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I, Anita J. Williams, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Urban Educational Leadership.

It is entitled:

From Pre-Service to Practice: Exploring Self-Efficacy Development Among Teachers During Their First-Year Teaching Experience

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**From Pre-Service to Practice: Exploring Self-Efficacy Development
Among Teachers During Their First-Year Teaching Experience**

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Abstract

This qualitative research study examined three teachers' self-efficacy development through lived experiences from pre-service through their first year teaching. Utilizing a multi-subject case study approach (Yin, 2003), the study explored what and how various experiences influenced three teachers' efficacy. Building upon the work of Bandura (1977, 1993) and Guskey (1988), Johnson (2010) described efficacious teachers as "resourceful, cause-and-effect thinkers who persist when things do not go smoothly and persevere in the face of setbacks" (p. 23). Previous research reports that teacher efficacy has powerful effects on teacher behaviors, and that the years during training may offer valuable exposure to efficacy-forming experiences (Johnson, 2010).

Findings of this study indicate participants' past experiences and training in their preparation played a critical role in self-efficacy development. Secondly, an important objective of teacher education training is grounded in its program's mission and instructors' curriculum implementation. As such, both areas must be accomplished with fidelity to support beginning teachers' capacity to bridge the gap in understanding how theoretical ideas may be manipulated for practical use during instructional delivery. Additional research findings underscore the critical need for PK-16 educators and other stakeholders to acknowledge and address how beliefs and attitudes about diverse groups influence the quality of their education. With regard to these findings, the study discusses implications for teacher education programs, acknowledging the responsibilities stakeholders assume in training teacher candidates. As such, future research should utilize longitudinal studies and qualitative approaches to explore how teacher candidates' experiences in training influence self-efficacy development and teaching sustainability. Additionally, further research into gaining a deeper understanding of how different motivations to teach relate to teacher success will add beneficial insights to current literature in the field.

Dedication

For Mama and Daddy,
I will love you always...

Acknowledgements

Thank you, Lord, for ordering my steps

A written demonstration of my sincerity and gratitude fails to communicate the extent of my deep appreciation to my family, friends and instructors. Their support over the past four years inspired me to conquer the research challenge and claim my victory. Long hours committed to studying, researching and writing replaced expectations of scholarly repose in the world of academia. The reality of academic pursuits jolted my sense of educator efficacy and led me to seek encouragement on many occasions. I am so grateful to many wonderful people for cheering me through the process.

First and foremost, I give Honor to God for favoring me to have such an opportunity and for His covering in all things. To my children, I express my love and appreciation for their patience, encouragement, and relentless high expectations. I have been privileged with an opportunity to accomplish a personal goal, which is both a blessing and gift from my family. I particularly wish to thank Arthur, my friend, critic and spouse, for clearing the path for me to pursue my dreams. To my big sisters, Valoria and Denise, you have nurtured me over these many years and influenced *who* and *what* I am today. Whether that is good or bad remains debatable, but I thank you so much. Dear Aunt Armenia and Aunt Sara, nieces and nephews, thank you for loving me beyond measure and making me think I am special and to my brother for constantly praying for me.

To my awesome extended family, I send you my heartfelt thanks for your love and encouragement. I could not have wished for a better group of people to call my own. My dear Cousin Thomas, thank you for claiming my title for me and blessing me all the way. To Vickie, Donna, Wilnetta, and Cheryl, I appreciate your commitment to helping others and for keeping me focused on the realities of our children's world and those teachers trained to guide them.

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Over the decades, I have enjoyed my time as a scholar and practitioner, honing my skills and capabilities through coursework and practice in K-16 classrooms. The experiences have broadened my perspectives on teaching, living, and learning in dramatically changing social, political, and technological environments. Throughout this time, I have been surrounded by so many people, whom I am honored to claim as family and friends. They believe in me and refuse to let me doubt my abilities to do great things. My cohort peers surrounded me with positive energy and ensured I stayed focused on what could be done through faith and hard work.

While getting to this point in my education has taken me in numerous directions, all seemingly leading to confusion, I cannot honestly say I enjoyed the many false starts. The guidance of my committee members was a major effort in helping me through the process. A special expression of gratitude goes to my committee chair and mentor Dr. Holly Johnson and to Susan Watts-Taffe, Ph D. and Carlee Escue Simon, Ph D. who served on my committee and believed in me. Also, I wish to thank the University of Cincinnati faculty and staff for their support over the years. It has been an amazing journey for which I am truly thankful.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Growing up in the late 1960's through the early 1980's, I was unaware of the emotionally-charged atmosphere of controversy regarding civil rights and issues of equality. I had no knowledge of President Johnson's plan to create the Great Society as espoused in the message of his "War on Poverty" (1964) speech or in his conviction that the signing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965), would chart a new course, striking "at the causes, not just the consequences of poverty" (p. 1). These high and just aspirations warrant the respect and gratitude of the nation. Fast forward to the 21st century, however, we find the causes and consequences of poverty have yet to find a remedy, and the challenge of establishing a system ensuring equality of opportunity for *all* citizens remains a topic of often heated and controversial debates, particularly in the field of education.

Critics of the educational system voice concerns related not only to the failure of the nation to maintain a competitive edge against other countries, but also limited academic progress for marginalized groups and emphasis on standardization and assessment (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ravitch, 2010). Although it has been a decade since the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2002) went into effect, the nation has neither eliminated nor achieved great gains toward closing the achievement gap. In fact, the discrepancy in progress among student subgroups, particularly African American students, continues to exist (Kahlenberg, 2008; Zhao, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ravitch, 2010).

In this highly politicized climate of mandates and public criticism, exploring teacher beliefs and the effect on instructional practices must be a major imperative for researchers and educators in the 21st century. Teachers' personal beliefs, attitudes, and experiences influence the learning environment and their ability to foster productive relationships within the classroom

(Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). These factors, coupled with the focus on the teacher's role in improving achievement have received heightened attention from policymakers, critics, and researchers (Cohen, Moffit, & Goldin, 2007; Valli, Croninger, & Buese, 2012). Fueled by growing public criticism of schools and limited improvements in student performance, researchers have responded to pressures by exploring the relationship among teacher beliefs, behaviors and student outcomes. Within this context, it is important to investigate the critical role of teachers and their understandings of how education policies, social perceptions, and personal experiences shape attitudes about race, education, and students' capacities to learn.

Problem Statement

Reports of teachers leaving the profession reveal that the first five years show an attrition rate of between 40%-50% (Maciejewski, 2007; Faez & Valero, 2012). Researchers (Hoy & Spero, 2005; Smith & Kovacs, 2011) report low teacher efficacy and inadequate training may be contributing factors to such high attrition rates among novice teachers. These factors, compounded by educational reforms toward a more standardized approach, may change the way teachers think and respond to societal events occurring around them and within the schooling context. Pajak's (2011) view underscores the precarious nature of 21st century schooling, "Teachers are paradoxically portrayed simultaneously by education reformers as the key to improved student academic achievement and the source of everything wrong with schools" (p. 2033). Teachers, held responsible for ensuring all students meet these expectations, carry the burden of correcting many of society's ills from poverty to illiteracy to carrying the blame for failing schools. These responsibilities may further exacerbate efforts to recruit and maintain teachers.

The intensification of expectations for the new generation of teachers troubles the field of education and challenges teacher training programs to meet the demands of the changing faces in schools. In what way are these challenges addressed for beginning teachers? How will they be prepared to identify and respond to various societal issues that children bring to school? What are the responsibilities teacher training programs have in providing self-efficacy forming experiences so teachers-to-be may be prepared to confront and respond to everyday-life realities in the nation's schools, particularly in urban areas where teacher turnover is high? These questions warrant serious consideration as teachers prepare to enter today's classrooms facing current societal issues and demands.

Aim of the Study

For the past three decades, researchers have investigated the connections between the teachers' role and student progress utilizing the self-efficacy construct, yet a theory of how prospective teachers develop efficacy beliefs remains elusive. As teachers work to close the achievement gap among culturally diverse groups and their White peers, today's highly politicized educational system, vested in standardized testing and accountability measures, intensifies teachers' responsibilities and tests feelings of efficacy, even among novice teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006; Datnow, 2011; Smith & Kovacs, 2011). Increasing diversity and the range of needs students bring to the learning environment add another dimension to teachers' pressures of helping all children reach established achievement goals. Within this context, research into efficacy development among pre-service teachers will add insights to self-efficacy research and education training program curricula.

The aim of this research study was to contribute to the existing literature on the role of personal experiences in shaping beginning teachers' efficacy beliefs and how they respond to

situations based on these beliefs. This research has the potential to guide educators in designing teacher training programs appropriate for teaching within increasingly diverse settings. It explored pre-service teachers' experiences during the last semester of teacher training through the first year of teaching. The objective was to capture the extent to which beginning teachers believe their teacher training program supported the development of self- and teacher efficacy. Use of qualitative multi-subject case study (Yin, 2009) added to the literature by gathering thick, rich data on beginning teachers' perceptions as they made the transition from the experiences of pre-service to practicing teacher.

Questions of the Study

I aimed to address the following questions in this study:

- How do three novice teachers describe self-efficacy forming experiences during training in the teacher education/training program?
- What were three novice teachers' lived experiences as first-year practicing teachers?
- What types of self-efficacy beliefs and behaviors do novice teachers utilize in their classroom in the first year as practicing teacher?

This inquiry sought to understand the process in self- and teacher efficacy research relating how self-efficacy forming experiences through the teacher training program may have positive results for beginning teachers in today's schooling environments. My questions specifically investigated how three pre-service teachers cognitively processed events from past experiences with new knowledge gained from theory and research in teacher education training. Of equal importance was exploring how they applied theoretical understandings to the practical realities of 21st century school environments.

Definitions

This research utilized particular terms may not be recognizable to readers. For this reason, I have included terms and their meanings in the following descriptors:

- Candidate; participant; pre-service teacher referred to the individuals who volunteered to participate in the case study.
- Field Placement was the setting where participants in the study practice knowledge and skill in an intermediate school setting.
- Novice teachers; practicing teacher; and beginning teacher referred individuals who are working in their first year as licensed, practicing teachers.
- Self-efficacy was utilized to refer to the term grounded in Bandura's (1977; 1986; 1997) social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy refers to one's beliefs in his or her capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce certain outcomes.
- Self-efficacy forming experiences are those experiences that lay a practical teaching foundation for future teachers. These experiences include coursework and field experiences designed to build positive self-efficacy beliefs in an individual's capabilities and the successful outcome of her efforts (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001)
- Teacher education/training program for this research study focused on the middle childhood curriculum designed for pre-service teachers interested in earning a license in middle childhood education.

Theoretical Lens

With consideration to research reporting the correlation between high teacher efficacy and improved student achievement, this research utilized the self-efficacy construct to explore self-efficacy development among three teachers in their first-year teaching experience.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy construct, defined as "beliefs in one's capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (1997, p. 3), helped identify gaps in pre-service teachers' understandings of theory and research learned during teacher education training and their application to the realities in the schooling environment. The construct also highlighted how pre-service teachers' beliefs influenced their responses or behaviors directed toward various teacher-learner circumstances and aided the development of high or low self-efficacy.

The self-efficacy construct grounded in Bandura's (1977; 1986) social cognitive theory emphasizes self-efficacy beliefs, defined as an individual's beliefs in her capabilities and the successful outcome of her efforts (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Usher & Pajaras, 2008; Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011). Beliefs play a critical role in an individual's attempts at unfamiliar tasks or in facing challenges. One may assume a level of confidence based on the premise that knowing the task and addressing it with an appropriate response is two-step: I know what to do versus I *know* what to do and *can* do (Bandura, 1977). This belief process influences teachers' motivations to approach a task not just in the classroom, a more controlled environment, but also the school and community environments.

Self-efficacy centers more on one's *perceived* level of competence rather than *actual* competence (Woolfolk-Hoy & Spero, 2005). The significance of this understanding is that the

way people react based on their perception of competence affects what behaviors they enact. Bandura (1997) cautioned, “A capability is only as good as its execution. The self-assurance with which people approach and manage difficult tasks determines whether they make good or poor use of their capabilities. Insidious self-doubts can easily overrule the best of skills” (Bandura, 1997, p. 35). Practice during field placements offers pre-service teachers a safe environment to practice the art of teaching, make good use of decision-making skills, and gain self-assurance through practice and reflective dialogue. Field placements offer opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage in self-efficacy forming experiences and to make adjustments in teaching beliefs, behaviors, and styles. The culminating teaching practice experience tests pre-service teachers’ beliefs in their capacities and plays a critical role in helping them develop a strong foundation early to sustain them into future years in teaching. Researchers suggest efficacy development to be most malleable early in learning, underscoring the first years of teaching as critical to the long-term development of teacher efficacy (Woolfolk-Hoy & Spero, 2005).

Locus of Control

Closely related to self-efficacy development is Rotter’s (1966) social learning theory which emphasizes *locus of control* and explains how individuals understand and respond to certain stimuli, “...reinforcement acts to strengthen expectancy.... Once expectancy for such a behavior reinforcement sequence is built up the failure of the reinforcement to occur will reduce or extinguish the expectancy” (p. 2). More specifically, pre-service teachers may learn to connect certain actions to specific outcomes and process a syllogistic-type understanding to the situation, assigning behaviors framed by content knowledge, context, culture, and environment. The level of control they perceive to have in the situation is a determining factor in both their

motivation to act and the resultant behavior. If the outcome of their actions is positive, then the chance for reinforcing positive efficacy development is assured.

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy

Teachers' sense of efficacy engages teachers' beliefs and behaviors in making decisions on what to teach and to what extent they will extend their efforts in reaching specific goals (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). According to Tschannen-Moran (1998), teachers must constantly make efficacy judgments, conditioned by individual beliefs and circumstances, which influence motivation to try. Bandura's (1977; 1986) research suggests that motivation is influenced by both outcome expectations and efficacy expectations and their interconnectivity because "the types of outcomes people anticipate depend largely on their judgments of how well they will perform in given situations (p. 392). Bandura's (1977) theory lends itself to exploring how a teacher's response to knowing and beliefs in her capacity to meet any challenge are powerful components of the teacher-learner experience. For novice teachers, these are critical elements for developing and sustaining positive self-efficacy and motivation (Deemer & Minke, 1999) to strengthen the beginning years of teaching and beyond.

Location of the Researcher

Through the nature of this qualitative research, I engaged in extended interaction and involvement with the participants. Because of the need to remain detached (Koro-Ljungberg, 2009) in the role as researcher, it was important for me to locate myself in the research and identify biases, values, and personal background influences that may influence interpretations formed during the study. Having worked as a classroom teacher for several years has provided me time to reflect on the underlying issues in education. As a practitioner, I engaged in a variety of approaches in an effort to understand better the external factors that influence the

school environment. A former principal served as my mentor and encouraged me to seek development opportunities to broaden and enrich my knowledge and expertise. Continuing scholarly pursuits, I increased mastery of content, building efficacy and a positive self-concept.

As a team leader, I experimented with leadership skills focused on building trust and promoting collaboration within the department. These years as a scholar and practitioner served as a valuable training field, laying the solid foundation for leadership and allowing time for practice and reflection in a supportive, nurturing environment. I can say with certainty that this training not only contributed to my growth and development as a future building and district-level administrator but also gave me the fortitude to face the challenges that accompany leading an organization through change.

My leadership experience introduced me to an awareness of my *other self* that I had not known existed. For the first time in my career, I had to recognize that being an African American female, leading a predominantly White staff, requires a different and varied set of skills, trust-building, and endurance. During my years as a high school principal, I was firmly committed to the responsibility of providing students with the optimal learning environment. I found that being an African-American female leading an organization consisting of over 1200 students and approximately 120 staff required foresight, a strong sense of self, and a fluid leadership style that acknowledged the necessity of building bridges among culture, traditions and beliefs.

My experiences in education have been proactive, active, and productive, and I expect *all* educators to work with the same tenacity, commitment, and high expectations. The teaching profession must embrace a mission of service and re-invent itself to keep pace with 21st century realities. This commitment requires a more in-depth and inclusive process for responding to

social issues that permeate schooling, rather than function in isolation from the political rhetoric and legislation that set the tone of the profession. Education’s progress relies heavily on the interplay of theory, research, practice and policy, in a continuous, responsive process (see Figure 1). All educators must embrace the responsibility of ensuring a position in decision-making by being continual learners well versed in understanding the research in their field and the policies that affect many facets of their practice. This is our moral obligation to the next generation.

Having worked with teachers as an administrator could have shaped beliefs and attitudes about the school environment and the support provided to pre-service teachers. Although efforts were made to ensure objectivity, personal biases can shape perspectives on the interpretation of data collected from participants. Through the use of memo-writing, I maintained an awareness of where I was located during the research and determined whether personal reflections contributed to the construction of meaning or detracted from it.

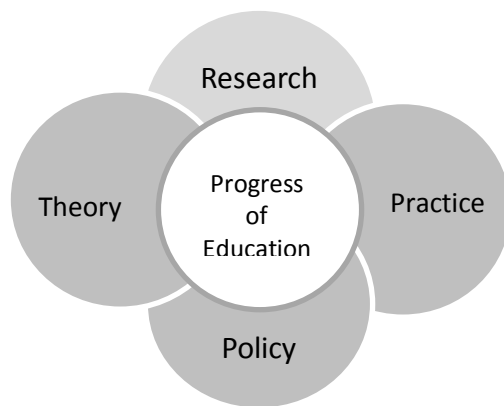


Figure 1.1. Education’s Progress: Interplay of theory, research, practice and policy for education’s progress.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this qualitative study lay in acquiring deep, thick data to advance knowledge in the field of how the middle childhood teacher training program and field

placement contributed to efficacy development among three participants. The study collected perspectives from pre-service teachers during their field placement experience, as they were actually teaching, through their first year of practice. This knowledge will aid higher education instructors and school districts in developing curricula for teacher education programs and professional development activities that support current needs in schools.

Understanding the relationship among research, theory, practice and policy empowers educators and ensures that they maintain a position in decision-making by being continual learners well versed in understanding the research in their field and the policies that affect many facets of education. Education programs have a great responsibility in providing relevant, informative learning experiences that support educators in this area.

Limitations

Literature on teacher efficacy acknowledges the connection between positive self-efficacy beliefs and improved student achievement (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998; Hoy & Spero, 2005), yet a theory of how teachers develop efficacy beliefs has eluded researchers for over three decades. Mansfield and Volet's (2010) research suggests that the way pre-service teachers see themselves as future teachers and "past experiences, beliefs, and visions of the future" (p. 1405) all have an impact on self-efficacy development during training. To contribute to the research, this study utilized qualitative case study methodology to collect in-depth data documenting pre-service teachers' experiences that helped shape or enhance self-efficacy beliefs. There were barriers, however, to negotiating entry in that a limited number of pre-service teachers demonstrated a willingness to participate. Among the fifty-one participants recruited through the university and the local districts, three participants volunteered to support the research study. Although qualitative case study research is not considered generalizable, the

small sample size may limit findings, yet by maintaining ongoing communication with participants for seventeen months through informal interviews, conversations, and response questions, I was able to gather data of participants' perspectives over time related to their experiences as students in field placement and as first-year teachers.

Hatch (2002) highlighted major difficulties in conducting qualitative research in working with participants who are unfamiliar with the qualitative process. This issue presented itself in that pre-service teachers, whose uncertainties regarding the use of collected information, were reluctant to record their perspectives through regular reflective journal writing. Additionally, my age and years of experience in the educational field may have influenced the type of information participants shared during the initial meetings. I discovered, however, that they became more comfortable as time passed and willing to respond to queries through the use of technology and informal conversations. This preference may be due to the influence of social media among the current generation. Although participants were very comfortable with my taking notes as they talked, the amount of information I was able to capture was limited to what I could record by hand and recall later as I reviewed notes and wrote memos. I may have missed some details that could have contributed more to the research.

Concluding Statement

This qualitative research study examined three teachers' lived experiences as pre-service teachers during their last semester of training through their first year of teaching. Utilizing a multi-subject case study (Yin, 2003, 2009) approach, research into *what and how* various experiences helped teachers develop teacher self-efficacy was explored. The study focused on beginning teachers' self-efficacy forming experiences as teacher candidates and how these experiences shaped their efficacy beliefs and behaviors through the first year of teaching.

Findings from previous research report that efficacy has powerful effects on teacher behaviors, and that the years during training may offer valuable exposure to efficacy-forming experiences (Johnson, 2010). Building upon the work of Bandura (1977; 1993) and Guskey (1988), Johnson (2010) described efficacious teachers as “resourceful, cause-and-effect thinkers who persist when things do not go smoothly and persevere in the face of setbacks” (p. 23). Given the demands of the changing dynamics in the nation’s schools, it is imperative that beginning teachers develop strong teacher efficacy beliefs to achieve the desired outcomes of professional success and improved student achievement.

There is a need explore to what self- and teacher efficacy mean in the context of legislative mandates and societal pressures. Although research has shown a link between teacher efficacy and student achievement (Armor, Conroy-Oseguera, Cox, McDonnell, Pascal, Pauly, & Zellman 1976; Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy 1998; Hoy & Spero, 2005), the changing societal climate requires in-depth, qualitative research into the construct of self-efficacy and in what ways teachers’ beliefs and behaviors about diverse groups influence practice (Henson, 2002; Wheatley, 2002; Labone, 2004). Exploring how self-efficacy develops and ways to support beginning teachers during the early years has the potential to help shape beginning teachers’ positive efficacy beliefs, which are easier to change during the early years of teaching (Knobloch, 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007; Johnson, 2010).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The nation is in need of good teachers whose beliefs and behaviors demonstrate their capacity to confront the challenges of today's schools. Expressing the need, however, does not solicit an adequate supply to meet the demands. As a profession, teaching was once considered a secure occupation, attracting several new candidates each year. The statistics have changed, however, as societal issues and frustrations increase and contribute to the difficulties of recruiting new and qualified teachers. Reports of teachers leaving the profession revealed that the first five years showed the highest attrition rate of between 40% -50% (Maciejewski, 2007; Faez & Valero, 2012). Researchers (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk & Hoy 1990; Hoy & Spero, 2005; Smith & Kovacs, 2011; Rots, Kelchtermans, & Aelterman, 2012) report that low teacher efficacy and inadequate training may be contributing factors to high attrition rates among novice teachers.

Researchers have presented findings that show a strong correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and positive student performance. These findings challenge researchers to consider how a change in the teacher training and professional development may broaden teachers' understandings of diversity and, therefore, change attitudes and beliefs about groups' cultures, traditions, and beliefs. According to Settlage, Southerland, Smith, & Ceglie (2009), there is a critical need for an increase in awareness among teachers and an understanding of how today's pre-service teachers "regard their future roles in teaching diverse populations of children and how they negotiate the complexities inherent in teaching across cultural boundaries" (p. 103). Such a focus has the potential to lessen gaps in achievement by equipping teachers with knowledge and awareness of societal, political and environmental events that influence access to educational opportunities.

This review of the literature outlines researchers' attempts at conceptualizing and measuring self-efficacy. As a starting point, the review contextualizes the study by defining and categorizing uses of efficacy in the field of social science, and then follows with an overview of the societal, political and environmental issues that influence teacher efficacy. Findings from Rotter's (1966) study are presented to illustrate how individuals who believe they have control of their own destiny are likely to engage more actively in the situation. His work laid the foundation for gaining a deeper understanding of how teachers' beliefs about their professional contributions in the teaching environment influence their attitudes and behaviors toward their work. The next section presents a description of the research on efficacy and researchers' attempts to measure it. This part of the review concludes with examples of testing items on various instruments.

The second portion of the review presents Bandura's research. A brief overview of social cognitive theory and its role in the development of self-efficacy follows the section on Rotter. The four sources of efficacy are described as well as the instruments used to measure the self-efficacy construct. Lastly, the review provides a rationale for a different approach utilizing interpretative methodology. The literature review is organized by headings that identify the different sections. The goal is to provide readers with a historical overview of the self-efficacy construct and its progress for more than three decades.

Methodology

My decision to investigate teacher efficacy originated from my interest in exploring how nearly fifty years of political involvement in education through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965) to current reforms has influenced student achievement and teacher effectiveness, particularly among beginning teachers. I reviewed various subject headings: Title

I, ESEA, No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002), standardization and assessment practices, reviewing 109 references prior to selecting 92 sources of varying types, including peer-reviewed articles, legal documents, and books to include in my annotated bibliography and other reports. Noting the numerous times the relationship between student achievement and teacher effectiveness was discussed, I selected these key words: student achievement, teacher effectiveness and efficacy, to find specific information for the teacher's influence on achievement, particularly for minority and disadvantaged students. This search directed me to seminal studies focused on self- and teacher efficacy or effectiveness, based on control beliefs, by major psychologists and education researchers such as Rotter (1966), Bandura (1977), Pajaras (1996), Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy and Hoy (1998), Usher (2008), and Usher and Pajaras (2008) to name a few. Originally, I collected ninety-five references from peer-reviewed articles and books to gain a foundational understanding of the self-efficacy construct and teacher effectiveness. These studies led me to review additional sources, totaling 117 references that provide the basis for this review of literature and the reference point for this study.

Efficacy

Bandura (1997) defined efficacy as an individual's belief in her capability to execute appropriate actions and produce desired effects. These beliefs are formed and strengthened over time as an individual successfully confronts various situations utilizing specific skills. If an individual lacks belief in her capabilities to act effectively in a situation, her motivation to engage may be compromised resulting in withdraw from the experience all together. Bandura's (1997) research suggested that efficacy beliefs greatly influence what actions people take based on whether they believe they have the capacity to "organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Bandura identified these beliefs as the self-

efficacy construct. In regard to educators, researchers explain teacher efficacy as belief in the ability level to organize and execute appropriate actions for specific outcomes (Ashton and Webb, 1986).

In their research, Ashton & Webb (1986) describe teacher efficacy as “teachers’ situation-specific expectation that they can help students learn” (p. 3). Klassen, Tze, Betts, and Gordon (2011) define teacher efficacy as the “confidence teachers hold about their individual and collective capability to influence student learning” (p. 21). They go on to say that teacher efficacy is considered “one of the key motivation beliefs influencing teachers’ professional behaviors and student learning” (Klassen et al., 2011, p. 21).

Teachers’ sense of efficacy engages teachers’ beliefs and behaviors in relation to making decisions on what to teach and to what extent they will extend their efforts in reaching specific goals (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Pajaras (1996) describes efficacy beliefs as those which “help determine how much effort people will expend on an activity, how long they will persevere when confronting obstacles, and how resilient they will prove in the face of adverse situations—the higher the sense of efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence, and resilience” (p. 2). An individual’s feelings of efficacy trigger different emotional responses, whereas, a person with high efficacy may approach more challenging situations with more positive, productive reactions (Pajaras, 1996). Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) underscore the power of the teacher’s judgments in affecting the “student engagement and learning” (p. 783). In essence, the higher efficacy a teacher has leads to more flexibility in working to meet students’ needs. When supporting this theoretical perspective, it becomes clear that teachers wield great influence in

education reform and students' learning opportunities. It is critical that researchers find ways to utilize this valuable resource.

Societal, Political, and Environmental Issues That Influence Teacher Efficacy

While research continues to explore the correlation between teacher beliefs and student performance, the involvement of federal and state policymakers in education has complicated efforts to advance research into the construct. Increased pressures on schools and teachers through top-down mandates strain teacher accountability and foster feelings of mistrust toward teachers as professionals (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Biesta, 2004; Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009) best qualified to make decisions about what and how children learn. Passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) legislation and more recently the elements in the Race to the Top (RTTT, 2010) grant funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, 2009) have increased expectations for classroom teachers, even as policymakers call for practitioners to be highly qualified teachers (HQT) and established criteria to meet HQT stipulations (Superfine, Gottlieb, & Smylie, 2012; Valli, Croninger, & Buese, 2012; Public Law 107-110, 2002). According to Bailey (2010), the NCLB mandate determined a positive relationship between teachers' "highly qualified" (p. 123) status in their content and student achievement and required each classroom to be directed by teachers earning this distinction. Darling-Hammond (1999) advocated for providing highly qualified, content-licensed teachers in the classroom, believing this provision held promise for improving student performance. Additionally, calls for accountability that link student performance with teacher evaluations have fueled much debate (Odden, 2011) and, in some instances, caused teachers to question their professional capabilities and beliefs as well as students' abilities to learn.

When dealing with diverse student populations, a host of other issues often create more work for teachers who may view the additional responsibilities as external interference beyond their control that negatively impact their teaching efforts. Furthermore, the majority of classrooms and teacher education programs are populated with teachers and student teachers who are predominantly “White middle-class females, having limited experiences with people from other race, ethnic, or social-class groups” (Banks, 2001; Settlage et al., 2009; Johnson, 2010). Beliefs and judgments grounded more in myth than fact may exacerbate any attempts at bridging the chasm of understanding between cultures and learning. Banks (2001) recommended teacher education students be challenged to examine their ideas of what race, culture, and ethnicity mean and to reconstruct them in ways that are more “inclusive” (p. 12) and susceptible to the influences of “economic, social and political structures in US society” (p. 12). Milner (2010) expressed concerns that this gap in understanding may create cultural conflicts which “can cause inconsistencies and incongruence between teachers and students” (p. 14), particularly since norms are established based on Eurocentric practices and traditions (Milner, 2010). This lack of understanding also impacts teacher efficacy.

Some researchers report a major step in improving the education system would be to link teachers’ instructional practice to student performance. Odden (2011), for example, argued that connecting teacher evaluations to student performance offers a way to monitor the “impact or effect of a teacher’s instructional practice” (p. 62). He further stated that if it is believed that good instructional practice is linked to improved student performance, the educational system must collect reliable and valid measures of instructional practice but only that which is “linked statistically to student learning gains” (p. 62). This data will provide specific insights for

teachers to identify “what they are doing well instructionally and what they need to improve” (Odden, 2011, p. 62).

Possible approaches such as the one mentioned above intensify societal pressures, testing efficacy beliefs and attitudes and causing teachers to question their own perceptions and perspectives on race and culture (Banks, 2001). This level of introspection may force some teachers to ignore challenges to the status quo traditions in education. Others may embrace this new awareness and make the changes on their own. Regardless of choices made, researchers and educators support the theory that the teacher’s beliefs and expectations hold tremendous influence in determining the amount a student is able to learn and achieve (Bandura, 1977; 1986, 1997; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). An important next step in the process engages research that advances knowledge in understanding what factors influence types of relationships between teachers and students and utilizing these findings to help shape experiences for practicing and beginning teachers. Additionally, exploring ways in which teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors influence the instructional environment offer meaningful insights into improving achievement outcomes for all students.

Rotter: Social Learning Theory and Locus of Control

Early studies examining teacher efficacy and its relation to student outcomes draw from Rotter’s (1966) theory on Internal-External locus of control research. According to Rotter’s (1966) theory, the way a behavior is reinforced will “strengthen an expectancy that a particular behavior or event will be followed by that reinforcement in the future” (1966, p. 2). Behavior is related to or in response to what one believes he can control and the ability to execute an action to the desired end, whether it be by skill or by chance (Rotter, 1966). If an individual believes

that consequences are related to the skill level he brings to the situation, then control is considered internal. However, if the outcome is considered to be through luck or chance, that control is external. An individual will learn to expect related outcomes between the behavior and the consequences.

Rotter’s (1966) work in conjunction with information from other researchers led to the development of the I-E scale, a “twenty-nine item, forced-choice test including six filler items intended to make somewhat ambiguous the purpose of the test” (p. 10). The items studied personal belief systems by testing whether a person has a tendency to think situations and events are under their control or the control of external forces. Then, it examined how these beliefs affected behaviors. Using the instrument, participants were to select which item they believed to be more accurate in describing beliefs for different situations. Sample items from the I-E scale:

Table 2.1

Generalized Expectancies for Internal versus External Control of Reinforcement	
•	a. Children get into trouble because their parents punish them too much
	b. The trouble with most children nowadays is that their parents are too easy with them.
•	a. Many of the unhappy things in people’s lives are partly due to bad luck
	b. People’s misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.
•	a. One of the major reasons why we have wars is because people don’t take enough interest in politics.
	b. There will always be wars, no matter how hard people try to prevent them.
•	a. In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world.
	b. Unfortunately, an individual’s worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard he tries.
•	a. The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense.
	b. Most students don’t realize the extent to which their grades are influenced by accidental happenings.

Source: Rotter (1966). *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied*, 80(1).

Findings from this study reveal that an individual's beliefs about her ability to control her destiny is connected to a stronger sense of self and an awareness of ways to utilize "aspects of the environment" (Rotter, 1966, p. 25) to inform future behaviors and conditions.

Rotter (1966) explained that the attitude, belief or expectancy regarding the connections between behavior and outcomes can be different based on a variety of situations. This work investigating the connections between beliefs about control and teachers' behaviors and attitudes can be generalized to today's pressures from political and societal arenas. It holds value for today's researchers in gathering a better understanding of the degree teachers' beliefs about their level of control in certain situations influences teachers' attitudes and behaviors in classroom situations.

Utilizing Rotter's Social Learning Theory - The Rand Studies

Researchers have utilized a questionnaire-type format to assess teacher beliefs and behaviors in relation to student outcomes (Armor et al, 1976; Berman et al., 1977; Guskey, 1981; Tschannen-Moran, 2007). Although the instruments differ in content, many are designed based on Rotter's (1966) learning theory of control (Armor et al., 1976; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). These items assessed whether "teachers believed that they could control the reinforcement of their actions" (p. 784). In other words, teachers expressed their beliefs on whether the ability to control certain situations lay within their control, internal, or outside their ability to control, external (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

The initial study that established the connection between teacher behaviors and their effects on student achievement was initiated by the Los Angeles Unified Local School district (LAUSD). In 1976, LAUSD partnered with Armor et al. of the Rand Corporation to identify best practices for raising student achievement in reading, particularly for minority students.

