popular room in the nursing home is the beauty salon.

PST 2: But I think it's wrong for older women to try to look young.

PST 6: It all comes down to a fear of dying.

PST 1: Is it that or the advertising?

PST 6: It's that, too, but they've played on our fear of getting older (field notes 11/7/00).

The lone outsider. One PST stands out in the discussion above as having an opposing view – the one who asserted that Janet Reno's lack of popularity had more to do with her political views than her appearance. This PST consistently set himself apart from the set of shared values of the group: the shared values in the analysis and critique of media, the value of technology, and, perhaps most noticeably, the value of learning through social exchange. He even sat apart from the rest of the class, spending much of the semester in the outer semicircle behind the others. I will discuss the dynamics of his participation in class further below.

Different values about the media. Martin frequently voiced opposing views during class discussion, views that might be considered more radical than those of the rest of the cohort. Note, for instance, this excerpt from a discussion of the values implicit in much of our television programming.

Inst: George Gerbner's point is that in previous generations, before all the media we have today, the stories people heard all came from their families. The purpose was to teach a set of values and morals. All those stories from family were benign. But when the stories come from the media, the purpose is to sell. Those narratives now structure our lives – define what's good and bad. Those values don't come from the family anymore but from the media.

Martin: That's a lot like the message behind Chomsky's *Manufactured Consent*.

Inst: Yes.

Rather than stopping there, however, Martin continued for another five minutes, lecturing the class on Chomsky's thesis – “The media are owned by a handful of corporations” – and giving examples. “Look at East Timor.” He concluded: “If the news is manipulated, why not sitcoms? They're all rich people who don't work.”

But he wasn't through. Five minutes later, after a brief discussion of the *Survivor* television series, Martin continued his lecture on Chomsky's radical politics:

The important thing – I don't care who wins – is that it's about looking at the phenomenon – it's supposed to be going back to nature – but it makes it look like capitalism is natural. They found out whether Chomsky's thesis is correct. The comments being aired aren't the ones that really get to the point. It's a piece of capitalist propaganda! (field notes, 10/5/00).

Differences in his value of learning through social exchange. Martin often talked at length, but did not appear to place much value on learning through exchange with his

peers, as he didn't often listen to others. For instance, when the class was discussing a reading from John Fiske's *Television Culture*, Martin began to lecture the class:

Martin: He does what is just so cliché in cultural studies. Any ideology is appropriate. No ideology should have rights over another. A perfect example of this is his bit about the play on the word "honey."

Martin continued in his monologue for another five minutes. After a while, he fell silent as others talked, all the while continuing to look for a specific reference in the text rather than listening to others. Twenty minutes later, he interrupted the discussion to announce:

I found the passage I wanted to read. [reads from the text]. You see what I'm saying. It can be just an way to open students up to indoctrinate them with some other ideology.

Meanwhile, I noted that other PSTs were showing obvious signs of intentionally tuning out, looking at the clock, raising their eyebrows, frowning, sighing, and shifting in their chairs. (field notes, 10/5/00).

The next week, during a brainstorming session of possible texts and media to pair for the next lesson plan, Martin sent out a trial balloon for a rather unorthodox text. "I was thinking of an obscure theory of economics, out of the writings of a French novelist. He wrote essays about fascism." He and the instructor engaged in five exchanges before other PSTs were able to rejoin the discussion. Martin fell silent for a while, but again, was obviously pursuing his own train of thinking rather than listening to the rest of the group. Ten minutes later he interrupted with another announcement.

Martin: I just thought of something – an obscure Argentine film. This guy is totally rational. A Christ figure. *The Man Facing Southeast*. I could have them read about Christ.

PST 1: That could be controversial.

Martin: It *shouldn't* be. It might involve seeing the whole movie and reading several texts about Christ.

PST 2: That might not be allowed where you teach.

Martin: Well, I don't care about it being controversial. I would invite that.

Inst: Presuming that you *could* show the film, reading the texts could be even more controversial.

Martin: But it might not lend itself to a 10-minute clip.

Inst: And it might not fit the plan for this course.

Despite being quite outspoken in class, Martin never posted a single entry to the discussion board during TELA III. However, one instance outside class in which he *was* notably outspoken was when Secretary of Education Riley visited campus. During a forum to which education students were invited, Martin drew attention by attacking Riley verbally, as noted in the local newspaper coverage of the event.

Education secretary visits MU

Area Demos join 'teach-in' for Al Gore.

By JOSH FLORY of the Tribune's staff

Story ran on Friday, September 15 2000

Missouri's strategic importance to the upcoming presidential election was highlighted again yesterday, as U.S. secretary of education Richard Riley stopped by MU to talk about education policy - and to talk up Democratic candidate Al Gore.

Though the question-and-answer format focused on policy, the atmosphere was purely political. Gore-Lieberman posters were taped up around the room at MU's Reynolds Alumni Center alongside signs touting Democratic U.S. House candidate Steve Carroll, who joined Riley on the panel. Lori Holden, wife of Democratic gubernatorial candidate Bob Holden, also participated. In the back of the room, students wearing George W. Bush stickers stood silent but conspicuous.

Riley, a 67-year-old with a slight, wizened air, is a former governor of South Carolina and has been education secretary since 1992. During yesterday's "teach-in" - a campaign trip paid for by the Democratic National Committee - he refrained from criticizing any Republican education plans but made clear his support for the proposals of Gore and running mate Joe Lieberman. "Their view of teaching is that it's a very elevated profession," he told the room full of future teachers.

The forum was brief, but Riley and Carroll answered questions from some students, including one who asked how the government can help draw qualified teachers into the failing school districts in Kansas City and St. Louis. Riley cited Gore's proposal to provide up to \$10,000 in college aid for students who commit to teaching in high-need schools for at least four years.

Carroll, who is challenging Ninth District U.S. Rep. Kenny Hulshof, said the state must work to improve the number of nationally certified teachers, a goal that is one of Holden's education planks.



Above, secretary of education Richard Riley talks yesterday to MU professor Judy Wedman after speaking to education students, below, at Reynolds Alumni Center.

Dan Gill photos



In a session after the forum with Tribune editors and reporters, Riley was more pointed in drawing comparisons between Gore and Bush, the GOP presidential candidate. Riley criticized voucher programs as a means of helping failing schools, an idea favored by Bush and one that has been the subject of fierce debate in Missouri's gubernatorial race. Holden is strictly opposed to vouchers while GOP nominee Jim Talent has said he would consider them.

Riley said that even if vouchers - stipends that pay for tuition at private or parochial schools - are offered, there is too little space in many private schools to hold all the children who might take advantage of such programs. He also said vouchers would damage the public schools that remain.

"You are just handing everybody a voucher for \$1,500 or whatever and simply let the school rot," Riley said. "It's a nonsolution."

Gore's proposal gives failing schools two years to turn around. If they fail, the plan would overhaul them with new teachers and administrators. Bush has called for vouchers to be offered to students in failing schools if those schools do not improve their performance.

The campus teach-in did strike a discordant note when a man berated Riley, citing a televised news report that said the Department of Education had lost track of \$700 million. Riley told the man that the General Accounting Office had found no fraud and dismissed the report as "pure, simple politics."

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Community

Traditions, Rites and Rituals. The only observable traditions of the group in TELA III were those of most classrooms: seating patterns and the structure of how they spent their time together. As noted above, the new classroom afforded them the opportunity of arranging small tables in to a large whole-class circle. Although they began the semester all in one circle, by mid-semester, a few had begun to break off and sit at the row of tables directly behind. Over time, the circle evolved into two rows or concentric semi-circles. Although there was no formal seating arrangement nor any pattern discernible for the whole class, there were a few – most notably the older, non-traditional PSTs – who tended to be the ones who sat on the “outside” the inner circle.

Most of the class sessions I observed (14 of 18) began with the first few minutes devoted to “housekeeping” or management issues, most often communication from the instructor to the PSTs about upcoming assignments and requirements for the program (e.g. fieldwork and portfolios). Indeed, the only times I observed class sessions in which no time was devoted to these introductory remarks were the times when the PSTs were in charge, leading a lesson from one of their curriculum guides.

At the end of class, there was no discernible “closing” ritual. Only occasionally (5 of 18 sessions) did the instructor close with a preview of what would be coming up in the next class session. Most often, however, the discussion ran up to and sometimes over the end of class time, and the end of class was signaled simply by the PSTs packing up their books and papers and leaving the room.

Meaningful Relationships and Commitment to the Group. No meaningful relationships that extended beyond the boundaries of the class were evident this semester. Commitment to the group, as evidenced in class attendance, appeared to diminish this semester. Attendance was more irregular and there was seldom any mention made of anyone’s absence. Only once, near the end of the semester (11/28/00, did one PST note that she had passed another PST from the group on campus, heading for the Student Health Center, as a way of explaining his absence.

Trust. While the foundation of trust often lies in the values and beliefs held in common, deeper trust is often made visible and strengthened by individuals sharing personal information and experiences. Sharing some of these stories involve a certain

amount of risk and vulnerability, such as in the story one PST shared in late November. The class had been engaged in a lengthy discussion about the culture of family traditions and rituals, around holidays, weddings, and funerals. One PST who seldom spoke in class ventured to share her story:

“Some traditions we continue, even when they have no meaning. My boyfriend’s sister died several month ago and some of the things we did then made no sense to me.”

It was obvious that this was still a raw memory for her, still laden with emotion, and that it had taken a good deal of courage to say even this much about her experience. Another PST listened and gently advised, “Some of it is how we begin to move into processing it, dealing with it.” Another PST, Melinda, was, perhaps, a bit less sensitive in her response, seizing the moment to tell a “better story” (as if it were a competition):

“Oh, that’s nothing. I had a friend who was *murdered*. Funerals are just *ludicrous!*” (field notes 11/28/00).

It seems there can be a kind of sharing of personal stories that engenders trust and stronger connections with the group, while another kind is used more as a way of trying to establish how different the speaker is from the rest of the group. While Mindy shared a story that might have been a common experience for members of the group by this point in their lives, a death in her extended family, Melinda shared a story that was much more uncommon, having a friend murdered. Mindy’s comment invited response, by framing it as her perspective: “things we did made no sense to *me*” (emphasis mine). Melinda, however, simply framed her comment as a pronouncement of fact, leaving no room for a response: “funerals are just *ludicrous!*” (emphasis original).

Melinda often shared personal stories in this latter vein, stories of experiences that set her apart from the rest of the group, weakening rather than strengthening any strong ties with the other PSTs. For instance, during an early discussion about television advertising, she embedded a piece of personal information that set her apart from the others in a comment on her dislike of television.

I don't have cable. But I know these commercials. I *abhor* television! I only see it when I work at ----- [a residential treatment facility for troubled teens].

(field notes 9/7/00, emphasis original).

A month later, during a discussion of one of their readings, one of the PSTs noted how we tend to type cast people into roles according to their appearances. Melinda responded:

That's funny. *One of my undergraduate degrees* is in theater. I thought about how it must feel to be the fat kid and think he is type cast into that role. (field notes 10/5/00; emphasis mine).

Her reference to having already completed not only one, but presumably at least two undergraduate degrees set her apart from the others. One can only surmise that she felt a need to lend authority to her statement by calling upon her previous education, although, in this instance, it did not seem to add anything. A month later, during a discussion of advertising's emphasis on youth and beauty, especially in marketing anti-aging beauty products, Melinda noted: "Oh, I've been using this stuff since I was 25!," again reminding them that she was different in being older than the majority of the PSTs in the group (field notes, 11/7/00).

Martin also frequently broke trust with the group and seemed to intentionally set himself apart from the others. As noted above, he had already established the fact that he

was older and had a different set of experiences than most in TELA I. This semester, he often physically sat apart from the others, sitting in the outer row of tables at the back of the room, rather than as part of the inner circle of tables where the majority of the class sat. Furthermore, his frequent extended monologues in class on issues and readings that sometimes seemed peripheral to the experience and interest of the rest of the class appeared to set him apart from the others (see for instance, remarks on his extended commentary on Chomsky's *Manufactured Consent* above). Finally, his disrespect of guest speakers served to set him apart for the rest, both in his verbal attack on Secretary Riley, in September (noted above) and in the following incident in November.

A high school teacher from one of the area schools had been invited in as a guest speaker to present an extensive PowerPoint presentation on the history of cigarette advertising, as a model of the kind of project the PSTs might develop for their classrooms. The presenter had barely begun when Martin challenged her on one of the statistics she had presented on smoking as a leading cause of death. "That's just hyperbole. It may be related, but you can't say it's the leading *cause* of death." While other PSTs rolled their eyes, looked away in embarrassment, or sighed "please stop!," the presenter, with great equanimity, simply responded, "I'll have to check my information on that" and proceeded (field notes, 11/14/00).

Respect for minority views. There appeared to be little respect for minority views this semester. Kevin, the one African American PST in the group, returned to his previous mode of being a silent participant in class. Neither the instructors nor the rest of

the class had much success in drawing him out and incorporating him into the discussions.

The most outspoken minority views were those of the two PSTs described above, Melinda and Martin. While the instructor frequently engaged them and responded to them during class discussions, the other PSTs appeared to shut them out by not responding to their comments. Often, Melinda and Martin dominated the class with extended monologues, or at best, dialogues with the instructor. The instructor made several attempts to incorporate their views into the class discussion, as in the following excerpt from early October.

The class had been discussing an essay by Fiske. After a long commentary by Martin, the instructor interjected, “Your point that Fiske is ideological is true,” as a summarizing statement to make a transition for other speakers to enter the discussion. Fifteen minutes later, Martin launched into another monologue in which he argued that cultural criticism can be “just another way to open students up to indoctrinate them with another ideology.” The instructor tried to bring his comments back into the center of the discussion and to defend the reading:

“To take what Martin was saying and put it into the classroom. The idea is not to brainwash them with a Marxist theory. Fiske lays out his theory and his data. If you disagree, you need to present your reading.”

A few minutes later, after Martin had begun lecturing the class on Chomsky’s *Manufactured Consent*, the instructor interjected, “Let me take a point you made back to what Fiske said,” in an attempt to get the discussion back to the original topic (field notes, 10/5/00).

By the end of the next class, however, after Martin's lengthy discussion of what, even he admitted, were "obscure" works, the instructor was forced to deal with the situation outside class, asking Martin to stay after class to talk privately (field notes, 10/7/00). Their talk appeared to be successful, in that Martin no longer engaged in the extended monologues in class. But the group was never successful at respecting or incorporating his views. Rather, for the most part, they simply shut him down. He never posted online and seldom participated verbally in class after this point.

Practice

Rights and Responsibilities. The academic responsibilities of the PSTs this semester shifted more towards the responsibilities of a practicing teacher. The majority of their grade was based on the development of four teaching guides (40%) and a PowerPoint presentation on teaching media texts (25%). The remainder of the course grade was based on their field experience project (25%) and participation, attendance, and punctuality (10%).

However, the expectations for the field experience project were less rigorous than in previous semesters; rather than a formal action research project and written report, the expectation in TELA III was that they would "communicate with others in the class via electronic entries" on the course web site and then "write a final reflective entry which summarizes and then evaluates what you have learned in your field experience overall, as well as in your communication with others on-line and face-to-face" (TELA III syllabus, FS 00).

At the same time, the language about expectations for attendance and participation was more succinct than in previous semesters, almost telegraphic. “Participation. Consistent Attendance. Punctuality. This includes quizzes over assigned readings, informal talks, demonstrations (e. g. view alouds), participation in class discussions, writing responses to peer’s work, etc.” The threat of penalty for excessive absences remained (“Three absences can result in lowering of the final grade by one-half letter...”), but the language encouraging regular attendance and participation grounded in the professional responsibility was noticeably absent. Whether intentional or simply a result of editing and the desire to avoid too much repetition from one semester to the next, this absence of a reference to professional standards of behavior, taken together with the continuing threat of penalties for absence and the new threat of quizzes over the readings, left the TELA III syllabus with more emphasis on a teacher-driven, student-level of responsibilities rather than responsibilities driven by the adoption of professional standards.

Shared Responsibility and Authority. In many ways, it appears that the norm of shared responsibility established in TELA II carried over into TELA III. PSTs shared in teaching the class through presentation of mini-lessons, although this semester these lessons were much shorter and done individually rather than in teams. As noted above, both the instructor and the PSTs expressed a dislike for team teaching as being “a headache” (field notes 8/22/00). When there were problems with the technology, the VCR or the SmartBoard, the PSTs were quick to jump up and lend a hand in troubleshooting and resolving the problem.

The PSTs were also very often good at carrying the discussion themselves, engaging the majority of the group, with little need for intervention or facilitation by the instructor. Often I noted 10 to 12 participants in a class discussion. Yet, there were many instances in which this shared responsibility for participating in the discussions was problematic; periodically, the instructor had to make the expectation explicit.

“I want to get everyone involved. I don’t know about you, but I’m tired of hearing my own voice.” (field notes 9/7/00)

“Now it’s *your* turn to talk.” (field notes 10/3/00)

“I could talk forever, but I want to hear your thoughts on this.” (field notes 10/5/00).

Another strategy used was intentionally re-directing a question that had been directed at the teacher back to the class:

PST 1: I really don’t understand the cultural context.

Inst: Does someone else want to share their understanding of that?

PST 2: It’s just any activity that could have them [your students] look at how what was going on at the time affected it [the piece of literature they are reading].
(field notes 9/19/00).

Satisfying the Teacher. One symptom of problems in sharing responsibility this semester was the frequency of questions that were variants of “What do you [the teacher] want?” For instance, in mid-September, after the graduate instructor presented a model for a curriculum unit and discussed the importance of being invested in the topic selected and the various options for activities and assessment plans they might include, PST questions, such as “But what does Dr. Fischer want?” “What would Dr. Fischer say if you turned in one like this?” (field notes 9/19/00), reflected more of a concern for the

minimum requirements for the assignment as *students* in teacher education, rather than ideas about how the assignment might benefit them as developing *professionals* who might use these curriculum guides in their own classrooms.

A month later, after the faculty instructor returned, similar questions emerged about the curriculum guides, this time focused on making use of state standards.

Inst: This is what you need to keep in mind when designing your curriculum guides. Design for what your students need. But cross-reference the standards.

PST 1: Which standards?

Inst: The MoSTEP Standards are for students; the ShowMe Standards are for teacher education.

PST 1: I didn't know I needed to include the standards in my teaching guide.

Inst: I didn't mark off if you didn't, but be sure to include them in the future.

(field notes 10/10/00).

Note that the PST's focus was on not losing marks on the curriculum guide as a student assignment, rather than on moving toward professional practice, understanding that in the future, she would need to create curriculum guides to help her students meet state standards.

Near the end of the term, when discussion turned to the field experiences (the only time they were discussed in class), the focus of the PSTs was not on the field experiences themselves nor on the process of learning by reflecting on their practice, but on what they needed to do to meet the requirements for the class.

Inst: So, about the field experiences...do you have any concerns there?

PST 1: My only concern is about the report. Do I just take my CourseInfo entries and write up a synopsis? (field notes 11/16/00).

When discussion then turned to the PowerPoint presentation project, their focus seemed to be much more on the mechanics of the assignment – when they were due, whether they would present them in class, whether they should include presentation notes, and what media they should use to submit the assignment – than on the actual content of the presentation.

“Are we going to present these in class?”