Armor et al. (1976) conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the district, identifying twenty inner-city elementary schools with high minority student populations.

The design utilized a Likert-type scale with two items from Rotter's (1966) research to include in their questionnaire. These items focused on internal and external control with regard to teacher beliefs in their ability to control student outcomes. For example, if the teacher believed the influence of the environment outweighs the teacher's ability to impact students learning, an external level of control is involved. The second item emphasizes the teachers' belief in his or her ability to teach difficult or unmotivated students using appropriate resources. Teachers supporting this belief exercise an internal level of control (Rotter, 1966). According to the findings, decisions made at the school and classroom level are of critical importance in the education of minority students.

In a second study conducted by the Rand Corporation at the request of the federal government, Berman and McLaughlin (1977) investigated the impact of federal funding on school change by funding specific projects. Using data from 100 Title I schools, the study investigated the progress schools made in implementing and sustaining change beyond federal funding support. Among the items used in the Berman and McLaughlin's (1977) analysis to gather comparable data over many areas were "teachers assessment of project effectiveness, the change in teaching style or behavior, and improvement in student performance in both cognitive and affective aspects" (viii). This study also utilized the two questions from Rotter's (1966) research:

Rand Item #1. When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.

Rand Item #2. If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.

Based on their findings, Berman and McLaughlin (1977) reported that certain teacher characteristics have positive effects on project outcomes, and “teachers’ sense of efficacy emerged as a powerful explanatory variable; it had major positive effects on the percentage of project goals achieved, improved student performance, teacher change, and continuation of project methods and materials” (xi). These positive results motivated future studies exploring the link between teacher efficacy and student performance.

Berman and McLaughlin (1977) call attention to concerns with these findings because of statistical procedures and interpretations of results and the generalizability of the findings based on a selected group of teachers. Additionally, they note that researchers point to many variables in this study that require specific follow up to determine how to duplicate positive results in other situation. Berman and McLaughlin acknowledge these issues in their report, yet the focus on follow up through qualitative research has not gained popularity and various studies continue to modify questions to find solutions. Regardless of these concerns, the Rand studies set the stage for continued research into the construct of teacher efficacy utilizing control theory.

Instruments Following Rotter’s Learning Theory

Rotter’s (1966) locus of control and the methods utilized in the Rand (1976, 1977) studies prompted other research into examining the teacher’s influence on schooling. According to Tschannen-Moran (2001), the process and findings set the precedence for further study into the relationship of teacher and school effectiveness and student progress. A few among those reviewed by Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) are Guskey’s (1981) Responsibility for Student Achievement (RSA); Rose and Medway’s (1981) Teachers Locus of Control (TLC) and Ashton et al. (1982) Webb scale.

Guskey's (1981) RSA scale contains thirty paired "alternate-weighting" items, each describing "either a positive or negative student achievement experience which routinely occurs in classroom life" (p. 44). Students were to assign points to different situations determining teacher responsibility based a 100-point scale for whether responsibility for student achievement was more or less internal or external to the teacher's control. The findings suggest that teachers' acceptance of responsibility for student successes or failures is related to teachers' beliefs, which may have important implications for researching the relationship between teachers' beliefs and student achievement. According to Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001), teachers appeared to relate more to successes than failures. They determine that Guskey's (1981) findings suggest a positive correlation between teacher efficacy and responsibility for student achievement. A sample of the RSA Questionnaire follows below:

Directions

For each of the following questions, please give a weight or percent to each of the two choices according to your preferences. For example:

If most students complete a home assignment you make, is it usually

_____ a. because of their personal motivation, or

_____ b. because you were very clear in making the assignment?

You feel that students complete assignments more because of personal motivation than because of your clarity in making the assignment. In that case, you might answer:

85% a.

15% b.

Or you may feel quite the opposite. The percentage will vary according to how strongly you feel about each alternative. You may see choice (b) almost totally responsible for students completing assignments and might give it 99%. Choice (a) would then get 1%. The two must always add to 100%.

This sample demonstrates how the RSA gathered information from teachers about the level of control they believed to have in influencing students' learning outcomes. They are grounded in

Rotter's theory of locus of control. Although findings suggest a connection between teachers' beliefs and students' performance, nevertheless, findings do not provide deep insights into understanding how the connections affect each other. Similar problems exist in other studies as well. Other commonly used instruments are included in the following pages.

The TLC (Rose & Medway, 1981) instrument was developed to measure elementary teachers' sense of classroom control. The instrument assessed eighty-nine teachers' perceptions of control over students' successes and failures through their responses to items in a variety of situations. The TLC includes twenty-eight items, broken into equal numbers of successes and failures situations (Rose & Medway, 1981). Included below is a snapshot of the TLC instrument:

Item

1. When the grades of your students improve, it is more likely
 - a. because you found ways to motivate the students, or
 - b. because the students were trying harder to do well.

2. Suppose you had difficulties in setting up learning centers for students in your classroom. Would this probably happen
 - a. because you lacked the appropriate materials, or
 - b. because you didn't spend enough time in developing activities to go into the center?

3. Suppose your students did not appear to be benefitting from a more individualized method of instruction. The reason for this would be
 - a. because you were having some problems managing this type of instruction, or
 - b. because the students in your class were such that they needed a more traditional kind of approach.

An analysis of the data show that the TLC revealed positive results in measuring teachers' perceptions of classroom control. According to Rose & Medway (1981), the TLC was demonstrated to be internally consistent. The researchers report, "Significant associations between teachers' TLC scores and classroom behavior variables observed in validation studies

underscore the importance of control beliefs in teachers' classroom management. Rose & Medway (1981) report that internal teachers' classroom behaviors maximized instructional efficiency. Research by Ashton et al. (1982) revealed evidence that supports the control internal teachers have over student achievement.

In their article, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) discuss the Webb scale, developed by Ashton et al. (1982). The format of the Webb scale required participants to respond to questions, based on deciding which of the two they more closely agree. This instrument was also a forced-choice format with items matched for social desirability. A sample is presented below:

Format: 7 items, forced choice

Participants must determine if they agree most strongly with the first or the second statement.

Sample items:

A. A teacher should not be expected to reach every child; some students are not going to make academic progress.

B. Every child is reachable. It is a teacher's obligation to see to it that every child makes academic progress.

A. My skills are best suited for dealing with students who have low motivation and who have a history of misbehavior in school.

B. My skills are best suited for dealing with students who are academically motivated and generally well behaved.

Results found that teachers who scored higher on the *Webb Efficacy Scale* had fewer negative interactions in their teaching style (Ashton, et al, 1982).

As noted above, these studies present various attempts to measure the relationship between teacher control and how it affects student learning. Differences in study instruments demonstrate changes in the content of the questions, illustrating attempts to measure better how findings are situation specific. However, the need for qualitative research is evidenced by the

limited information that results from use of positivist approaches to measuring human behaviors. There are too many variables that have to be considered in the findings.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's research into understanding behaviors differs from Rotter's control theory. His perspective of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) emphasizes efficacy expectations and expectancy outcomes, or the level of competence one believes is needed to accomplish a task. The major focus is on an individual's beliefs in their capacity to confront or overcome certain tasks. Social cognitive theory recognizes additional processing responses between the behavior and the outcome. Bandura (1977) described them as efficacy expectations and response-outcome expectancies. An efficacy expectation is one's belief in his or her ability to execute an action. Outcome expectancy refers to one's judgment of how likely his or her actions will result in the expected level of competence (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Social cognitive theory differs from other perceptions of learning theory in that it deals with how one's processing of information and response to various situations "influences their behavior and development" (Grusec, 1992, p. 781).

Beliefs play a critical role in an individual's attempts at unfamiliar task or in facing challenges. Beliefs assume a level of confidence based in the premise that knowing the task and addressing it with an appropriate response is a two-step: I know what to do versus I know what to do and can do. This belief process influences how teachers approach a task not just in the classroom, a more controlled environment, but also the school and community environments.

Bandura's theory lends itself to exploring how a teacher's response to knowing and beliefs in his capacity to meeting any challenge are powerful factors in a student's learning

experiences. In the diagram below, Bandura (1977) illustrates the thinking process for his theory (p. 193):

Thinking Process of Social Cognitive Theory

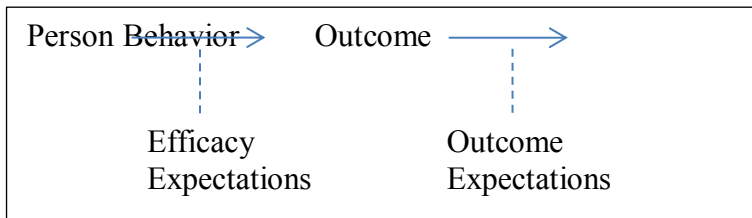


Figure 2.1. Bandura (1977, p. 193).

In conducting an investigation of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy development, the research into how beliefs and behaviors are formed early in a person's background may add important implications for future study. Taking this position adds another dimension that highlights how various situations factor into a teacher's life and shape her belief system. These events initiate a series of reactions which invoke certain behaviors during the teaching process. Researchers also need to consider the interconnectedness of past experiences, traditions, and beliefs in shaping mindsets (Milner, 2010). One's experiences help shape or form beliefs, which then influence the degree of effort one will extend to a task or challenge.

Based on his research, Bandura (1986) surmised, "People regulate their level and distribution of effort in accordance with the effects they expect their actions to have. As a result, the behavior is better predicted from beliefs than from the actual consequences of their actions" (p. 129). Bandura describes important elements that influence behaviors as self-regulation and self-efficacy. Self-regulation is the way an individual responds to a situation based on a set of predetermined standards. These standards account for background experiences which develop within an individual and form from the collection and evaluation of experiences over time. This basis determines the type of response an individual has to a situation (Bandura, 1986; Grusec,

1992). Research shows that experiences individuals value are rated positively, while those that trigger less favorable reactions are considered as negative (Gursec, 1992).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1978, 1997), defined as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3) is an important element in Bandura’s theory (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 787; Williams, 2009, p. 601). Conaway (2010) describes self-efficacy as “future oriented” (p. 966), which incorporates teachers’ pre-judgments on the situation, prior thoughts, and motivation to approach the task. In analyzing Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy theory, Grusec (1992) ascertained that people’s beliefs about their capabilities and subsequent behaviors is greatly influenced by the particular situation which, in turn, determines how much effort they will put into the task (p.782).

To further illustrate how this works, Conaway (2010) suggests using Bandura’s (1978) triadic model of reciprocal determinism. This concept provides a visual of how behaviors are influenced by personal and environmental factors and explained as “reciprocal interrelation between behaviors, personal factors, and the environment” (Conaway, 2010, p. 966). Reciprocal determinism considers how teachers’ actions, behaviors, and interpretations or judgments of the outcome influence future reactions and responses, creating a cyclical process in understanding actions and performance. This concept is significant in thinking about the impact of current pressures on teachers, particularly beginning teachers who do not have experiential knowledge of how political, societal, and environmental issues affect 21st century schooling needs.

Self-efficacy has an important role in determining what a person believes and the actions he is willing to take. It is the processing of these experiences and reflecting upon the expected outcomes that results in consequences. According to Bandura (1986), human beings utilize a

self-reflective process to evaluate their thoughts and understandings and make judgments concerning proper response. Regardless of the outcome, it is the process of self-reflection which influences human beings' sense-making of different realities (pp. 18-21).

Four Sources of Efficacy Beliefs

Bandura (1977) also identified four sources of efficacy beliefs that influence one's perception of his or her capabilities. These sources include "performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal" (p. 193). Williams (2009) describes performance accomplishments as "mastery experiences" (p. 602), which is a fitting description in that a person's experiences with a task affect feelings of efficacy. In other words, if a person experiences success, self-efficacy will increase. Failed attempts, however, will lower self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) explains that performance accomplishments, or mastery experiences (Williams, 2009) can have powerful influence in the development of self or personal efficacy beliefs because once self-efficacy beliefs are established they can be generalized to other similar situations. This theory holds important implications for teachers and teacher education programs and the impact on student performance.

Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) suggest that intense and deliberate research investigating how teachers' efficacy beliefs in their capabilities are formed and reinforced and their impact on student achievement "could provoke significant changes in the way teachers were prepared and supported in their early years in the profession" (p. 802). If the nation is serious about improving education opportunities for all students, investing in research in this area needs to be a priority.

Vicarious experiences occur through watching others and believing that one's capabilities can match those observed. This experience is understood also as modeling and then permitting

participants to mimic the event (Bandura, 1977). This allows for practice in achieving desired behaviors and consequences. Current teacher education programs incorporate this step in their training. If utilized properly and positive experiences occur, vicarious experiences will support strong self-efficacy beliefs.

Bandura (1977) describes verbal persuasion as “easy to use and readily available” (p. 198). He raises caution that merely telling an individual what to do or what to expect does not produce strong self-efficacy. It may be useful, however, in combination with another corrective performance activity (Bandura, 1977). Williams (2009) identifies verbal persuasion as social persuasion and agrees in Bandura’s (1977) assessment of the limited influence of this experience on self-efficacy. The fourth experience is emotional arousal, psychological and emotional states (Williams, 2009). According to Bandura (1977), emotions such as stress may obstruct their judgment, “People rely partly on their state of physiological arousal in judging their anxiety and vulnerability to stress” (p. 198). While emotional arousal has been identified in Bandura’s theory (1977), other researchers have noted that there is not a lot of research into this experience and its influence on self-efficacy (Labone, 2004; Williams, 2009).

Woolfolk , Rosoff, and Hoy, (1990) extend Bandura’s theory on the interrelationship between efficacy and outcome expectations suggesting that motivation is influenced by both outcome and efficacy expectations. In addition, outcome expectancies in the form of rewards, recognition or punitive responses may initiate positive or negative responses (Bandura, 1986; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Following these concepts, researchers would do well to consider exploring in depth the impact of current mandates of testing and accountability measures, particularly in the suggestion of merit pay and tying teacher pay to student performance. Additionally, exploring the foundational knowledge and ways of knowing and

doing that teachers bring to the learning environment offer valuable information for understanding the teachers' responses in various classroom situations.

Bandura's perspective on social learning theory provides another avenue to explore. Efforts to gather data that extended beyond teachers' beliefs based in locus of control and more toward the engagement of cognitive processes prompted researchers to develop instruments utilizing theories presented in Bandura's (1977, 1986) social cognitive theory. Although the purpose was to expand on Rotter's locus of control and the two Rand items by incorporating more of Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977, 1986), the instruments still required participants to read and evaluate different responses before selecting the one most related to their view. In the section that follows, a few samples of instruments are included to illustrate the similarities.

Instruments Based in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

In an effort to show that teacher efficacy is context specific, Ashton, Buhr, & Crocker (1984) conducted a vignette study involving sixty-five (65) classroom teachers in graduate classes at the University of Florida. These participants were given an instrument containing (25) teaching scenarios and asked to determine their level of effectiveness in handling the situation. In addition, participants had to evaluate their effectiveness in comparison to other teachers' expected level of performance (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). This instrument holds potential for having teachers think about different situations and select a response, but still the items are preselected and sway participants' thinking toward available selections.

Gibson and Dembo (1984) developed another teacher efficacy instrument to address concerns with having only two items from the RAND studies, found in Rotter's locus of control, and to include elements from Bandura's (1977) outcome expectancy and self-efficacy

factors. They suggest the need for carefully designed measures that are more specific to issues of efficacy and related outcomes. Continued review of the TES confirmed difficulties in creating an instrument to capture the characteristics of teacher efficacy while maintaining the major elements of Rotter's (1966) and Bandura's (1977, 1986, 1997) research and theories (Henson, 2001; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2001; Williams, 2009).

Ashton Vignettes (Ashton et al., 1982)						
One of your students misbehaves frequently in your class and is often disruptive and hostile. Today in class he began roughhousing with a friend in the back of the class. You tell him firmly to take his seat and quiet down. He turns away from you, says something in a belligerent tone that you can't hear and swaggers to his seat. The class laughs and then looks to see what you are going to do. How effective would you be in responding to this student in a way that would win the respect of the class?						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
extremely ineffective			moderately effective			extremely effective

Figure 2.2. Ashton, P. T., Olejnik, S., Crocker, L. & McAuliffe, M. (1982). *Measurement problems in the study of teachers' sense of efficacy*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York.

Bandura's Teacher Efficacy scale (1997) pulled together examples to gather data on various school-related situations that present challenges for teachers. This instrument includes thirty items with a 9-point scale, with choices ranging from nothing to a great deal. There are seven different focus areas identified as follows: efficacy to influence decision making; efficacy to influence school resources; instructional self-efficacy; disciplinary self-efficacy; efficacy to enlist parental involvement; efficacy to enlist community involvement; efficacy to create a positive school climate. Admittedly, this instrument does attempt to pull together scenarios from different experiences. However, by these efforts it does not offer the appeal that a more sophisticated questionnaire might include. The instrument is lengthy and convoluted with too

many choices and categories. The length alone might discourage many participants. Not surprisingly, the instrument was not used and, therefore, validity and reliability data are not available (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk & Hoy, 2008). The significance in sharing this instrument is in observing how various attempts to gather situation or context-specific data to measure efficacy expectations and expectation outcomes tend to develop longer forms but are limited to collecting one-dimensional information.

In more recent research, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2008) developed the Ohio State Teachers Efficacy Scale (OSTES). The two versions of the OSTES include a 24-item and a 12-item instrument, 9-point scale, with choices ranging from nothing (1) to a great deal (9). The content of the items measures responses to three factors: efficacy for instructional strategies; efficacy for classroom management; and efficacy for student engagement. According to Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2008), the OSTES is superior to other instruments because it measures a range of teacher capabilities that are considered characteristics important to good teaching and the items cover a broader range of teaching tasks and (p. 20).

1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

While the items appear to be more flexible and identifiable to a broader range of teaching tasks, this information is limited to measuring how much teachers rate their level of belief. Findings continue to be limited to one-dimensional information without benefit of understanding

the experiences that molded these beliefs. Therefore, its findings are also limited, as is the case in other quantitative studies.

This research produces findings regarding the influence of teacher efficacy on student achievement rather than teachers' efficacy beliefs about how to teach better (Wheatley, 2005). A criticism of past studies argues that so much attention on this one aspect of teacher efficacy has left a gap in teacher efficacy data (Labone, 2004). Wheatley (2005) recommends that researchers incorporate essential questions that focus on what teacher efficacy research offers that can improve teacher education and promote democratic education. These contributions will advance the maturity of the construct and inform stakeholders in making needed improvements.

Need for a Different Approach

In conducting past studies measuring teacher efficacy, researchers discussed in previous sections utilized quantitative methods for analyzing data through survey-type questions, requiring teachers to respond to various aspects of schooling. These studies explored surface-level connections, capturing snapshots of information through interview items, surveys, questionnaires, formulaic scales, and student achievement data. Researchers measured results and compared findings to student achievement and outcomes data. This process for measuring teacher efficacy and its influence on student achievement and engagement has been widely used for nearly forty years. However, answers to decades-old questions for how best to support teacher candidates in developing high self-efficacy continues to elude researchers and educators alike.

Fast forward to the 21st century to find added stresses to teacher candidates' and teachers' already burdened responsibilities. The nation's demographics are changing. Current data from reports (Census Bureau, 2010) affirm an increase in the minority population and project that "in

five years, minorities will make up more than half of children under 18” (Yen, 2013). Studies also show that gaps in achievement continue among disadvantaged and some minority groups. Based on data collected from the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), the percentage of children living in poverty was greater among Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders than for White and Asian families. Also, the National Center for Education Statistics (2010) reported that achievement levels among American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, and Hispanic students lagged behind White and Asian/Pacific Islanders on 4th and 8th grade tests in reading and mathematics. These statistics underscore a critical need to educate the next generation of teachers to meet the changes in economic, cultural, and linguistic requirements of an increasingly diverse population. This is particularly important considering statistics that show White middle-class females are entering the educational arena in greater numbers than any other group, a reality that may create cultural barriers. Laughter (2011) presented statistics that reveal 83.1% of teachers in the United States are White, while “39.7% of students are identified as Minority” (p. 43). This gap which Laughter (2011) refers to as the “demographic divide” (p. 43) suggests that pre-service teachers may require more specific training to understand the differences between them and many of their students. It also underscores the need for teacher education programs to present experiences that challenge candidates to recognize and evaluate their own understandings of diversity and expectations for teaching and learning.

Salisbury-Glennon and Stevens (1999) in agreement with researchers (Mansfield and Volet (2010); Smith, 2005), posited that pre-service teachers enter teacher education with their own “personal history-based beliefs” (p. 1404) that affect how they teach and process new learning experiences. Chong & Low (2009) affirmed findings in the literature stating that pre-

service teachers “begin teacher education programs with fixed conceptions, perceptions, and beliefs about teaching” (p. 60-61). In regard to pre-service teachers’ motivations, researchers McDiarmid (1990), Mahlios & Maxson (1995) and Chong & Low (2009) opined that exposure to various teaching styles has great influence over prospective teachers’ motivation to teach. Bandura described this exposure as mastery experiences and vicarious experiences in his research, describing the greatest benefits to lie in mastery experiences. Hoy & Spero (2005) reinforce these statements, explaining that mastery experiences during student teaching and the induction year have a powerful influence on teachers’ self-efficacy development.

Challenges in overcoming student performance barriers, critical media commentary, and strict scrutiny present pressures for teachers that may influence their sense of teacher efficacy and trigger specific beliefs and attitudes about minority and disadvantaged students. Within this context, a qualitative or mixed methodology is best suited to explore teachers’ understandings of how the dimensions of policy, race, and class influence access to educational opportunities. According to Usher and Pajares (2008), “Qualitative inquiry provides a phenomenological lens through which the development of efficacy beliefs can be viewed, and it can capture the personal, social, situational, and temporal conditions under which students cognitively process and appraise their beliefs and experience,” (p. 784). Learning about people, their experiences and values, requires close communication and continued contact. This type of interaction builds a level of trust and openness which corresponds with qualitative approaches: “grounded theory, ethnography, classroom observations, interview techniques and case studies” (Usher & Pajares, 2008, p. 784) and last over a period of time, quite different that the instruments used in quantitative studies that take a snapshot of a moment in time.

Researchers investigating the influence of teachers' beliefs on student performance must explore not only the existence of teachers' beliefs as measured by instruments, but also in what ways background experiences influence current beliefs and behaviors. Using methods such as qualitative methodology provides opportunities to gather data on *what and how* various experiences shape beliefs and responses. According to Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001), the field of education research has not been lacking in the study of teacher efficacy, but to date researchers have had difficulty in developing an instrument that will provide a comprehensive measuring tool. They promote exploring other perspectives and to potentially expand the self-efficacy research and gather thick data for understanding how experiences mold certain mindsets and influence behaviors. Labone (2004) criticized the time that researchers have remained status quo and encouraged the expansion of research into the "paradigms of interpretivists and critical theorist" (p. 342) to broaden understandings of both the development of efficacy beliefs and the role of teacher efficacy in changing social contexts. There is a need to broaden both the foci and methodologies used to explore the construct.

Analyses of past studies highlight problems in validity and reliability and challenge both the current conceptualization of teacher efficacy as a construct and the psychometric properties of instruments in the field (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Henson et al., 2001). Williams (2009) adds that although the relation between teacher efficacy and student learning has been demonstrated through the data, the "relationship in reality may be indirect" (p. 604). Pajares (1996) challenged researchers to re-examine the meaning of teacher efficacy in relation to self-efficacy, as presented through Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, self-regulation and motivation. Unless there is a clear way to understand how these connections are made and how to identify the characteristics that inform practice, these findings may not be beneficial.

The changing societal climate requires in-depth research into the construct of teacher efficacy and in what ways teachers' beliefs influence practice (Wheatley, 2002). Changing times have also changed the way individuals think and respond to events occurring around them. For example, Castro's (2010) work investigated how pre-service teachers' views on cultural diversity have changed from 1985-2007. Borrowing from the work of Gay (2002) and Villegas (2008), Castro (2010) determined that preparing culturally responsive teachers to work in more diverse settings "represents, perhaps, the most daunting task facing teacher educators today" (p. 198).

There is need to re-define what teacher efficacy means in the context of legislative mandates and societal pressures and determine what "general efficacy" (Gibson & Dembo, 1984) really measures. In his study, Coladarci (1992) notes "from a measurement perspective, the teacher efficacy literature also would be enriched by more qualitative studies...in which teachers' thoughts are probed as they respond to teacher efficacy items (p. 335). Moloney's (2006) research focuses on teachers' feelings of powerlessness caused by external factors of political influence such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) mandates and more recently the Common Core (2009) standards. Calls for teacher accountability and performance-based evaluations have changed social attitudes toward teachers, requiring them to develop high self-efficacy in order to manage the responsibilities and pressures of teaching in today's schools.

Concluding Statement

The field of education is complex and deeply rooted in tradition, beliefs, and social norms. Throughout history, the social climate of the times has invited scholars, philosophers, and researchers to search for ways of understanding human behavior and interactions among groups and the world around them. Their work offers varied perspectives on philosophies, theories, beliefs and behaviors that influence education and presents a lens for viewing the

similarities and differences each generation brings to the practice of educating children. The work of past studies must be acknowledged and respected for the contributions made to investigating how beliefs affect various facets of the learning environment. The conversation around the findings is duly noted as it refers to classroom teachers and the influence they have on instruction.

RAND I and II (Armor et al., 1976; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Henson, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) brought attention to the role of teacher efficacy beliefs in relation to student performance. Ashton and Webb (1986) extended this concept into highlighting how teacher efficacy interacts with teacher motivation. Their findings suggest that the success of reform efforts depends largely upon researching efforts that will build teachers sense of esteem and professionalism (Ashton & Webb, 1986). In addition, Klassen et al. (2011) explain that teacher efficacy is considered as “one of the key motivational beliefs influencing teachers’ professional behaviors and student learning” (p. 21).

Bandura’s (1977, 1986, and 1997) work with social learning theory set the direction for continued investigation. In explaining self-efficacy, he noted that individuals undergo a process of bringing their own meaning, “the inferential processes that govern the self-appraisal of efficacy are better elucidated by analyzing how people select and integrate multidimensional efficacy information than by having them rate the relative weight they give to a few preselected factors,” (Bandura, 1997, p. 84). Usher & Pajares’ (2008) research reinforced Bandura’s position. The way an individual internalizes or processes informs their efficacy beliefs. The current generation of researchers and educators need to consider the relevance of past studies to identifying potential solutions to issues confronting the educational system today.

Throughout the decades, researchers have implemented different instruments in hopes of harnessing the synergy between teacher efficacy beliefs and student performance. Their efforts, however, have fallen short, and the methods of closing the gap remains elusive. Myriad performance reports continue to underscore the ineffectiveness of our centuries-old, European-designed educational system which fails to address the changing landscape of today's classrooms. The explosion of diversity in the nation's schools demands a thorough, deep process of investigating teachers' beliefs and how they play out in diverse learning environments.

Use of qualitative methods provides researchers with a chance to explore the teachers' cognitive processes that inform and shape beliefs. Additionally, working through this methodology invites the qualitative researcher to investigate mindsets (Milner, 2010) and their role in teachers' response behaviors. Researchers have an opportunity probe into the data, unlocking layers that contribute to teacher efficacy. The dialogue between researcher and teacher may shed new understandings on how teachers' thinking is shaped through various experiences and why different behaviors are used in various situations.

In researching the construct of self-efficacy, researchers, educators and policymakers have the responsibility to incorporate a mechanism for identifying how one's beliefs strengthen the system or negatively impact improvement plans. It is critical that findings be supported by situation-specific data that will both inform and advance the teaching profession. Klassen et al. (2011) caution researchers to create reliable and valid measures, providing solid evidence to support findings and ensuring that research is relevant to the current issues educators face. Implementing qualitative methodological techniques would lead researchers and educators in this direction.

Policymakers, researchers, and educators must acknowledge the urgency to transform its educational process and work cooperatively and collaboratively. The expectations of standards-based reforms intended to address the decades-old issue of an achievement gap between White and disadvantaged and non-White students, has placed more pressures on teachers to improve achievement as measured on standardized tests (Datnow, 2011). Educators, as the authority in decision-making about what and how students should learn, find that “the age of accountability has shaped the culture of teaching in significant ways...” (Datnow, 2011, p. 148). In response, teachers will have to “develop reflective cultural and national identifications if they are to function effectively in diverse classrooms...” (Banks, 2001, p.10).

Unless educators and those involved in teacher preparation programs make deliberate and purposeful curriculum modifications that recognize and support the social and cultural diversity students bring to the learning environment, the gap in achievement will increase and an opportunity to improve student performance will be lost. The words of Usher and Parajes (2008) succinctly express the urgent need for change in the way schools respond to students, “The cultural landscape of American schools is changing dramatically, and the academic motivation of students is a function of their cultural, ethnic, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds” (p. 788).

In the reality of our changing social and political climate, researchers, educators, and politicians must explore how this new wave of issues affects teacher efficacy and behaviors and gather specific research data to inform decisions in the change process through policy and practice. It is difficult to determine what specific changes to make in education or how to activate sensitivity and tolerance in others, but the goal of ensuring that each child achieves independence through knowledge and intellect remains a moral imperative.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Collier's (2005) unassuming query, "If high teacher efficacy is the key to facilitating more effective teacher performance, how do we develop and support this critical belief system?" is a call-to-arms for researchers and educators. In this highly-politicized schooling climate of testing and accountability, education researchers face new challenges in utilizing data collected in past teacher efficacy studies to identify *what* and *how* various experiences and beliefs shape efficacy development in teacher candidates. Building upon the work of past researchers, current and future studies need to focus on understanding how pre-service teachers filter new knowledge and skills through their lens of past experiences, beliefs and traditions. The findings have the potential to facilitate the design and direction of teacher education training programs and respond to 21st century schooling needs. As stated by Corbin and Strauss (2008), "Alternatively...a new approach is needed to solve an old problem, even though it has been well studied in the past" (p. 22).

Previous research on self-efficacy and the teacher efficacy construct have utilized quantitative measures with instruments limited in providing a comprehensive measuring tool (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001). Also, analyses of past studies highlight problems validity and reliability issues and challenge both the current conceptualization of teacher efficacy as a construct and the psychometric properties of instruments in the field (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Henson et al., 2001). The dialogue between researcher and teacher, however, provided important breakthroughs on how teachers' thinking was shaped through various experiences and why different behaviors were used in various situations. Quantitative studies provided researchers with groundbreaking knowledge that objectified the relationship between teacher

efficacy and student achievement. My study built upon this work by qualifying how prospective teachers processed their learning and dealt with past and current issues, utilizing new knowledge and skills gained through teacher training to sustain them in successful teaching careers.

This chapter described the design and procedures used in my study to address the following questions:

- What are novice teachers' lived experiences as first-year practicing teachers?
- What types of self-efficacy beliefs and behaviors do novice teachers utilize in their classroom in the first year as practicing teacher?
- How do novice teachers describe self-efficacy-forming experiences during training in the teacher education/training program?

Various forms of data collection contributed to a more holistic picture of teachers' experiences during training and in practice. These data included interviews, observation, field notes, artifacts, and written reflections.

Qualitative Paradigm

Since the late 1970's, researchers have used quantitative methodologies to study the teacher efficacy construct (Armor et al., 1976; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998, 2001; Hoy & Spero, 2005). The impetus behind these studies stemmed from reports of a positive correlation between teachers' efficacy beliefs and behaviors and student performance (Armor et al., 1976; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998, 2001). The objective of additional studies focused on finding productive means of improving academic achievement among minority groups.

I selected a qualitative research paradigm because it provided a well-suited methodology to explore human interaction within naturalistic settings as experienced by individuals (Bogdan

& Biklen, 2007; Hatch, 2002). My objective was to seek an understanding of participants' experiences throughout training in their teacher education program and their perspectives on lived experiences as first-year teachers.

The complexity in studying how humans understand and interact in their natural settings requires “a way of thinking and studying social phenomena” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 1) that captures the experiences and circumstances of people engaged in everyday living experiences. Vishnevsky and Beanlands (2004) explain that “qualitative methods, with their focus on investigation of human experiences from a holistic, in-depth perspective are well suited to exploring the complex problems” (p. 234). Any research that studies people, their experiences and values, requires close communication and continued contact.

According to Usher and Pajares (2008), “Qualitative inquiry provides a phenomenological lens through which the development of efficacy beliefs can be viewed, and it can capture the personal, social, situational, and temporal conditions under which students cognitively process and appraise their beliefs and experience,” (p. 784). This characteristic of qualitative inquiry considers an individual's experiences and mindset and establishes the setting for developing inter-relational communication and continued contact. These interactions foster trust and openness and correspond with qualitative procedures used in methods such as “grounded theory, ethnography, classroom observations, interview techniques and case studies” (Usher & Pajares, 2008, p. 784). Additionally, the relationship between researcher and participant continues for an extended period, in contrast to quantitative studies that capture a snapshot of a moment in time.

Research Design

This study was a multi-subject case study (Yin, 2003) that followed three teachers' lived experiences as student teachers through the first year of teaching. It was bounded by teachers' views on the extent to which the teacher training program provided experiences that cultivated their self-efficacy development as prospective teachers and how these beliefs supported them in their classrooms as first year teachers. A case study approach, generally characterized by the observation of phenomena in their natural settings, established the conditions for capturing participants' lived experiences as they processed new knowledge and its practicality and applicability in their field practice (Yin, 2003). Additionally, this methodological choice outlined the boundaries for probing beliefs and behaviors of participants in their roles as teachers-in-training. As a case study, this work was generalizable to the larger population of educators, but aimed to add insights to the Middle Childhood Education program at the University and placement site.

Yin (2009) explained that “the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (p. 4) and described the process for using case study methodology as being twofold:

1. The first part as empirical inquiry investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and,
2. Secondly, the methodology provides a process for data collection by coping with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points: and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion; and as another result,

benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (p. 18).