“Will we turn in a script to go along with it, to show how we will use it in class?”

“When are these due?”

“Is it ok to turn it in on a CD?” (field notes 11/16/00, 11/28/00).

Dominance of a Few Voices. Another problem in sharing responsibility in TELA III was that a few voices sometimes seemed to dominate the discussion. Sometimes it was the instructor himself who dominated the discussion. Self-consciously, he sometimes felt the need to apologize for this tendency. “I have to stop sermonizing!” (field notes 10/10/00).

Often, however, two of the PSTs – Martin and Melinda – tended to dominate the discussions, as described above. The rest remained silent, apparently expecting the instructor to remedy the situation. Despite the instructor’s attempts to redirect the discussion and make a place for others to join in, Melinda and Martin clearly dominated the discussion both in the number of times they spoke and the length of their comments. Further, many of their comments were made as pronouncements, with a tone of authority, which tended to close down rather than invite further engagement from their colleagues.

Norms. One of the continuing norms this semester was that casual style of dress of college students, rather than a more formal style of dress that might be expected of practicing professionals. Even on the days they presented their curriculum guides and mini-lessons to their peers, the PSTs dressed casually, suggesting that they still saw this activity as another assignment as a college student, rather than as actual practice in teaching.

Another norm that resurfaced this semester was the tendency to fall into teacher-student Q&A and IRE communication patterns in the classroom. In the second semester, PSTs often directed questions to each other and responded to each others' questions and comments; the instructor often participated as another member of the discussion rather than as "the expert with the answers." But in this third semester, the instructor began to appear as "the expert" again, and much more of the in-class dialogue began to fall into patterns in which the PSTs turned to the instructor to either provide the answers or to provide the expert evaluation of their responses. Note, for instance, these excerpts from a class midway through the semester.

Inst: Take out some paper. Now let's say you are teaching *The Eclipse*. You want to teach a media text with it. What would you do? How would you have them analyze it? What media would you use? Go. [He gives them a couple of minutes to write.] First, if someone were observing your class and asked, "Why did you have your students write? You could have used that time to teach."

PST 1: It's another form of learning.

PST 2: It personalizes it.

PST 3: Being able to write isn't the same as being able to speak.

PST 4: It gives more people a chance to participate.

PST 3: It gives more time to reflect. Time to let it simmer.

PST 5: Seeing it written down makes it more concrete.

Inst: Absolutely right! You guys are great. Two minutes of silence is great for kids who have something in their face all the time. Ok, who wants to start?

PST 6: *Little Women, Steel Magnolias, Fried Green Tomatoes, Sex in the City, Patty Duke, The Facts of Life.*

Inst: Great! Who next?

PST 3: I'd compare it with "I stand here Ironing." Or maybe have kids look at old home movies and see how family influences their perspective.

Inst: I love it! (field notes, 10/10/00)

Note that, although as many as 6 PSTs participated in the discussion, the pattern of communication was still IRE: the instructor posed the question; the PSTs offered possible responses, directed back to the instructor; and the instructor then evaluated their responses.

Later in the same class session, the discussion turned to a simple question and answer format in which the PSTs asked the instructor for the answers to their questions.

PST 1: Do we always have to use a short story? Like, could I do an article and a movie?

Inst: Sure. But you have to make sure your students (that's us, in this case) have a copy.

PST 1: What if I wanted to do a novel? They would have time to read it in advance. And then they could compare it to the movie.

Inst: Yeah, you could do that.

PST 2: What about choosing a film that is a book.

Inst: Yes. But a lot of times, the film becomes dessert or filler at the end of the unit.

PST 3: So what would you look at?

Inst: You could just do a clip, like we did with *Silence of the Lambs*.

At the same time, (and perhaps not coincidentally) a more traditional seating arrangement began to re-emerge over the course of the semester. The whole class circle began to evolve into two rows or semicircles facing the “front” of the room, where the instructor and visual presentation resources –such as the SmartBoard – sat. At first, only one or two PSTs sat in the outer ring or second row; by the end of the semester, the group was nearly evenly distributed between the two rows of tables.

Negotiation of Ideas. There was notably more an open flow of discussion between PSTs and less of the Q&A and IRE pattern of dialogue during the mini-lessons led by the PSTs. At moments during these discussions, they were able to negotiate ideas and differences of opinion and arrive at new understandings. Note, for instance, a couple of excerpts from two sessions in November. In the first, one of the PSTs was leading a class in a lesson about the short story, *The Pill*.

PST (as Inst): Step outside yourselves for a moment. As the narrator of the story, which side is preferred?

PST 1: Clearly the blonde. Note how the nurses are talking about the daughter, how she’s let herself go.

PST (as Inst): So they prefer the physical beauty?

PST 1: Yes.

PST 2: I disagree. That's just the superficial. The real issue is that she can't do anything for herself.

PST 3: I agree. It seems that the blonde woman is preferred, but at the end, the one nurse talks about her aunt who won't take the pill. She may look good outside, but inside she's gone. It kind of implies that taking the pill contributes to that.

PST 4: I agree. As the author, that's the point.

PST 1: Ok, as the *author*...but not as the *narrator*. (field notes 11/7/00)

Through the discussion, they clarify that the question depends on the point of view, and that the narrator's point of view is not necessarily the same as the author's.

Later in the semester, another PST showed a clip from Seinfeld and led the class in a discussion of traditions.

PST (as Inst): What makes a tradition a tradition?

PST 1: Families.

PST 2: Doing it several times.

PST 3: Families are just the smallest unit. It's when people – any group – find common ground.

PST 4: It has to have symbolic importance, like sports players before a game.

PST 5: And a story of how it was created, like religions and Santa Claus.

PST (as Inst): Yes, it's interesting to watch how traditions have evolved over time.

PST 6: Christmas has lots of complex meanings for some, while for others, it's just another day off.

Although they never formalized it, through this negotiation, the PSTs began to develop a the elements of a working definition of "traditions" upon which they could build the succeeding discussion.

Although they posed more questions than answers online, there were a few instances of negotiation of ideas evident there as well. One thread centered on teaching grammar, noted above. One PST noted her frustration with teaching grammar: "if I don't feel I have a firm grasp on it, how do I teach it? "

| |
|---|
| Current Forum: field experiences |
| Date: Sat Oct 7 2000 1:01 pm |
| Author: ----- |
| Subject: grammar |

OK, so, I thought I was the only person still struggling with grammar, But when I was talking to my field placement teacher he said he had the same problem, he said he wouldn't know a gerund if it bit him on the nose....(Well, he also said that now he does because he had a parent say to him "Do you know what a gerund is?" and he had to admit that he didn't, despite being an English teacher).

I haven't had grammar since my freshman year of high school, and yea, I've taken linguistics classes here, but all that seems slightly beyond what I will need to tell a group of high school students. SO, if I don't feel I have a firm grasp on it, how do I teach it? I know we've covered teaching grammar in the context of writing, but what about when I am grading papers and a student's grammar is poor and I wouldn't even know the difference. What my field teacher was saying was that he has to spend a long time looking up grammatical rules while he's grading papers, (and I don't want to do that...). and he also was saying that since he is not formally teaching grammar, and he corrects students grammar in papers and marks off for it, he has kids who come to him and complain "I never learned that," or "you never told us that." Then what? Is it fair to count off for grammar if students don't even know what's right? and if not, then why would they care if they had "good grammar" if they knew they wouldn't lose points for it?

I have never seen grammar being taught (formally or informally) in any of my field placements. And in many of the student papers I have read, grammar is poor. What gives?

Grammar is like math to me, I hate it because I don't understand it despite my efforts to try to learn it.

Another responded initially with humor, arguing that there are ways of teaching grammar “without making students want to run screaming from the classroom” and suggested that the questioner consult other resources, such as the district curriculum guide.

Current Forum: field experiences
Date: Tue Oct 17 2000 8:00 am
Author: -----
Subject: Re: grammar

Aren't gerunds extinct? I managed to escape exposure to formal grammar exercises except in the eighth grade. I don't think it makes much difference if you label a word as a noun, or NP as long as you are able to use it correctly and in context when writing. I barely survived linguistics because of this belief. The formal study of grammar annoys me; there are ways to teach grammar without diagramming sentences. Hemmingway used conjunctions to good effect--other writers could be used to learn about grammar without making students want to run screaming from the classroom. My high school English teacher made a game of it, and we looked for writing patterns/parts of speech in the spirit of detectives, instead of having grammar hammered into us. Have you had a chance to look at the district curriculum guide for this subject?

After reading the response of another participant in the discussion,

Current Forum: field experiences
Date: Wed Oct 11 2000 8:37 am
Author: -----
Subject: Re: markers and glitter and grammar

.....I'll have to admit, though, that I wonder about the mini grammar lessons. I wonder if teaching grammar, de-contextualized from writing actually has any effect on students' writing. Most research, I think, says that it will not. They might learn the rules and the labels, but not how to actually use them.

the initial questioner concluded that it might be best to teach grammar both as mini-lessons AND in the context of student writing.

Current Forum: field experiences
Date: Fri Nov 3 2000 1:50 pm
Author: -----
Subject: Re: markers and glitter

.....In response to what ----- said, I think it is important to have these mini-grammar lessons AND teach grammar in the context of writing. Because I never had these grammar lessons and learned a lot of my grammar in context. Then, I had all kinds of linguistics classes,

and tests (i.e. ACT, SAT, blah blah) and couldn't identify a gerund or something, if it hit my over the head with a large stick. So, I do think it is important for kids to know both the terms and how to use them and it seems the only way to do that would be BOTH in context and in these sort of mini-lessons. This way when someone later on tells them, "You have a misplaced modifier..." they will know what that is and how to fix it.

In another thread, PSTs negotiated the similarities and differences between what they were learning in class and in the field. One PST marveled at how she was seeing the things she learned in class being used in the field.