The phenomenon in this multi-subject case study was the beliefs prospective teachers had about themselves after their training in the Middle Childhood Education program and after a year on their own as teachers. Beginning in the second quarter of their field practice, I collected data from various sources to use for the experiences which supported pre-service teachers in developing self-efficacy and how these experiences were utilized in their first year of teaching. I used Bandura's (1977, 1986) self-efficacy construct to guide the collection of data from multiple sources, including semi-structured formal interviews, informal interviews, formal and informal observations, field notes, written reflections, and artifacts.

Context and Gaining Access

Context

This section provides background information on the metropolitan area, Midwestern University (a pseudonym is used in the study), the Middle Childhood Education program, and the field placement for the research.

Midwestern City

The study was conducted through Midwestern University (identified later as University), located in a midwestern city which proudly serves as headquarters to seven Fortune 500 companies and several other major corporations and businesses. It is the third largest city in the state and the 25th largest city in the United States. Covering a 79.5 square mile area, the city reports a population of 296,950 people. The diversity of groups includes 49.3% White, 51.7% non-White, and 29.4% people living below the poverty level.

Midwestern University

The University is an urban public institution with a total enrollment of 42,656. Ranked as 135th by *U.S. News and World Reports* (2014), the university offers more than 300 programs of study, including graduate degrees in business, law, and engineering, and is known for its efforts in “linking education to the workplace and the community” (*U.S. News*, 2014). The School of Education, one of the many schools at the university, has a ranking of 65th among the nation’s top graduate schools of education and provides services for teacher licensure, undergraduate and graduate programs.

Middle Childhood Education Program

The University’s Bulletin (2008; 2010-2011) described Middle Childhood education as a “comprehensive education program designed to prepare students to become effective middle childhood teachers who are capable of delivering quality instruction in a variety of settings and to diverse student populations in grades 4–9” (p. 29). Guidelines required once accepted into the Professional Cohort included specific expectations:

- minimum cumulative grade point average: 2.6 for 2010-2011; and of 2.8 for 2011-2012 and after on a 4.0 scale;
- minimum grade point average of 2.5 for 2010-2011; and 2.6 for 2011-2012 and after in courses within their major;
- successful completion (grade of at least C) of prerequisite courses;
- acceptable good moral character and conduct form; passing scores on Praxis I (can be waived by earning ACT score of 22 or SAT score of 1000) (2010, p.8).

Participants in the program selected two subject areas in which to obtain licensure: language arts, social studies, natural sciences and mathematics and engage in 4 field experiences. The courses required to earn licensure varied based on the areas of concentration.

Candidates could earn licensure while pursuing either their Bachelor's or a Master's degree in Middle Childhood Education. Upon successful completion of the program, participants were eligible to apply for an Ohio Middle Childhood Education provisional teaching license.

Assigned Field Placement

Field placements for the program were planned by the Field Placement Coordinator and intended to provide prospective teachers with a professional perspective of the education system and the practice of teaching in four settings. Pre-service teachers were assigned to a local school district approximately twenty minutes from the university and with an enrollment of 3,349 students. Based on the state's measurement criteria: indicators, performance index, adequate yearly progress, and value added, the district rating was designated as Academic Watch, meaning students' progress on state proficiency tests did not meet established performance levels. The elementary school where the three candidates were assigned had an enrollment of 531 students and was rated as Continuous Improvement.

The following tables obtained from the Ohio Department of Education (2013) provide an overview of the school's academic environment during the 2011-2012 academic year. The diversity in the school's demographics was evident in the overwhelming majority of minority and economically disadvantaged students (see Table 3.1). The data illustrating students' achievement levels in reading, mathematics, and science for grades 5 and 6 highlighted the gap between students' performance level and minimum state requirements during the time of candidates' placement (see Table 3.2). Accountability expectations for teachers required that

Your School's Students 2011-2012									
Black/non-Hispanic	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Migrant	White, non-Hispanic	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	Students with Disabilities	
70.2%	--	--	7.1%	8.8%	12.2%	72.6%	6.0%	17.2%	--

Table 3.1. 2011-2012 School Year Report Card. Your School's Students 2011-2012. Ohio Department of Education. Reportcard.ohio.gov.

State Indicators -- The state requirement is 75 percent			
5 th Grade Achievement	% of Students/ School 2011-2012	% of Students/ District 2011-2012	% of Students State 2011-2012
5. Reading	57.6%	57.6%	76.8%
6. Mathematics	30.4%	30.4%	67.5%
7. Science	66.5%	66.5%	72.5%
6 th Grade Achievement			
8. Reading	75.2%	75.2%	86.7%
9. Mathematics	60.9%	60.9%	79.9%

Fig. 3.2. 2011-2012 School Year Report Card. State Indicators. Ohio Department of Education, reportcard.ohio.gov.

School Teacher Information		
Your Building's Poverty Status*: High Poverty	Your Building	District
Percentage of Teachers with at least a Bachelor's Degree	100.0%	99.5%
Percentage of Teachers with at least a Master's Degree	59.4%	67.1%
Percentage of core academic subject elementary and secondary classes not taught by highly qualified teachers	0.0%	0.0%
Percentage of core academic subject elementary and secondary classes taught by properly certified teachers	100.0%	100.0%
Percentage of core academic subject elementary and secondary classes taught by teachers with temporary conditional or long-term substitute certification/licensure	0.0%	0.0%
*High-poverty schools are those ranked in the top quartile based on the percentage of economically disadvantaged students. Low-poverty schools are those ranked in the bottom quartile based on the percentage of economically disadvantaged students.		

Fig. 3.3. 2011-2012 School Year Report Card. School Teacher Information. Ohio Department of Education, reportcard.ohio.gov.

school districts hire teachers qualified to teach in the content area to which they were assigned. According to data collected by the state for the elementary school, all teachers hired in this high poverty school had met highly qualified teacher status (see Table 3.3).

The above information presented an overview of the authentic learning environment where pre-service teachers practiced new knowledge in new situations. The candidates worked under the guidance of mentor teachers and the value they placed on their training in how to work in diverse environments, applying theoretical understandings to practical realities of the school. It was within this setting that pre-service teachers had opportunities to build upon foundational knowledge and beliefs in their capacity to “organize and execute the courses of action required to produce certain outcomes” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Self-efficacy forming experiences during student teaching exposed the 3 participants to potential mastery experiences or performance accomplishments, which Williams (2009) described as opportunities to develop positive or negative efficacy. Actions that have positive outcomes increase self-efficacy whereas those which were failed attempts lower self-efficacy.

Gaining Access

To gain access (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) for the study to begin, I met with the appropriate faculty beginning in late October 2011 to establish a plan for the project and obtain input on working with pre-service teachers in the College of Education. Students enrolled in the education cohort and also engaged in field placement were presented with information about the research study. Flyers and information sheets (see Appendix A) were left for distribution in the Field Practicum II class, detailing the study and containing appropriate contact information. I requested permission through email correspondence from district superintendents (see Appendix B) to conduct research in their district’s schools. Additionally, principals in six area schools with

over 50% minority population were sent request messages (see Appendix C) about the study via email and were asked to distribute study information to any student teachers in their buildings. It was important that schools had a significant minority population since working with diverse student populations and urban settings was one of the University's objectives. After two weeks, I conducted follow-up calls to principals (Appendix D) and sent follow-up messages to students (see Appendix E). The principals responded that they had posted the flyers where pre-service teachers could view it.

Two participants responded to the flyer via email message to me. Replying to both messages, I detailed the need to meet and sign consent forms, and worked with participants to set a date and location for the interviews to occur. The third participant, identified through snowballing (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), also responded via email message. I provided the same information to her and set a date to meet and review the consent form and establish interview dates.

Selection of Participants

The participants in this study were 3 pre-service teachers enrolled at a predominantly White, urban university located in a midwestern state. They were recruited from the Practicum II: Field Experiences class, a required course in the curriculum of the Middle Childhood Education program in the College of Education. This class with fifty-one (51) total students was recruited because of their involvement in full-time student teaching placement. Through the process of purposeful sampling (Koro-Ljungberg, 2009; Patton, 2002), participants were selected during the last semester of the 2011-2012 academic year. According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling for participants "focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study

will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 230). This recruitment process identified participants willing to engage in the phenomenon of the study.

Recruiting from this population of prospective teachers was determined by the objective of the research. The involvement of pre-service teachers engaged in student teaching presented an opportunity to document or observe beliefs and behaviors regarding teacher training in the Middle Childhood Education program at the University and capture their perspectives and behaviors during student teaching. Secondly, this group of students served as potential candidates to follow during their first year as practicing teachers. Because this research study required participation over time, it was important to have pre-service teachers who would potentially have teaching experience after graduation from the University and obtaining a teaching certificate.

Participants

The three participants were White females. Two participants volunteered through the recruitment process by responding to the information flyer. They contacted me using the email address included on the flyer I left in their class. The third and last participant, was identified by one of the initial volunteers through snowballing,” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), a process where respondents are recruited for interviews through informal contact between them. All three participants had been trained through the Middle Childhood Education program at the university and enrolled in the Practicum II: Field Experience cohort. Upon graduating with a Bachelors of Education degree and teaching license, grades 4-9, each teacher was employed to teach. Two teachers taught in traditional classrooms, working with students in grades 4 and 7. The third teacher gained a position in a nontraditional school setting.

Participant one, Anna, (pseudonyms were used for all participants) was twenty-two years old. A Middle Childhood Education major with an interest in teaching mathematics and language arts, she grew up in a suburban community approximately twenty-five miles from the university. Anna came from a middle to upper-middle-class, predominantly White community. During her childhood years, Anna did not interact with minorities or disadvantaged individuals.

The second participant, Betty, was twenty-six years old at the time of the study. Another Middle Childhood Education major with an interest in teaching science and language arts, she grew up in a different suburban community, approximately 25 miles from the University.

Clara was the third participant. She described herself as a “nontraditional student,” because she had already had one career and was returning to the University after having married and reared her children. She had earned a Bachelor’s degree in marketing, and then enrolled in the university to obtain her Master’s degree and a teaching certificate in Middle Childhood education.

All three participants were interested in being a part of the study. They understood that future research would explore their experiences as novice teachers by collecting interview data, written reflections of their teaching experiences, field notes, and examining artifacts about the teacher training program. Data collection with them began in the spring of 2012 when they engaged in student teaching experiences and continued into fall 2013.

Data Collection

In describing the attributes of case study methodology, Yin (2009) explained that the approach “relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion; and as another result, benefits from the prior development of theoretical

propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (p. 18). Using this to guide my research, I began with collecting various data during the 2011 fall semester and into the fall of 2013.

Since the objective of the study was to collect data on how teachers develop self-efficacy and the influence self-efficacy forming experiences had on their view of teacher training and teaching practice, data from various sources were collected to use as evidence to support the research questions. Multiple sources for data collection included semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, observation, field notes, written reflection, and artifacts, including the Middle Childhood Education program description, course curriculum, and documents about field placement sites (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Data Matrix

<p>What are novice teachers’ lived experiences as first-year practicing teachers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews • Written Reflection • Field notes (memo-writing, bracketing) • Artifacts
<p>What types of self-efficacy beliefs and behaviors do novice teachers’ utilize in their classroom in the first year as practicing teacher?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews • Written Reflection • Field notes (memo-writing, bracketing)
<p>How do novice teachers describe self-efficacy forming experiences during training in the teacher education/training program?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews • Written Reflection • Field notes (memo-writing, bracketing) • Artifacts • Formal/Informal Observation

Interviews

Semi-Structured Interviews

Three participant semi-structured interviews provided a major source of data for this study. In her research, Hatch (2002) reinforced the positions of Mishler (1986), Seidman (1998) and Spradley (1979) averring the benefit of conducting qualitative interviews lies in the richness of data interviewers collect from “a special kind of speech event during which they ask open-ended questions, encourage informants to explain their unique perspectives on the issues at hand, and listen intently for special language and other clues that reveal meaning structures informants use to understand their worlds (p. 23). These interview questions investigated teachers’ beliefs, understandings, and knowledge of current issues in schooling. They were written also to explore candidates’ perspectives on training and self-efficacy forming experiences (see Appendix F). These interview sessions were scheduled, as agreed upon by participants.

Each interview session lasted between forty-five (45) and sixty (60) minutes. Prior to the first semi-structured interview round, I met with participants to build a rapport with each of them, thus creating a degree of trust and ensuring a level of confidentiality. During the first round of interviews, I set aside time for each participant to understand the purpose of the research, review the adult consent form, and obtain background information on participants’ experiences and influences as students and pre-service teachers. The importance in collecting this type of data lay in investigating perspectives, beliefs, and practices that make up participants’ belief systems and often drive beliefs and behaviors into adulthood.

The second round of semi-structured interviews occurred after I had conducted observations of the classroom teaching experience for each participant. The purpose of this interview session was to hear participants’ reflections on the student teaching experience,

attitudes about schooling and the school environment, and any expectations for their own practices in the classroom. I followed up on responses provided during the first round to check the accuracy of the information. Since my professional background involved numerous observations and evaluation conversations, I made a mental note to ensure I would not provide any feedback that would influence participants' views of their instructional delivery.

The third semi-structured interview session occurred in January-February 2013, which was the beginning of second semester at each participant's teaching site. The purpose of this round was to gather each teacher's overall impressions of her experiences from teacher training to this point in the first year of teaching. During this session, I encouraged participants to share their experiences as first-year teachers, to compare this experience with their expectations during student teaching, and to reflect on the training each received. Participants also wrote reflective responses to questions I sent to them through electronic messages. These questions offered an opportunity to verify information provided in prior sessions and check for any change in beliefs or perspectives.

Each semi-structured interview sessions was audio-recorded using an iPad and transcribed using digital media. I took additional notes by hand for specific comments to explore immediately or to bracket thoughts and write memos.

Informal Interviews

I conducted informal follow-up interviews and conversations through email correspondence and by phone to check accuracy of the information and seek clarity on many comments. The participants preferred this form of communication since their schedules were busy and inconsistent. To show respect for their time and my research progress, I created a calendar close to the school calendar, beginning the summer after candidates' graduation from

the university's program. The purpose of this contact was to express appreciation for their help, check on their employment status, and ensure they were still willing to be involved in the study. Throughout their teaching school year, I communicated with participants through the use of electronic messages and the phone. During this time, I was able to collect some written reflective responses to my questions from two of the participants. All three of the participants, however, showed a preference for verbal communication. According to one teacher, she did not have time to sit and write and asked me to call her after 7:00 PM., a request which I accommodated.

Some situations required clarification of information or another question to obtain a clear understanding of the participant's response. For these situations, I took advantage of informal interviewing opportunities. Hatch (2002) described informal interviews as "unstructured" conversations that aid researchers in taking advantage of the immediate context. Electronic messages and use of Smart phone technology were used for informal inquiries and clarification. These exchanges were not the primary source of information, but contributed thick, rich, and very meaningful data. Conversations were informative and more relaxed, prompting candidates to speak more openly, elaborating on descriptions of experiences shared in previous sessions.

Observations

Formal

I conducted one in-class observation, lasting between forty (40) and fifty-two (52) minutes, per teacher. I observed instruction in a fifth-grade language arts classroom; a fifth-grade science lab; and a sixth-grade math classroom. To obtain notes for the data collection during the observation period, I organized events occurring in 10-15 minute time segments. I also created a sketch of the classroom area detailing the placement of the students' areas,

teacher's area, and positioning of the teacher throughout the lesson as additional data. I noted students' behaviors and levels of engagement. I looked for evidence of how pre-service teachers applied new knowledge and theory to instructional practice, the level of motivation and engagement in the classroom, and adjustments in the lessons to accommodate students' needs.

Informal

Various settings in the building comprised the informal observations outside classroom settings, including the teachers' lounge; gymnasium during an assembly; and the school's library. Other areas I explored where pre-service teachers were not in attendance were the hallways and school cafeteria. My purpose in observing the overall building was to gain a deeper understanding of the culture of the building to relate to pre-service teachers' perspectives regarding school climate.

In the lounge, I observed pre-service teachers interact with teachers through casual conversations as they ate. Topics of the conversations were about a variety of issues and events. There was minimal discussion of students, none of which was offensive or degrading. This light, friendly atmosphere could have been contributed to the catered luncheon that was provided for teachers to show appreciation for their work. The hallways were orderly and clean, as was the school cafeteria. There were no teachers monitoring the hallways, but the principal was in the cafeteria with other staff monitoring the students as they ate. Others were outside with students during recess, as viewed through the cafeteria windows.

Students in the school library worked at the computers. The librarian sat at her desk. The teacher and one pre-service teacher walked among the group as they worked at the computers. No students were reading or checking out the books. Lastly, the observation during the assembly in the gymnasium noted different interactions:

- interaction of students to students;
- interaction between students and pre-service teachers;
- interaction of teachers to teachers;
- interaction between principal and student body; and
- interaction between the student body to visiting performers.

The purpose of these observations was to observe informally the staff's behaviors in a relaxed setting, to gather data on the culture of the school, and to gather data on pre-service teachers' beliefs and behaviors in response to this environment. Field notes were collected on pre-service teachers' behaviors in each setting. It was important to note that their actions were comparable to teachers who worked in the building. There seemed to be a lack of enthusiasm and motivation among teachers and students. Even during the assembly, teacher interaction was limited to re-direction or reprimand. I did not observe friendly conversations between teachers and students. Some teachers remained in one section of the bleachers while their students sat away from them. Throughout the building, I observed that teachers carried out their responsibilities; however, there was limited evidence to support a nurturing environment where children thrived and loved the work of learning.

Artifacts

Field Notes

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) referred to field notes as “an important supplement to other data collecting methods” (p. 108) and considered all data collected during a study to be field notes, “...including field notes, interview transcripts, official documents, official statistics, pictures, and other materials” (p. 108). In this study, I used field notes to capture descriptive and reflective notes on my impressions, ideas, observances, personal connections to data, and future

plans for working with the data. For example, during semi-structured and informal interview sessions with candidates, I recorded additional notes concerning the date and circumstances of the interview because of the potential influence each had on candidates' attitudes and responses. In this situation, there were important similarities and differences to note between candidates' beliefs and behaviors upon completion of teacher training and then after their first year teaching.

Reflective notes were of particular importance to data collection because of the need to maintain an awareness of my personal connections. I utilized bracketing to account for my familiarity with the research topic and to identify biases, values, and personal background experiences in public school administration that may have influenced interpretations formed during the study. I engaged in more extensive note-taking through memo-writing after each interview sessions, initial review of transcribed interviews, and multiple occasions during constant comparisons of data.

Written Reflections

Each participant provided written reflections to questions during their teaching experience in the fall of 2012 and the spring of 2013. The purpose of these reflections lay in gathering additional data on their perspectives over time. Although reflection topics focused on the questions as those presented during semi-structured interviews, the approach to the topic was different so I could collect participants' perspectives for comparison purposes. An additional consideration was given to participants who preferred to write their responses because of time restraints.

Middle Childhood Education Handbook and Website

Other important sources of information were University artifacts, including components and procedures of the Middle Childhood Education program and field placement. I used

descriptions of courses provided on the program's required course list that participants had mentioned during interviews and conversations. Common courses mentioned among all three were Teaching and Learning in Diverse Classrooms (TLDC) and Classroom Management: Middle Childhood (CMMC). Regarding the CMMC course, participants suggested that writing about theory without actual application of it at the same time does not provide a realistic view of how theory works in practice. Also, since a stated goal of the program was to ensure teachers were prepared to work in diverse environments, I included data on pre-service teachers' thoughts on the diversity course, which offered perspectives on the program's intended goals in comparison to pre-service teachers' perceptions. I reviewed the section on mentor teacher responsibilities to demonstrate the gap between the expectation of pre-service teachers' engagement in mastery experiences under the mentorship of master teachers as described in the handbook versus being placed with teachers who have low self-efficacy, limited professional skills or content knowledge (see Appendix G)

University Bulletin

The Bulletin included an overview of the Middle Childhood Education program. It contained program expectations and the list of required courses for pre-service teacher candidates. Courses were presented based on pre-service teachers' progression in the program (see Appendix H).

Data from Department of Education

Standardized assessment and accountability requirements provide states with yearly data on students' progress, demographics, and other relevant information. I used this resource to collect statistical data on pre-service teachers' field placement and teaching positions after they graduated. The information provided descriptive data on the schools' learning environments.

Researcher's Role

The field placement experience began in the fall of 2011, although I did not engage with participants until after the first semester. As pre-service teachers observed teachers and students at the school, I completed the required steps expected of all individuals who plan to conduct research at the university:

- Gathered information from the Field Practicum II professor on the program and its processes;
- Completed all required steps in the IRB protocol;
- Gathered documentation on the Middle Childhood program, and
- Created necessary documents for recruitment purposes;
- Presented the information to students in the Field Practicum II cohort;
- Contacted local school districts to gain access to student teachers who may be practicing in their schools;
- Obtained permission from superintendents and the school principal;
- Made contact with volunteers and obtained signed adult consent forms;

Once all documentation and permissions were obtained, I began to collect data on teacher candidates' experiences.

An important part of this research that I, as the primary investigator or "human as instrument" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981), considered was a reflection on my "self" that I brought to the research, as well as how I planned to interact with the participants. I included my own biases, assumptions, and experiences through bracketing during the investigative process. Through the process of reflexivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), I acknowledged my thoughts and involvement in the research and their influence on the interpretation of data. As both inquirer

and respondent, I engaged an “emic” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Greenback, 2003) approach, including participants in a discussion of preliminary findings. Their involvement served as a way to maintain a level of objectivity while exploring the understandings participants brought to their experiences in classroom environment. I utilized an interpretative approach toward interviews, observations, field notes, written reflections, memos and artifacts.

Table 3.5 **Timeline of Data Collection**

2011-2012	Conduct Study Project
Summer-Fall 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write continuing review of protocol for Institutional Review Board approval • Maintain communication with participants • Review field notes on interviews and observation from spring 2012 • Maintain communication via email with participants • Transcribe interviews and organize notes
Fall 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain communication with participants • Read interview data and observation notes • Write follow-up questions • Collect and read articles for literature review • Organize articles and data
Winter-Spring 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct interviews with each participant using follow-up questions from previous interview and observation sessions • Transcribe interviews • Write follow-up and clarification questions • Collect documents on the university's Middle Childhood Education program, mission and goals statements, academic expectations for prospective teachers and other documents relative to the study • Organize all notes collected
Summer 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-read all data (May) • Organize all notes collected (May) • Begin writing chapters 1-3 of dissertation (May-June) • Begin data analysis (June-July) • Interview participants to collect data on their overall impressions of teaching, teacher training, the education system and issues in schooling
Fall 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue data analysis (August-September) • Conduct member checking August-(September) • Complete Dissertation (September) • Preparation for dissertation defense (October)
Spring 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write revisions • Present revisions • Graduation

Table 3.5 Timeline of work progress

Data Management

An important first step in data collection was to consider how information would be collected and organized for future use. The data collected for this study was in different forms based on the specific experience unfolding. For this reason, it was important to maintain a system for reflecting before, during and after collecting any type of data, particularly since information was coded by hand without aid of computer software.

Artifacts collected from various electronic sources, such as state departments of education, were maintained in folders organized in electronic folders under participants' pseudonyms. University artifacts were stored in electronic folders as well. Sections that were coded were printed off for writing notes and color coding information.

Informal interview notes and reflexive bracketing constituted some of the data collected for the study. For this reason, it was important to determine a time and space for writing quality notes and reflections before moving on to other tasks. Collected information was scripted by hand and transferred to computer, organized by date, participant and time. I then printed off copies of transcripts and hand wrote notes, since I found this process much easier than working with the computer. This made managing data more organized and manageable.

All materials per each participant were organized by date and their selected pseudonyms to identify them. I eliminated all identifying information from data to ensure confidentiality. Information for each participant was saved on a flash drive and stored away in a secured and private location until it was used. It was maintained in this manner for up to one year after IRB approval (approved in November 2012). At this time, I applied for continuing review to obtain an extension for working with the data.

Once the organization plan was in place, I thoroughly read the data after each interview to become very familiar with its content. Bogdan & Biklen (2007) recommend reading all data at least twice, fully concentrating in order to grasp the overall concept and begin identifying a list of preliminary coding categories and other items that will aid in finding relationships within the data. Making additional copies of all data sets was necessary so that items that fit into multiple categories could be separated and placed in individually labeled manila folders. This also provided a visual display when laid out to determine categories and check them for accuracy. The next step in managing the data was to assign “units of data” (p. 182) to the categories and coded the categories, which was also a way to ensure I had adequate support for categories. Utilizing a coding system and post-it notes supported the process by color-coding information for categories and coordinating codes with line numbers and abbreviations to make it easier to remember and locate information for categories. Lastly, Information was organized into themes and maintained in handwritten notes and computer files.

Data Analysis

Data analysis, according to Hatch (2002) is a “systematic search for meaning...a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others” (p. 148). I had established the purpose for my study and developed research question that supported what I wanted to learn from participants in regard to their self-efficacy development at the University and well into their teaching careers. The next step was to determine an appropriate strategy for processing the data and supporting my level of expertise throughout the analysis.

There are many ways to conduct qualitative data analysis, and deciding which one to use was rather overwhelming. Considering the data I had collected, however, and the focus of my study, I decided to utilize typological strategies (Hatch, 2002). According to Hatch (2002)

typological analysis is the process of “dividing the overall data set into categories or groups based on predetermined typologies generated from theory, common sense and/or research objectives and initial data processing that happens within those typological groupings” (p. 152).

Typologies for this study focused on discovering candidates’ beliefs in the following areas:

- Interest in a teaching career;
- Quality of education training;
- Student achievement and the gap in learning;
- Race and culture;
- Political involvement in education; and
- Societal and environmental issues

Considering my interest in knowing participants’ views on these education issues, I decided typological analysis was an appropriate analytical procedure for this study. There were clearly defined focus areas and a reliance on interviews and written reflections from participants.

Typological Analysis

Utilizing Hatch’s (2002) work as a resource, I conducted typological analysis of data collected from the semi-structured interviews and written reflections. The focus for my study was based on my interests in how current schooling issues such as the influence of education policies, social perceptions, and personal experiences shape teacher candidates’ beliefs and behaviors regarding student diversity, education, and students’ capacities to learn. Using these focus areas to organize the analysis, I initially read through transcribed data to become familiar with its content. During the second reading, I began the process of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) marking data that matched identified typologies. After each interview session, I read through the data, noting areas that required additional clarification. I marked entries using

post-it notes and markers to color-code items and wrote memo notes in the margins and between the lines. Additional notes were included in a spiral notebook. I chose this method after attempts at coding data on the computer became time-consuming and frustrating. With subsequent readings of all interview data, I continued to code data, comparing similarities among each participants' information and looked for categories. As each new set of data were collected, I looked for similarities and differences, which helped refine previous topics as new information was collected and analyzed (Hatch, 2002; Tara et al., 2006). This constant working of the data supported my efforts in gathering rich information and promoting familiarity with the data. It also facilitated the search for patterns and relationships among the three participants.

Charmaz (2000) also emphasized the importance of constant comparisons and identified important elements in the process: “comparing data from different individuals; comparing data from individuals to their own data at different points in their narratives; comparing incidents with other incidents; and comparing categories with other categories” (Fassinger, 2005, p. 160). Tara et al. (2006) explained that the researcher organizes incidents into themes or categories, purposefully identifying them through a process called “open coding” (p. 104), the initial step in interpreting meaning from the data. This process continued and was refined as new themes developed from constant comparing of information. Over the 17 month period, I maintained contact with participants to ensure they were still interested in completing the study, since they had graduated and taken on new roles and responsibilities.

Once I had coded all data, I organized my categories and included supporting data. I examined my notes to ensure there was enough data to support the categories that were listed under two sections, teacher candidates and beginning teachers. The data included these categories: motivation, coursework, diversity, mentoring, and standardization testing. Support

data were organized under themes or phrases that identified sections of the study. Included below are the resultant five themes that shaped each candidate's narrative:

- Background and Motivation to Teach
- Teacher Preparation
- Understanding Diverse Cultures
- Mentors and Mentoring
- Effects of Standardization on the School's Culture

Themes in the Study

The five themes of the study are described in the section that follows.

Background and Motivation to Teach as Candidates

Motivation to teach became a theme as each participant's narrative introduced the concept in some form. For this reason, this study sought to explore to what extent motivation was a contributing factor in candidates' beliefs and perspectives on teaching as a good profession for them. Supporting the research of Deci & Ryan (2001), Kauffman, Soylu, & Duke (2011) describe motivation as a force that drives students to "apply themselves and persist in the face of challenge" (p. 279) and suggest that research documented results declaring motivation to have "a real and significant influence on human behavior" (p. 279). Motivation has been identified as an important factor in determining teacher longevity in the profession. Three types of motivation introduced in the literature include intrinsic motivation, defined as engagement driven by internal desire without thought of material gain, and extrinsic motivation, explained as engagement for some external gain (Kauffman, Soylu, & Duke, 2011) and altruistic motivation which is seen as having a sense of responsibility towards children (Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010).

Research findings suggest prospective teachers' and beginning teachers' motivation to teach is closely related to the desire to work with children and the desire to help others (Wood, 1978; Ganchorre & Tomanek, 2012). Other motivations related to a teaching career focus on contributing to social improvement or working to better society by making right the wrongdoings through social injustices and inequity of opportunities. Also considered are ideas that the teaching profession presents a secure occupation, offering scheduled breaks or an easy career to pursue. There are numerous factors that motivate students to embrace a teaching career. Utilizing motivation to teach as one of the study's themes, therefore, provided an appropriate focus for capturing insights into what students believed and how their beliefs and motivation worked toward helping them develop self-efficacy.

Preparation for Teaching

Teacher attrition rates within the first 3 to 5 years of beginning teachers' careers present troubling statistics for maintaining a quality teacher workforce for today's schooling needs. Rots, Kelchtermans, & Aelterman (2011) found that "experiences during teacher education influence job motivation and the decision eventually not to enter teacher" (p. 1). Candidates who decide to enter the profession still require self-efficacy forming experiences that support their continued growth as professionals. Hansen's (2006) findings revealed that "teacher efficacy is associated with academic qualifications, practical experience, and professional (pre-service and in-service) development" (p. 53). These results underscore the importance in designing authentic teacher education programs that equip prospective teachers with appropriate skills and knowledge that lead to mastery. Once on the job, school districts have the responsibility to provide quality professional development opportunities to promote and sustain teachers' sense of efficacy.

Understanding Diverse Groups

The nation's demographics have changed to reflect the increase in minority populations. The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) reported that minorities, described as single race, non-Hispanic Whites, are projected to comprise 57 percent of the population in 2060," more than doubling the total minority population. The older population will continue to be "predominately non-Hispanic White, while younger ages are increasingly minority" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). These statistics demand the next generation of teachers to be prepared to face the potential challenges in economic, cultural, and linguistic requirements of an increasingly diverse population. This is particularly important considering statistics that show White middle-class females are entering the educational arena in greater numbers than any other group. Teacher education training programs will need to transform and expand learning experiences that are more inclusive of diverse cultures, traditions and learning styles. Researchers (Banks, 2001; Laughter, 2011; Salisbury-Glennon & Stevens 1999) suggest that programs need to develop opportunities that challenge teacher candidates to recognize and reflect on differences among cultures, including their own, and come to terms with how their own beliefs and understandings of diversity may create barriers to students' learning opportunities.

Mentors and Mentoring

Of great importance to pre-service teachers' on-site experiences is the guidance of the mentor teacher. The teacher mentor-mentee relationship and the opportunities for observing mastery teaching, practicing new knowledge in a safe setting, and developing relationships important to the profession are critical areas to the development of sound teaching practices. To this end, the Middle Childhood Handbook included expectations for mentor selection and their responsibilities in working with pre-service teachers. In addition to specific responsibilities, the handbook states that, "All mentors must be nominated and recommended by their principal or

supervisor, have the appropriate licensure, and have at least three years successful teaching experience. Mentors with masters' degrees are preferred" (p. 15). Although pre-service teachers did work with practicing teachers, they shared various perspectives on the level of "performance accomplishments" or "mastery teaching" (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977, 1997) explained that mastery experiences (Williams, 2009) can have powerful influence in the development of self or personal efficacy beliefs because once self-efficacy beliefs are established they can be generalized to other similar situations. The relevance in this experience is that practicing teachers play a crucial role as mentors, supporting pre-service teachers in connecting theory and practice and reflecting on their experiences to broaden skills and knowledge in working with diverse groups on a variety of issues.

Locus of Control: Effects of Standardized Testing on School Culture

Rotter (1966) explained that behavior is related to or in response to what one believes he can control and the ability to execute an action to the desired end, whether it be by skill or by chance. According to some critics of the educational system, the age of standardized testing in the field of education, limits control over what children may learn and how teachers may teach. Ng (2006) called attention to the accountability movement's binding impact on teachers' ability to control what and how children should learn and discussed how the climate of accountability has impacted schools in high poverty communities. Districts serving a disproportionate number of minority students, such as urban districts, suffer even more of a burden (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Ng, 2006), especially considering they often start with a deficit of human and material resources. Teachers, in many instances, must do more with less while working to meet expectation established by higher external influences in curricular decisions, assessment, teacher empowerment, and school culture.

Trustworthiness

The interpretative nature of qualitative research invites criticism from some who question its truthfulness or credibility. Guba (1981), recognizing the benefits of developing an approach to establish credibility in qualitative work, developed a model to increase the study's rigor and relevance. The model (Guba, 1981) consists of 4 basic aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. While utilizing multi-subject case study (Yin, 2009) was an appropriate methodology for investigating the objective of my study, establishing trustworthiness in the findings was a crucial action that required utilization of Guba's (1981) model.

In the subsections that follow, I followed Guba's (1981) model and provided detailed accounts of the steps I took to secure trustworthiness. Each aspect was identified with headings followed a description. Information was presented in the same order as listed above.