Current Forum: field experiences
Date: Sun Oct 15 2000 9:12 pm
Author: -----
Subject: -----

.....My field experience is going great so far. The teacher I'm working with graduated from here just two years ago, so it's really neat to be working with a young teacher. Even more interesting is that she just recently took the classes we are taking right now--she basically knows and understands everything we are doing in TELA III right now. I see many of the things that we learn in the class put into action in her classroom everyday! For example, the class (college comp.) works in the same type of writing groups to peer review and revise their papers as we worked in during TELA I. The awesome thing is--they really were very effective in the high school classroom. The only complaint any students had was that they wanted to spend more time in the groups because their peers were helping so much!

Another PST found the opposite, confessing that she was disillusioned to learn that the teachers she had worked with in the field who were recent graduates of the program had all told her "how idealized English ed methods classes are and that expecting students to actually do a lot of the things we learn about is crazy."

Current Forum: field experiences
Date: Mon Oct 23 2000 7:51 pm
Author: -----
Subject: disillusionment

Every teacher I have ever worked with in the public school district has been a graduate of the College of Ed.
If that's not interesting, I'll tell you what is....
They have all at one point or another told me the SAME thing.
That being: that "what they teach you in your methods classes is b.s. and you'll never do half of it."
OK....so? Today I was talking to my field teacher and another teacher who shares the classroom

and they were both saying how idealized English ed methods classes are and that expecting students to actually do a lot of the things we learn about is crazy. How true is this? and what kind of reflection on the students is this? or what does this say about these teachers?

A third PST negotiated the differences and offered a middle point of view, arguing that it is okay that teachers don't use half of what they learn in their methods classes. Rather, it is better "to know several different approaches/techniques/styles and then choose the best one for your group of learners." She concluded, "You may not use everything you learn in theory class every time you teach, but you can choose to use some of it when you want to spice things up."

Current Forum: field experiences

Date: Tue Oct 24 2000 11:02 am

Author: -----

Subject: Re: disillusionment

I think it is helpful to know several different approaches/techniques/styles and then choose the best one for your group of learners. You may not pull out all the bells and whistles every time, but it is nice to have lots of tricks in your bag. (Is it necessary for me to dress as a pirate whenever I read a pirate story? Should I bother to bring a stuffed parrot to introduce the story? Should I tie it in with geography/history/math?) Since I teach younger students, they actually seem to appreciate my antics, but I think that older children recognize extra effort, too. You may not want to come in costume, and older students may roll their eyes at puppets, but any time you can add something extra or different to teaching/learning, it seems to increase student interest in the subject. So...you may not use everything you learn in theory class every time you teach, but you can choose to use some of it when you want to spice things up. I try to remember that there are different learning styles and try to think of some way to reach/teach everyone. Presenting each lesson in the same way would bore me senseless, so why should I expect my students to learn that way?

Chapter 7:

Discussion of the Findings

The goal of this study has been to examine the development of a group of preservice teachers over the course three semesters, during the second phase of their coursework and fieldwork in the teacher development program at a major Midwestern university. The questions at the heart of the study were

1. Did this cohort of preservice teachers develop a community of practice? What markers of community were evidenced?
2. What conditions, in the technologies they used and the context of their teacher education program, contributed to their ability (or inability) to form community?

Did this cohort of preservice teachers develop a community of practice? What markers of community were evidenced?

In order to answer these questions, it will be useful to summarize the findings of the study of this cohort in terms of the markers of a community of practice identified in the literature, organized around Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) key concepts of domain, community, and practice.

Domain. Much of the previous research concurs that one of the principal defining factors of community is having a shared interest, goal, or purpose, a *raison d'être* (Barab et al, 2002; Calderwood, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Little, 2002; McCotter, 2000;

Palincsar, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Westheimer, 1998). The group came together around a shared interest in teaching English in the secondary schools.

That these preservice teachers had a *shared purpose or goal* might appear, at first, to be a given under these circumstances.

There was evidence of multiple goals within this community of practice, however. As college students, their primary goal was simply completing the coursework and fieldwork required for graduation and teaching certification. As preservice teachers, their goal was gain practice and develop strategies and resources for their future teaching practice. Differences in emphases on those goals emerged over time and between individuals. For instance, it is not surprising to find that, as they approached their teaching internships and graduation, there was evidence of more emphasis in the group on what they needed to know as teachers and less talk about the what they needed to do as students.

But there were also differences among members of the cohort that emerged. In the fall of 1999, when this group of nineteen students entered the Teaching English Language Arts (TELA) sequence, the majority (15) were traditional undergraduates ranging in age from 20-24; four were older, non-traditional students returning to college. Nearly half of the cohort (9) had been clearly focused on the goal of becoming English teachers from the beginning of their college careers; others had either changed majors as undergraduates and entered the program late (6) or had returned to college as graduate or post-baccalaureate students (4) to seek another degree or additional teaching certification. This last subset was perhaps more goal-oriented and more focused on gaining the ideas,

resources, and skills they could carry into their teaching practice than the undergraduates, many of whom had not made a final commitment to the teaching profession.

By the time they entered the third semester in the fall of 2000, the difference in their professional goals had become more apparent. Two of the original 19 had already left the program altogether. During introductions on the first day of class, the career goals they shared included teaching high school English (6), teaching drama (1), teaching foreign languages (1), teaching English at the middle school level (1), and pursuing graduate school to become a school counselor (1), a principal (1), or a lawyer specializing in educational policy (1). Several (7) were still not sure what they wanted to do, hoping that the final semester of coursework and fieldwork and the student teaching internship in the spring would help clarify their goals.

Also, while it appeared at the beginning of the TELA sequence that members of this cohort shared a *common set of beliefs and values* about the importance of teaching English and about how to do that, over time, differences in those beliefs and values became more apparent. For the most part, the group did seem to share a common set of liberal values about teaching English language arts in the secondary schools:

- students learn best through authentic practice – they learn to write by writing; they learn to discuss literature through engaging in discussion; they learn about media by critiquing and creating media
- students learn through social exchange with their peers,
- assessment should be wholistic and based on a portfolio of students' work rather than exams,

- young adult readers should be provided reading options that are authentic to their experience (not just the “classics”)
- English teachers teach more than language and literature: they help young adults explore issues relevant to their lives, help them discover their identities, and help them expand their horizons

These values pervading the TELA sequence of courses and were made visible in the class activities, the fieldwork, and the comments of the instructors and the PSTs in class and online.

But there were some outliers. Some still clung to the value of teaching the classics; some still argued the need to teach traditional grammar. A few expressed concerns about the wholistic grading system, particularly when it was applied to them as students. And at least one PST who was in the class (although I would not go so far as to say that he was part of the community) in the first and third semesters was so far left that he would be considered more radical than liberal in his views. There was some consistency in the goals and values of this group of preservice teachers, but they were not shared by all.

Community

While a group of people may be initially drawn together by a shared set of goals, values, and beliefs, there are a set of dynamics of social exchange that help maintain community cohesion. If the *domain* is the vertical axis of community – the shared focus, purpose, and direction of a group – the dynamics of *community* might be thought of as the horizontal axis, the relational dynamics between and among group members that knit

them together. Key relational elements of community that have emerged from research (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Calderwood, 2000; Westheimer, 1998; Wenger, 2002) include *traditions, rites, and rituals; trust; meaningful relationships*; a sense of *commitment* to one another and to the group; and *respect* for and inclusion of *minority views*.

Evidence of these markers of community waxed and waned over the three semesters of the TELA sequence. There was not a strong sense of a cohesive community in TELA I. The *traditions, rites, and rituals* that could be observed were those of the traditional classroom. For the most part, students sat in rows facing the front of the room, where the instructor stood. Communication was most often only one-way broadcast (instructor to students) or duplex (teacher to student to teacher), but seldom multiplex (multiple interchanges between students). The class often began (and sometimes ended) with housekeeping announcements from the instructor. Small group work was often pushed to the last 10-15 minutes of class.

There was little evidence of any *meaningful relationships* developing; some, in fact, noted that they didn't even know the names of many of the other PSTs in class. Class attendance patterns showed little evidence of a sense of *commitment* to the group; they came to class because it was a class and absences would lower their grades. The shallow level of dialogue in the small groups revealed low levels of *trust* when it came to sharing their writing with each other or critiquing each others' writings. That lack of trust did not foster an environment supportive of the expression of minority views. It appears that the one person who *did* voice a minority view did so more because he was

oblivious to the emerging culture of the group – a culture of pseudo-community, with the appearance of homogeneity – than because of a sense of trust.

By contrast, there was a much stronger sense of community cohesion in TELA II. For one thing, the PSTs, the instructor, and the researcher spent most evenings gathered in a circle, as if around the communal campfire. They took time to *socialize* over food at a mid-way point in each class session. And they made a point of entry and exit *rituals*, with introductions both in class and online and a closing *celebration* at the end of the semester at a pizza house near campus.

Although the statement about attendance was still in the syllabus, there was a sense of an intrinsic *commitment* to the group evidenced in the higher levels of attendance and participation, both in class and online. They came not just because attendance counted as part of their grade, but because they were committed to the group. If someone was absent, we knew why. They told the group in advance or sent word via another member of the group. We knew what other commitments they had that superseded attending class that night; you didn't just cut because you didn't feel like being there.

The discussions in class and online revealed a much deeper sense of *trust*. People shared revealing personal anecdotes and deeply-held beliefs. And, while there was little evidence of any *meaningful relationships* being established within the group, there were signs that they were better able to embrace *minority views*. Perhaps the discussion of the literature itself helped extend the boundaries for some of these white-bread, middle class students who had been raised in fairly homogenous communities with little exposure to minorities. Many confessed that they had grown up in all-white communities. Rather than responding negatively, however, many of them argued the need to be exposed to, and to

expose their students to, different experiences and different ways of looking at the world. “What is our role as educators, if not to bring up these issues?”