Credibility

Shenton, while supporting the findings of Lincoln and Guba (1985), averred that ensuring credibility in qualitative work is "one of the most important steps in the research process" (p. 64). To ensure the findings of my study were credible, I maintained contact with participants for an extended period of time. I initially met with participants during their field placement in the spring of their last year as teacher candidates. I maintained this contact with them through their first year of teaching and into the fall after they had completed their first year. During this *prolonged engagement* of 17 months, I collected data from their experiences (interviews, field placement observations, written reflection, and technological communication) and compared their perspectives over time. I kept *reflexive notes* to ensure I remained aware of my own thoughts on various topics and how they influenced engagement with the work and participants. These notes or my *reflexivity* in this study was beneficial because of my background experiences

in teaching and school administration. Maintaining these notes provided time for me to reflect on the study and expand my ideas and the research.

To strengthen the quality of the research, I utilized data from multiple sources to gather different perspectives, referred to as *triangulation*. This strategy provided a way for me to compare data from one source to another and confirm that information collected aligned with the objective. I utilized semi-structured interviews, formal and informal observations, written reflections, memo writing, field notes, artifacts and informal interviews.

Use of the strategy referred to as *member checking*, a valuable technique that engages participants in looking at the data and discussing previous interpretations to ensure accuracy of information (Hatch, 2002). The opportunities available with a member check contributed to building trust and collecting, rich data through many interpretations and perspectives of the phenomenon under study.

Transferability

The multi-subject case study included three participants, a small number not uncommon in qualitative research. It was important, however, that I demonstrated my findings to be transferable “to other situations and populations” (Shenton, 2004, p. 69). I provided thick descriptions of the participants, identified through purposive sampling, the context of the study, and the settings. These descriptions provided information for other researchers interested in replicating the study in their own teacher education training programs in utilizing findings in similar situations.

Dependability

In the situation where other researchers may be interested in engaging in their own case study, I provided detailed information on the processes used to conduct a multi-subject case

study (Yin, 2009). In the methodology section, I included dense descriptions of the details of the qualitative paradigm, research design, data collection, data management, data analysis, and trustworthiness. Triangulation of data provided important sources of information and included multiple perspectives. Additionally, I engaged in the code-recode procedure described by Shenton (2004) and Krefling (1990) as conducting an initial coding of data, then after a sufficient amount of time, recoding it to check results. Sharing dense descriptions of the processes involved in the methodology provided other researchers the opportunity to replicate the study or verify that I had followed proper procedures to ensure dependability (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability

To establish confirmability, I again made use of triangulation. Krefling (2004) explained that triangulation for confirmability engages use of “multiple methods, sources of data, and theoretical perspectives” (p. 221). I utilized multiple sources of data and built upon the research gathered from multiple perspectives. Lastly, I maintained reflexive notes, memo writing, and bracketing to ensure I remained attentive to my influence on the data.

Concluding Statements

This multi-subject case study (Yin) incorporated a variety of data from multiple data collection sources to ensure trustworthiness, but as noted by experts in the field, it was not realistic to think that my “voice” as respondent or interpreter would not significantly influence how I interpreted and reported findings. I considered my personal experiences with training through the doctoral program and years as an administrator as I interpreted participants’ perspectives. Denzin & Lincoln (2003) explained that “...understanding is itself a kind of practical experience in and of the world that...constitutes the kinds of persons that we are in the world” (p. 303). This understanding of my position as the interpreter had to be understood and

taken into account as I processed the information. Because of this intimate involvement with the objective of the study, I wrote reflexive notes in. Additionally, I worked to ensure the voices of participants were heard and included all data that was appropriate for reporting on the investigation. I employed ethical practices and engaged participants in review of data. Use of an interpretative methodology offered the potential for expanding the research into gathering dense, descriptive data and understanding how experiences mold certain mindsets and influence behaviors.

CHAPTER 4

Cases and Cross Case Analysis

Introduction

This multi-subject case study explored the cases of three Middle Childhood Education participants from pre-service through first year teaching and their perspectives on developing self-efficacy in training and in practice. Typological analysis of data gathered through semi-structured and informal interviews, observations, written reflection, and artifacts, provided the procedures for identifying the categories and themes: background and motivation to teach; teacher preparation; understanding diverse cultures; mentors and professional relationships; and effects of standardization on the school's culture. From this information, I constructed the case reports for each teacher candidate/teacher followed by cross case analysis.

Case Descriptions

During analysis, each participant's information was examined for relevance to the three research questions. Next, data for each case was organized in two parts and analyzed according to the five themes. The first part relayed the experiences of participants as teacher candidates in training during the last semester of teacher training and their field placement. The second part focused on presenting each participant's experiences as teachers, utilizing four of the five themes.

To ensure clarity in communicating participants' perspectives and enhance trustworthiness, I presented the data, including descriptive information, for each participant individually during each of two parts. I presented the events of Anna's experience first, followed by a reporting of Betty's perspectives. Lastly, I provided data on the details of Clara's experiences. This organizational plan provided an appropriate platform for presenting each

participant's thoughts on training and working within the field of education. It also captured insights into their beliefs and the development of self-efficacy and its influence on teacher practice.

Themes

Background and Motivation to Teach as Candidates

A prospective teacher's background experiences, undoubtedly, shape their beliefs about teaching, expectations of how students learn, and visions of their future performance as teachers. Personal experience may offset the realities of what it takes to become a successful teacher, and students may resist the need to challenge their beliefs and understandings (Deal & White, 2006). Mansfield and Volet (2010) theorize that these beliefs or ways of understanding teaching and learning may influence instructional decisions in practice.

Exploring participants' perspectives illustrated ways motivation influenced the three participants' beliefs and thought processes as they navigated their journey through the last semester of training through the end of their first year of teaching.

Teacher Preparation

Pre-service teachers entered teacher education training with a set of beliefs shaped by their backgrounds and prior experiences. As they progressed through teacher training, these beliefs influenced how they interpreted and responded to knowledge and experiences (Chong & Low, 2009; Mansfield & Volet, 2010). Taking steps that would likely support development of high self-efficacy, the University identified its mission to prepare committed, caring, and competent educators and identified specific performance expectations in the Conceptual Framework and Institutional Standards. The Middle Childhood Handbook presented standards for committed, caring, competent educators, and the teacher training program determined a list of

courses from which participants chose to meet requirements. Two particular courses that all three teacher candidates mentioned in interviews were Teaching and Learning in Diverse Classrooms (TLDC) and Classroom Management Middle Childhood. Taken together, these aspects of the training program were implemented to secure relevancy and rigor of experiences for teacher candidates.

Once pre-service teachers entered their careers, they continued to interpret prior knowledge and experiences with events occurring around them that either worked to strengthen self-efficacy or diminish its influence on their decisions to teach. For teachers to continue growing professionally, school districts had the responsibility to provide professional development opportunities and mentors to guide the transition from pre-service to practice.

Understanding Diverse Groups

The nation's demographics are changing. Current reports affirm an increase in the minority population and project that "in five years, minorities will make up more than half of children under 18" (Yen, 2013; Census Bureau, 2010). In contrast, studies continue to show that White middle-class females are entering the educational arena in greater numbers than any other group (Castro, 2010; Milner, 2010; Laughter, 2011). Because of a critical necessity to understand differences and similarities between White teachers and their diverse students, Laughter (2011) suggests that pre-service teachers may require more specific training.

This type of training was an objective of the University's Middle Childhood Education program that developed its initiative around preparing teacher candidates with the resources and skills for supporting students in high needs schools (see Appendix I). As pre-service teachers engaged in coursework aimed at challenging their beliefs, they had opportunities to broaden their perspectives, which played a critical role in preparing them to work in more diverse settings.

The program's goal to improve students' performance would be accomplished through aggressively preparing educators committed to and caring for each student and competent in evidence-based and data-driven instruction. Targeted efforts included those listed below:

- Helping candidates come to terms with unintentional barriers and bias
- Implementing a reliable and valid Teacher Performance Assessment to improve the consistency and quality of teacher effectiveness
- Embedding methods courses in schools and better integrating methods courses with field experiences
- Adding more and earlier field experiences
- Preparing teachers for urban schools
- Implementation of research-based strategies
- Academic language development
- Reflection

Field Placement

The program also emphasized having teacher candidates engage in authentic teaching experiences through field experiences to hone their skills and knowledge. The Middle Childhood Education Handbook (2011) selected criteria to ensure appropriate field experience for its teacher candidates (see Appendix J). These criteria specified expectations for both the school and individual cooperating teacher mentors:

- The school adheres to the Middle Childhood Program's conceptual framework and disposition.

- The school demonstrates a commitment to providing inclusive, diverse learning experiences for candidates consistent with the Ohio Integrated Systems Model.
- The school accepts the goals described in the professional experience, and must be committed to offering candidates a wide range of learning opportunities commensurate with the standards for field experiences.
- The school provides appropriate support to cooperating teacher/mentors.
- Mentors at the school commit to providing professional supervision and evaluation of the candidate.
- Cooperating teacher/mentors at the school model the skills and dispositions prescribed by the Middle Childhood Preparation Program
- The school provides candidates with opportunities to infuse technology in their pedagogy.

Considering the emphasis placed on field placement and the identified mission of the Middle Childhood Teacher Education program, this study included a focus on pre-service teachers' field placement in a local school with a high minority and economically disadvantaged population.

The participants' field placement experience occurred in a school which served 531 students in grades five and six. According to the state's local report card data, approximately 88% of the population was minority. Among these students, 73% were identified as economically disadvantaged and 17% were enrolled in special education. The school's designation as "Continuous Improvement," was based on performance scores of the state's standardized assessments rating. Considering the fact that all three participants were White females from White, middle-class suburban backgrounds, their placement presented an opportunity to practice teaching in a diverse, urban-type setting. The Middle Childhood

Education program intended to provide to candidates the professional point of view and practical understanding essential to the preparation of effective teachers. The placements were planned in a variety of settings to provide differing experiences that addressed “grade level, licensure area, content area, and diversity” (p. 13). The handbook details other requirements of the placement:

Mentors and Mentoring

The high attrition rates among beginning teachers and limited numbers entering the teaching field demand that educators identify and assign quality mentors to support teacher learners. Tillman (2005) described mentoring as an important strategy for confronting issues of retention among 1st-year teachers and suggested a close tie between mentoring beginning teachers and developing professional and personal competence. As in most learning circumstances, candidates and beginning teachers who are processing new knowledge under the guidance of experienced teachers are vulnerable to the beliefs and behaviors of teachers assigned to mentor them. Proper training and guidance are precursors to success in a teaching career.

Locus of Control: Effects of Standardized Testing on School Culture

According to some critics of the educational system, the age of standardized testing in the field of education limits control over what children may learn and how teachers may teach. Ng (2006) called attention to the accountability movement’s binding impact on teachers’ ability to control what and how children should learn and discussed how the climate of accountability has impacted schools in high poverty communities. According to Rotter’s (1966) work on locus of control, an individual’s response to certain situations is related to the amount of influence she believes she is able to have over the outcome. In this age of testing and accountability and the pressures that pervade the schooling environment, prospective and beginning teachers require

additional support in processing how expectations, new knowledge, and skills intersect to improve achievement for all students.

Case Study: The Story of Anna

Teacher Candidate

Background and Motivation to Teach

Anna came from an area north of the city's urban center in a middle-to-high-income suburban community, where she lived for all of her twenty-two years. Located approximately 18 miles north of the city's metropolitan area, this community hosts a population of 60,958 residents, consisting of approximately 78% White and 22% minority persons. The average income in 2010 was \$108,495 with a median income of \$93,722. (U.S. Census Bureau)

Anna entered the university in 2008 and enrolled in the education program after deciding that her prior major did not present the challenge she desired. Graduating with a B.S. degree in education and a teaching certificate, Anna later got a job teaching math. This is her story.

I'm from W.... I've lived here for 22 years. So, basically all my life. Teaching, I was [a] economics political science major and got really bored with it and wanted a challenge. So, I decided to go into teaching. It was basically my journey in there. So, it's all I have on that. And then, have any questions about that, I can answer?

Initially, Anna's intention was to obtain a degree in political science and economics, but she later changed her mind, explaining that this major did not offer a challenge. She also stated that she was not impressed with her teachers or schooling experience and thought she would do a better job with helping other children learn. This desire served as her motivation to teach. She further explained her motive for exploring education was a response to lack of interest in her economics and political science major, "It was basically my journey in there." She closed the conversation when she added, "That's all on that."

Her comments did not hint of any other thoughts regarding a desire to help students, as research suggests or as I had expected. Thinking Anna might be hesitant to talk about herself or unsure about how to respond during an interview, I approached the question differently by asking Anna what she thought she could contribute to education. My aim was to gather additional insights into her commitments to teach,

Well, originally when I was in sixth and seventh grade, I had really a lot of trouble with like fractions and all that kind of stuff. And I always felt like I could do a better job of explaining it. Like when I got to college, they really like were like oh, here's how you do this and why and I was like well, that opened my eyes to that. And I'm like well, I would like to have that experience with my students because I hated math when I was in school. And I thought like I could do so much better in making kids want to do math. So, with that aspect, that's kind of why I decided to do that because I felt like I could do better. And try to be more clear with them so they would understand and, you know, get some more female engineers in the world.

In the above lines, Anna opened up about her experiences in school. She told of her own personal struggles learning math.

And you know, that's kind of how I felt. I kind of felt in school, that I wanted to like scream and shout at somebody, I didn't understand and say why are you moving me on when I don't get this? I don't want to move on until I understand, because if I don't understand it you can't build and I'm going to be even more lost later. Why are you doing this to me? And you know, why are you doing that? And ...

Her description of these experiences suggested that the teacher's lack of clarity in presenting material or skill in motivating children in math curiosity limited her own desires and abilities, "...because I hated math when I was in school... I could do so much better in making kids want to do math...that's kind of why I decided to do that."

Her "vicarious" (Bandura, 1977; Williams, 2009) experiences with her teachers and what they did not accomplish in teaching her math influenced on her decision to teach. Additionally, her expressed "hate" for the subject is most likely attributable to her struggles in school and teachers that did not or could not help her. Her wish to teach seems to stem for her desire to

outperform the teachers she had in school. It should be noted that the inquiry focused on her contributions to education, yet her response focused on and delivered her reflections on a negative situation. I inquired of Anna if her personal experiences led her to want to do a better job with students. Without hesitation, she responded emphatically:

“Exactly.”

To delve more deeply into Anna’s desires, I asked her to describe her idea of a perfect classroom:

If I had to pick a perfect classroom,... Um but probably an ideal classroom would just be one that’s diverse. Everybody engaged because when everybody’s learning together, it’s kind of fun to just watch just like say oh, my goodness, I finally understand it. And I just, I feel like that’s just the classroom that I want. Is just the one that’s got everybody engaged, you read all the perfect stories and you’re like that’s what I want, that’s what I want, that’s what I want. And you just try your best to get that classroom and it’s going to take time and it’s going to take effort, but hopefully one day I’ll get there...

In her ideal classroom, Anna exclaimed, “I finally understand it!” This phrase could be a recollection of her own disappointments with school, where it was not until college that she understood how to work the math.

Like when I got to college, they really like were like oh, here’s how you do this and why and I was like well, that opened my eyes to that. And I’m like well, I would like to have that experience with my students because I hated math when I was in school.

Again, her idea of having everyone engaged and learning together may reflect on her own experiences, as the student who did not learn with others. Her dream to have a class like the “perfect stories” may also be more about what she wanted to experience as a grade-school student. I wondered if unresolved issues in her own experiences created a distraction regarding her students’ perspectives of learning and their likes and dislikes.

To me, is just like they [students] want to participate and they don’t really care if they’re right or they’re wrong. They just want to hear, be heard and they want to learn and that’s, to me that’s active participation. That’s engagement...But I mean, you can’t get every student, every single lesson. It’s just, there’s going to be ones that you hate, like I

hate what we're doing right now. Circles. Like circles and circumference and area. I just, circles don't fit in the little box because pi is not 3.14, it's 3.1459 dah...dah...dah.

Anna shared what it is she does not like about math, the subject she plans to teach. She used the word "hate," a strong, expressive emotion which may be the way she reflects upon her own experiences as a student. It should also be noted that she repeatedly used this word in describing different circumstances related to her teacher training. These experiences suggested that Anna's motivation to teach was extrinsic. Specifically, her motivation to teach was driven by her desire to prove that she was not responsible for the math difficulties she had as a student. To prove that her beliefs were accurate, she chose a teaching career to move her closer to her stated goal. She did not mention teaching was her primary desire to work with the children, nor was teaching her initial interest upon entering college. Both of these factors trouble the development of positive self-efficacy development for teaching.

Anna reflected on past experiences with testing as a young student. Her description underscored her frustration and anger that spilled over into her teacher training. Also noted was the repeated use of the word "hated" to describe her feelings, as she did when sharing memories as a student who struggled with learning math skills.

We had Iowa's in Proficiency, I believe they were called when I went through. And I hated them... like I test horribly. I have so much anxiety. And like taking, for example, the Praxis to become a teacher, I stayed up for three days studying this book. And when I got there, nothing I studied helped me... it's, so random and it's, sometimes there's stuff that you haven't even learned and you just get so frustrated... They say here's what we want you to know, but it's a crap shoot of 100 different lessons. And it's just like OK. You want me to pull 20 years of knowledge in one day. That's not going to happen.

The effects of negative emotions were discussed in Bandura's (1977; Williams, 2009) explanation of physiological/emotional states, which he described as having an influence on self-efficacy development. For example, in Anna's situation, her negative beliefs fueled her stress and anxiety. These feelings intensified her inadequacies and instigated additional levels of

stress. During one conversation, Anna talked about her experiences with the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) and compared it to the learning circumstances of students in her placement.

According to Anna's report of the OGT as a high school student:

“The OGT had me so stressed out worrying about *the test*. But it was easy. Why is it such a big deal? I'd learned a lot of it years ago. But here [placement], I felt like they're learning the same thing. It's [standardized testing] not their fault the test is not stratified to where you're from. I feel there needs to be equity between programs [math programs], like Connected Math (a math program at the school). How is that equity? They don't even have enough books? It just doesn't work. No standards across the board. No one else uses Connected Math. They have these pacing guides they have to follow. I see the need for the Common Core.”

These testing experiences from Anna's past contributed to her thoughts regarding students' anxieties about their math studies. She criticized the District's math curriculum for its limitations toward meeting students' needs or being consistent with programs in other districts and the lack of enough math resources.

I feel there needs to be equity between programs (i.e. Connected Math). How is it equity—they don't even have enough books. It just doesn't work. No standards across the board. No one else uses ____Math and pacing guides. Statewide math curriculum? Common Core? I see the need.

Although I could sense the concern Anna had for students having to follow a curriculum (math) that did not meet their needs, the level of negative emotions she expressed verbally and with her rolling eyes signaled her irritation with this way of teaching. She insisted on a need for “equity” (I believe she meant consistency) “across the nation so that when students moved from one place to another, they would know what's going on. Math should be math!”

Anna's point may be valid. I did not hear her speak, however, about how her instruction filled in any gaps in the program. As she criticized the math program at her placement school for not helping the students learn, I thought about her description of her own learning experiences in math as a young student and wondered if these memories triggered the emotion

she presented. I sensed the passion in her voice and wondered if she had expressed her views to her mentor teacher or discussed them in her course at the University. Such strong beliefs, especially negative ones as evidenced in this exchange could interfere with developing positive experiences and high self-efficacy, especially for a beginning teacher. In discussions about her training, she shared insights into my thoughts.

Preparation for Teaching

Anna expressed disappointment with the teacher training program. She did not think the activities afforded her the practices important for developing requisite skills to be effective in the classroom. The frustration she felt was apparent in her words and her tone.

I mean, you can't, you don't, they teach theory. They don't teach practice. If you want to see it, you need to teach us how to do it. Not just saying here's a problem. Can you recognize this problem? Yes. I see there's an issue here, but I don't know what to do about it. What do you want me to do about it?

I think that's half the problem with teacher education programs is like you see, for example, they don't throw you in the classroom until your sophomore year, your, sorry, your junior year of college. I had, I have way more questions now about some of my other classes than I did when I was in them because I hadn't been in a class. So, it's like I feel like there's a double edged sword. You want us to, you know, know all this theory but you have no way of putting it into practice until we get in certain situations. And I feel like there's so much, I want to put student teaching twice...

Anna did not discuss any time spent on classroom discussions or conversations with mentor teachers on how classroom experiences translate into practice. Since Anna was enrolled in the TLDC class during the same semester as her field placement, discussions during class meeting times could have provided the appropriate platform for asking questions or sharing experiences about implementing strategies to address various behavioral or academic situations.

I wondered how she processed classroom assignments into everyday situations. There seemed to be a gap in understanding how theory looked in practice. Even if Anna was not able to make the connections, there should have been opportunities for others to help guide her in

bridging this gap. An additional concern for Anna was her exposure to actual teaching environments prior to conducting her own student teaching experience.

In regard to how well the teacher training program provided opportunities for mastery teaching practice for pre-service teachers in diverse settings, Anna's response in a reflective writing assignment painted a very clear picture of a non-example. One part of the prompt directed her to address how teachers and administrators view students based on curriculum and instructional approaches.

My placement attempts to create the principles incorporated in *A Particular Text*, but I feel that it fails miserably. I feel that one of the primary objectives in the reading was to create a mini-community in which all students have access to caring educators, rigorous academics, and supportive cohorts. In my placement we have pods... While the goal of our pod is to create a cohesive, caring community, it seems just as disjointed as any other school I've attended, observed, and apprenticed in.

The students all have the same science and math teacher, but have either one or the other of the history/reading teachers. We have bi-monthly PBT (don't ask me what that stands for, I've asked numerous times and have yet to get an answer) meetings in which the whole pod gets together. It is supposed to be a team planning time, but it is basically just a meeting to decide which teacher gets which students for intervention and the division of students is rarely based on their specific needs in the various subjects.

In Anna's view, the teachers at this school conducted the teaching approaches found in traditional schools. They did not utilize their time to ensure students learned in an environment that supported "a cohesive, caring community" for the students. Additionally, the description in Anna's narrative sounded as if the teachers did not know of a different way to approach teaching or establish a nurturing environment. Although Anna wrote an informative critique the situation, this experience did not offer a model of how to incorporate her knowledge and skills in ensuring a productive learning climate in her future classroom.

I believe that part of the problem perhaps stems from the lack of direction given to the teachers on how to cultivate such a learning community, or a lack of desire for the extra work it creates on behalf of the teachers. While the teachers in my pod socially get along the teaching strategies couldn't be more different if you tried. It lacks consistency from

subject to subject and not just in teaching styles and curriculum. The lack of consistency stems from the various rules each of the individual teachers has and their interpretation of the rules and enforcement. I see students so frustrated with all of us staff members based on the way and when we enforce the rules. To me it seems like if you have the same students that maybe a co-decision on the rules and enforcement procedures is the same across the board and the students don't have so many different expectations to deal with. Discussions about the barriers, on the other hand, could have given Anna practice in

brainstorming and seeking solutions with her peers during class. In this way, many pre-service teachers could have gained valuable insights from this non-example. At this point in the interview, however, it was not clear how Anna utilized her resources to address her gaps in learning? As a prospective teacher, it was critical that she develop skills in initiating her own learning experiences to support the development of positive self-efficacy.

During her interviews, Anna criticized courses she believed did not promote positive efficacy development. They failed to provide adequate preparation for working within various classroom settings or for dealing with certain types of behaviors. She was clearly frustrated with her limited knowledge of classroom management strategies or skills for addressing various school-related issues. Anna's required course list, however, included courses where it would be expected for her to learn and discuss skills to support her classroom practice, two of which were Classroom Management: Middle Childhood (CMMC) and Teaching and Learning in Diverse Classrooms (TLDC), both taken during the last year of training as she engaged in student teaching.

The objective of the TLDC course was written as follows: "to expose students to the problems, issues, and experiences of students from under-represented groups based on race, ethnicity, language, socio-economic status, and sexual identity" (2011). In practice, however, Anna's perspective was that it did not prepare her to deal with the environment in which she was placed.

I have a diversity class. As I just, as I mentioned before. And you have me read about it. And you have me do, you have me, they had me go to a different out of class experience. I went to a mosque. I'm Catholic. So, going to a mosque is completely like mind-blowing. The rituals are different. How a lot of things are, are different. And I mean, that was a cool experience. And I'm glad that they pushed me out of my little white suburbia Catholic bubble, but at the same time where does that translate in my class? I mean, it tells me OK, this is what a kid's going through at home but how do I address that?

Anna talked about the experience she had in her diversity class, but she did not translate that experience on a broader scale. What does it mean to her that some groups have traditions different than hers? How will that impact the classroom setting? I thought about Anna's limited range for translating her class experience to the *practice reality* of teaching. She continued to share her assessment of the course in the lines that follow:

I don't think, in terms of diversity in that, they're [college course] doing us any service. Because there's, I'll use where we are right now as an example, I don't have a really, I have a diverse group of students but they're not extraordinarily diverse. I don't have a lot of— I don't have an equal mixture, I guess, of students. And so, it's hard to address everybody at the same time.

Anna seemed to have difficulty explaining that the majority of her students were minorities, Black and Hispanic students. During her narrative, I listened to hear words that acknowledged the role race and ethnicity played in planning instruction or those which demonstrated how she took initiative in finding ways to utilize her knowledge and skills to work productively with minority students. She did not address this area in her interview, rather provided an ambiguous response regarding the best approach to close the achievement gap.

Stop treating them like they're lower. Honestly, if you think, if you have expectations that these kids are lower than any other kids you need to sit back and you need to stop and you need to think. If you lower your expectations, they're going to achieve lower. If you set the bar up here, you might not get everybody and you might not get a lot of them, but then they know OK, these are my expectations, they're rising. I need to come up to meet them. If you keep lowering your expectations, then what are you getting out of it? I mean, you can't just sit back and say this, that and the next thing and expect results. You have to work for those results.

According to Milner (2010) and Banks (2001), expectation theory does set the boundary for how much students may achieve. Anna's words seemed to express the philosophy, but at the same time, she did not talk about using knowledge and skills to motivate or engage students in productive learning activities. There was, however, evidence in her comments that seemed to contradict her statements, making it difficult to determine her beliefs about race and achievement. Interested in capturing more of Anna's thoughts to determine how the University's focus on diversity influenced her beliefs, I turned the conversation to the topic of diversity.

Understanding Diverse Groups

The TLDC course Anna took during her training emphasized having pre-service teachers exposed to the “problems, issues, and experiences of students from under-represented groups based on race, ethnicity, language, socio-economic status, and sexual identity” (Schedule of Classes, 2010). Having this learning opportunity was an initial step in the preparation. I wondered if having experienced her field placement in a school with a high enrollment of Hispanic and Black students provided her the opportunities for practice and ultimately a mastery experience (Bandura, 1997). I asked her to share her thoughts on race and the role it plays in the problems of education:

And race, I mean, culture is going to play a part in it. For sure. But race? Not so much. You know, I don't think it has a place in education. I think we need to stop all that kind of stuff, personally.

Words are powerful and should be carefully placed when laying the foundation of one's beliefs. Their underlying message has the power to build and the power to destroy. Take Anna's word choice from the preceding lines, “all that stuff,” as an example of her limited awareness about different groups and the struggles they have endured. Race has historically been an issue throughout the nation and continues to create barriers to learning. Banks (2001) suggested that

ignoring the differences in race or colorblindness in the classroom disregards the value of racial identity, a feature of great importance to students of color. Anna's query, "Can we just drop it?" represented an attitude of privilege and one that demonstrated her limited understanding of racial knowledge and sensitivity. This mindset did not align with the missive advocated in the University's mission or proponents of multicultural education. Anna continued to elaborate on her views in the lines that follow:

One of my friends, she's from France. They don't cap-, they don't ask the things like are you White, Black, this, that and the next thing. Why does it matter? Honestly, I don't know. But I mean, I think my kids here, they're mostly African American. I mean, I don't have an issue with it. They don't have an issue with me being White. Whatever. You know? They're here to learn and I'm here to teach. And I think some of their, there's some social stigma somewhere, somewhere that somebody got on their mind that, you know, these kids need more help and these don't. Like White, rich, elitist kids are OK, but the Black, rich elitist kids, they're not good. They're on the same level field, but their skin color differentiates whether they're good or bad.

The confusion communicated in this section highlighted Anna's beliefs and her limited understandings of how race may create inequities in some learning environments. I wondered if Anna shared these thoughts during her TLDC class sessions and if they were challenged by others during discussions, particularly since students at the placement site were predominately minorities. Also noted was Anna's vague choice of words "... there's some social stigma somewhere, somewhere that somebody got on their mind..." in her explanation. Whose ideas was she presenting and what message was she sending? Her tone and pace seemed hyped with uneasiness during prolonged discussion on the topic.

I think a lot of it starts with expectations. And I think a lot of schools, they say well, this is a low achieving district, we're going to put the bar here and if we can just get them to that low bar we're good. Well, why not raise that bar up a little bit? We're all capable. They're all capable. They're, they just, some of them are just lazy. They haven't had anybody setting those expectations, so keeping the expectations high for everybody and it's standard across the board is what we need to do.

I noted that Anna generalized some of the students as “lazy” with ease, yet she did not acknowledge the issues of schools with a high population of economically disadvantaged and minority students. She eradicated traces of identity by referring to the students using pronouns, “them” and “they,” as she spoke, rather than identifying the issues that accompanied individual groups. Her reluctance to be specific in her comments signaled a sense of dis-ease with the topic. She continued to speak in general terms, even when she said “some of them are just lazy.” Careless use of phrases may trigger beliefs among some groups that Anna was stereotyping Black children, particularly since statements such as this have been used about Black people for centuries. When discussing how to address issues in learning, Anna switched her pronoun to “we,” as if she saw herself as part of a solution by setting high expectations and standardizing them “across the board.”

I mean, the achievement gap is there and it’s recognizable, but I think a lot of it is, I mean, take suburbia. I’ll take Sunny Town District. High population of White, rich White kids. Go to Urban City Public (UCP). Less monetary influence. Low socioeconomic status. And a higher population of African Americans. Yeah, there’s a difference. But the difference isn’t boiling down to the children. It’s boiling down to UCP is in the middle of a big school district with way more kids. There is less funding for a greater number of kids, and there’s more funding up here because for whatever reason, the levies are higher... I mean, when it boils down the kids are the same. I can probably pick a kid from UCP, move him, assimilate him a little bit, get him used to how we do things and then he’ll probably rise, too.

And it’s just the difference in the levels of education and what our standards are, I feel. Like I feel some of the standards here are a little bit low. I would be, like that wouldn’t have flown where I went to school, but again, I’m not in school there anymore.

Anna did not make it clear what group “we” represented in this scenario. Equally unclear was her meaning when she stated, “assimilate him...get him used to how we do things...” Use of the term “assimilate” suggested that the student would abandon his cultural identity or traditions to adopt the ways of the unidentified “we” in her example. I wondered if Anna purposely used this term to underscore her meaning or if she was unaware of the message. Regardless of the intent,

the outcome could be interpreted negatively by some groups. She stated that all children are the same, differing only because of the limited availability of resources. She seemed, however, to lack an understanding of how limitations were often connected to inequities of opportunities for minority and economically disadvantaged students. Funding is only a part of the issues.

The increase in minority population will require teachers to broaden their perspectives if they are to be effective in building positive relationships with all students. People are different. Children are different. Race is one of the differences that matters. Anna did not want to recognize the reality in this statement.

I mean, it just, culture is one thing; race is something entirely different to me. I differentiate between them. I make it a point when I write papers to un-capitalize all that stuff because I don't like the qualifiers. I don't like that they may capitalize Blacks, Whites, Hispanic, Latino. Why does it matter? We're humans. Can we just drop it?

Anna, just like current and future teachers, will need to be aware of how some ways of knowing, thinking, and doing may have underlying negative consequences. Haberman (1996) advocates for ridding current practices in teacher training of a “kids are kids,” “teaching is teaching” and “learning is learning” approach (p. 747). He criticized this approach on the grounds that it does not effectively teach pre-service teachers how to deal with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Anna's way of thinking illustrated Haberman's point and the potential complications of a “colorblind” (Milner, 2010) mentality.

Field Placement

Research findings report the positive impact of field placement on pre-service teachers' training (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Levine, 2006; Anderson & Stillman, 2013). Knobloch (2006) suggested that the time spent in the field supports the development of skills and knowledge through application in “authentic leaning environments” and in “real teaching situations” (p. 36). Bandura (1986) discussed the major

impact of teaching practice on developing mastery experiences under the supervision of experienced teachers. While these research findings support positive results from field placement, Anna did not provide evidence of such outcomes occurring in her training experience. Her statements did not illustrate the development of capabilities as described in the definition of teacher efficacy espoused by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), “teacher’s belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (p. 233). According to Anna, the experience left her overwhelmed and disillusioned with the amount of responsibilities she had to meet for the students.

And it’s just, I feel like there’s unrealistic expectations for what they just decide is a diverse classroom. And when you say well, you need to be doing this, that and the next thing with your students, well, how can you? There just aren’t enough hours in the day.

Anna’s words and high-pitched tone prompted me to wonder about how she assessed her own abilities and “self-appraisal of capabilities” (Bandura, 1993, p. 118). In Bandura’s (1993) work, he discussed how people’s beliefs influence the way they process their abilities to handle various situations. Anna appeared cognitively to process limited capabilities in meeting instructional expectations. Her words, however, failed to provide evidence of a high sense of efficacy or her ability to visualize success in meeting the expectations required in her teaching experience. One concern she voiced dealt with the limited time to “get it all done.”

There’s not, I have my kids for 55 minutes. You want me to hit on material I’m supposed to teach, the test that, the test that they’re going to take in a few weeks, the diversity in the classroom, and you want me to make sure that I keep their attention and they’re actively engaged. That’s four huge things that you want me to do in 55 minutes. How can I do all of them?