Admittedly, there was less challenge for them to embrace minority views within the group this semester, since the two most vocal outliers from TELA I – the non-traditional post-baccalaureate students – were missing from the rolls of TELA II. They could talk *about* embracing minority views, particularly of those groups classically defined as “minorities,” but there was less of an opportunity for them to *practice* embracing differences within their own group.

By the third semester, the apparent group cohesion began to disintegrate. The centripetal forces that had held them together in something of a community – the *shared values*; the *social exchanges*; the *traditions, rites, and rituals*; the *commitment* to the group; the *trust* in each other and the ability to *embrace minority views* – were superseded by centrifugal forces that pulled them in different directions. This sense of the disintegration of the community was visible, for one thing, in the evolving seating patterns in class over the course of the semester. Beginning, as they had, in TELA II, with class gathered in one circle, the group evolved over time into two concentric semi-circles or arcs, one for the “inside group” and one for the “outsiders.”

The lack of cohesion was also evident in the lower levels of *participation* in class and online. Attendance was lower, despite the threat of penalties in the course grade. The volume of discussion online was only about 20% of what had been seen in TELA II. For the most part, that discussion was one-way or two-way, between individual PSTs and the instructor in charge of the field experiences; there was very little evidence that the PSTs were reading or responding to each other’s posts.

The group experienced serious difficulties in *embracing difference*, as two of the more vocal “outliers” from TELA I rejoined the group, along with another non-traditional, older PST. The lack of *trust* became evident in the boundaries between the insiders and the outsiders. Two of these older PSTs appeared to use the opportunities for sharing something of themselves and their experiences as opportunities for asserting their differences and setting themselves apart from the group, rather than as a means of being incorporated into the group. The remainder of the group did nothing to attempt to overcome these differences. Rather, they simply drew boundaries, both physical and metaphorical, between themselves and these “others.”

Practice

Wenger and his colleagues (2002) argue that a community of practice develops a set of *practices* that help to shape its *identity* and provide the cohesiveness that sustain it over time. It develops a set of *norms*, *rights*, and *responsibilities* for expected behavior – some formal and others more informal. Responsibility and authority for the community is *shared* rather than invested in one person. Westheimer (1998) and McCotter (2000) both argue that the power and organizational structure is flattened rather than hierarchical.

Much of the previous research on communities of practice and teaching communities (Barab et al, 2003; Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Calderwood, 2000; Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, 2002; Westheimer, 1998) argues that that a community develops a *shared history* that not only helps to codify the norms of acceptable behavior, but also helps shape community identity. Most importantly, through shared practice, a

community seeks to *negotiate new understanding* (Barab et al, 2002, Lave & Wenger, 1991; Little, 2002; Palincsar, 1998; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Synder, 2002; Westheimer, 1998), to construct new knowledge about their practice, to learn something *together* through negotiation of ideas and by embracing different ways of seeing things.

The practice of the group in TELA I might best be described as one of balancing explicit rules with implicit norms. The responsibilities made explicit through the syllabus were those of *shared responsibility* and *professional practice*. The PSTs were expected to share in the responsibility for leading the class through the microteaching activities. They shared in the responsibility for generating paper topics and for peer review of each other's work in reader response groups. At the end of the semester, they were given the responsibility for generating potential final examination questions. Even the language about attendance in the syllabus was couched in the language of professional practice and commitment to their colleagues.

Yet there were conflicting implicit *norms* in the group grounded much more in the culture of student practice. The style of dress was casual, rather than professional. For the most part, the class seating arrangement was that of a traditional classroom, with the PSTs/students sitting in rows, facing the front of the room. PSTs did not seem to take the shared responsibilities that were offered seriously. The microteaching sessions were less authentic teaching experiences and more like typical student presentations. The peer review I observed in the reader response groups provided only gratuitous praise and little serious criticism. Few provided suggestions for paper topics or final examination questions. There was discussion in class, but little evidence of true *negotiation* of ideas.

Rather, the dominance of a few voices, the seating arrangements, the frequent IRE dialogue patterns, even the presence of a written final exam, established an implicit student-based culture. PSTs behaved as students rather than as developing professionals and refused the shared rights and responsibilities that were offered to them.

By the second semester in the sequence, the PSTs began to adopt more of the *responsibilities* of practicing professionals, not just students. The bar was raised; expectations were higher and they began to live up to those expectations. For instance, even though the syllabus maintained the formal rules and expectations about attendance and punctuality, they were couched in the language of demonstrating “commitment to your colleagues and to our chosen life’s work.” The physical arrangement of the class, with the PSTs, teacher, and researcher all in one circle, made all equal members of this emerging learning community. Participation, both in class and online, was encouraged from the beginning of class. The instructor made clear that she wanted “real interaction” with each other, not just with her as the instructor.

The curriculum itself was student-driven, based on themes that emerged in an early discussion of “What do you know? and What do you want or need to know?” Many of the forums on the discussion board emerged from the PSTs’ discussions in class. The PSTs shared responsibility for negotiating the class schedule, and shared responsibility for providing treats each week for the break. They showed signs of adopting professional responsibilities, including involvement in the local branch of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and other professional workshops on campus.

Discussion patterns were more multiplex and less teacher-directed. There were far fewer instances of IRE exchanges, in class or online. The PSTs truly took on the responsibility for participating in and carrying the discussion, responding to each other. Nowhere was this more evident, perhaps, than in the online discussion board, which generated 460 messages over the course of the semester. There was evidence of real *negotiation* of ideas in these discussions, negotiating differences and developing new shared understandings about the role of the English teacher in the high school setting and what they should teach.

Finally, reflections about the experience at the end of the semester, posted online as their “final reflections” revealed a sense of an emerging group *identity*, an identity as a group of preservice teachers developing a common practice, rather than simply another cohort of college students.

In TELA III, there was an obvious continuation of the progression of these PSTs towards the professional practice of a teacher. The class itself was designed to put more of the emphasis of their work on developing curriculum guides and practicing teaching in class. At the same time, many of their online comments about their field experiences noted that they were finally getting a chance to “really teach,” to design and carry out lessons in their field placements. There was much more *shared responsibility* for participation, carrying the discussion in class and more open negotiation of ideas around issues that emerged from their readings and their field experiences, such as whether and how to teach grammar.

Discussion online dropped off dramatically, though, in TELA III. The majority of discussion centered around their field experiences and, admittedly, more of that

functioned as a means of reporting in to the instructor who served as the liaison for the field experience than as genuine dialogue. The fact that the field experience discussions, for the most part, happened *only* online and did not involve the faculty instructor, tended to marginalize the discussion and diminish the importance of the discussion board for the PSTs and the instructor.

At the same time, there was more language about “what do you [the teacher] want?” evident in the PSTs’ questions in TELA III, a sign of many moving back toward a teacher-centric classroom culture in which the PSTs did things only because they were required. There was also evidence of gravitation toward more IRE patterns of dialogue, in which the instructor provides evaluative comments as the arbiter of right and wrong. This pattern of dialogue, too, tends to reinforce a more teacher-centric classroom culture.

Summary. What emerges is a picture of a fairly coherent cohort of preservice teachers in a teacher development program who began to evolve into what might be called a “community of practice.” It was, perhaps, a qualified community of practice, situated in the context of a teacher development program. While they began the program as college students, they emerged as beginning teachers engaged in professional practice.

Over time, they began to exhibit many of the markers of community identified in previous research on communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, and Synder, 2002), communities of teachers (Calderwood, 2000; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2000, 2001; Little, 2002; Palincsar et al, 1998; Westheimer, 1998), and communities of preservice teachers (Barab et al, 2002; Beck & Kosnik, 2001): a *shared set of goals* and a *shared set of values, beliefs, and perspectives* about teaching; *rites and ritual* behaviors, *trust* and *commitment* to the group; *shared*

responsibilities; respect for minority views; and a set of shared practices, including negotiation of ideas and construction of shared knowledge. These markers were evident not only in their copresent interactions in the classroom, but also in their online interactions.

The group cohered around a common set of experiences, goals, and values and perspectives about teaching English in the secondary schools. They shared the same experience of the teacher education program and, as English education majors, many had other content area classes in common as well. For the most part, they shared a *common goal* of graduation with a BA, teaching certification in English education, and finding a job as an English teacher. Over time, their goals shifted from a student orientation (what do I have to do to get a grade and to graduate?) to a professional orientation (how do I navigate the questions of professional practice, such as deciding what to teach and how to teach it?).

Most shared in a liberal set of *values* about the importance of teaching English – reading, writing, and media studies – to secondary students as the foundation of a liberal arts education. For the most part, they believed that teaching English is about expanding student’s horizons, helping them to explore new worlds, while, at the same time, helping them seek their own identities.

Over time, they developed a set of *rites* and *ritual* behaviors, such as seating patterns, and they evidenced a degree of *trust* and *commitment* to the group, particularly in the second semester. There were, however, no signs of *meaningful relationships* developed between group members, nor was there much evidence that they were able to

embrace minority views. With more time together, these attributes might have developed, as the community matured.

They also developed *shared responsibilities* in leading the class, particularly in the microteaching sessions, and took on increasing responsibility for professional practice in their field experiences. At the same time, their discussions in class and online gave evidence that they were beginning to *negotiate ideas* and develop *shared knowledge* about their chosen profession of teaching.

What conditions, in the technologies they used and the context of their teacher education program, contributed to their ability (or inability) to form community?

Wertsch (1998) argues that all human action is mediated by tools and that changes in the tools we use necessitate changes in our practice. How might the changes in the tools used by this community – the physical and temporal context for the class meetings, the technologies they used, and the pedagogical context of the class – help to explain the differences in the strength of community across the three semesters in this study?