Since planning and management are primary components for any teacher training, I thought Anna should have been aware of lesson planning and classroom management strategies to

address these types of needs. Her narrative, however, did not include these valuable elements in organizing time. This is an area where the support of the mentor teacher or supervisor should have been resources to provide guidance for Anna.

Mentors and Mentoring

An important role for the mentor teacher is to ensure pre-service teachers assigned to them receive guidance in implementing practices to help them implement strategies appropriate to different circumstances within the school and classroom setting. In the University's Middle Childhood Handbook (2011), the responsibilities and qualifications of mentor teachers have been outlined to ensure pre-service teachers receive support in addressing academic and behavioral concerns. Rots and Aelterman (2009) discussed the important role of mentor teachers in concert with the teacher training program to reinforce and encourage teacher commitment and provide support which contributes to pre-service teachers' decisions to enter the teaching profession. Unfortunately, in Anna's teaching practice she did not believe she obtained the guidance or support to develop positive self-efficacy.

The College of Education is a joke. I mean, like, they give us all of this reading and I wonder if they know that we don't read. They should get a bunch of these teachers and let them say, 'Yes, this is real, in school and practicing. Not theorizing. How to make the most out of what you're given. There are lots of opportunities and they squander it. One of the girls in the program isn't even going to teach anymore. She's going to study law.

I never had the same professor twice, except for the math department. The education department has huge turnover and has had it since I've been in my program. The most I learned was from online or at the school.

I reflected on Anna's years in training and the opportunities for these thoughts to be addressed. It was not clear to me why she did not initiate conversations within her support system that would clarify her own doubts or concerns. I asked her to share her perspectives on

this issue, at which point she continued with the explanation that her supervisor was overworked and had no one to support her. She also shared that everyone (professors) seemed too busy and sighed, “I don’t even think anyone grades the papers. They’re all too busy to do the ‘busy work.’ They don’t even know. I don’t know if they even care.” This perception of limited support seemed to effectuate an air of negativity rather than engender a feeling of positive self-efficacy in Anna. I listened as she gave an overall assessment of the teacher training program.

I asked her if she felt frustrated.

Yeah... Part of it’s terror. I don’t even know if I’m prepared for it. Two more Praxis and you can teach high school. I don’t even have experience in high school. I feel so unprepared. Everything I learned, I learned in here or ‘offline.’ I always wanted to be a teacher until I went through the education program. It’s all negative. I was in business. A ‘cake program.’ You don’t do anything. I don’t even know why I got into this anymore.

Cards on the table. This is what you’re getting yourself into for the rest of your life. The paperwork, the background, all the other stuff that goes into it. The meetings...

The frustration and disappointment in Anna were very apparent. She talked about the fear of not being prepared to teach and displayed signs of envy toward her friends who had remained in the business program. She described the various experiences she had in her four years which had not worked to nourish her enthusiasm for teaching. There appeared to be a discrepancy in the intended outcomes identified in the training program and Anna’s reflection on the experience. To illustrate this point, the Middle Childhood Handbook, (2011) included the expectations of the Collaborative Assessment Log (CAL) which was an assessment tool for pre-service teachers described as useful in guiding mentoring conversations. The Handbook stated that the CAL was expected to be completed by the mentor and the pre-service teacher biweekly. The CAL appeared to serve as an important part of the placement, providing the pre-service teacher time to reflect and pose questions of her mentor teacher. For Anna, however, there was

no discussion of the CAL form or any occasion where she and her mentor utilized the process as she went through the program. The intended provisions of the CAL could have been a valuable resource for Anna as well as the mentor teacher and university supervisor.

Observation of Teaching a Lesson

One instance where I saw evidence of her struggles occurred during an observation of her teaching a math class. There were 19 students in the class: 8 Black males; 7 Black females; 3 Hispanic females; and 1 White male. I noted certain behaviors that appeared to distract from students' engagement and disrupt opportunities for learning. A major problem I saw was where Anna positioned herself during the lesson. She was seated at a center table where she remained throughout the fifty-five minute lesson. Her back faced the students in the class, and a few students sat or stood around her. One Black female played in her hair. Other students were seated two to four per table. Two Black male students were seated in the rear of the room, isolated from the rest of the students.

Anna began the session by directing her students to focus on their activity, "3...2...1... Everyone, get out your Dream project." As she spoke, she directed students through a math problem and asked questions using the Promethean Board. Some students talked during her directions. Students worked on worksheets during the lesson. After students began their work, Anna addressed the full group on different occasions, once to ask students if they needed help, "Do you guys need the formulas written up again?" Some students responded, "No."

Another time Anna reminded students to stay on task, "3...2...1...Please make sure you're working on your project and not talking. Some of you haven't done a thing since you started," as she remained seated and working with two students at the front table. I did not see her give any additional explanations to the students at the board nor did students work any

problems on the board. When help was requested by students, they called out from their seats to the teacher seated at the front. Also, students left their seats without permission to get supplies, walk around the room, or visit other students at their desks. One male student without his work wiggled his tongue at his tablemates, sang and talked the entire class session. Another male student shot paper wads at the trash can in the front of the room, while another lay on the floor near the back. Several students received permission to go to the restroom, which Anna permitted, leaving the room as soon as one returned with the hall pass. Anna did not address this behavior or individually redirect any student to complete the work.

I noted that classroom management and lesson planning were areas where Anna could use additional support. Her mentor teacher, however, was not present in the room during the observation to note these concerns. Anna explained that although the mentor teacher was very nice, he was not skilled in his responses to different issues in the classroom. During the post-observation interview, she expressed concerns with her own classroom management and the lack of practical guidance in dealing with various issues, “You have to get beyond certain involvement with culture expectations as well.”

I did not know what Anna meant in the phrase “culture expectations” so I asked her to elaborate. She shared the text below as clarification:

Like there are so many parents here that I feel that are so uninvolved. And it’s like you send home conference notices and the parents that you don’t want to see that you don’t need to see are the ones that come in. And the ones don’t come in are the ones that you need to see. And it’s just, I think you have to, you have so many battles on a daily basis of just getting the kids in the door.

Did “culture” represent a way for Anna to present her belief that different groups were expected to exhibit certain types of behaviors? If so, did that indicate race may be a factor in how to education some groups? Considering that the majority of her students were Black, this explanation did warrant further investigation. As far as connecting theory from class activities to

actual practice in her placement, Anna did not exhibit mastery experiences. Based on what I observed, I easily understood her issues and noted frustration in her voice as she gave an example of an assignment from her Classroom Management course:

They [professors] teach, they may be teaching us on some level of what we need, but I don't think they're teaching us what we want. Because--I'm going to go back to my classroom management class--because that's the one class we all treated as a joke. You know, she [professor] was so focused on this book. And how the book was the bible. And how we needed to know everything in this book in order to be successful. And we read that book cover to cover, stuff that on my classroom management plan winded up being something just under 80 pages.

And I mean it, it was just cerebral. And even writing some of it, we just said this is not going to work and, and we knew it and we, she would, this was during our student teaching when in our night classes. We would discuss what was going on in our classrooms, and it was so much a theory and not a practice. And she was, and she would even start her sentences in theory, you would do this, in theory you'd take the kid out into the hallway and talk to them, in theory you would call their parents right there in class, in theory, in theory, in theory...!

The course description for the CMMC class explained that students enrolled would become acquainted with ways to develop abilities in creating and maintaining a positive learning environment in the middle childhood classroom as well as strategies for effective teaching. These strategies emphasized issues of diversity, and attention was placed on analyzing, resolving, and preventing managerial problems (Middle Childhood handbook, 2011). From this description, the class provided an appropriate arena to challenge ideas and practices, even theory found in texts. Anna and her classmates had opportunities to discuss the barriers to having the ideal learning environment for students. That is the purpose for marrying theory and practice under the supervision of the coordinator and mentor teacher. Unfortunately, the description of the course was to in direct contrast to what Anna believed she experienced in teacher training, which did not work toward creating a positive self-efficacy forming experience.

Informal Observation

On two occasions, I observed Anna and her interactions with teachers and students outside the classroom. One observation occurred during a school assembly. The purpose of this observance was to gain a better understanding of the culture of the school and identify what characteristics Anna demonstrated in an informal setting. I noted Anna's behaviors and her interactions with others. As each class piled into the bleachers, some teachers sat with their students and others stood along the walls or sat on the lower rows. Anna sat near her class. I did not see her talk with them or monitor their behavior. She watched the performance. Her mentor teacher sat with the students in the class.

On the day of the Teacher Appreciation Luncheon, I sat in the teachers' lounge and visited with the staff. Anna and her mentor teacher were there. The climate was friendly and spirited. The feeling of a collaborative, supportive environment emanated from the conversations and laughter among the group. Anna participated in the discussions, which varied from group to group. There were discussions about the students, but they were not negative or demeaning in any way. Only when it was time to report to class did any complaints fill the room, and they were harmless comments.

In both settings, the environment appeared to be orderly and students seemed to be familiar with the routine of the hallway and assembly expectations. The level of responsibility to ensure order was maintained, however, did not come from Anna. During the assembly, she did not show signs of authority or responsibility for the students in the gym. Her actions made her seem more like a visiting adult more than a teacher in charge of a group of sixth-grade students.

In the lounge conversations, her tone switched to one that hummed with authority as she talked about the lessons students needed to finish and the difficulties she would have getting

them on task after lunch period. She and her mentor mentioned two students' names and made comments about their work habits. I found it interesting that Anna's behaviors were more animated when surrounded by the teachers. She was far more relaxed and spirited and seemed to have formed relationships with them. I thought of her classroom management and the difficulties she had with delivering instruction and wondered she sought guidance from them. It was apparent that this was a supportive environment which could have provided support for Anna.

Locus of Control: Effects of Standardized Testing on School Culture

Anna placed the responsibility for many of today's schooling issues and the gap in achievement on the government's involvement in education. Her theory was that the system penalized children and schools more than it helped them. She identified with the pressures placed on the students, but she did not believe she had the capabilities to improve the situation.

But I think it's a lot of my kids. A lot of them don't write very well and it's things like the OAA where it's written based. It's just so much writing and they just shut down because it's so much on one day and even in one week, you have the reading, you have a day off. Then you have the math. And it's like that's a lot of testing in two days. So, I just, I feel like it's just too much pressure on them. And I don't think it's right, but what can I do about it? Not really anything.

Anna clearly finds fault with the focus on so much testing for the students. Even after she identified students' challenges, she did not offer a plan to fill this gap. As a prospective teacher who would probably confront this same issue in her work environment, I expected her to be the students' advocate looking for resources and strategies to strengthen students' areas of need. Rather, she chose neglect her responsibility to teach by giving up.

This attitude of helplessness did not foster high self-efficacy or motivate Anna to utilize her skills and knowledge to support the students. She placed the responsibility for these issues on the government, but she did not offer her commitment to provide the structure children

needed to learn. When asked to discuss the origin(s) of the problems with testing and learning, Anna offered this explanation.

I think it comes from the state and I think it comes partly from the federal government and No Child Left Behind. I think we're so focused on what No Child Left Behind means and that we're quantifying it that we think OK, well, we have to have some way to test to see if we're actually doing what this bill says. So, let's create a test because tests tell us everything about a kid and it tells you nothing.

I noted Anna's anger as she spoke about assessing children's learning. She spoke quickly and fluently, as if she were describing episodes from her personal memories and feelings. She criticized the system as a way of competing with others on a local, state, national and global level without consideration for the students or what they need to learn and live productively. Her words below illustrate her beliefs:

So, but I think on some level, yeah, it comes from the federal government. But it sure comes from the state and probably some of the schools because they want to know how they're doing in comparison to everybody else. And it's, I think it's just one big comparison game, compare every country against each other. It's just not how it should work.

It doesn't matter if you were scoring a 98, then you score a 78. OK. We need to see where your weaknesses are and where that correlates to your goals in life and we just, we don't take that data and do anything with it.

The irony in Anna's last preceding statement lies in her own admission that she would not use the data because she believed there was "nothing" she could do. She expounded on the issue created by external involvement in schools in the following lines:

And then, I think the other thing we have these schools that are losing funding because they're scoring like needs improvement, needs this, needs that. Well, why are you taking away funding from schools that need more funding? You need better teachers. How do you get better teachers? You pay them more. You need better materials. How do you get them? You have to buy them. That costs money. This, that and the next thing and it's just like you're sending mixed messages to everybody.

Anna described her dislike for the testing and accountability system currently in place across the nation. The friction behind her words sparked the frustration with impersonal nature

of the test that seems, according to Anna, to focus more on the score than on what students actually know. She did not expect to be able to confront the challenges inherent with this type of system and appears to have given up before her career has begun, “And I don’t think it’s right, but what can I do about it? Not really anything.”

Low self-efficacy such as displayed in Anna’s attitude and comments sent warning signals. Did her mentor teacher or university supervisor have any idea she did not believe she had the capabilities to help students learn in spite of testing barriers? Her attitude is particularly alarming since she was in her last semester of her teacher training program. Anna continued to express her concerns with the effects of accountability and funding on resources.

And it’s just, I think you have to, you have so many battles on a daily basis of just getting the kids in the door. That’s when you say by the way, here’s a test. And here’s a book that’s, you know, 10 years or so out of date. Work with it. Or there are so many scribbles. It’s just, it’s, it’s frustrating as a teacher and then you have things where you have certain curriculum that you really can’t do much with because it’s so structured and you feel like if you deviate from it, you’re going to get your hand slapped by your administration, by your lead teacher, by this, by that. You, because it’s not on the test. But if it’s not on the test, but it helps them learn, you’re kind of in a catch 22. And so.

Anna presented a negative critique of the schooling situation. Her experiences in field placement illustrated how schools with high percentages of minorities engaged in intense focus on testing. She also expressed frustrations with lack of parental involvement and limited resources.

If they don’t have, you know, textbooks that work for them, what good does that test if you’re not giving them materials the back end result isn’t going to be any good. You need to trust your teachers and trust that they’re doing what’s in the best interest of their students. And I feel like they’re not giving us that judgment that we, that most teachers have always had.

In these lines above, Anna talked about the uselessness of outdated textbooks, but she failed to discuss what she could provide to students to support them. She spoke in contradictions about “trust” of teachers to deliver instruction in spite of limited resources, yet, she stated earlier that there was nothing she could do to overcome limited resources.

I mean, I support the Ohio Graduation Test. Like I think that's solid. I mean, good. You have to have a basic level of function. That should be your only test that you should have to take. I mean, I feel like these are all just benchmark tests up to that bigger test, so what's the point of testing a kid every year? I mean, it doesn't do you any good, especially if they're not learning anything. They don't have the books. They don't have the computers. They don't, like we have to face the facts. We're moving away from everything.

How much did Anna understand about standardized testing, its intended purpose, and the ramifications of failure. Clearly she did not consider the consequences for high school students who fail the test with few opportunities to pass before graduation. What about the importance of utilizing data to monitor student growth and needs?

Yeah. It's just what do you do? It's a big continuous cycle. You don't, they, they think that OK, if we [government] take away your money you're going to be scared into doing a better job. Well, it's not that you're not doing a better job it's you don't have the resources to do a better job or you don't have the type of involvement you have with some students. You know?

Anna's description here made it seem as if external forces, identified by Anna as the government, have targeted teachers with termination unless they comply with mandates to test all children. This achievement must occur under additional pressures from lack of resources. She also accuses parents for many of the issues with helping students succeed.

You have to get beyond certain involvement with culture expectations as well. Like there are so many parents here that I feel that are so uninvolved. And it's like you send home conference notices and the parents that you don't want to see that you don't need to see are the ones that come in. And the ones don't come in are the ones that you need to see. And it's just, I think you have to, you have so many battles on a daily basis of just getting the kids in the door. That when you say by the way, here's a test. And here's a book that's, you know, 10 years or so out of date. Work with it. Or there are so many scribbles. It's just, it's, it's frustrating as a teacher and then you have things where you have certain curriculum that you really can't do much with because it's so structured and you feel like if you deviate from it, you're going to get your hand slapped by your administration, by your lead teacher, by this, by that. You, because it's not on the test. But if it's not on the test, but it helps them learn, you're kind of in a catch 22.

When considering Anna's perspectives on the effects of external control, it was difficult to decipher whether the issues she described were based on her own experiences as a student, a pre-

service teacher, or the educational system overall. She did not speak with commitment to the profession or determination to advocate for change. She has not expressed any ideas for how she will overcome these challenges in own classroom. She did not demonstrate a positive attitude toward facing the challenges associated with making the system work better for the students.

I felt profoundly saddened for Anna, the teachers she had talked about, and the students who desperately need great teachers in a time when great teachers are few and far between. At this point, I reflected on my own questions about what is happening in the education programs that causes teachers to lament their career choice, especially after having gone through so much time and effort in the program. I reflected on Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy's (1998) work which detailed "teacher efficacy" (Berman et al., 1977) as "judgment of his/her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes or student engagement and learning" (p. 202), even students who may be described as difficult to motivate. My thoughts turned to a concern for students and the way in which their needs and the goal of education had somehow gotten lost in the mission. An important fact to remember is that pre-service teachers are still students, learning the craft of teaching. They need guidance and support in a nurturing, productive learning environment, especially in their field placement.

Teacher Anna: The Rise of the Fall

Anna graduated in the spring of 2012 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education, Middle Childhood. She was licensed to teach grades 4-9 in the areas of math and language arts. She was hired at a middle school in North Carolina. The charts below contain information about the setting where Anna worked. The school's enrollment (Table 4.1) indicated the middle school was predominantly White. The minority population included mostly African American students and some Hispanic, American Indian and biracial students. The school's rankings indicated that

the school's performance in math and reading had decreased over the past seven years the (Table 4.2), taking the school from a ranking of 317 in 2006 to 408 in 2013 statewide. According to the data (Table 4.3), a little over half the population could be described as economically disadvantaged (Table 4.3). Overall, the school's context was comparable to the placement where Anna had conducted her student teaching. Her previous experiences could have been of benefit as she started her new career if she had properly processed and utilized events in training.

Enrollment									
Year	White	African American	Asian	Hispanic	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Not Specified	Total
2010	329	217	2	48	8	n/a	n/a	0	604
2011	353	151	0	48	3	0	33	0	588
2012	332	186	0	47	5	0	31	0	601

(Table 4.1) Source: North Carolina Dept. of Public Instruction. Education First NC Report Cards. About Enrollment/Ethnicity

Rankings				
year	Avg Math Score	Avg Reading Score	Statewide Rank	State Percentile
2006	58.8	86.5	317 th	45.9%
2007	63.8	86.1	300 th	49.5%
2008	62.2	50.5	377 th	37.4%
2009	78.3	63.1	362 nd	40.6%
2010	79.8	66.4	384th	37.6%
2011	87.3	72.7	246 th	59.7%
2012	81.4	67.5	362 nd	40.4%
2013	24.7	36.3	408 th	34.0%

(Table 4.2). Source: Test Scores: North Carolina Dept. of Public Instruction, rankings

Free and Discounted Lunch				
Year	# Students	Full-time Teachers	Student/Teacher Ratio	% Free/Disc Lunch
2011	588	40.9	14.3	55.4
2012	601	40.3	14.9	54.2

(Table 4.3) Source: North Carolina Dept. of Public Instruction. About Students eligible for discounted/free lunch

Teacher Preparation

Continuing our communication in the late summer of 2012, Anna shared news that she was hired to teach “seventh-grade math-AIG (Gifted and Talented) and ESL/ Exceptional children.” She seemed to have a positive attitude about the job as she described the environment in which she would be starting her teaching career:

North Carolina schools are really different, at least from my perspective as compared to Ohio schools. For instance, Language Arts and Math have 98-minute blocks with 32-36 students in each block, while Science and Social Studies have 45 minute blocks with 15-20 students. I’m a little weary [sic] of having such large classes for so long, but we’ll see how it goes.

This state of mind was a change for Ann, who often expressed negative thoughts about teacher training. One positive aspect of the job was the focus on technology and resources to advance instructional delivery and student learning:

The most encouraging thing about teaching is definitely the technological aspect of schools. It is really encouraging to see all the technology schools have for us to use and the innovative ways in which they are using it. I think that’s the coolest part of the school I’m at right now. They’re one-to-one with student laptops so we’re almost completely paperless and we are abandoning textbooks in favor of online learning which is really neat to see who it’s all going to work. I consider myself a technology lover but I’ve already learned about so many cool websites and tools that I’ve always wished existed—turns out they already do!

Anna looked forward to her experiences teaching math and using the technology in new ways. Although she was unsure about what she would do differently in her “real teaching,” she did acknowledge that having no textbooks for students would be a huge change. She also shared that she had not yet been to the school or started her planning because of the time spent moving and establishing herself in her new apartment.

Reflecting on Anna’s previous concerns with lesson planning and classroom management during her years in training, I recalled Anna’s previous experiences with classroom management and her limited knowledge or skills in developing plans for instruction to meet students’ needs. I

questioned her about any concerns she might have with the upcoming year to determine the degree to which she had focused on her professional responsibilities and addressed potential issues.

I'm not so sure my views on teaching have changed much since completing student teaching. I will have to say that now that I'm on the "teacher-of-record" side, it's completely daunting and overwhelming. The sheer amount of information thrown at you—especially from a legal standpoint—is mind-boggling.

Anna is right to be concerned with the legal side of teaching, particularly since she was assigned to teach a class with exceptional children. There are numerous responsibilities that accompany teaching and laws to protect both students and teachers. Knowing the laws is critical, and she had not mentioned previous training in the legal aspects. She recounted her fears:

The biggest disappointment as a new teacher I'm facing is definitely the class sizes I'm looking at. My class sizes are 32, 35, 36. It is quite nerve-wracking to see such high numbers and plan for managing not the sheer number of students, but also for the long length of time.

The trepidation Anna expressed was not without merit. Teaching within a block schedule required skill and pre-planning. In addition to blocks of time and large class sizes, Anna had to plan lessons using web-based resources, involving a combination of skill, knowledge and creativity to develop her own pedagogical style. These areas presented challenges for her during her training and I sensed they continued to plague her thoughts.

After a few weeks into the school year, I checked with Anna to see how she had settled into her year. Her reflection on the start of the year did not leave any doubts about her feelings of efficacy in manipulating the responsibilities and expectations of teaching and managing a classroom:

Honestly, it was a nervous nightmare kind of moment, I suppose. You know, you want to use all of the books and you see in theory how everything should run, but when you're left to do it on your own, you're kind of going, I've learned nothing.

I recognized this tone in her voice so similar to her attitude in student teaching, as she communicated her perspectives. Interested in hearing more on how she utilized her development from teacher training to increase her efficacy and motivation in practice, I explored more on her management skills. She elaborated, adding specifics from her training to relate the experience:

We had to do a classroom management paper like how we would handle papers, how we would handle movement. But what I failed to recognize in my head is that that's perfect in theory and what it doesn't do is it helps all the little school mandates and the county mandates and the state mandates we go on. So, and it doesn't, it doesn't account for your classroom either. I mean I have 40 kids and I was trying to figure out how do I fit 40 desks in a relatively small classroom and still be able to move. And the answer is there's really no good way to do that. And then you have the problem where you don't have enough desks, you don't have enough supplies. You aren't making enough to go out and buy them. You don't have a stipend. And it's just, it was a nightmare honestly. So, I guess the transition of getting your room set up was a nightmare.

I focused on Anna's use of pronouns. She demonstrated a tendency to switch between first person, "I" or "we" and the second person pronoun "you." I wondered if this were a strategy she used to separate herself from the issues she had to confront, as if they were not hers to solve.

Throughout this interview session, as in many other of our conversations, Anna introduced the topic which consumed a great portion of her comments in training: theory and practice. She again criticized her training program for emphasizing more theory and less practice.

I think they taught us that practice and theory. I mean, what I kind of got from my teaching experience is you understand what I, what's on paper should be the best and what you can do for some students. And while it does teach you possible modifications, this that and the next thing it doesn't it doesn't account for what I like to call reality the reality is you can't get 100% engagement most of the time.

During our first interview session, Anna shared her dream of having a classroom with 100% of students engaged, a "class like the perfect stories." I wondered if these dreams of an ideal

classroom environment blurred the reality of her situation, interfering with her capacity to utilize the resources she had.

And so I think they taught us perfectionism, I'm going to call it, in a perfect world, but it does not account for all the, you know, the issues that you're going to encounter. And like knowing Blooms is great, knowing the theory is great, knowing what they stood for in the research they've done and how it's shaped things is great, but what we need more of I think is just overall classroom management because classrooms are so different...

Finally, Anna hit upon a *truth* which, even though she said it, she did not fully comprehend. Classrooms *are* different and regardless of what she may have learned through research and theory, a gap lay in her critical need to internalize information and process it in a way fitting for her style.

I questioned Anna about changes she would have liked in her student teaching experience. Her response was quick and spoken with confidence as she provided her recommendations.

I think that I kind of wish student teaching was a year. A full solid year where all you do is teach. And I know that's not practical, but I really wish you started from day one and it was your responsibility. It was your responsibility to set up the classroom, design seating charts, design lesson plans. All of that kind of stuff. Like I really wish it was put on you to do all of that because how student teaching works now, you have a sem-, you have a, well, how I did it was a quarter of observation, you have a quarter of actual teaching, and you have another quarter of observation. But you really don't get all the work that goes in in student teaching. You don't understand that you're going to be fully responsible for all of the grading, all of the parent contact, all of the meetings that your kids have to go through. All of the, you know, backend stuff. You don't really get to see that. I mean, when we were student teaching full time we were leaving school right as the bell rung trying to make our 4:00 class...

From these lines it seems that Anna believed she would have learned more if she had more *mastery* experiences rather than *vicarious*. According to Bandura (1986), *mastery* learning experiences provide the most powerful source of information to pre-service teachers. Anna shared more about improving the time in field placement and ways to improve the experience.

I feel like if you really like were given the responsibilities of a teacher for an entire school year as part of your curriculum, you would learn so much more than you do just in observation. Because all you're seeing is how to teach, but in reality teaching is only about 30% of your job. Paperwork and meetings are the other 70. And I mean, including grading and all of that. I mean, by the time you get through everything else you have to do, you're only really teaching probably 30%, 40% of your time, at least the time.

Anna's point was well taken. Sitting for an extended period of time without practice in actual teaching involvement does not offer hands-on experience. Additionally, Anna would have benefitted from discussions with her mentor teacher or supervisor on what she observed and practiced. I continued the conversation to hear Anna's beliefs on what she gained from her training. I was not surprised to hear her mention the dichotomy of theory and practice:

I think they taught us that practice and theory. I mean, what I kind of got from my teaching experience is you understand what it, what's on paper should be the best and what you can do for some students. And while it does teach you possible modifications, this, that, and the next thing, it doesn't, it doesn't account for what I like to call reality. The reality is you can't get 100% engagement most of the time. Not in our society and if the students aren't getting it now, they just don't care and they shut down.

And so, I think they taught us perfectionism I'm going to call it, in a perfect world. But it doesn't account for all the, you know, the issues that you're going to encounter and like knowing Blooms is great, knowing the theory is great, knowing what they stood for in the research they've done and how it's shaped things is great, but what we need more of I think is just overall classroom management because classrooms are so different...

Anna expected to be prepared for all situations. What she must come to terms with is that there is no way to be prepared for all situations in the classrooms. Learning does not happen that way. Learning best practice techniques and making adjustments based on different situations comes with practice, aggressive attempts, adjustments, and interventions. The more successes encountered in practice, the more likely self-efficacy will be high. Anna closed this session with words of caution, sounding as if there was more to her warning than she shared, "So, it's just like in theory all these things are great, but watch out if something happens!"

Indeed, there were many things that happened in Anna's experience. Her transition to practice as the teacher-of-record was not without problems. Research has reported that beginning teachers face numerous challenges during the beginning years of teaching, and Anna's narrative offered various events that supported these findings.

And it's just, it's , it's great when there's all the theory and it kind of helps prepare for you some of the situations, but when you're thrown up to your neck into a pool of water, you're barely trying not to drown in it. And I feel like we were drowning. I feel like all the new teachers, because the school had 6, we were looking at each other going what did we just get ourselves into because it was nothing like student teaching. And we all kind of said well, we wished we would have been thrown into the deep end during student teaching where from day one the entire year, it was all us...

Anna's eyes were opened to the overwhelming amount of time and effort involved in planning, organizing, and assessing outcomes of instructional delivery. The level of responsibility really took her by surprise and left her wishing she had been required to do more in her student teaching:

But you really don't get all the work that goes into student teaching. You don't understand that you're going to be fully responsible for all of the grading, all of the parent contact, all of the meetings that your kids have to go through. All of the, you know, backend stuff. You don't really get to see that.... So, you don't see the meeting side...

Because all you're seeing is how to teach, but in reality teaching is only about 30% of your job. Paperwork and meetings are the other 70%. ..I mean, by the time you get through everything else you have to do, you're only really teaching probably 30%, 40% of your time...

As she talked, I wondered why she expected this type of preparation to come from teacher training. What responsibility did the school and the administration have to support Anna in the transition to the school? Was there no mentor to help her understand the culture of the school and the expectations established by the District? What role did the principal play in directing the development of new members of the staff? Was there professional development? This question really resonated with me as this beginning teacher detailed the barriers to teaching:

...and I haven't prepared for the hundred different types of technology I was going to be required to use. And I was trained on the Smart Board 3C, and the Promethean Board ...I had many boards that I had no idea how to work.

Did Anna ask the questions to address these unknowns, especially considering her class was through use of the internet and technological resources? With these questions in mind, I inquired about the school's responsibility in preparing her for this job rather than her teacher education program.

It's not even funny I mean...so much on technology and so little on actual teaching. I feel like as a teacher I was expected to be a facilitator of the internet and not so much a teacher... I feel like there needs to be, we had one technology class and all that was doing was creating a webquest. It wasn't how to set up a grade book.

Anna's tirade remained focused on her teacher training program. It seemed that she was angry and wanted to level blame on their program instead of facing the issues. Reflecting on her motivation for entering education, I recalled her comment that she wanted to teach because she thought she "could do better and get the students to understand." She did not accept the responsibility for her own difficulties. In her explanations, it appeared that she was again placing the responsibility for her success, or lack of, on the teacher education program. I restated the question in an effort to hear the degree to which took the initiative to find answers or held her new school responsible for helping her meet their expectations.

I feel like there's a huge disconnect between the system they're teaching now and what is actually happening. And I feel like the tech line hasn't crossed from what you're doing in the classroom into education classes. ...we had one technology class.

I mean how do you find decent resources for your students to use? How do you find decent lesson plans? Because as we know, there's none. And there's hundreds of thousands of resources, if not millions of resources out there for teachers to use, but how do you evaluate something that's a good lesson plan without actually doing it? How do you line up standards? Those kinds of things. And I just, I feel like that's kind of where we fell short. I guess, is just that kind of aspect.

Mentors and Mentoring

Who is in charge of helping beginning teachers transition to the job? In the preceding words, Anna assigned the responsibility for teaching technology usage and evaluating internet resources to her teacher training program. While support for determination of responsibility lay with training, it could also be argued that the school that hired Anna to teach was obligated to show her the resources to use, especially since the students greatly needed good teachers. In response to this way of thinking, Anna conceded:

So, it's really, you have to think on your feet and move within your curriculum. And so, I guess I just wasn't prepared for all that. I was involved in trying to learn the curriculum, evaluate the curriculum, evaluate resources, blah, blah, blah.

After graduating from the University, Anna believed she had the training she needed to teach. Within a few months on the job, however, her self-doubts returned as she and other beginning teachers made comparisons on their training experiences. Anna believed their success was attributed to their training in the education program in another state.

They're having a little bit more success. The three North Carolina teachers are also master students [Master's degree]...more prepared to teach. So, like um, the girl that I was working with, I'll use her as my example, she was the other 7th grade math teacher that was new. She got her undergrad in math and then she got her Master's degree in education. And to hear her talk, what they ended up doing was instead of, you know, doing, they did the theory classes and all that stuff but they were thrown in beginning the first of August, they were full time teachers...

Their mentor teachers were basically there, like okay, is this lesson plan right; is this correct? These kids shouldn't be sitting next to each other, here's why. They were helping her fix problems, but they weren't actually teaching. It was all on her and they would work from, she was in school from 6:00 until 5:00 and then they had classes from 7:00 until 10:00.

This explanation expressed her belief that the courses at their colleges provided opportunities for debates and problem solving, not just theory. As students, their professors encouraged them to share their own thoughts and challenged them to solve problems and back them up with answers

from the research and contributing theory. According to Anna, one particular teacher's success in practice was attributed to this type of training, "She's like the only teacher of all 6 of us that's excelling. And we're all basically, we're treading water."

The overwhelming tasks of the beginning teacher can place teachers under a great deal of stress making it difficult for them to think and use sound judgment. In asking Anna if she felt prepared to face the challenges of teaching, she responded with a question of her own:

Is anyone really prepared? Personally upon graduation, I would say yes, but upon being *thrust* in to the teacher shoes I was, the answer is a resounding no? Some of them I as prepared to face, but I personally feel those were on the basis of my personality and character more than actual training.

Grace under pressure is a characteristic I think I possess, and most of the time the situations I was put under were those. But it was the actual decision process and the impact it would have on my teaching I don't think I was prepared for... There are so many unique situations you're put in to while being an actual teacher that you can't ever fully prepare yourself for.

Much of Anna's narrative highlighted a high level of stress and anxiety. Descriptive word choices such as "thrust" from the quote above and metaphors, such as the one describing her as *drowning*, are suggestive of pain and violence. It is interesting that Anna would adopt this mood to express her first-year experiences. In contrast, she chose "grace" to describe her response to the circumstances of her job placement.