The class met in three different classrooms over these three semesters, the first two while the teacher education building was being renovated. In the third semester they were able to return to the renovated building. Instructors changed, too, over the three semesters and, while the teaching philosophy made explicit in the syllabus remained consistent, there were subtle differences in each instructor's implementation that appear to have made a difference. Finally, there were a number of changes in the technologies used over the course of these three semesters, ranging from the fairly low-tech environment of the first semester (traditional classroom with only an overhead projector

and no online course management system) to the high tech environment of the third semester (high-tech multimedia classroom adjacent to the School's media lab and an integrated online course management system). These differences in the learning environment, no doubt, had an impact on the development of this community of practice.

Physical Context. Because the College was under renovation for most of this period of time, the English education program had no physical home base. Classes met in older, traditional classrooms scattered across campus. In the first semester, the PSTs spent a good deal of the time in a traditional seating arrangement, in rows facing the front of the room, where the instructor stood. Even the PSTs, when leading a microteaching session, tended to maintain this same physical structure to the class. This seating arrangement, of course, does little to foster dialogue or support the formation of community. Although there was some time for PSTs meeting in small groups, it appears to have been too little time for them to develop the level of trust necessary for genuine dialogue and negotiation of ideas.

TELA II also met in a traditional classroom, but transformed it by arranging the chairs in a circle so that PSTs, instructor, and the researcher were all facing each other. This configuration helped the group to get to know one another better. It also served symbolically to convey the message that everyone had an equal voice in the discussion.

Although TELA III moved back into the teacher education building, it was not in a room that they could claim as their own. Rather, it was a room that was obviously shared with the math department, given the posters and other resources that remained in the room. Admittedly, the new tables made it easy to reconfigure the room to facilitate collaborative learning within a community; small tables could easily be arranged in small

groups or one large circle. Although the class began the semester in one large circle that incorporated all the PSTs, the instructor, and the researcher, by the end of the semester, what emerged was more of a pair of concentric semicircles: an inner and an outer circle. The changing seating pattern may have created the context for or simply mirrored the communication patterns that emerged over the semester.

Those who sat in the outer circle tended to be those who were considered by the group (or considered themselves) the outsiders: the older, non-traditional PSTs who were not well incorporated into the community. These PSTs may have been marginalized for a number of reasons. One obvious reason was that they were older and had a different set of experiences – both within and outside the teacher education program. They did not progress through the sequence in the same order as the others. At the same time, a couple of them appeared to intentionally set themselves apart from the group by asserting their differences rather than seeking common ground. As a point of contrast, not all of the older students were pushed to the margins; some who were less vocal about their differences were easily integrated into the group.

Temporal Context. TELA I and TELA III met twice a week for 75 minutes each session, TELA I in the morning and TELA III in the early afternoon. TELA II had the advantage of meeting only once a week for 2 ½ hours each session on Wednesday evenings. The extended time together not only allowed for more in-depth discussions, but also provided the excuse for a social sharing time over food mid-way through class each week, since they met over the dinner hour.

Pedagogical Context. Changes in the pedagogical context of the class may also serve to explain the differences in the strength of community formed over the three

semesters. The liberal ideals of the democratic classroom espoused in the syllabus were consistent throughout the sequence; however, these ideals were perhaps most fully realized in TELA II, with an increase in shared responsibility and learning through social exchange. They took time to get to know one another and to socialize. From the first, they were encouraged to talk to one another in class and online, rather than to the instructor alone.

There was little discussion about grading; PSTs appeared to be more focused on learning for the sake of developing their professional practice, rather than on grades. The final in class examination was replaced by a take home exam and a reflection on what they had learned over the semester.

The difference in the focus of the class each semester may also have had something to do with the levels of participation and strength of community developed. That is, the increased participation in TELA II might have also been an artifact of the focus that semester on “learning through oracy,” learning through discussion.

Technological Context. The use of an online course management system (Blackboard’s CourseInfo) in TELA II and TELA III facilitated communication between the instructor and the PSTs. Course expectations and other information, such as assignments, readings, and the schedule of activities were easily communicated by the instructor to the PSTs through the various pages of the site. Perhaps the most significant element of this technological context to the formation of community, however, was the discussion board, which provided the opportunity to expand and extend the in-class discussions beyond the class meeting time.

Online discussion was virtually absent in TELA I because of the lack of a course management system. An email discussion list for the class was created mid-way through the semester, but seldom used. Use of the online discussion board was strongest in TELA II, when 460 messages were posted. Admittedly, one of the reasons for the high level of usage might have been that it was required as part of their grade. However, usage was far higher than the minimum required. Another may have been simply that they were English education majors: they were facile with language and strong communicators.

Another reason might be that the online and in-class discussions were well-integrated. New online discussion forums emerged from issues discussed in class. At the same time, in-class discussions often began by referencing what had been discussed online in the previous week. The physical structure of the class – the large circle, which symbolically gave everyone a “voice at the table” – may also have served to foster higher levels of participation online in TELA II.

TELA III continued the use of Blackboard’s course management system and discussion board. However, participation on the discussion board was not nearly so high in TELA III. There were only 87 messages posted, and most of those were related to their field experiences. The discussion board was not well-integrated into TELA III. In fact, for the most part, the discussion board was simply used as a means for the PSTs to report on their field experiences to the field experience liaison. Apparently even that assignment was unclear, since only 14 of the PSTs posted a message there. There was less a sense of discussion or dialogue; rather, these were simply reports from the field. Few participated in the other forums. Obviously, the use of the discussion board was less valued this semester. At the same time, there were changes in the level and kinds of participation in

class. One cannot help but wonder if the emerging change in the physical structure of the classroom and the dominance of a few voices in class served as a parallel to the changing level of participation online.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Further Research

A number of conditions of this study limit the extent to which we can generalize the findings and point to the need for further research in this area. First, the study was limited to one cohort of preservice teachers in one disciplinary area. Some of the findings about their use of the online communication tools to support the formation of community may be unique to those with a constellation of interests and values around the teaching of English. I originally designed a comparison of two cohorts, one in secondary English education and one in secondary science education. However, in order to do any depth of data analysis with the field notes, interview transcripts, and online communications, I finally learned that I would need to sacrifice the breadth of the study and focus on one cohort alone.

A number of other variables differed between the two cohorts – different communication technologies and different pedagogical frameworks for using those technologies – that would have made a comparison, at best, complex. It would have not been a simple comparison between two groups in two different disciplines. Further research should examine the issue of the formation of learning communities in preservice teachers in other disciplines, using other communication technologies.

The volume of data collected also necessitated a focus on these three semesters in their secondary methods classes, although I gathered data on some of these PSTs for the

full four years they were in the program, following them from the time they first entered the program and interviewing them at the end of the spring 2001 semester, after they had completed their student teaching internships. The sheer volume of the data necessitated limitations to the data collection and analysis.

It would have been interesting to have followed these PSTs into their internships and even their first year of teaching, to further assess the impact of the program and the strength of this community on their initial teaching practice. Did some of the connections established during the TELA sequence survive into their first years of teaching? Did they take the model of a learning community into their classrooms and into their professional practice? That is, did they continue to participate in professional communities of practice as beginning teachers? Did they foster communities among their students? These would provide fertile questions for future studies of the formation of communities of practice for preservice and beginning teachers.

Another condition of this study that provided both strength and a limitation was that it was part of a larger research project that involved an interdisciplinary team of researchers. The regular team meetings as well as the number of opportunities to present findings at professional conferences provided a rich environment in which to work, to gain insights and feedback from my colleagues and professionals in the field. At the same time, the negotiation of multiple research agendas for the overall project sometimes placed a limit on how many questions I could include in an interview guide to be used by the team.

An additional limitation imposed on the study, in the context of this larger project, was that, in order to protect the anonymity of the faculty involved in the program, the

focus of the study was intentionally on the preservice teachers. Differences among instructors were not included as an issue in the study.

Yet another limitation of this study was that much of the data analysis was done retrospectively. I began reflecting on what I was learning about the PSTs, their use of the communication technologies, and their formation of community from the moment I entered the field in the fall of 1997 and I drew upon that emerging understanding to shape the research questions and some of the interview questions. However, I did not begin systematic data analysis of the field notes, interview transcripts, and archives of the online discussions until much later. While this distance provided the opportunity for rich reflection, there were times when questions and insights emerged from the data that I would have like to taken back to the PSTs for validation.

Finally, I must acknowledge my own experience and perspective as a factor in this study. My connections to this cohort because of my own experience as a preservice teacher in English education and as a graduate student in College of Education provided me entrée into the cohort and a better understanding of some of their experiences, both in the College of Education and in their discipline-related classes in English literature. I believe it helped to establish a level of trust and a sense of rapport that allowed for rich discussions during the interviews. There is always a concurrent risk, however, that being so deeply embedded in the culture of this cohort and this discipline biased my judgment.

Further, I believe my years of experience in learning communities and the insights I gained there, as well as insights gained from a systematic review of the literature, helped to sharpen my focus while in the field to be attentive to signs of emerging community and the factors that supported or impeded that development. Again, this

narrow focus may have also biased my judgment. In any ethnographic study, one can only focus on so much. Decisions are made at every step along the way in what observations to attend to and what to record. Data is streaming by at every moment and, even with multiple cameras recording every class, every field experience, and every interview, something would be missed. The human lens is even more narrow in its focus, and I must acknowledge that bias in my perspective on studying the development of this cohort of preservice teachers.

For instance, with a more comprehensive transcript of what was said during class meetings by each PST, I might have been able to conduct a comparative analysis of online and in-class communications to investigate questions such as whether those who were silent in class used the online forum more frequently, or whether there were differences in frequency of communication by gender or age. Future studies conducted by other researchers with different research interests will no doubt bring different perspectives to this field of research.

Implications for Practice

Despite these potential limitations of the study, the findings suggest that context -- the physical, pedagogical, and technological context of a class -- makes a real difference in the use of online learning environments and their potential to support the formation of learning communities. Changes over the three semesters in the communication technologies used, the physical arrangement of the classroom, and the importance of the online discussion in the course all seemed to have an effect on communication patterns and the formation of community in this cohort. With the increasing use of computer-

mediated communication resources such as email; instant messaging and chat spaces; blogs; and CourseInfo, WebCT, and other emerging course management systems, teachers need to attend to the contextual factors that can facilitate (or impede) communication and community formation and, ultimately, the negotiation of knowledge. Factors such as the arrangement of the classroom and the value placed on the online discussions, both in the syllabus and grading system and the day-to-day classroom practice, may make a symbolic statement about the importance of the students' voices in the learning experience and ultimately, make a real difference in the use the online communication and the formation of community.

At the same time, teachers need to be wary of students' inclination toward insularity, seeking out and bonding with like-minded individuals to the exclusion of all others. Communities that are strongest are those whose boundaries are permeable and whose members are willing to embrace differences.

Finally, the findings suggest that these students – and perhaps others like them – sometimes are too goal oriented, putting a priority on “getting through” the class and the program over learning about and through community. If they are to survive their first few years of teaching, preservice teachers will need to learn how to participate in and learn in professional communities of practice.

Appendix A:

The Methodological Context of the Larger Study

The larger study included both surveys of all preservice teachers in the program and case studies and interviews with a sample of the PSTs. The study was approved by the campus Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study and given assurances that all data would be kept secure and reported anonymously, and that they could withdraw from the study without risk at any time. All participants signed written consent forms to participate in the study.

Participants

The Population

This longitudinal study focuses primarily upon the second cohort to enter the program, the class of 2001. Nearly 300 PSTs began the program in the fall 1997 semester in one of three sections of the Inquiry into Learning course, designated as “teams” D, E, or F.

Primary Case Study Sample

Late in the winter 1998 semester, we identified 30 PSTs in this cohort as potential participants in the primary case study sample, those we intended to follow in more depth and interview regularly throughout the course of their tenure in the teacher development program. Through our selections, we attempted to build a sample of PSTs who would be

inclusive of the gender, race, and ethnicity of the cohort population, as well as of the range of self-reported technology expertise. We selected PSTs who were preparing for teaching in a wide range of age-levels and disciplines. We also attempted to select those who appeared to be seriously committed students who, we thought, would be likely to continue in and complete the teacher development program.

During the summer 1998 semester, 29 PSTs entered the program through a summer immersion program. These were students who had already been on campus for a year or more who had decided to change majors and enter teacher education. They spent the entire eight weeks of summer school together, for the most part in field experiences in the morning and meeting together on campus during the afternoons. On campus, they read and discussed the same materials other PSTs had read over the Fall 1997 and Winter 1998 semesters. From that summer immersion cohort, who joined teams D, E, and F in the fall 1998 semester, we selected an additional five PSTs to participate in the case study sample.

Feedback from the project's advisory board over the summer of 1998 convinced us to pare that proposed primary sample down to more reasonable 20 participants, five for each of four field observers to follow in depth.

Secondary Case Study Sample

Over the course of the study, there was considerable change in the population of the PSTs in the program. Like many college students, those who entered the teacher education program of studies often changed their majors and switched to another field of study. At the same time, many who began study in another area decided that they wanted

to switch into the teacher education program. Some, too, decided to take a year off between Phase I and Phase II of the program; some were forced to make this choice to work on improving their GPA in order to be eligible to continue in the program.

These patterns of change in the overall population of PSTs in the program led us to the decision to recruit a secondary case sample of PSTs in Phase II of the program at the beginning of year 03. These 45 PSTs were selected to be representative of the range of age-level and disciplinary groups in Phase II pedagogy classes in the fall 1999 semester. The overall goal in gathering data from this secondary sample was to augment and compare our findings from the key informants in our primary case study sample.

Data Collection

Surveys

The larger study combined both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A set of surveys was given to all PSTs in the program each year to gather general descriptive and comparative statistics about

- 1) demographic variables such as the size of their home communities and their graduating classes in high school and the level and subject area they were preparing to teach;
- 2) their current technology use; and
- 3) their attitudes about teaching with technology.

The packet of surveys evolved over the course of the project, in response to concerns that emerged from our observations and our reading of the literature on

technology and teacher education. Some continuity of surveys and questions from year to year allowed for comparative analysis.

Surveys in Year 01 included researcher-designed demographic questions, the Computer Anxiety Scale (Reed & Palumbo, 1987/1988), a modified version of the Spielberger State-Trait Personality Inventory, and a researcher-designed survey that probed PSTs' attitudes about teaching and learning with technology. In this third survey, PSTs were presented with three scenarios that depicted three methods of using low, middle, and high levels of technology in teaching and then were presented with questions that directed them to select the scenario they preferred for each situation. For example, question 9 asked, "Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom in which you would most like to teach?"

In year 02, we reduced the number of questions on the demographic questionnaire and included a new researcher-designed questionnaire about PSTs' current technology practices, with questions based on the technology markers outlined in the program's Principles and Practices. PSTs were asked to rate, on 5-point Likert scales, how proficient they were with a particular set of technologies and how important they believed these technologies were for teaching.

In year 03, we added new questions to the general demographic instrument, based on the observation that a large number of new PSTs had entered the program through Summer and Winter Immersion programs in 1999 and as Master's and transfer students seeking teaching certification. We dropped the Computer Anxiety Scale from the survey packet. We added a set of questions developed by Becker and his colleagues (1998; 1999) that are part of their Teaching, Learning, and Computing national survey that

probed inservice teachers' pedagogical beliefs. Finally, we modified the scenario-based questionnaire about their preferences for teaching and learning with technology. (See Appendix B for samples of the survey instruments.)

Observations and Interviews

Year 1. During the first year of the study, we observed classes and collected field notes and artifacts from the classes (class handouts, samples of student work) in all three teams of the cohort (D, E, and F) across the fall and winter semesters and during the summer immersion program. We also attended and gathered field notes from team meetings of the instructors, when possible.

Year 2. In year 02 of our research, those of us in the field continued to observe classes, but our observations were tied to following members of the primary sample rather than to one particular team. Observation schedules became more complex as PSTs changed teams to accommodate their course schedules. We continued to compile field notes of class observations, but gradually withdrew from observing team meetings of the instructors. At the same time, we began interviewing PSTs in our primary sample twice each semester.

These semi-structured interviews followed guides collaboratively developed by the research team, using questions that emerged both from our field observations and from our readings of the literature about teacher education.

1. Questions in the first interview centered on their visions of the ideal teacher and their reasons for choosing the profession of teaching.

2. The second interview focused on their technology use: their early uses of a computer, their current practices, and their visions for using technology in teaching.
3. Questions in the third interview probed the preservice teachers' understanding of the issues of professionalism and diversity and how they might appear in their future teaching.
4. The fourth interview, at the end of the Phase I of the program, was retrospective in focus. We asked them to look back over the past two years in the teacher development program and discuss which elements of their experience, both in class and in their field experiences, had had the greatest impact on their learning about how to become a teacher.

Year 03. Primary Cast Study Sample. During the third year of the research study, we continued to follow PSTs in the primary case study sample through observations of their education classes and through interviews twice a semester. Observation schedules became even more complex as PSTs in the class of 2001 entered in age-level and discipline-specific pedagogy courses ranging from early childhood to secondary science education.

1. The first interview with the primary sample in the fall 1999 semester focused on issues of identity in these preservice teachers, using the Twenty Statements Test (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954), a well-established measure of self-identity.
2. The second interview included three blocks of questions: one set about school reform efforts, one set about community and communication among education

students, and one about how the program was preparing them to teach with technology.

3. The third interview asked PSTs about their understanding of key values of the program: reflection, inquiry, and professionalism. It also asked about their current confidence in their abilities as teachers.
4. The fourth interview, conducted at the end of the winter 2000 semester, asked PSTs to reflect on and summarize their experiences in the classroom and in the field during their first year in Phase II of the program.

Year 3. Secondary Sample Observations and Interviews. PSTs in the secondary sample initially agreed to complete three activities: a focus group interview, a survey, and an individual interview. PSTs in this secondary sample completed the survey and focus group interviews during the first semester of year 3. We interviewed each of these PSTs once during the second semester, focusing on their understanding of the key principles of the program (reflection, inquiry, and professionalism), what they felt they were learning from their classes and field experiences, how they expected to use technology in their teaching, and their confidence in their readiness to teach.

Year 04. In the fourth year of the study we continued to observe PSTs in their methods courses and interviewed them once a semester. In the fall semester, they were on campus completing coursework. The interview, near the end of the semester, asked both the primary and secondary case study PSTs to give a brief summary of their story of becoming a teacher and asked about what they had learned from their classes and field experiences that semester, what technologies they expected to use in their future classrooms, and how confident they felt about going into their student teaching.

Many but not all the PSTs in both our primary and secondary case study samples were engaged in student teaching during the winter 2001 semester, some locally and some in the St. Louis area, making observation difficult. We conducted one interview at the end of the semester, focusing primarily on what they had learned from their student teaching experience. We began to shift our focus at that time to analysis and reporting of the data.



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Study of the Technology Infrastructure for Teacher Education (STITE)

NSF Award # REC-9725214

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February 21, 2000

The National Science Foundation awarded a grant to the University to study and document the new program and technologies in the Teacher Development Program at MU. The aims of this study are to understand the professional socialization of beginning teachers and the role of technology in teacher education. The research team on this project includes Dr. Jim Laffey and Dr. Peggy Placier, from the College of Education, and Dr. Peter Hall, from the Department of Sociology, as well as several graduate student researchers.