It is clear from Anna's detailing of events at her job that many teachers were experiencing similar issues. She provided examples of situations where she needed guidance from someone because she could not translate theory from her classroom management class into practice. Also, the time she spent at the field placement did not offer experiences from which she derived an understanding for handling these types of situations:

But there's so many teachers and you just, we're at these meetings together, we're just talking, there are so many times when people just say we just stare at our kids. We stare at them because we have no idea how to handle it. And it's like you saw these in student

teaching, you kind of talked about them in theory, but when you're the one staring like the deer in the headlights and you have a kid you have no idea what to do with, you know, and there's something to be said about student teaching. I mean, as a first year teacher I had to deal with what do I do when a kid flips a desk? I didn't have to deal with that at field placement. What do I do when a kid, you know, [pounces] another kid in my room? Like I, what do you do? Like and then you have OK, so that happened and I deal with a kid that [pounced] the other kid. I called the parents, got the administration involved. Do I have to call the other 30 kids in the room parents? Like do I tell them what happened? Like where's my level of my responsibility here? Where's the line?

In this type of environment, Anna would have benefitted from having the support of the building principal or a mentor teacher assigned for first year teachers. Her descriptions of her experiences did not make it seem as if this was not an option, and she and other teachers were left on their own to support each other. She expressed her idea for improving the teacher training she had at University by having teachers talk with pre-service teachers about their teaching. Although this approach may have been helpful, I wondered why Anna did not recognize that this "idea" was the objective of her field placement.

And I just, I feel like that would be a really awesome idea. You just have a beginning teacher at the beginning of the year, tell them about your experience, and I think you'd learn so much more from people not, I wouldn't say your own age, you learn from your own age but also your same situation.

Anna's perspective on her training was far more emotionally charged as she shared her experiences as a beginning teacher. Her reflection focused on her professors and her coursework.

It's, you want to say that they understand, and you, you want to say that they're in the know, but when a professor has been out of the classroom for as long as some of our professors have been, they have no way of knowing. They know what they read in a paper, what they do in their post-doc work, some of their doctoral work, you know. It's, I think they forget what all of these changes are like for somebody that's just starting.

And it's just, you want to say OK, that's great, now *tell* me how to really deal with it. And I kind of feel, and I'm going to say this and it sounds horrible, *I feel lied to*. I just, I just don't think that what was represented to me in college was what teaching actually is anymore. You know? People call us glorified babysitters, and in some aspects of my job that's kind of what I felt like. To have these, my hands are so tied. How do I change that? How, how do I, how do I keep on pacing, how do I meet the test expectations, how

do I meet expected growth, how do I meet this, when I can't even do what I need to do to make sure the kids can add, subtract, multiply, divide? You know?

Anna's words reflected her low self-efficacy in meeting the requirements of the job. She placed responsibility for her limitations on lack of preparation in her training program. She faced issues that she did not know how to resolve:

Why do they [students] spend so much time questioning relevancy than they even question what they're learning? And I think they just get so bogged down by inconsistencies across the board that it, you know, it's not even funny anymore. So, it's, you're, you're left struggling what to do when some of those things happen, and again it's going to vary depending on the school system and all that and what they place emphasis on, but it's just like I wasn't prepared for what [inaudible] and I haven't prepared for the hundred different types of technology I was going to be required to use....

I expected that Anna would have received this training as part of the professional development from the school. It was an unrealistic expectation on Anna's part for the teacher training program to give pre-service teachers all the strategies, techniques, and knowledge for all the situations they will encounter, as Anna seemed to expect. What she should have gained was a foundation to build upon, utilizing the knowledge gained through the university's program and incorporating the necessary skills unique to the position.

And you know, it was, it's just, there are little things that you wish you could learn everything about, and again you can't but schools are so tech heavy now it's not even crazy. It's not even funny, I mean. It's just, you sit there in one school and have so much on technology and so little on actual teaching. I feel like as a teacher I was expected to be a facilitator of the internet and not so much a teacher because they wanted me to be using things like [Kahn] Academy. They wanted me to be using [Manga High]. They wanted me to be using uh [Brain Pop] and all these websites to do the teaching for me. So, it's kind of more of the facilitator rather than a teacher. But OK, let me grade your work based on these activities and let the internet do the work.

Anna's words were filled with anxiousness and fear. Bandura (1977) suggested that emotions such as stress may obstruct an individual's judgment, "People rely partly on their state of physiological arousal in judging their anxiety and vulnerability to stress" (198). In cases such

as Anna's, it could be argued that stress, frustration, and anger consumed much of her energies, causing her to think others excelled where she did not and leaving her with a sense of helplessness and self-doubt:

So far, it's the two, two of us new teachers that are falling, the new teachers that are falling. And it's, we don't know if it's us, or our education, or if we just don't like teaching. And the more I think about it, I think I'm just not cut out to be a teacher....

Because of all this, I feel like a failure. And whether it's because of where I am and what the transition experience is like and has been, or if I'm just not a good teacher. And it's, you spend so much time second guessing yourself that you just, you don't know, and it's hard to know if I'm just in a really bad situation for my first job. But what it makes me do is I don't want to try again....

The more reflecting I do, the more I realize it's becoming almost impossible to do what you need to do in the classroom to ensure that every student learns because the one thing that I find and that I think a lot of my friends that I still talk to, the one thing that we keep finding is that we don't have time or freedom....

Anna admitted that she lost confidence and belief in her abilities to meet the needs of children and did not want to invest time in trying to find the gaps and filling them. Her self-efficacy was replaced by self-doubt. She did not believe she had received adequate preparation at the University or the support in her school.

At no time in the interview did she mention a mentor teacher or principal working with her to make the transition less stressful. The only situation involving the principal occurred when she had already decided to quit. That conversation revealed relevant information about Anna's class load:

... my principal, the first time I talked to her about potentially leaving Southside was in November and the first thing she did was pulled up my students' test scores. Their tests that I had given, but she pulled up their test scores from the state tests, the EOG...

She pulled up the last five years. The students that I have are classic underachievers. They scored 1's and 2's on state tests, where a 3 is the passing rate. You have to be getting a 3 in order to pass. So, I'm dealing with students that haven't passed a test basically in five years. ..

Prior to the start of the school year, Anna had shared that her classes were gifted with some being ESL and exceptional. These were not the same students discussed during the session with the principal. It was clear that Anna's students were tracked into her class. Was she set up for failure? It did appear that is what had occurred. Many times new teachers are assigned students with many academic and behavioral issues to overcome, as described in Anna's situation. I decided to explore her thoughts on the students' backgrounds and the extent to which she believed this contributed to their academic attainment.

Understanding Diverse Groups

During the time Anna was a teacher candidate, she discussed her perspectives about individual differences among people. She did not support the position that race had any influence on learning and that all human beings should receive the same treatment. At that time, I wondered how far-reaching her beliefs and how they would play out in her classroom. With this in mind, I asked Anna to share her perspective on the influence of socioeconomics, race, or culture on students' achievement in her classroom:

I'm going to say no to race, but I'm going to say yes to the economic levels. The biggest issue I had with race, when people, with kids saying just because I'm Black, and you know, most of the teachers at our school unfortunately are White, but we turn around and we tell the kids okay, we did a math study to handle that race issue and we took the schools demographics and we put them up on the board for all the kids to see...

I was impressed with the use of a math lesson to teach students that issues are not always based on race. Anna used a lesson on probability, showing students by using a real example. According to her, they were able to see the connection between math and reality as well as learn a lesson on understanding others:

And it's, it's not anything personal. It's, you know, it's statistically speaking, that's the problem. And so, once we kind of laid that out flat for the kids, they understood it wasn't a race thing. Because, and it's an African American school...And so, they understood that. So, race wasn't really an issue, but socioeconomic status was definitely an issue.

I noted that even though I had asked Anna her beliefs on race, she explained how she dealt with students' understandings and did not voice her perspective. I found it interesting how she avoided sharing her beliefs and reflected on discussions during Phase I when she avoided discussing the race of the students she taught by using pronouns.

Continuing her narrative, she explained that the diversity in economic levels was “definitely an issue” and the “fault” of students' situations lay with the parents and lack of involvement in providing knowledge of the world beyond their own community. She believed that this limitation contributed to their lack of interest in learning, “There’s a whole big cultural aspect that these kids have not even experienced.”

Although economic barriers negatively impact learning and opportunities, it was important for Anna to identify root causes and address issues with understanding. Why are there socioeconomic issues within the school and community? What differences did they make in access to equal opportunities? Was it important for Anna to acknowledge this for her students and build lessons around their interests and needs? Anna did not share this perspective, and I thought about her limitations in comprehending how deeply these issues cut into the lives of her students. Therein lay another gap:

And then you have rules where a teacher is expected to dress professionally, dress nice, etc. and some of these kids are wearing the same outfit over and over again to school. And so, they start writing you off as somebody who doesn't care because you have money, what do you care. Or you've been to college and I'll never get to go, what do you care? You know, you, there's a whole lot of perceptions. So, it's hard for them.

Building relationships with students helps them develop respect for the teacher and opportunities they may learn to experience. Knowing students' perceptions gave Anna important information that signaled her to make adjustments in instructional delivery. Milner (2010) stressed how important it is to understand how “race or diversity would matter to their teaching”

(p. 46). This understanding is critical for White teachers to acknowledge when teaching in diverse environments. Considering Anna's background, it was imperative for her to reflect on her students' needs and broaden her perspective:

Because you know, I wasn't in a school that ... was failing, and so pretty much from that position it's very, very difficult, because for all intents and purposes I've lived a very privileged life. A very cultured life. A very whatever you want to call it life, but to say that keeping a school accountable based on a test score, I don't think it's valuable. I don't, I don't think the information garnered from that test is valuable, because there is so many outside aspects tied to that score...

What did Anna mean when she compared her background to her students' experience? Her comment failed to consider the inequities in the two learning environments, but she did realize that there are external factors to be considered when assessing students' achievement levels. I wondered if Anna comprehended how the advantages she enjoyed growing up were grounded in historical and social systems established decades ago that exacerbate the lagging progress of disadvantaged and minority groups. Based on the comments of her students' perceptions, it seemed as if they sensed the gap in her understanding.

Locus of Control: Effects of Standardized Testing on School Culture

During Anna's student teaching, I inquired about her beliefs on the causes of many problems in the educational system. In her response, she described a system controlled by federal meddling that "penalized children and schools more than it helped them." Now that she had her first experience as the teacher of record, I again asked her to share her perspectives regarding the influence of external forces on a school's practice. Her views had been somewhat altered as evidenced by her reflection when asked if she thought the government needed to "butt out of education":

In some ways, yes. And like the more, th, the more I think about it, maybe they do need to step in, but I think they're not stepping in in the right way. And I, I don't, I honestly, I, it's hard for me to say anymore how I even feel about that. And I think, how do you, how do you regulate something like somebody's learning?

I did not understand clearly what Anna tried to communicate in the last question she posed. Was she talking about standardization? In past conversations, she had expressed disapproval of the testing in schools and control of curriculum decisions by upper-level administration, stating that it interfered with teachers' academic freedom and their authority to make instructional decisions.

The more reflecting I do, the more I realize it's becoming almost impossible to do what you need to do in the classroom to ensure that every student learns... we don't have time or freedom...

I think there's too much authority that is not with the classroom teacher. I think we have more authority than, when it comes, let me rephrase this, we need to have more authority when it comes to the education of our students.

She provided an example in reference to a teaching activity she had prepared that was in addition to the curriculum, she told me that she feared "facing disciplinary action for doing something I thought the kids needed to know to even understand what we were talking about." According to Anna, any activity that deviated from that which was written in the curriculum had to be approved. I understood that this level of control would interfere with making alterations in lessons to support students' needs. I asked her to share more about her experience to gain a clearer understanding of her beliefs regarding her capacity to teach in this environment.

We need to change something. And nothing's changing... No Child Left Behind is leaving behind more and more kids. And that's exactly how I feel... You don't want to leave them with a deficit, with an incapacity to do something... You want them to succeed and excel and have that opportunity. And all I see in the system right now that I've left so many students who have the capability of doing basic because they're so worried about a test. And that test means nothing...

Anna used words in sharing these beliefs that were the same as those she used in Phase I when describing how she felt when trying to learn math skills as a student herself, and also when she talked about students' frustrations in her student field placement. I wondered if some of her anger and frustration was based on her own memories of being in the same situation. She

expressed her belief that the school was at fault because the district realized what it was doing to the students' morale and did not change their practices.

There were many barriers according to Anna that she could not overcome, not only from standardized testing, but the overall environment as well. She cited lack of parental involvement, student motivation, administrative support, and adequate professional development opportunities. With so many overwhelming obstacles to overcome and the challenges that accompany the beginning years as a practicing teacher, Anna felt powerless to make the changes and eventually gave up on trying.

And I just, I can't get past some of those things. And, but in some ways I think it is on me, but I think there's so many things that are broken. And I want to fix them, but I, I'm powerless. I don't even know where to begin. And it's, I think you have to have an incredibly supportive school environment in days where funding the state, where everything's driven by a test, sorry, a test score. They could care less.

Anna described many things as "broken." She was broken as well. Her self-doubts had flourished, leaving her without any desire to continue. I asked her if she believed she had the capacity to continue in the profession. She replied, "Capacity, yes. Will, no." I was not prepared to hear say she held the capacity to teach. There had been no evidence of that in her teaching practice, not even when she was a student in training. She continued her explanation of what it would take for her to engage in teaching again:

I mean, I'm sure given the right situation, the right school, I could be an amazingly successful teacher, basically because of everything I want to do with my students. But I just think there's so many hang-ups; there's so many things that prevent me from doing my job. And I just, I can't get past some of those things.

Realistically, in the right situation and the right school, we all could be amazingly successful teachers. The reality, however, is that we do not live in an ideal world where we get to pick the settings with perfect participants. These comments restate Anna's dream school that she described in the "perfect stories" in Phase I. I thought about her challenges throughout

training and her transition to practice. What was her motivation to teach? She said the words that many interested in teaching voice, but there were subtle messages she also communicated.

There was no doubt that she placed a great percentage for her lack of teaching success on the University. I did not hear evidence that she accepted responsibility for her lack of efficacy in the practice of instructional delivery:

I just don't think that what was represented to me in college was what teaching actually is anymore. You know? People call us glorified babysitters, and in some aspects of my job, that's kind of what I felt like. They have these, my hands are so tied. How do I change that? How, how do I, how do I keep on pacing, how do I meet the test expectations? How do I meet expected growth? How do I meet this, which I can't even do? What do I need to do to make sure the kids can add, subtract, ...?

And I feel like any subsequent schooling they get this year, that they had last year, or the year before that, when they haven't met the foundations, they should not have moved on in math. And you, now, that's kind of how I felt. I kind of felt in school, that I wanted to like scream and shout at somebody [that] I didn't understand and say why are you moving me on when I don't get this? I don't want to move on until I understand, because if I don't understand it, you can't build and I'm going to be even more lost later. Why are you doing this to me? And, you know, why are you doing that? And...

This was Anna's story. She came face-to-face with her own issues in the learning obstacles of her students. She clearly told how hurt and afraid she was as a student and now as a teacher. She screamed for help that did not come. It was my belief that many of the frustration she felt in training and practice stemmed from her own insecurities, a state Bandura (1977) referred to as "emotional arousal". I asked Anna if she internalized other's problems as her own.

Sure. I wholeheartedly believe that. And I guess that's part of my personality is that if I look at a students' failure as my own failure, and I look at failure of other people as my own failure. And it's really hard for me to separate the two. So, basically, yeah. I mean, it's hard and that's where I think that's where I'm struggling. It's hard for me to separate the two. And so, I just I feel like I'm no good and I'm worried that if I were to find another classroom of that kind of situation that I wouldn't make it the six months I've made it now.

Anna quit her position as 7th grade math teacher in February 2013. She had pondered her decision about leaving the profession since November of 2012. She decided to return to her

hometown where she found a job as a copywriter. She described this as the perfect job for her because she could work alone while reading, one of her favorite past times.

Summary of Anna

Anna made it clear that her motivation to become a teacher was driven by lack of interest in her previous major and an idea that her performance as a teacher would accomplish so much more than the teachers she experienced as a pupil. She shared snippets of childhood scenes where she felt on the fringe of students who seemed to know the answers to the questions, made good scores on the tests, or got the support from the teacher as needed. These memories of frustration and failure, and possibly some anger, served as her motive for obtaining a teaching career, licensed to teach a subject she admitted to “hating” as a child and unable to master until later years. Her idea to be more capable than her teachers nurtured her beliefs that other’s inadequacies and not her own lack of initiative or skill was the source of the problem. After she quit her teaching job, she did not comment on whether the inadequacies were the fault of others or her own.

Case Study: The Story Of Betty

Teacher Candidate

Background and Motivation to Teach

Betty was a twenty-three-year-old White female. She grew up in a suburban community located approximately 25 miles west of the city’s urban center. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) 11,948 reside in this community with 91.5% of the population classified as White and the remaining 8.5% belonging to minority groups. The estimated median income in 2000 was \$57,481; in 2011 it increased to \$62,419.

She attended private schools for all her schooling years and described it as a nurturing, supportive environment. During her schooling years, she did not have interactions with minorities or disadvantaged students. Having been sheltered by this confined environment, she was unsure what she wanted to study at the University and changed her major five times before deciding to enter the College of Education.

Um I – this is my sixth year in college. So, I switched my major uh quite a few times. I am graduating in June, obviously. Twenty-three. I switched my major quite a few times, so my first two years of college weren't even in education at all. So, I believe it was my third year that was my first year of education.

When asked what she would like to contribute to education, she provided her critique on learning styles that she preferred.

I really like hands-on learning, inquiry learning. Um I don't like to lecture too much. Um I like kids to investigate and kind of like build their community in a – in a school. I think kids need a community in the school, because a lot of times they don't feel that outside of the school. So, I really – not only do I – like with learning in the school, I think it's really important to be like a mentor or parent – you know what I mean?

To capture more on her views on teaching and her motivation to teach, I asked Betty if her beliefs about schooling were based on her experiences in school. In response, she addressed some of the differences in her teacher training from her own schooling experiences.

No. I – well, some of it is, but not that – like the – I went to private schools my entire life, so this is um – these experiences that I've had from __ within the urban districts are very different for me. So, I feel like the teachers are – there's more responsibility put on the teachers to be role models to kids. So—

Betty was hesitant in her explanation of the teacher training experiences and appeared uncomfortable speaking about the challenges of parental involvement in urban districts. There was also some difficulty in gaining a clear focus on Betty's motivation to teach or how her background experiences influenced her decision to enter the teaching program. Continuing this frame of questioning, I inquired about Betty's beliefs and whether she believed teaching should

be based on what her experiences were when she was in school. At this point, she opened up somewhat about her experiences:

And like you know, we didn't have the lack of parent involvement from where I went to school, so I didn't see education that way, that you know, you needed to be a parent and – because my teachers weren't parents to us, you know, this – you do your work and if you don't, you get in trouble, but your parents get you in trouble and some of the kids I have – some kids have great parents. I'm not saying all of them, some of them don't. So, I feel like the teachers are – there's more responsibility put on the teachers to be role models to kids.

Betty seemed concerned about limited parental involvement. Based on her experiences, she believed that parents were the ones responsible for guiding their children, setting expectations, and monitoring academic and behavioral efforts. She voiced criticisms against having teachers take on more responsibilities, adding parental obligations to the pressure of being role models to students. From her perspective, this level of involvement should remain with parents.

While I understood Betty's point of view, I also noted the importance of teachers being role models in children's lives. The importance of teachers as role models in children's lives has been an expected responsibility for decades. Working with children in urban communities demands that teachers take on an array of behaviors. Although teachers may be unfamiliar with students' experiences based on their cultural upbringing, making connections with them is vital to supporting their social, emotional, and academic needs, as well as the teacher's success in building relationships and productive, positive learning environments.

To ensure prospective teachers gained this level of understanding, the University incorporated elements in its Middle Childhood Education (2011) conceptual framework to address societal factors unique to urban schools, "The conceptual framework ...is to prepare committed, caring, and competent educators" and in the mission of its main initiative which states, "Our goal is to improve outcomes for students in high needs schools...prepare educators

who are committed to issues of social justice, caring about each individual...” (5). The focused and deliberate emphasis of Betty’s teacher training was directed toward supporting urban children, yet Betty’s views were the antithesis of the goals promoted through the program.

I encouraged Betty to share more on her experiences, listening for ways her beliefs about schooling influenced how she envisioned her own teaching and learning environment. I had interest in hearing how her personal goal compared with what she experienced in education and her desired contributions to the field at the end of 30 years. Her behavior seemed confused as she asked me to clarify the question two additional times, “OK. Like what do I want to do differently from them or just in general?”

Um I just want – do – do you – I’m sorry. Can you repeat the question? Are you asking me what my past experiences in education – like through my education?

I restated the question, asking her to share more of her personal education in comparison to what she planned to do when she had her own classroom and the contribution she wanted to make to the field. She finally opened up about her experiences, adding her critique of the current system:

Well, I think that a lot of my education was very, you know, structured, very like factory, you know what I mean? And very lecture based, and I would like to steer away from that because I – I don’t think that kids need that skill anymore. We don’t – there’s not that many factories. I mean, it’s a period of globalization, so there’s really no point in factorizing schools, you know, making them set up as a factory because it’s not helping kids anymore. Like it’s – the education system was developed during the Industrial Revolution, so that made sense then. But I don’t think it makes sense anymore.

Betty believed her years of schooling were not in keeping with the needs of 21st century children. Her words advocated the need for change in the system’s current functioning, which had not kept pace with “globalization.” The practiced, calm tone accompanied both a sense of control and detachment, as she stated her expectations for schooling the next generation of children. I wondered, however, if she understood the type and level of engagement necessary in helping students learn to think critically and make decisions on their own.

The hesitancy and lack of clarity on Betty's part did not go unnoticed. Seemingly unsure of how to respond, she took a while to process the questions. This time may have been a calculated approach, but it seemed to be more of a distractor for exercising caution with her information. It took much probing to get Betty to talk about what she wanted to accomplish to make education better for the children.

So, I would like to – I mean I'm not planning on changing the entire public education system, but maybe on a smaller scale help kids learn 21st century skills rather than, you know, 18th century skills that they're not going to use anymore. So, just um develop critical thinkers and kids that can – that make good democratic citizens that can be out on their own without me telling them what to do.

Although Betty identified what she wanted to contribute to education as a teacher, her comments regarding what she would like to help “kids” learn seemed to be said as an afterthought and lacked authenticity. Additionally, I noted her stated desire to incorporate the ideals of making “good democratic citizens,” which in some learning environments could be problematic or controversial (Sheppard, Ashcraft, & Larson, 2011).. These statements and Betty's behaviors during this part of the interview session caused me to think about her motivation to become a teacher.

Betty did not enter into the teacher education program until after five previous attempts in other fields. Her motivation to teach may have stemmed from having exhausted other career options. Interested in gaining an understanding of how her words would be implemented in practice, I made a mental note to watch for evidence during her placement experience and future conversations.

Teacher Preparation

Betty did not openly share her perspectives on the teacher training program at the University. Throughout our talks, I found her to be very guarded when providing her views

about her coursework, placement or overall impressions. I contemplated potential causes for her reluctance as I asked her to share her perspectives on teacher training and field placement experiences.

I was interested in hearing about training experiences that resonated with Betty, particularly in comparison to her years in private school, and her preparation to implement the theories she had learned through coursework.

I think – it did prepare me good, like I – I got a lot of um – I took a lot of literacy classes and that really helped. Like I – I feel like I took a lot of classes to help, you know, get a lot of resources for using literacy in like a science classroom. Just kind of – it’s more difficult to do, I feel like than social studies or um a literature classroom, obviously. So, I felt like the literacy classes were good. I had a lot of really smart professors. Um my social studies methods class, actually, I think was my best class I took. It gave me a lot of ideas. I feel like I’m really prepared to teach social studies, honestly.

Betty’s academic concentration areas were language arts and science. As I asked her to explain in what ways she found value in these classes, she talked about the resources, but did not provide specific details regarding the content knowledge she had gained in the areas of science and language arts, but shared that she found using literacy strategies to be of great benefit. She also was quick to offer positive appraisal of her professors and how smart they were, but stopped short of describing any knowledge to support her in practice.

Working to gain more insights on her thoughts, I stated that it sounded as if she had good experiences with learning the strategies. I specifically asked if she had learned strategies or approaches for supporting different cultures or facing the variety of issues in 21st century schooling, to which she responded, “Yeah. Um we did, but it could have been more, I think.” I probed, “What do you mean it could have been more?” Betty provided specific information about her classes:

Like we had – we had a cultural class and we – we did a lot of writing and stuff and we read a lot of articles, but like I said, like I wasn’t – I don’t know if you can ever really

prepare for that, though. Like kids getting picked on and like you can't – like some of the [lan-] – language and like words that the kids used, like I didn't even know what this is – like that's not something you really, I guess, teach in school. You have to learn and so do more of the real world kind of teaching

In this last semester of Betty's training, she was enrolled in TLDC and CMMC, both courses which focused on strategies important to practice. The TLDC course provided an appropriate setting for processing the dichotomy of theory and practice into everyday, real-life teaching situations. From her comments about the cultural class, however, I gained a better understanding of Betty's uncertainties or low self-efficacy in practicing the strategies for working effectively with diverse cultures. One example was presented in her confusion in relating to her students, "...like some of the [lan-] – language and like words that the kids used, like I didn't even know what this is." This was a missed opportunity to discuss with peers the cultural gaps that exist between teachers and their students and ways to bridge them through *mastery experiences*.

Lee and Dallman (2008) suggests that teacher's belief systems are formed from their own "sociocultural context," (p. 36) a reality that makes having dialogue with peers, sharing and listening to their experiences about diversity and ways to process their own responses is a valuable part of knowledge construction. From this position, it was understood that discussion could have led to a broader and richer appreciation for the differences students bring to the learning environment, a topic which could have provided beneficial information to others under the guidance of their professor. To the contrary, there was not mention in Betty's retelling to suggest that she used this as an opportunity for bridging the gap between her experiences in placement to what she wrote about in her own coursework.

Understanding Diverse Groups

From the description of one experience, however, it appeared that Betty was uncomfortable with being placed in a school so different from her own experiences:

They [college of education professors] really push us to go to urban areas and work, actually force – but um [be-] – before I had gotten to the teacher [edu-] – I had never been in a – before I got in the teacher education program, I'd never been in a public school in my life. So the first school I walked into was School Elementary. So, it was – it was really different for me, like um I never – I didn't know they had security guards at schools. Like, you know, I went to a private school.

Field placement has been described as an important part of learning for potential teachers under the supervision of experienced teachers. Experiences in Betty's placement offered her the time and opportunities to develop skills and knowledge required for working with diverse groups. The school Betty described was located in the city's urban area. It had a high percentage of minority and economically disadvantaged students. Throughout this part of her narrative, I observed Betty's body language and the way she stumbled through her responses, as if searching for the best way to express her thoughts. Because of her hesitancy, I wondered if this was an unsettling experience for her or a tactic to ensure she did not utter offensive or politically incorrect comments in her response.

Her word choice, “push us to go...actually force,” revealed her inner conflicts with the assignment. Since she introduced this focus, I continued the interview, making a point to listen for more insights into her beliefs about working in “urban areas.” I questioned her about her beliefs on race and its effect on schooling. I found her descriptions of her experiences gave insights into her discomfort.

OK. I don't think it – don't think it should, but I think it would be ignorant to say that there's no racism and that the – all – I just read um a – a chapter out of one of my education books that this man said there's no racism, race has no place in the classroom. And it – it really – and I was forced to agree with this on my discussion board.

Betty stated she was “forced to agree” during a discussion on race. Rather than standing firm to her true beliefs, she gave in to external pressure. Her choice of words illustrated her lack of control, and her actions suggested her that her way of dealing with potentially controversial topics and situations was to avoid them. Her years in private schools may have contributed to these beliefs and her behavior. I wanted to follow this train of thought, but the flow of her narrative did not provide the opportunity at this point. She continued her explanation.

I think she [professor] was just trying to put me out of my comfort zone, you know? She knows me and she knows how I feel about that. But um it was really difficult because maybe it should have no place in the classroom, but it does. That’s the reality of it and that these kids – everybody comes in to the classroom, every child comes into the classroom with different experiences and maybe they’ve had racial, you know – negative racial experiences where they’ve been put down or whatever because of their race. And we have a couple of [classes] here that’s um mostly ESL – 90% of the class is, and they get put down because of their race. They get called, you know – they get called all kinds of racial slurs. They get called ‘spic’ and the ‘Mexican class’ and like – and they’re not even all Mexican. It’s -...

I noted her comment, “She knows me and she knows how I feel about that” and listened for more on her perspectives of race. I asked her to provide more details and to explain who was behaving in this way:

– not the staff. Not that I’ve heard anyway. But from other students, and um I think it really – it – it kind of just puts them down every time. Like they’re kind of made to feel that they’re not as good as the other students. And I have heard other students say that and it really – it upsets me.

I encouraged this line of thinking and asked Betty to share how she dealt with the situation:

Um I had a student – I was eating lunch with some students and one of the kids said something, basically saying that the Mexican class – in quotations. I don’t want you [referring to me] to think when you’re reading (shows concerns about what I will think of her) – when you’re listening back that I was calling them that. But she [student] said that, you know – that they [Mexican students] um – that you shouldn’t put your stuff on the desk because you don’t know where they’ve been. She was just basically saying that they were dirty and whatever.

Well, and I kind of explained to her, you know, I was like your race has been continuously ostracized throughout the history. I said you need to pick up a history book, you know,

and we kind of went over some stuff. I had the time to do that because it was in our lunch period but you know, it doesn't make sense to me. There's just like – you know, the – there's a totem pole of how these kids view each other. And there was another kid that actually – she is very dark skinned. She's from um – oh, my gosh – she's from the Sudan. She's a refugee, and she was getting made fun of because she's really dark. I mean, she's the same skin – I just didn't understand that.

I don't know there was this hierarchy in this culture. I didn't know that. I was completely – I think the teacher [mentor] told me that or – I don't even know who told me that – but I had no clue. So I was so confused and she's crying. The kids are making fun of her because she's dark. So, that – so I – I think it definitely plays a part in how the kids view themselves.

I appreciated the retelling of this event. Her ignorance was underscored by her inability to comprehend how the interplay within groups often implodes. This is not a unique occurrence among Black people as Betty intimated, as she placed all people with similar skin tones in the same category. This misconception that could be considered stereotypical, an *all Black people are the same* way of grouping people or the way she said, “hierarchy in this culture” as if the behaviors of children with dark skin—Black people—are any different in the attitudes toward each other than any other group. Regarding how she handled these types of situations, I asked Betty to share how she would try to incorporate some of those stereotypes and biases into her lessons? She shared a story of one incident where she had to help a student understand the power of his words.

Um, I think that teaching about other cultures and about other – I think knowledge is power, basically, and if you can teach kids – most of the time, people are making fun or picking on cultures or students, whatever, that they don't know anything about. So, if you can educate kids and they're familiar with that, then generally, not always, but generally, they're going to be less apt to do that.

So, just like um one of my kids said something about Jewish – he doesn't even know what that word means. So, we got out the history book and we looked at the Holocaust and now he's – you know what I mean? He's different. He's completely obsessed with World War II and I just feel like if you educate kids on things that have happened or how you can pick out similarities between them and other cultures or educate them at least and they know why they do that, then they'll be less likely to do it again.

This brief vignette captured Betty's beliefs about how education may change a person's attitude. It was clear during this part of the interviewing that Betty was not comfortable with the way the children behaved toward each other. She did, however, take advantage of teachable moments to address attitudes that are derogatory toward different races and cultures, a commendable response. She believed the school should have had more focus on this form of behavior and believed they missed a great opportunity to bring about awareness of how race and culture are important parts of our society that should be respected.

Um [mentor teacher] was really good about that. She – she took care of that. Like talked to the class and we did, um, some – what am I trying to say? Like community – I don't – not community [building] but like kind of a – like awareness. Culture awareness things and stuff like that. I think they could have incorporated a lot more, just because of – it just seemed like [field placement] was like a melting pot. There was just so many kids from so many different places. It would have been a lot – it would have been cool if they could have done more stuff or incorporated more cultural things in everyday learning. Then again, that goes back to the testing piece, didn't really have – she [mentor teacher] pretty much had to do what she was [ha-] – the lesson she was handed.

Betty's experience at her field placement demonstrated how focus on standardization has a detrimental impact on the school climate. She talked about students' learning needs versus the culture of testing and accountability. Unfortunately, it appeared that she was disenchanted by the realities of teaching occurring in some schools. With regard to what the teacher training program should offer to make it better meet the needs of pre-service teachers, Betty offered insights for creating a more rigorous program.

Um well, I think maybe they need to hold teachers to higher standards. Like just their – even – like even the grades and everything and like passing the Praxis – Praxis is just not hard. And it's not hard to get a 2.8, and that's what you have to graduate with to be a teacher. That's pretty low.

Observation of Teaching a Lesson

During the observation of her teaching a science lesson on the digestive system to twenty-three fifth graders, I watched for the ideas espoused in Betty's philosophy of teaching

and learning, (“... help kids learn 21st century skills rather than...18th century skills....develop critical thinkers and kids that...can be out on their own without me telling them what to do.”)

Students were seated two per table in the science lab, facing the front board in traditional style.

The diversity of the group included the following members:

- Seven Black females
- Sixteen Black males
- Four Black female *IEP students
- Seven male *IEP students
- Ten general-level students
- Two advanced-level Black females

Betty stood at the Smart Board identifying the parts of the digestive system while students called out the answers for her to write. The mentor teacher was in the room and was also involved in the lesson. She asked clarifying questions of the students and offered praise, “___ . You did a nice job. Does that tell me you’re using context clues? Good.” She was seated in the rear of the room. My expectation had been for Betty to respond to the student, rather than have the mentor teacher continue her influence during the lesson.

I noted that there was no variety in the lesson. Betty implemented teacher-directed instruction, providing no hands-on or critical thinking activities, which Betty had stated as her preferred styles for instruction. The lesson unfolded in the following manner as described in the paragraphs that follow.

The class was settled and worksheets were distributed among the group. Betty wrote answers on the Promethean Board while students followed along on their worksheets. Literal recall questions filled the room as students called out answers to the blanks on worksheets,

“What’s the very first part of the digestive system? ____, do you know?” The lesson was not challenging or engaging, as one student demonstrated through inattentive behavior, “____, keep your hands and feet to yourself.”

This question-answer process continued for fifty-two minutes. The only variation occurred when Betty permitted students to take turns walking to the board to identify the parts of the salivary glands. They were the only ones engaged. As some became restless, Betty redirected with this response, “Shhh. We all need to listen.” My observation noted that students began to talk among themselves, look around the room, and neglect their worksheets. They had remained in this seated position for the entire class time, many of them not participating at all. I found this as a missed opportunity for students to demonstrate what they knew by experimenting or creating a product, especially since this was the end of the unit and they were reviewing for their upcoming test.

After the observation, I reflected on Betty’s words during one of our previous conversations:

Some classes you have to sit there and lecture and they have to write down or they will not pay attention. They’re going to chat, or maybe it’s a reward to do something like that. But then there’s other classes you could do it every single day and they are all on task. So, un, I think—it [teacher training] did prepare me good, like I—I got a lot of um—I took a lot of literacy classes and that really helped. Like I—I feel like-- I took a lot of classes to help, you know, get a lot or resources for using literacy in science classroom. Just kind of—it’s more difficult to do...

I agreed that students determine how lessons will flow. I would have thought, however, that Betty understood not all lessons should be taught the same way for all students, and certainly not for a full class period. Students require a variety of activities and movement, particularly in a situation where there are students with special needs. I also expected that the mentor teacher

would have demonstrated a variety of strategies appropriate for the diverse needs of the children in this class.

Informal Observation

I had an opportunity to observe Betty informally. The class was in the school's library seated at individual computers, reading questions on the screen and selecting answers. There was no interaction between Betty and the students. She stood back and monitored the group without watching closely to ensure they were selecting the correct answers. Students did not seem to need help, since none of them called the teacher or raised her hand for assistance. I could not determine if the lesson was challenging, but I did see that students completed the work without disruptions. I wondered if they preferred this way of learning over working within the classroom. I also reflected on Betty's seemingly aloof demeanor as she stood apart from the group. Was there a relationship between her and these students? If so, I did not see evidence of it.

Mentors and Mentoring

An important role for the mentor teacher is to ensure pre-service teachers assigned to them receive guidance in implementing practices to help them implement strategies appropriate to different circumstances within the school and classroom setting. In the University's Middle Childhood Handbook (2011), the responsibilities and qualifications of mentor teachers have been outlined to ensure pre-service teachers receive support in addressing academic and behavioral concerns. Bandura also (1986) discussed the major impact of teaching practice on developing mastery experiences under the supervision of experienced teachers.

Although Betty's field placement provided a time to practice mastery experiences, I found this form of instructional delivery was not appropriate for addressing the various learning

needs of the group or implementing the vision Betty had for teaching. Where would she learn to implement practices she found important in delivering instruction if not during field placement? Also, what role do mentor teachers actually play in redirecting student teachers in utilizing various approaches for student learning and how do universities work with schools to ensure best practices instructional approaches are modeled for prospective teachers? I did not see examples in this situation.

Locus of Control: Effects of Standardized Testing on School Culture

Betty's experience at her field placement highlighted how a focus on standardization had a detrimental impact on the overall culture of the school. She talked about students' learning needs that rated second behind the climate of testing and accountability. Unfortunately, it appeared that she was disenchanted by the realities of teaching occurring in some schools. I broached the topic by asking about her thoughts on the greatest challenge in education.

Hm. Um trying to teach kids while being evaluated on standardized testing. So, I think [laughter] – I don't know. I've seen it a lot here [field placement], because of the school – you know, the school district is continuous improvement and we have to do a lot of things that we know – like we don't think as the [be-] – how do I say that without – I don't want to make her [mentor teacher] sound bad, but things that she knows that are like the best ways, but you're like teaching to the test because you have to. It's your job or the school or you know what I mean? You can't – can't make a difference and you don't have a job. So, uh I think that's going to – is the biggest challenge right now.

Betty seemed upset by the fact that her mentor teacher was unable to teach according to what she believed students needed to learn. Could this have been the problem with Betty's limited strategies in her own practice? If so, then how will higher education address this form of *malpractice* training? Betty appeared reluctant to talk about the situation. It was difficult to decipher the source of her distress, whether she was unsure about sharing her concerns about testing or if she thought she may cause trouble for the teacher. There was no question, however,

that Betty did not agree with the teaching and learning practices in the school. Betty continued to talk about the management of the building and the politics of it all.

And it – I guess if you're in a school district that is doing well, you have a little bit more leniency to – to kind of do your own curriculum. But like here, we pretty much have to do whatever the department head tells us. So, we don't have much -flexibility...

I asked Betty to clarify her comment.

I – [I'm] just mean by the things that um – like what we were allowed and not allowed to do or – I don't know if maybe political is the right word, but it was just ...it was more – like the teachers just didn't really have much of a say on what they could teach.

I asked Betty if she thought this building management was unique to that building, and she responded, "No." I continued asking questions on the topic, hoping to find out how this type of teaching style worked for the students. Betty shared that she could tell the instructional approach was ineffective:

Um, I mean, I guess I would say adequate progress. Like enough to be OK, but nothing substantial... And I feel like the way they wanted you to teach was a lot more of like rote memorization, like to pass the test right away, not – not – it wasn't like building on concepts. It was more details, you know. No. I don't think that's exciting for most people. I know it wasn't exciting for the kids.

I asked her to tell me a little bit more. I wanted to know how she knew the students were not learning and how she knew they were not happy with the instruction:

Um, well, it was just – I mean, they didn't want to do – like what we would have to do uh test – like OAA prep – it is OAA, right? Sorry. It's been a long time since I've heard those words. The OAA is the test, right? OK. Sorry. It's OAT in Florida and I was just talking to my friend the other night about it, so I wanted to make sure I said the right thing. But we would have to do like test prep questions and all the kids would just like moan and groan about it, because it was just – it was so redundant and like it was just – it just didn't even seem like it mattered if they got the right answer. It was just the way they presented the answer to like [trick] the scores. I don't – maybe not trick, but just like to get a good score on it.

For a student teacher such as Betty, this situation did not offer the opportunity to practice writing lessons and making decisions on what children should learn based on their data.

Practices in mastery experiences were limited, making it difficult for her to practice new knowledge and skills because curriculum decisions were not hers or her mentor teacher's to make. From her tone and expressions, I knew Betty did not agree with this style of teaching as her words indicated.

I asked Betty to share more of her ideas on what changes in education could improve the current testing situation or improve learning opportunities for children.

Um I don't – I really don't – I don't have like all – you know what I mean? I don't know what my – exactly what my view on that is. I do think the teachers should be held accountable and that – that kids – I don't know the best way that they should be able to do it, but I – I think there's a better way than what we're doing now, than – than this – just the testing.

In regard to how No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the testing influenced social attitudes, Betty expressed the view that even if it intends no harm, testing children has a negative effect on the way society views schools and the way schools are treated. She responded to my question of whether NCLB and the media create negative attitudes:

Yeah. Especially – I mean, like when I wa... – and I knew that these ratings don't mean what you think they mean, but when I was looking at the schools I looked at them. And you know, and then I'm kind of telling – telling myself well, that really doesn't matter and it – you know – and it's – I think that this – they put all this – it doesn't make any sense to me why you would give more money to a school that's passing tests and then cut teachers and budgets from schools that can't pass the test because they – you know, they obviously need more [reso-] – [me-] – need more resources or more materials, you know, instead of trying to punish them, maybe help – give them resources to help those kids.

The political involvement in schools with testing gave Betty a negative impression on the way teaching occurs in the 21st century. This experience was so different from her schooling and her belief system. Her response above illustrates her belief that this way of instructing children is punitive. Even in her own situation and knowing how the system worked, she admitted that her attitude is negatively influenced by media commentary. Her emotions and doubts about how

schooling functions influenced how she selected a school for her own child. Even after having participated in training and field experiences in schools, she believed the quality of education was affected by school ratings,

Um trying to teach kids while being evaluated on standardized testing. ...I've seen it ... because of the school – you know, the school district is continuous improvement and we have to do a lot of things that we know – like we don't think as the [be-] – how do I say that without – I don't want to make her [mentor teacher] sound bad, but things that she knows that are like the best ways,...you're like teaching to the test because you have to...

With regard to what the teacher training program should offer to make it better meet the needs of pre-service teachers, Betty offered insights into creating a more rigorous program.

Um well, I think maybe they need to hold teachers to higher standards. Like just their – even – like even the grades and everything and like passing the Praxis – Praxis is just not hard. And it's not hard to get a 2.8, and that's what you have to graduate with to be a teacher. That's pretty low.

Hearing Betty's recommendation for the teacher education training program was unexpected. It seemed as if she did not hold the program's criteria in high regard. Her comments sounded very similar to complaints made by other critics of the education system. As she spoke, I wondered if she included herself in her critique of teachers.

Teacher Betty: Taking the Exit to True North

Finding true north described Betty's journey to discover the career that best suited her personal desires. Utilizing her internal compass to navigate the right career path required Betty to change her major six times throughout her educational exploration. It was not until Betty decided to take the exit leaving a career teaching in traditional public school setting that Betty

found her fit. Her final destination landed her in the field of special education working with children with autism.

Betty graduated in the spring of 2012 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education, Middle Childhood. She was licensed to teach grades 4-9 in the areas of science and language arts. She decided, however, to switch her focus one last time to special education and accept a job as a behavior therapist for children with autism. When prompted to share more about her desire to go into special education, Betty wrote, “For me, it was a little different. I choose [sic] to teach special education even though this isn’t what I went to school for. We don’t have standardized tests.” Was this a true reason to switch to this field? There is testing in some areas of special education. I decided to explore Betty’s thoughts more on her decision to once again change her focus. She shared more on this career focus:

Um, year. Um, I don’t—I think it—I—like I always knew like—well, not always knew, but I never thought I didn’t want to teach, But I think I just wanted—I think I just wanted a more specific or more, un, like individualized teaching instead of having an entire classroom. I wouldn’t want to do gen. ed

Um, I just like special needs kids. It’s just—I feel like it’s where I belong. I mean, year, just totally my own personal preference. I—I just—I didn’t know how much I loved them.

Betty also stated that having worked so closely with special needs students during student teaching helped motivate her to find a career in that field.

I talked more with Betty about her training in middle childhood education and the timing of her decision to go into special education. She shared that she thought about it during her student teaching, but it was too late to switch. I asked more in-depth questions to find out more about her reasons. In a journal response to one of my queries, Betty wrote about her reasons for waiting to obtain a special education degree:

I took one special education class and I thought about switching, but I had already switched my major so many times I just wanted to graduate and I figured I could get my masters in special ed. I never talked to anyone about it. I knew I was going to get my masters eventually anyways.

Her decision not to obtain her teaching certificate in special education at that time was motivated by her desire to finish her training and graduate. Rather than become a general education teacher, she started her career in a field different than the one she began when she enrolled in the teacher education program.

I thought about whether Betty may have made this decision based on where she was in terms of graduating and wanting to be finished with the program. Was part of her motivation to go into special education based on the number of children for which she would be responsible? How much influence did race issues (“There’s a lot of—a lot of race issues there that I was surprised of. Like the Mexican kids got picked on a lot”) and the politics behind standardized testing weigh in on her decision? I continued to think about these factors as Betty openly talked about the enjoyment she found working with special education students in her current career.

Teacher Preparation

Betty made it clear that the environment where she had her student placement had dulled her desires to work in a regular school setting. In talking with her after graduation for the University, she shared that the overall student teaching experience was much different than she had expected. This difference contributed to her decision to teach special needs students. Her explanation caused me to think that the search to discover her passion continued:

Um, I think that when I went into the school, I – it was a [lit-] – it was different than I had expected. It was a little bit more politics than I had hoped for, especially being in a school that was not doing so well for all the standardized testing and everything. There was a lot of regulations on what we could and couldn’t do. But um like I got to work with the um – a lot of kids with behavior disorders, and that kind of did – is the reason why I’m doing what I’m doing now. So, I’m thankful for that and I really like – it just was something that like really – I don’t know what I’m trying to say – like it – I really

just like – I really liked doing it, like it was something I just kind of like oh, I – I kind of want to do this. So...

She didn't know what she was trying to say, and neither did I. For a career that she chose rather than regular teaching, I expected her to be clear in her decisions. I engaged her in reflecting on her experiences in her field placement and teacher training. Her comments targeted the politically charged atmosphere at the school driven by an intense focus on standardized testing and accountability.

I think it [politics in the building] stemmed from standardized testing and public funding. I—I'm—just mean by the things that um—like what we were allowed and not allowed to do—I don't know if maybe political is the right word, but it was just—it was more—like the teachers just didn't really have much of a say on what they could teach.

In response to my questions about how the students responded to their style of teaching, Betty added that she believed “students made adequate progress, like enough to be okay, but nothing substantial.” She did not have a choice in creating lesson plans or designing her own lesson at all. She used the plans her teacher mentor provided for her, even though she believed they were neither engaging nor challenging. Interestingly, Betty was clear and direct in providing her perspectives on teachers' desires versus what she believed they preferred in teaching:

I feel like the way they want you to teach was a lot more of like rote memorization, like to pass the test right away, not—not—it wasn't like building on concepts. It was more details, you know. I don't think that's exciting for most people. I know I t wasn't exciting for the kids. It was just—I mean—they didn't want to do—like what we would have to do, uh, tests—like OAA prep, But we would have to do like test prep questions and all the kids would just like moan and groan about it, because it was just—it was so redundant and like it was just—it just didn't even seem like it mattered if they got the right answer. It was just the way they presented the answer to like *trick* the scores. I don't –maybe not trick, but just like to get a good score on it. That was more important.

Reflecting on her placement experience now that it was in the past seemed to release Betty of any responsibility for events which occurred during her training. She did not enjoy the assignment, as evidenced through her narrative, and knew students did not enjoy their learning.

Planning, creating, and implementing instructional activities was a critical part of training in field placement. The University established this time as part of their program for potential teachers to develop self-efficacy through vicarious and mastery experiences to sustain them in their years as practicing teachers. It is also a time for prospective teachers to gain a sense of their professional identities.

Betty's narrative revealed a non-example of instructional practices for any learners, particularly minority and economically disadvantaged students and future teachers. She went on to express her belief that learning in this setting was a secondary concern, occupying a place behind test scores and teacher accountability. As behavior therapist, Betty provided one-on-one instruction to her students, a position she believed to be more suited to her personal knowledge of teaching and learning and her beliefs. She provided an overview of her responsibilities:

We have um three – we only have three students right now, but our program can hold up to 16. But we opened in the middle of the year, so it's a little bit different. But I came from another location, which it's the same setup, like once we get full kids. But it's a 2 to 1 ratio and we have a – a room that is just the kids with autism and then the hope is that, you know, kids will come in [at three] – when Ohio had autism scholarships. So, they won't pay – like it's 20 – I think it's \$20,000 a year for every kid in Ohio that is diagnosed with autism or an autism-like disorder.

So, um our program – like they don't – [at three] they can – well, they can come before that but you'd have to pay out of pocket. Pretty expensive. So, at three they would come in, hopefully go through therapy and we would [re-] – reinforce social skills and everything and then hopefully they would move to the typical preschool room with support from a therapist. So, the ideal situation would be that the kids would progress enough to go to the typical room with support, and then hopefully move to a typical school for kindergartner, first grade.

Working within a setting specifically designed for children with autism, Betty seemed to find her niche'. Her calmed manner was noteworthy during this brief overview of one particular situation. She did not hesitate as she talked about one of her students:

There is a regular preschool that we do take some of our kids into, the inclusion. But those are the higher functioning kids or the kids that have – have learned – like usually kids don't come into the program and go there. It's like a progression. And that's not always – I do have one kid right now that – that he came in and he was already inclusion ready.

Betty chose to accept this job working with children with special needs rather than go into a traditional setting, teaching students in grades 4-9. Trained the typical way of providing instruction, Betty's program has scheduled courses for her that did not incorporate focused training or experiences in teaching individuals with exceptionalities. I inquired about her preparation for this occupation, to which she responded that only the classroom management class supported her in preparing for her daily responsibilities as a behavior therapist. Having worked with students with special needs at her field placement introduced her to a different approach for supporting diverse students' needs. The experience broadened her perspectives to a different need in teaching that presented another avenue to helping students without the pressures of standardized testing and performance constraints:

Um some of it. Like a lot of the – my classroom management classes, like a lot of that is um – like still applies but it's more individualized.

Um I just like special needs kids. It's just – I feel like it's where I belong. I mean, yeah, that's just totally my own personal preference. I – I just – I didn't know how much I loved them.

Since Betty illustrated a strong desire for a career in this new field of interest, I wanted to know why she did not investigate this area sooner or obtain her license to teach students with exceptionalities. According to her rationale, she decided that it would be better to graduate with her current degree and licensure in order to finish as scheduled, particularly since she had switched so many times. She would return at a different time to work on her Master and focus in special education.

A final part of the interview engaged Betty in sharing her overall thoughts on the teacher training program at the University and in what ways the program could have been improved.

She offered her experiences and recommendations for changes to enhance the program:

I liked that we were at the same school. I got to know those kids and everything for a whole year. But I would have also liked to see different types of schools. Because that—I was in X School, but I was only there two half days a week my junior year. Two half days for the whole quarter. And I did a—I did one—one lesson there, that I taught. One of my own lessons—like I—I did some of his lessons, buy one of my own lessons I believe is what it was.

And then, Z School [field placement] and they were pretty similar. Like I never saw—I would have like to have been in different kinds of schools, I guess.

I had to do four days at, um, Y School, but I was only there four days through the whole semester. Yeah. It was just like for a class, like it was just—we had to have like 12 hours or something...Just observation.

I know the University is dedicated to teaching inner-city teachers because there's more of a need for them. I feel like some people might feel like they were shortchanged because they were focused in just one area. I don't because I—that's always kind of what I wanted—I wanted to work with like inner city or more—I didn't really want to work in the suburbs, but then again, I'd never been in a school like that, especially the ones I went to. So, maybe a little bit, yeah.

And then the first quarter [field placement], we only did—I was—it was just like observation again, and then winter quarter is when I like took over the classroom. I wish that I would have had a little bit more in like classroom management strategies. Like I know we learned them, but I just feel like a lot—there wasn't a—like a lot of hands-on. Like I wish I would have been able to do that better.

Betty did not teach on a regular basis until her field placement experience. Even then, she stated that her first quarter was spent conducting more observations. Her recommendation would be to have more varied experiences in schools, including charter schools and suburban schools. She also believed she should have been more equipped with practical strategies for classroom management and different cultures and issues in 21st century schooling.

She also recommended that expectations in the teacher training program needed to be more rigorous:

Um, well, I think maybe they need to hold teachers to higher standards. Like just their—even—like even the grades and everything and like passing the praxis—praxis is just not hard. And it's not hard to get a 2.8 and that's what you have to graduate with to be a teacher. That's pretty low.

Betty was surprised that the expectations for teachers would be so low. She compared the Nation's view of education to that of Sweden's (could not remember exactly). Her point was that their students were outscoring American students and only the top 10% of people in their class were able to become teachers. She approved of the more stringent criteria and stated that this selection process probably was a factor in better achievement scores. She then added, "So, that—maybe they're just a little bit more prepared or they take education more seriously." This comment was one to really consider, then and now.

Effects of Standardized Testing on School Culture

After a few months into her new job, I asked Betty to reflect on the major challenges in education and to share her views based on her experiences. She responded that the amount of testing students have to be involved in has negatively impacted the education system. Whereas she once stated, "schools are a place where children can experience a community feel," they now had to focus on meeting state assessment requirements.

I know that we shouldn't standardize our kids like they're – that they're trying to get – I know they want to close the achievement gap and have all kids learn. I understand that. But kids learn differently and at their own paces, so I don't know how the best way to do it. I don't know.

Betty was critical of standardizing children through testing and classifying them, as she observed in her placement setting and in general. She expressed disdain for this treatment of children, but admitted she did know what to do to make learning better. How much time and energy was directed toward this question during her training? It seemed as if she was totally unprepared for this type of environment, which is surprising since there has been such a major shift in many

schools based on the need to close the achievement gap and improve test scores. One of her major concerns was that students would recognize how little their education was valued and stop caring. She believed overemphasis on standardized testing and public funding forced teachers to relinquish their beliefs about the best ways children learn in order to meet district expectations. Students' progress was a secondary concern:

Um, I think it [political pressure] stems from standardized testing and public funding. I—I'm—I mean by the things that um—like what we were allowed and not allowed to do or—I don't know if maybe political is the right word, but it was just—it was more—like the teachers just didn't really have much of a say on what they could teach. But I mean the way they teach is more what I meant to say.

In regard to students' learning and progress:

Um I mean, I guess I would say adequate progress. Like enough to be okay, and I feel like the way they wanted you to teach was a lot more of like rote memorization like to pass the test right away, not—not--it wasn't like building on concepts. It was more details, you know.

Students' response to their learning environment:

I don't think it was exciting for most people. I know it wasn't exciting for the kids. I mean, they didn't want to do—like we would have to do un test—like OAA prep, but we would have to do like test prep questions and all the kids would just like moan and groan about it, because it was just—it was so redundant and it-- it was just—it didn't even seem like it mattered if they got the right answer.

The political climate of testing and accountability was not the type of setting Betty expected to find when she went into education. The highly charged political environment and the limited involvement from parent overwhelmed Betty's expectations to the point where she believed there was too much responsibility placed on teachers to overcome the gaps some children endure. She also noted the problems parental neglect brought to the situation:

Don't know if you could really put a finger on a root problem. I think that the emphasis on the testing is – stems from – makes a lot of things, other things – what am I trying to say – makes – it's – it's – this – the stem – but I don't want to say it's like the root – because I think there's a lot of other problems. I mean, a lot of things go into education, you know, like parent involvement. I think that's really huge in, um, lower income

schools, when kids don't have the parents there to get them up for school. [E-] – Just to get them to school or to feed them breakfast. And I mean, schools try to help out with that, like you know get the kids breakfast before school and whatever, but I just – I think that that is a lot of the problem, too, is parents.

Betty's complaints included the amount of pressure teachers received from having to support parents in rearing their children. These comments were similar with ones made in previous statements about parents not supporting their students at home, leaving teachers to fill in for these responsibilities. In her current position, issues with parental involvement did not pose the problems she witnessed in her placement. Betty believed that the focus at the Center was more on supporting the child and dealing with the disability. Additionally, parents had to pay for the service in which the child was enrolled. Betty believed this financial commitment contributed to positive parental involvement as well.

Summary of Betty

Betty's case was unique in that she had already relinquished her plans to teach before completing the teacher training program at the University. Having switched her college major five times before entering the field of education, she found the realities of public schooling did not match her idea of how schools should function. She believed schools should provide a sense of community and support for students, where they could learn how to think and live as democratic citizens.

The influence of standardized testing and teacher accountability usurped the needs of children in her view and functioned more by political influence than teachers' expertise. She also encountered racial issues among students and lack of parental involvement to be barriers to learning, placing more responsibility on teachers to counter the effects of these negative factors on the schooling environment. Her decision to choose a career outside traditional teaching

stemmed from her desire to avoid the barriers to educational progress and to work within an area where she could make positive contributions to the lives of those she served.

Case Study: The Story Of Clara

Teacher Candidate

Background and Motivation to Teach

Clara, a middle-aged White female came from north of the city's urban center. She lived with her family in a middle- to upper-middle income suburban community. Her desire to become a teacher stemmed from her experiences as a substitute teacher and her interest in promoting literacy in the schools. As a child, Clara grew up in a community celebrated by some as one of the city's premier historic areas. Located approximately ten miles from the city's urban center, this community had a population of 2,154, with a population change of -1.6 since 2000.

Clara attended elementary school located in a district well supported by businesses and property income taxes. Although it was a diverse community, Clara stated that she did not notice any minority students who struggled to learn. She did not see any differences based on race or culture.

As an adult, Clara married and moved to a suburban community approximately 20 miles north of the city's urban center. After earning a Bachelor's degree in marketing and working in the business world for a few years, Clara decided to remain at home with her children. As they grew older, she was inspired to become a teacher through her work as a volunteer Mom at her children's school and later as a substitute teacher. This year marked her eleventh year substitute teaching. She said she enjoyed this time working with the children and decided to get her teacher's license in middle childhood education.

Clara entered the University's teacher training program in 2010 to obtain her Master's degree and teaching license in Middle Childhood Education. When asked what she wanted to contribute to education or to accomplish in her career as a teacher, Clara explained her that her love for literacy motivated her to help children make sense of what they were learning:

Literacy, um, and helping children see an authenticity between what is going on in the classroom, what they're being asked to learn, and what is happening in their lives and the world.

Questioning Clara more about literacy provided a glimpse of her philosophical perspective about teaching and learning and the ways they were tied to literacy.

Um, and there are so many that are still struggling with the, the skills of reading. And how to read, that they're missing the content. And they need that in life. They need, they need to have a fluency in reading and literature so they can read it so they can comprehend it on deeper and deep-, deeper levels to get the information that they need to grow as people, to ask deeper questions of themselves and the world around them, to understand what's going on in their world. Whether it be for, for their education, for jobs, and just to be a well-rounded person and know what is going on in the world. For voting, for life application.

Further discussions into Clara's reasons for having strong support for literacy skills revealed that she loved to read and expected that it was a skill all children acquired in school. Throughout the interview, Clara consistently talked about the need for literacy for children and adults. She applied the skill to many points during the interview and spoke with conviction about the many issues in society attributable to lack of literacy skills.

I realized it doesn't work that way and the kids who were the ones struggling got left behind. And the more research I did into, they got left further and further behind. And it seems like about fourth grade year is the year that if you don't have it by then, the odds of you getting it get grow slimmer and slimmer each year as you get older...

After discovering the gaps among different groups, she decided to teach and advocate for children's rights to be able to read.

Helping and supporting these kids where they are in understanding that education isn't just from 8:00 to 3:00, but it involves questioning and broadening your perspective and your horizons wherever you are, what the foundations need to be built.

Is it, is it that we have less emphasis on the importance of education and what does education mean from one person to another person? Is it education for education's sake or is it education for where it can get you? Or is it education um, I don't know. I don't know. I, the root problem? My heart says literacy, but I think it's bigger than that. I think it, it goes deeper than that.

Clara's beliefs fueled her intrinsic motivation, driven by her passion for reading. I questioned her about her own plan to achieve the goal she set for herself and her idea of the perfect classroom focused on building literacy skills. What would that look like in her classroom?

Filled with literacy of all genres and types, non-fiction, fiction, um and supporting whatever, whatever is going on. When we talked about social studies and, and um talk about teaching content within the English room, the language arts room, so if you're going to teach content within the language arts room you can have that content in written form. So, it could be about social studies. It could be about science. If you're learning about the Civil War, um if that's part of that grade's curriculum, then you ought to have all kinds of pieces, posters, pictures, writing in that room from that time period, from different voices within that time period. Um the European perspective, the, well if we're talking Civil War, we're going to talk about, you know, every side of it. The slave side, the politician's side, the kids, um understanding the lifestyle of that era, getting a broader perspective and realizing that there isn't just one voice to any time.

There were copious print resources in her ideal classroom, yet no evidence of her knowledge or strategies for how to use them. Since she had provided so many reasons for strong literacy skills and the need to teach them, it was important to hear her insights on the best practices to implement. I listened for ways she would incorporate standardized testing expectations, but she did not share any details about how she would assess students and meet these obligations to state mandates.

I continued the interview with this topic in mind by turning the conversation to the challenges that would hinder her plan. She hesitated and asked me to repeat my question about

greatest challenge to education. Finally, she answered that literacy was the problem of the past and continued to be the problem in the 21st century:

We're still struggling with things we were struggling with years ago, which is literacy. You, you got the technology and keeping up with the technology and can the technology help the kids? Of course, but just putting technology in a room isn't going to make it a better room, a better educational environment for the kids.

I did not expect Clara to identify literacy as the greatest challenge we face in the 21st century, but since this was her response, an explanation for her view should have been given to support the point she was trying to make. She attempted to clarify her response by adding that the question was too broad to really answer, "And I guess I'm answering it very broadly, but that's a really broad question."

Clara's reaction to questions during this part of the interview gave the impression that her comments were not grounded in knowledge or based on an awareness of current issues impacting schools. Although literacy does pose a problem for many children, her belief that it is the greatest challenge in schools demanded more explanation and clear examples to support her views. Her limited responses made me wonder how much she actually understood the practices required for achieving the goals she spoke about so self-assuredly.

Her desire to ensure all children were able to read stemmed from her personal experiences as a reader supported by family and the schools she attended. Her many positive experiences working within schools in her suburban community and with her own children nurtured her beliefs that she could be successful in helping other children. Ultimately, her take-charge attitude prompted her to act on her beliefs and earn her teaching certificate. I wondered, however, what knowledge she had to bring about change in education.

Teacher Preparation

During the time I spent with Clara, I asked her to reflect on her teacher training and field placement experience. I was interested in hearing about areas that particularly stood out to her. Specifically, I asked her whether the teacher training program in which she participated prepared her for teaching.

Um they try. I think in theory. It, it, they-- they try. And I think just like in, just like in the buildings that we're in right now and the buildings that I've worked in, there are, there are some [teachers] who are really authentic and really um a little more closely to what actually happens in the classroom. And the grand vision. But you kind of need the grand vision, too, to have a goal to reach toward. So, they try.

I asked Clara to elaborate on the “grand vision.”

The teacher education program at the University strives for best educational practices in terms of, um, educational theories and educational studies have proven that, you know, group work is the best and um [relationality] with children is good and, you know, movement every 20 minutes or so. And that is not what is being practiced at any of the schools that I was placed at through university. At all.

The frustration in her tone was noteworthy, as was the emphasis in her words: “they try” and “in theory.” There was more to her narrative that required more probing on the topic of her coursework and its applicability to her placement. Her words were purposeful and tinged with criticism. What she had studied through training had not adequately prepared her for the realities of the work place, “...so teacher burnout and teacher shock and teacher—yeah. Absolutely.” She added that there was a gap between what teachers are learning and the needs that they have when they get into real teaching positions, “You don't go into education thinking that you're going to be revamping—spending as much time on testing and data as you are.”

Clara's background and understanding of schooling were different to the environment she found in her placement. Her teaching philosophy was developed based on her own learning style

and this gap when making the transition did help develop positive self-efficacy. The conversation followed her lead as the topic switched to coursework in her training.

Coursework

When discussing coursework, Clara focused on the level of support she experienced through the teacher education program. She believed developing instructional capabilities and teaching competence was vital to delivering quality instruction and appropriate responses to various environmental and behavioral needs. She believed her training was average and helpful for providing instructional strategies. In application, however, there were no opportunities to practice or develop her skills.

The support I received from the education program did help with instructional capabilities in terms of educational studies as to how we learn, thinking about linking new knowledge to old, and experiential and social learning helped me as I continue the school's model of reading and writing workshops. I While this style of teaching was definitely supported in my University classes, it was never exemplified in my student teaching/observations experiences.

Clara's narrative identified a gap between what is taught in training and what is practiced in the schools. She shared details about the focus on testing and lack of authentic teaching experiences in the placement. She also shared the disillusionment of other pre-service teachers and the way they dealt with inconsistencies:

And I know of at least three, and they were younger... but I know of at least three of the traditional students who dropped out after going through some of the practicums. Um be – because they were so disillusioned with what they saw in the classroom versus what they had been taught and told it was going to be.

There appeared to be a theory-versus-practice gap between what the training delivered and the practice required. For pre-service teachers this incongruence was understandably overwhelming, particularly when student teachers were also responsible for so much new knowledge. It should be noted that situations such as these do not enhance the learning for student teachers or the

younger students with whom they work. I prompted Clara to share more of her experiences with field placement.

...I was in the same classroom from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year, so from August 9th to June 1st or whatever that final date was. Um, I was in the same classroom in the building. So, I don't – I can't speak to how other teachers taught. But again, you had kids coming in and sitting down and it was a lecture. And the lecture might last two hours.

Um they got there at 8:00 um and we – we were started by 8:20 and they went until lunch. Um, and so they had language arts for almost half the day. And then they had math and science for the other half of the day, the way it was broken out. It was supposed to be social studies, but the teacher – the language arts and social studies combined... into the first couple of months, the teacher said we've run out of time, we've just got to hit it with language arts and try and pick up some social studies and content.

From her description of the day's routine, it was evident that Clara's experience was not one that aligned with the philosophy of the university or with Clara's commitment to "authentic teaching and learning." Her manner and tone hinted of tension with her mentor as she related the events of her teaching practice.

But it was pretty much um lecture driven and it was also some textbook because the teacher said that from the textbook you could validate that you were actually hitting the points you were trying to hit. So, if you were supposed to be teaching non-fiction, questioning, and connection, and you read this story in the book-- if everybody read it, then the teacher could say I taught this topic. And the books that they were using through Book Publisher had the state um standards that they were trying to teach to. So you knew OK, well, here's the state standards so if anybody from administration came in you could show that you were teaching to these particular standards because you knew you were because you were teaching out of a book that said you were. So, you used the teacher's manual and the kids read from the kids' books, and then you hit it.

This teaching style did not represent the criteria that University's education program described.

Discouraged by the experience, Clara explained that her mentor teacher did not positively respond to her attempts to introduce varying teaching strategies and activities. She indicated that the mentor had firmly told her teaching would be done her way only. Clara decided not to complain, concerned that it would create more problems in her placement.