Data collected from the following surveys is part of that ongoing project. As a preservice teacher in the TDP, you may be asked to complete additional questionnaires and be observed in your classes. Your identity will be protected. We will not share your responses or comments with your instructors, and we will use a code or pseudonym rather than your real name in all of our data analysis procedures. When we report our findings, your name will not be used.

I am aware of this study of the Teacher Development Program and consent to participate in it as outlined above.

Signature

Date

TDP Technology Use Survey

We have designed the following questions to survey the use of technology in the teacher development program at MU. Please take a few moments to answer these questions. This is not an evaluation of your individual competencies with the use of these technologies. Your responses will be kept confidential.

For each item below, rate your competency in using the technology by circling the appropriate number on the scale. Then rate how important you feel it is for you to be competent in using that technology. Please identify which tools you find most useful in each group. Use the comment box for any additional information you would like to share with us on each item.

Competency Scale

- 1 = I cannot demonstrate this competency
- 2 = I can demonstrate this competency with help from someone else
- 3 = I can demonstrate this competency, but sometimes need help
- 4 = I can demonstrate this competency without help
- 5 = I can demonstrate this competency and can help others learn how to demonstrate it

Importance Scale

- 1 = This is *not* important to my learning/teaching
- 2 = This is *marginally* important to my learning/teaching
- 3 = This is *somewhat* important to my learning/teaching
- 4 = This is *very* important to my learning/teaching
- 5 = This is *critical* to my learning/teaching

Part 1. Learning Support

The following questions are designed to help us understand your use of technologies that support you as a learner.

| Technology Competency | How competent are you? | How important is it to you? |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Using technology to communicate with peers and/or instructors | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Using technology to reflect on my learning | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Using technology to identify and acquire materials for use in inquiry projects | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Using technology to publish inquiry projects | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Exploring technologies that are unfamiliar to me | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Using technology to increase my understanding of other perspectives (eg. Perspectives from different ethnicities, genders, teaching levels/subject areas, etc.) | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Part 2. Teaching Support

The following questions are designed to help us understand your use of technologies that you may use as a teacher.

| Technology Competency | How competent are you? | How important is it to you? |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 7. Using presentation technology to demonstrate a complex concept. (eg. PowerPoint, Hyperstudio, etc.) | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Which tools do you find most useful for this? Please list: | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. Using technology to facilitate instructional communication | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Which tools do you find most useful for this? Please list: (eg. Discussion lists, Journal, chat rooms, email, etc.) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9. Using technology to support inquiry (eg. Web searches, web quests, database searches, etc.) | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Which tools do you find most useful for this? Please list: | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Comments: | | | | | | | | | | | |

Please read the three scenarios and then answer the following questions:

- A. Students learn by reading textbooks, classroom exercises, and teacher lectures. Students write reports and take tests using paper and pencil or word processors on a computer.
- B. Students learn by reading textbooks, classroom exercises, computer-based tutorials for important skills and teacher lectures. Students write reports using word processors.
- C. Students learn extensively through computer tools, such as simulations and internet-based research. Students present their ideas about the curriculum by creating multi-media reports which are the basis for assessment.

1. Which of the scenarios depicts a classroom in which you would most likely get a high grade? A B C
Why? _____

2. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom in which you would most likely enjoy the learning process? A B C
Why? _____

3. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom in which you would most likely learn things that you would be able to apply outside of the classroom? A B C
Why? _____

4. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom that will most likely be successful in preparing students to pass standard achievement tests? A B C
Why? _____

5. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom that will most likely be successful in preparing students to understand and apply knowledge to solve problems? A B C
Why? _____

6. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom that will most likely be successful in preparing students to do well in college? A B C
Why? _____

7. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom that will most likely be successful in preparing students to do well in a work environment? A B C
Why? _____

8. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom that superintendents, principals and parents will expect of you when you take on your first teaching assignment? A B C
Why? _____

9. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom in which you would most like to teach? A B C
Why? _____

10. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom you have spent most of your time as a student? A B C
Why? _____

Your Teaching Philosophy

1. The following paragraphs describe observations of two teachers' classes, Ms. Hill's and Mr. Jones'. Answer each question below by checking the box under the column that best answers that question for you.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Ms. Hill was leading her class in an animated way, asking questions that the students could answer quickly; based on the reading they had done the day before. After this review, Ms. Hill taught the class new material, again using simple questions to keep students attentive and listening to what she said.</p> | <p>Mr. Jones' class was also having a discussion, but many of the questions came from the students themselves. Though Mr. Jones could clarify students' questions and suggest where the students could find relevant information, he couldn't really answer most of the questions himself.</p> |
|--|--|

| | Definitely Ms. Hill's | Tend towards Ms. Hill's | Can't decide | Tend towards Mr. Jones' | Tend towards Mr. Jones' |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. Which type of class discussion are you more comfortable having in class? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Which type of discussion do you think most students prefer to have? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. From which type of class discussion do you think students gain more knowledge? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. From which type of class discussion do you think students gain more useful? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Indicate how much you disagree or agree with each of the following statements about teaching and learning.

| | Strongly Disagree | Moderately Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Slightly Agree | Moderately Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Teachers know a lot more than students; they shouldn't let students muddle around when they can just explain the answers directly | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. A quiet classroom is generally needed for effective learning | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Students are not ready for "meaningful" learning until they have acquired basic reading and math skills. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. It is better when the teacher --not the student--decides what activities are to be done. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Student projects often result in students learning all sorts of wrong "knowledge." | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Homework is a good setting for having students answer questions posed in their textbooks. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Students will take more initiative to learn when they feel free to move around the room during class. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Students should help establish criteria on which their work will be assessed. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. Instruction should be built around problems with clear, correct answers, and around ideas that most students can grasp quickly. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j. How much students learn depends on how much background knowledge they have; that is why teaching facts is so necessary. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. **Different teachers have described very different teaching philosophies to researchers. For each of the following pairs of statements, check the box that best shows how close your own beliefs are to each of the statements in a given pair. The closer your beliefs to a particular statement, the closer the box you check. Please check only one box for each set.**

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| a. "I mainly see my role as a facilitator. I try to provide opportunities and resources for my students to discover or construct concepts for themselves." | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | "That's all nice, but students really won't learn the subject unless you go over the material in a structured way. It's my job to explain, to show students how to do the work, and to assign specific practice." |
| b. "The most important part of instruction is the content of the curriculum. That content is the community's judgment about what children need to be able to know and do." | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | "The most important part of instruction is that it encourage sense-making or thinking among students. Content is secondary." |
| c. "It is useful for students to become familiar with many different ideas and skills even if their understanding, for now, is limited. Later, in college, perhaps, they will learn these things in more detail." | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | "It is better for students to master a few complex ideas and skills well, and to learn what deep understanding is all about, even if the breadth of their knowledge is limited until they are older." |
| d. "It is critical for students to become interested in doing academic work; interest and effort are more important than the particular subject-matter they are working on." | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | "While student motivation is certainly useful, it should not drive what students study. It is more important that students learn the history, science, math and language skills in their textbooks." |
| e. "It is a good idea to have all sorts of activities going on in the classroom. Some students might produce a scene from a play they read. Others might create a miniature version of the set. It's hard to get the logistics right, but the successes are so much more important than the failures." | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | "It's more practical to give the whole class the same assignment, one that has clear directions, and one that can be done in short intervals that match students' attention spans and the daily class schedule." |

Teaching with Technology

- 1. The following paragraphs describe observations of two teachers' classes, Ms. Evans' and Mr. Kellar's. Answer each question below by checking the box under the column that best answers that question for you.**

| | |
|--|---|
| The primary tools for teaching and learning in Ms. Evans' class are textbooks, chalk, and paper and pencil. Occasionally she uses an overhead projector or VCR and television. | Mr Kellar has a high-technology classroom, which provides one computer for every two students, all connected to the Internet, and a SmartBoard for projecting computer screens. |
|--|---|

| | Definitely Ms. Evans' | Tend towards Ms. Evans' | Can't decide | Tend towards Mr. Kellar's | Definitely Mr. Kellar's |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Which of the scenarios depicts a classroom in which you would most likely get a high grade? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom in which you would most likely enjoy the learning process? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom in which you would most likely learn things that you would be able to apply outside of the classroom? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom that will most likely be successful in preparing students to pass standard achievement tests? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom that will most likely be successful in preparing students to understand and apply knowledge to solve problems? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom that will most likely be successful in preparing students to do well in college? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom that will most likely be successful in preparing students to do well in a work environment?

8. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom that superintendents, principals and parents will expect of you when you take on your first teaching assignment?

9. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom in which you would most like to teach?

10. Which of the scenarios depicts the classroom you have spent most of your time as a student?

Demographic Information

Name: _____ Student #: _____

Gender: M F

When did you graduate from high school? 19_____

Approximate size of your graduating class: _____

Size of your home community: Urban/Metro Suburban Rural

MU Class Ranking this semester: Sophomore Junior Senior Grad/Post-Bacc

Education Class(es) I am currently enrolled in: _____

My first class in education at MU was ED_____, which I took FS WS Summer 19_____

The teaching level and subject area that I am preparing to teach in is:

Early Childhood Elementary Middle School Secondary

Subject Area: _____

Size of the community in which you would like to teach: Urban/Metro Suburban Rural

How old were you when you first decided you wanted to be a teacher?

Pre-school Elementary Middle School/Junior High High School College

Is anyone else in your family a teacher? Yes No

If yes, who? _____

How old were you when you first began using a computer?

Pre-school Elementary Middle School/Junior High High School College

Do you work at a job while you are in school? Yes No

If yes, is your job teaching-related (such as tutoring, substitute teaching, work in Adventure Club, etc.)?

Yes No

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