Understanding Diverse Groups

The next area of discussion focused on Clara's beliefs about race. I asked her to speak about race and whether she thought it should be considered in instructional planning.

I feel it's more cultural. I, I don't think it's race. Um. I think we need to explore all races just like we explore all countries. Like we explore all other areas as a part of studies in curriculum. It's a part of the big world we live in. Absolutely. But I feel there are, because, because if you go to, I don't think race inherently makes the difference. I think it's a culture. I don't think just because someone is Asian, they're automatically going to be the brightest kid in the room in math. OK? So, I don't think because a student is black, they're going to be the worst kid in reading. I don't think it works like that. But there are pockets of culture that seem to share more values. So, the value of education, higher education, um and wider perspectives for understanding the authenticity of education to reality. And, and if you are in a lower economic situation, you're going to be struggling more on just daily, you know, getting the job and getting the food. So, taking your child to a museum.

Clara's explanation on race and culture is valid to an extent. Her comment about the Asian culture being the "brightest kid" and the "Black students being the worst in her scenario has stereotypical undertones, which from her conversational tone, she did not think about negative message she was sending. Unfortunately, this lack of awareness could be misinterpreted in some environments and result in friction in certain relationships.

Observation of Teaching a Lesson

During the observation of Clara teaching a language arts class, I noted the mentor teacher gave students directions on the list of items in their current research project. The students listened and moved to the areas when directed to do so by the mentor teacher. The pre-service teacher stood in the rear of the room until the mentor teacher had finished talking, then moved about the room talking with students about their projects. She stopped at one group and worked with them on their project. She led two students from the group of five to the computer area, which contained two computers for classroom use. As she and the two students returned to the

group, the mentor teacher came to the group and began talking with them. At this time, the pre-service teacher walked to another group. The mentor teacher and pre-service teacher continued to walk among the classroom talking with students. After twenty-five minutes, the pre-service teacher asked the mentor if the class could go to the computer lab, located in another part of the building. The mentor teacher went to check her calendar to schedule the time. The pre-service teacher continued to talk with individual groups. The class session continued this process for the entire fifty-five minutes I observed. Since there were only two computers in the classroom and limited resource materials, students' assignment productivity was extremely limited.

The mentor teacher controlled the delivery of instruction for the entire class period. I had expected the pre-service teacher to be the primary person responsible for instruction, particularly since I had received permission to conduct the observation. Additionally, I did not see or hear the mentor teacher or the pre-service teacher talk with students about the learning objective for the day's activity. The pre-service teacher did not address the full group at all during the time I was in the classroom.

Mentors and Mentoring

To explore Clara's thoughts about her experiences with practicing new knowledge and instructional skills in the placement, I asked her to share more about the working relationship between her and her mentor teacher through the following question: ...do you feel empowered to comment on the way the class was structured? Did you feel like you could ask, "Why don't we just look at the material that's here and use it to inform our teaching rather than guide our teaching?" After which, Clara explained.

In my case, I did not. Wanted to, because that was the way I had been teaching and that was the way um – not only that [university] had taught me to teach but in all of my substitute teaching experiences, it was not from a book. If you used a book, you used it to supplement other learning. You didn't use it as the core focus of the class. But in that

class, I had pretty much been told what my place was and it was pretty much to assist the teacher. So—

The need for a teacher mentor to act as a mentor is critical to a pre-service teacher. The lack of professionalism in the situation did not work to build efficacy for Clara as she experimented with practicing new knowledge and skills in the training program. I asked Clara to elaborate on how she reacted to the situation to see if she believed she had a right to advocate for her own learning.

My university mentor was aware of the situation. I did not teach from August 9th to June 1st. The only time I actually taught was when I was doing these videos for the university that I had to do um for a project for the university. But other than that, um -.

I asked about others at the university who could support her, by identifying different people involved in the placement program. She identified one particular person who did not assist her in resolving the problem.

Um she did not. And I thought – and – and in order to do so in all honesty, I feel like I would have had to have left the building because I think there would have – I think it – there would have been bad feelings. And I – I don't want to come off sounding like my mentor teacher was terrible. She did not practice the type of teaching that I know or that is effective for me.

To hear that a year was spent in this type of educational environment for pre-service teachers to learn the practice of teaching provides an example of how placements may do more harm for pre-service teachers than good. Hoy and Spero (2005) affirm that inadequate training also may be a contributing factor to high attrition rates among beginning teachers.

Clara shared that the relationship among the staff at the university was tenuous, leaving her without the support important to teachers-in-training. Because of her desire to complete the program, Clara remained in the situation without voicing further complaints. I noted, however, her anger about the situation.

And you do what you're told and – yeah. Yeah. Or they'll bump you out or put you in something else and at that point, you know, I'd been through a year of additional undergrad classes and, you know, a full year of education courses and was in my final

year of education courses and I just thought I'm not rocking the boat at this point. then I was exhausted and I said I just need to get through this. And my university supervisor was of the same— just you know –you're putting the checks in the box, you just fill in – you're just filling in your time so that you can get out. And that's what I – that's what I was attempting to do. I did. Did either of those experiences help me? They broadened my perspective as to what was happening in urban situations, which just made me sick.

Clara expressed strong disagreement with the support she received at her field placement and the lack of support from her university supervisor. She did not feel empowered to improve the situation. Her emotional response to the situation was to give up and do what was necessary to finish the program. She was angered by the learning environment for children in urban schools. The training did not promote educational opportunities for the children or provide a positive experience for building high self-efficacy in beginning teachers. Clara's statement, "...you're just filling in your time so that you can get out" illustrates her physiological/emotional state is negative and conducive to the development of low self-efficacy.

Locus of Control: Effects of Standardized Testing on School Culture

Clara discussed how the government's involvement in education has transformed the system. She described how the intense focus on standardized testing in schools ignores the most important goal of the school, to improve achievement for all children. She is surprised to find that lower income schools focus more attention on testing than middle to higher income communities. Since Clara has been actively involved in education as a substitute teacher for over a decade, she has a greater awareness of how politics influences education.

How has it changed education process? Everybody's worried about the test. The test. There's a wonderful picture book I would, and I think it's just called 'The Test' that I absolutely love told by a child's perspective. And it shows the teacher's administrators running around, just flipping out over the test. But don't be stressed, it's the test. Um but it, it's a very ironic book because it shows the teachers, how stressed everyone is about it. And um, and it's one of those, it's funny because it's true. Don't worry about, don't stress about it, but study for the test. Um it, it blows me away and I feel like having worked at Suburb School, which is considered a higher income district, that um is another point that could be argued and then at Urban last year for observation, and then here, the

biggest difference feels like the, amount of pressure about the test. The OAT's. Much higher stress...

Clara explained that the amount of emphasis placed on the test seems to be determined by the socioeconomic status of the school district. The school is high minority and high poverty in comparison to suburban, higher income communities. She is angry that the students who seem to require more attention to their studies spend more time discussing the test and where their scores place them.

So, the kids had to then, they take their test and when the results come back um they have to sign off on it and they have to state a goal. They're given a sheet with goals printed on it, and they put down the goal. Um. For, and, and they can come up with their own goals and some of them will say I want to be a doctor or um I want to be a football player. But they have to color in based on the results of that test whether they got a red, a yellow, or a green on a range, you know, there's a range of their test scores. And again, this comes from maybe reading a passage and answering five questions. Or as many as seven and as few as maybe four questions on these tests. And it is a constant pressure. The teachers feel the pressure from the administrators. The kids feel the pressure from the teacher, you know?

Clara described how students were required to list their goals along with their test scores. She expressed strong dislike for the way students listed goals that did not match their scores. The concerns with the accountability system outweigh students' needs.

In her teaching position, Clara could see how external forces controlled events occurring in schools. A primary example was how students received instruction. In the example below, Clara shared how children at her teaching position were instructed.

In my current teaching position, the most fun I have and I think most teachers would tell you the same thing, there's a 40 minute or so period during the day um – I've been in various schools that call it various things – teaching and enrichment, so T&E, RTI – Response Intervention – but it's a time out during the day when the kids are truly grouped either - according to something – scores that they got on something. I – sometimes it's been scores they got on a common assessment, sometimes it's been scores they uh – their reading scores, sometimes it's been based on science or math. But they're grouped and then they're moved around every so many weeks and – and during that time period, while it's instruction, it is non-graded instruction.

So, there isn't a grade on the report card that says T&E or RTI. It's just true instruction. The atmosphere during that 40 minutes is so much more relaxed. You're not – you're not set up, you know, paced um that you have to get through this unit and the next unit and the next unit, and then you have to have such a percentage of kids pass. You can have kids just sitting and reading and then you can pull small groups up and work with them on individual things or small group things that you think they need to work on. You can have discussions, robust discussions with kids about um things that they've read or done and it's just a much more relaxed atmosphere without the pressure of the pacing and the testing. And if education as a whole were more like that, I think it would be more conducive to learning, there would be less stress on the teachers, less stress on the students, and you know – and there's the subjective thing.

And if you have teachers who are actually going to use that time to really bond with the kids, get to know what they need and work with them on that, that can be some of the most valuable time of the day

Clara saw value in allowing children to learn for the sake of learning. She believes that children need time to explore, nurture their curiosity, and discover on their own. She was able to enjoy this type of teaching in part because of the climate that had been established by the school's principal. Clara credited him for the positive sense of teamwork in the school.

He [principal] comes in classrooms to get students or ask questions rather than calling on the classroom phones. He's the most involved principal I've ever seen. He walks his building. He sometimes sits in the cafeteria during student lunches working on his laptop or eating with students. He organizes and attends monthly movie nights and in short is very familiar with the staff and students in his building. This creates a different atmosphere for teaching--very supportive of the teaching experience and he handles the discipline.

Clara described this setting as one which made her work “ten times harder at planning and preparing than I thought I would.” In contrast to this environment, the site where she did her field practice was very different. She talks about the gap between what she learned in the training program and her field experience.

I was in the same classroom from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year, so from August 9th to June 1st or whatever that final date was. Um I was in the same classroom in the building. So, I don't – I can't speak to how other teachers taught. But again, you had kids coming in and sitting down and it was a lecture. And the lecture might last two hours. They got there at 8:00 um and we – we were started by 8:20 and they went until lunch, and so they had language arts for almost half the day. And

then they had math and science for the other half of the day, the way it was broken out. It was supposed to be social studies, but the teacher – the language arts and social studies combined - which we did at the beginning of the year, but by – into the first couple of months, the teacher said we've run out of time, we've just got to hit it with language arts and try and pick up some social studies and content. But it was pretty much lecture driven.

The comparison of the two teaching episodes demonstrates the powerful impact external control may have on the teaching and learning. In the situation about, the mentor teacher used direct instruction and control, never relinquishing any time for allowing children to guide their own learning. According to Clara, this was the plan implemented by the district in response to low ratings on the state report card. Clara expressed concerns over the effect of standardization on the education system, particularly in schools that have issues with students' achievement. On the other hand, the school's leadership was able to control the negative influence testing may have by setting a positive tone in the building.

Clara's teaching style or philosophy did not parallel with what she found in her field placement. She stressed her desire to teach differently in her field placement assignment, but she could not because of the mentor teacher and the teaching restrictions in place in the building. Her perspective and descriptions of her time at her placement present a bleak picture of a frightening experience for young prospective teachers who have not had any experiences other than their own schooling.

Teacher Clara: The Ins and Outs of Teaching

Clara's stated desire to teach and empower children by providing them with literacy skills stemmed from her intrinsic motivation. Her years of experiences as a substitute teacher enhanced her chances of landing her ideal teaching position. Months after graduating from the teacher education program in the spring of 2012, Clara gained a teaching position. She did not maintain the position, however, beyond the first year.

Clara was hired to teach 4th grade language arts at an elementary school in a suburban community. Students' standardized testing data showed the high performance of students in the school (Table 4.4) achieving well beyond the state's average. Their progress, however, had gone down over the past three years reading and math progress. The school's demographics did not present a majority White population of 75% with the other 25% consisting of minorities and economically disadvantaged students (Table 4.5). This school did not share similar characteristics with Clara's field placement during training. She was familiar with the school, however, since it was located in her home community and she had been hired as a substitute teacher there in the past. Clara expressed positive comments in describing her working environment. I could hear the excitement in her voice as she described the elements she encountered that supported her transition from student-learner to teacher-of-record.

4TH GRADE ACHIEVEMENT					
State Standard – 75%					
Reading			Math		
2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
90.2	94.5	89.0	87.5	90.4	84.7

Table 4.4. 2011-2012 School Year Report Card. 4th Grade Achievement. 2011-2012. Ohio Department of Education. Reportcard.ohio.gov.

Your School's Students 2011-2012										
Average Daily Student Enrollment	Black, non-Hispanic	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	White, non-Hispanic	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	Students with Disabilities	Migrant
655	7.4%	--	6.5%	5.9%	5.0%	75.2%	14.2%	9.8	9.1%	--

Table 4.5. School Year Report Card. Your School's Students 2011-2012. Ohio Department of Education. Reportcard.ohio.gov.

Teacher Preparation

Clara described the support she received in her position at her new job. I noted the enthusiasm in this beginning teacher's voice as she shared a description of her ideal job in an atmosphere that focused on "just true instruction."

The atmosphere during that 40 minutes is so much more relaxed. You're not – you're not set up, you know, paced um that you have to get through this unit and the next unit and the next unit, and then you have to have such a percentage of kids pass. You can have kids just sitting and reading and then you can pull small groups up and work with them on individual things or small group things that you think they need to work on. You can have discussions, robust discussions with kids about um things that they've read or done and it's just a much more relaxed atmosphere without the pressure of the pacing and the testing.

And if education as a whole were more like that, I think it would be more conducive to learning, there would be less stress on the teachers, less stress on the students, and you know – and there's the subjective thing. And if you have teachers who are actually going to use that time to really bond with the kids, get to know what they need and work with them on that, that can be some of the most valuable time of the day.

Clara had experienced the "perfect classroom" experience just as she had described in a previous interview. She shared that the perfect classroom would be "one filled with literacy of all genres and types, non-fiction, fiction, um and supporting whatever, whatever is going on." The involvement of the school's principal with the students was praiseworthy, according to Clara. Additionally, she was fortunate to work on a team with other 4th grade language arts teachers, planning and collaborating together.

Clara's teaching position was a positive experience for her. She believed it was a good fit that she was prepared to fill. Working with a team of language arts colleagues, Clara was able to enhance mastery experiences that support high self-efficacy. An additional support to her was administrative involvement that Clara found contributed to her sense of efficacy. She did not, however, credit her teacher education training for having contributed to her development. When

I asked her to share her view of the teacher education program, she immediately talked about her teacher mentor and her behaviors in working with her students.

Understanding Diverse Cultures

I continued the interview, interested in learning more about her motivation and self-efficacy development. She provided an interesting comparison of her suburban workplace to her placement assignment.

Behaviorally, I have not seen the disrespect insubordination at my first year that I did in my student experiences, nor did I respond by calling parents in the middle of class or yelling at a student (calling him out) in class. I tried to ignore non-disruptive behavior until I had the rest of the class otherwise engaged, then spoke to the student individually/privately.

Unfortunately, the perfect classroom did not exist for all students, particularly minority and disadvantaged students. Interestingly, as she talked, her words noted the inequities that minority and disadvantaged children experience in their schooling as opposed to her ideal teaching situation. She reflected on her experience at a different school with high minority and disadvantaged students:

... I was told that the school board um – that they came because that school was a low performing school, so they were functioning under strict government mandates so they didn't get taken over. You know, they [school district] were about to be taken over. Um, as a matter of fact, you know, theirs was supposed to close but there was this parent outcry so they remained open. Um, but there – they were a Race to the Top school. They [government] were throwing money at them, trying to get them [students] – when they went to the library, they went to the library and sat down in front of computers, which if you went past them you – at the library, oh, that's really cool, they've got this neat equipment there. They [students] never, ever checked out books from the library. Not once. The books are over on shelves. They didn't even browse the books. They came in, they sat down in front of the computers, and the librarian led them through a series of drills. Might be math, might be reading, but they sat down, faced the screen, and they went through a series of drills. They did not check out books. They did not sit around the room reading. Um so – and I'm being very candid here and hopefully it doesn't come back to bite me. But in all honesty, I did not see one instance of teaching the love of reading, the joy of reading, or even the necessity of reading. It was just – other than to pass the test. The test, in big capital letters!

Clara discussed at length the type of learning children experience in high minority and disadvantaged schooling environments. I heard the disdain in her voice as she described what she had observed in her student teaching placement. The image provoked negative thoughts about her experiences in teacher training at the University and schooling inequities. When asked to reflect on both placements with regard to how they helped her make the transition to teaching, Clara succinctly summed up her beliefs about both experiences:

...I don't think it had anything to do with University. ...I just need to get through this. Did either of those experiences help me? They broadened my perspective as to what was happening in urban situations, which just made me sick. Um, where I thought things were bad in suburban schools where I'd been at, then I go to the urban school and I'm like oh, you know, you think suburban school—you know, my peers at the suburban schools would be saying it's getting terrible, we can't do this and that. And I'm going you haven't seen anything yet. You know? So, it opened my eyes to that...

I thought back to Clara's use of the phrase "true instruction" in her previous statements and thought about her original motivation for desiring a career in teaching. Previously, she stated her motivation was to teach literacy skills to all children. I wondered how she now viewed the needs of disadvantaged students and whether she expected that they would receive true instruction. How could she translate her teaching style to teaching environments that were more challenging? She had also used the phrase "authentic teaching." I wondered if her vision for the *ideal* in education was for all children to exhibit the same interests and behaviors according to her idea of what learning should look like in the classroom. Clearly, her eyes had been opened, and the vision she saw did not present hope for a positive future for some children.

Mentors and Mentoring

It was apparent that Clara's new teaching position, based on her descriptions, provided mastery experiences that supported high self-efficacy. Working among a group of professionals as a member of the language arts team also provided mastery experiences that came with

opportunities to collaborate within a professional community. Clara had material resources, teacher support and the school principal who modeled expectations by taking an active role in engaging with staff and students:

This building has the most involved principal I've ever seen. He walks his building, he comes in classrooms to get students or asks questions rather than calling on the classroom phones; he sometimes sits in the cafeteria during student lunches working on his laptop, or eating with students. He organizes and attends monthly movie nights, and in short, is very familiar with the staff and students in his building. This creates a different atmosphere for teaching—very supportive of the teaching experience and he handles the discipline.

Clara was inspired in her work by the leadership of the school principal. She had found the ideal teaching position that supported her beliefs about how children should learn, and this was based on teaching literacy. According to her written reflections on her first year teaching, she thrived in this environment:

I worked ten times harder at planning and preparing than I thought I would, even with planning with the other two language arts teachers, and with a binder of the units including daily lesson plans. We use that as a guide to structure our own lessons, and then gathered the resources either from previous teaching or original creations to support the lessons and incorporate book clubs, independent reading, poetry reading and writing, and historical fiction projects. It was more work, but more rewarding than the reading packets (copies of short cycle tests) or reading textbooks that I saw during my University student/teaching experiences.

While testing was important, and we would look at the end-of-unit tests while constructing the lessons to ensure we were covering the standards tested, I did not feel the pressure I had at my student teaching schools to continually teach and talk to students about the state testing in the spring.

This last comment was made in reference to learning how to teach at her field placement. She reflected on experiences during that time, which were in sharp contrast to what she enjoyed teaching in her suburban workplace.

Clara's teacher mentor during her field placement did not model appropriate behaviors. The leadership in the building was pressured by upper administration to improve test scores. There was a lot of tension and the focus remained on student assessment and performance. The

mentor teacher was abrasive and did not engage Clara in planning or grant her much freedom in instructional practice. According to Clara, there was not a positive learning experience conducive to self-efficacy or mastery experiences.

Clara explained that she was not the only one who found difficulties in adjusting to the culture of the placement schools. According to Clara, two of the other student teachers decided to leave the program because they were not prepared for the realities of the teaching world. In her own placement experience, she described a situation where she and her supervisor had “bumped heads” regarding a request Clara had made. I asked her to share more details about why she chose not to find another support person. In response, she stated, “you do what you’re told and—yeah. Or they’ll [teacher program instructors] bump you out or put you out in something else and at that point, you know...”

An episode such as the one Clara described above did not offer two-way communication between Clara and her supervisor, quite unlike the positive, collaborative environment she experienced in her new position. She did not, however, seem to have been negatively affected by these experiences. She attributed her sense of calm to having had years of experience and resolving many issues through past experiences. When asked about the teacher program and what it had contributed to her experiences, she rolled her eyes and stated, “Um. They, they. I think in theory. It, it, they, they try.” I wondered what else Clara had to share, but she led the discussion to another topic. It was clear from her manner and change in topic that she did not want to discuss the situation further.

Locus of Control: Effects of Standardized Testing on School Culture

Clara did not encounter the same type of pressures or stresses in her position at the suburban school that she faced in her placement assignment. The principal had set a positive

tone in the building and she found students and other staff followed his example. Clara criticized the stringent focus on standardized testing and offered criticisms of the level of external involvement driven by the need to secure improvement scores on standardized tests. Although Clara was glad that students did not spend so much time practicing for tests, it was noted that for the few years performance levels had gone down. I wondered how Clara's teaching style would influence scores.

One observation Clara shared caught my attention. It was on the topic of the inequities in educational opportunities for children in high minority, high poverty schools. According to Clara, these schools use teacher-directed instruction, pacing, and practice assessments in schools which she explained are not authentic learning activities. She continued to explain that she had seen this treatment in other placements she had encountered through the University. She believed it was a great disservice to the students and commented, "It just makes me sick." I found myself agreeing with this observation.

Summary of Clara

My first encounter with Clara presented a teacher candidate that appeared confident and knowledgeable about schooling and best practices. Clara explained her passion was motivated by her love of literacy. She talked about literacy in all aspects of schooling and found it to be a major issue for all students, regardless of their race, culture or ethnicity. Having had over a decade of substitute teaching experience gave Clara an advantage in how schools function. She had a positive attitude about her capabilities and shared that she was prepared to teach. Teacher training was just a necessary step to obtain certification.

After the observation of Clara teaching her lesson, I reflected on her comments about literacy and how she would manage a classroom. In this observation, I did not see her engage

with students in her preferred style of instruction. Her lack of engagement did not support her philosophy. Although I understood her rationale for maintaining this instructional environment because of her mentor's preference, her compliance with the situation did not match her words. I wondered how much she had talked with her mentor or supervisor regarding her needs as a student learner and how much value she placed on her training since she viewed herself as experienced. It was also noted that her engagement during the lesson seemed forced and lacked enthusiasm, contrary to her description of an authentic learning environment. I had expected the emphasis she placed on ensuring all students obtained literacy skills would be manifest in her instruction.

Clara was disillusioned by the intense focus on testing in her placement. She criticized the school and higher administration for not providing a more nurturing environment, particularly since students' progress lagged behind others across the state. She noted the inequities in learning opportunities between her placement school and her teaching position where she described being able to practice her style of teaching.

At the end of the year, however, Clara was not hired permanently. She shared that a teacher more experienced in working with diverse students had gotten the position. As I questioned her to learn more, Clara shared her confusion about losing the job, especially since she had been a substitute teacher at the school in the past. To me, it appeared there may have been valuable insights that Clara missed during her training and field placement. Experiences in the diverse setting could have benefitted her on her job and filled a gap in understanding schooling issues in addition to students' learning needs.

Cross Cases Analysis: Teacher Candidates

Background and Motivation to Teach

The teachers' motivation to teach originated from different sources. Clara's words expressed a commitment to teaching children literacy skills. This desire remained consistent throughout her interview as she discussed the importance of literacy in all aspects of life. Her background and beliefs fostered an intrinsic motivation to develop positive teaching practices and a strong sense of self-efficacy. In comparison, Anna's beliefs and past experiences with schooling provided the motivation for her to become a teacher, but in ways different from Clara. Her motivation stemmed from negative emotions that originated in bad experiences with her own teachers. Snapshots into her school years portrayed images of her struggles with math skills, testing, and anxiety aggravated by teachers who did not help her learn. There was no discussion of a desire to work with children, rather thoughts of doing a "better job than her teachers." Her descriptions did not present the vision of the "ideal classroom" or the "perfect stories" she described during her interview. She spoke of incidents of repeated failures and disappointment in training and placement as well. Her motivation is extrinsic.

Lastly, Betty chose to enter the College of Education after attempting five previous majors. She did not talk about a desire to provide a service to the students. Initially, her extrinsic motivation was driven by the need to complete her studies, having been at the university for six years. She explained that she had already changed her major six times and needed to finish. She did, however, share that she enjoyed working with special need children during her placement experience and decided to find employment working in that field. Neither she nor Anna demonstrated evidence of an intrinsic motivation to teach.

Among the three, only Clara seemed to be intrinsically motivated to earn a teacher's certificate. She expressed her desire to teach literacy to all children because she viewed illiteracy as a potential cause of many of society's problems. Anna and Betty seemed to be searching for the right fit for a career. Although the three teachers used the language of educators to describe their desires to teach, there was no evidence in their field placement to demonstrate their initiative to learn and work toward mastering their craft. Considering the outcome of their first year as teachers, this assessment appeared to be accurate.

Motivation to teach is a precursor to success in the teaching profession. Researchers reported that teacher candidates who have the right motives to enter the teaching profession engaged more deeply in their training and were committed to remaining in the profession (Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2006; Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010). It is critical that teacher education programs continue to search for ways that support teacher candidates in identifying the source of their motivation to become a teacher early in teacher training.

Teacher Preparation

The analysis of the data uncovered some disparities between intended outcomes of the teacher training program and the influence this training had on teachers' beliefs and behaviors in their first year of teaching. Interview results for the three participants identified specific areas of their training and field placement that did not prepare them for the realities of teaching in diverse settings. They specifically mentioned intense pressures from testing and accountability. Researchers have found that field placement afforded prospective teachers practice under the guidance of experienced teachers. Knobloch (2006) suggested student teachers greatly benefit from "situated and incidental learning in authentic social context through increased knowledge, opportunities, applied knowledge in new ways and new situations, increased competence,

increased self-knowledge, value for life-long learning, improved life skills and development of self-confidence” (p. 36). Bandura (1986, 1997) reported information from mastery experiences as “the most powerful source of information” (Pajaras, 2008, p. 752). While the research literature reported positive results from student teaching, the participants’ reports contradicted these findings.

Anna summed up the experience with her own recommendations for how the teacher training program could improve student teaching. She suggested year-long responsibilities in the classroom fully in charge of all teaching responsibilities. She did not like having one quarter of observation, a quarter of actual teaching, and another quarter of observations because it did not represent all the work that goes into teaching. Additionally, her criticisms of coursework, specifically the CMMC, TLDC, and literacy courses, voiced an overemphasis on theory without the logistics of how to implement theory into practice. Both Betty and Clara’s reported similar frustrations regarding the amount of theory presented without learning the skill of applying new knowledge to situations.

Understanding Diverse Cultures

During their personal schooling experience, the teachers had encountered limited to no interaction with minorities, a factor that may have restricted their understandings of different ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups to secondary sources. Among the three, only Anna described having any relationship with someone outside the White race. As they responded to questions about race and culture, none of them acknowledged that race was a factor that should be considered when making instructional decisions or creating an appropriate learning environment.

Each teacher stated that socioeconomic status created more barriers than race. They exhibited what Milner (2010) referred to as “colorblindness” (p. 16) in their approach to teaching. This lack of acknowledging differences or planning with students’ academic outcomes in mind created problems for Anna in her teaching position. Also, this gap may have been an issue with the way Clara approached her planning and teaching. Betty had already decided she would not be successful as a teacher and chose a different career path.

As diversity increases, the demand for pre-service teachers’ awareness and ability to attend to various beliefs, traditions, and cultures becomes greater. It should be noted that while the three participants did not appear to have issues with diversity on the surface, there were areas that could potentially cause disruption in the schooling environment. Anna’s insistence to disregard race as if it did not matter in the learning environment raises serious concerns about the gap that remains between understanding and respecting others’ cultures, race, and traditions. Bank’s (2001) explanation of the detrimental impact of colorblindness is appropriate here. Siwatu et. al (2011) assert that a failure to acknowledge and respond to “differences and incorporate students’ culture into the teaching and learning process may result in student withdrawal and low academic achievement” (p. 211).

Betty was disillusioned by the harassment between groups based on race and culture that she encountered. She could not understand the harshness some students held toward others and admitted to a lack of cultural awareness in many areas, including the language some students used. Clara’s privilege as a White upper-class female created a barrier in recognizing how her comments could be misconstrued by others, especially minorities. Although seemingly harmless on the surface, these beliefs about differences among people can and do create barriers.

In agreement with concerns posed by Glazier (2003) and McAllister & Irvine (2000), Settlage et al. (2008) raised an important issue when discussing the difficulties in preparing pre-service teachers to be “culturally responsive as they work with children who do not look, speak or think as they do” (p. 103). It is imperative for pre-service teachers to consider their future roles in the classrooms and the relationships that will need to be formed as they deal with the complexities of “teaching across cultural boundaries” (Settlage et al., 2003, p. 103). Teachers’ beliefs about how much they will have the ability to support the learning needs of children who do not look like them is of critical importance for all stakeholders. If a positive relationship between the student and teacher is not developed, chances of enhanced teacher self-efficacy and improved student achievement is highly unlikely.

Mentors and Mentoring

Mentoring and professional relationships are important in supporting pre-service and beginning teachers in learning how to bridge the transition from teacher training to beginning teacher. The student-mentor relationship must be one in which the student trusts the mentor and sees her as a resource. The importance of this experience cannot be overly emphasized, as it has a major role in self-efficacy development among pre-service and beginning teachers.

Betty and her mentor teacher enjoyed a positive professional relationship. The teacher candidate often talked to her mentor about issues with student behaviors and attitudes. She also learned her mentor’s frustrations with lack of academic freedom to teach according to students’ needs. Although Betty found her mentor to be supportive, she did not model appropriate teaching strategies that support diverse learning needs. Betty practiced traditional teaching methods that she knew did not meet students’ need, rather than practice various methods of instruction. Adopting the attitude of her mentor teacher, Betty believed there was nothing she

could do other than accept the situation. She did not believe it was within her control to advocate for change.

Anna's experience with her mentor was similar in that she also practiced traditional teaching strategies, utilizing a curriculum that was not appropriate for the students. In addition, she did not practice appropriate management strategies to address behavioral issues. She did not voice her concerns with her university mentor because she believed the supervisor was too busy with her own issues. She admitted her extreme frustration because of the lack of support. Even though she had a positive relationship with her mentor, she did not believe she had the ability or authority to change the learning environment. She also took on the attitudes and beliefs of her mentor teacher.

Unlike Betty and Anna, Clara's relationship with her mentor was not professionally courteous or productive. Clara stated that the style of teaching practiced by her mentor was not aligned to her teaching style or philosophy. She even expressed concerns that the mentor teacher had instructed her to stand aside and assist. She did not believe she could protest the placement or the mentor teacher's directive. She explained she was not comfortable in this placement, but felt that a complaint would make the situation worse. Additionally, Clara stated that she did not believe her supervisor at the University would support her. According to Clara, they had already "bumped heads" regarding a previous issue, and she chose not to cause any additional conflict. She said she decided to deal with the problems and "just get it over with." Clara's issues underscored a serious contradiction in the efforts to develop high self-efficacy among pre-service teachers with the mission of the teacher education program.

In each of these situations, the quality of the experiences with mentor teachers or the types of professional relationships encountered did not support the development of self-efficacy

for pre-service teachers. This was a missed opportunity for all involved. Parkison (2008) brings attention to the significant challenges of providing quality field experiences for teacher education programs and in “helping pre-service teachers make connections between theory addressed in the university classroom and the practice they observe in the K-12 setting (p. 29). A quality program demands “systematic and intentional field experiences” (p. 29). If field placement is designed for student teachers to explore, practice new knowledge, and acquire high self-efficacy through positive experiences, then it must be the responsibility of the teacher training program to ensure pre-service teachers engage in “mastery learning experiences” (Bandura, 1986).

Locus of Control: Effects of Standardized Testing on School Culture

Lastly, all three participants felt the pressures of external locus of control originating from a culture of testing and accountability requirements. They saw them as interference in students’ learning and in hindering teachers’ authority to utilize best practices strategies. They did not believe there would be much they could do to offset the external pressures from the state and local leadership.

Teachers

Teacher Preparation

The last year of teacher training and field placement left participants’ feeling disappointed with their overall training and field placement. Their perspectives were that the program was not effective in providing mastery experiences for developing self-efficacy to support them through placement and the transition to their first year as certified teachers. For example, Anna was hired to teach 7th grade math in another state. She expressed disillusionment with her training and believed she did not experience success as a teacher. She was unable to

utilize the knowledge and skills from training in her teaching practice. The issues she encountered during her training were similar to issues present during her field placement.

Anna shared that she was unaware of the responsibilities that went into teaching and suggested that the teacher training program provide more authentic mastery experiences and ensure more responsibility is given to pre-service teachers during training. Experiencing low self-efficacy, Anna expressed her belief that she was “no good,” and quit her job in February after having taught for only 5 months. She stated she was not suited for a teaching career and did not plan to ever teach again.

In instances where teachers exhibited low self-efficacy, the likelihood they would remain with a teaching task until it was successfully accomplished was less than it was for the teacher with a higher level of self-efficacy. For example, Anna demonstrated low self-efficacy and believed that she did not have the capacity to be a good teacher. She quit before the year ended.

Betty’s low self-efficacy directed her path toward a different type of teaching environment. She avoided teaching in a traditional setting altogether. In Betty’s experience, the idea of teaching a general education class after her experiences in field placement was not an option. She believed that working with smaller groups and with special needs students was more to her skill set. The hostilities among the students and stresses from pressures of a highly-charged political environment overwhelmed her. She decided that she would complete the Middle Childhood Education program, earning her license to teach, but her goal was to return to school in a few years to earn a Masters in special education. She chose to start her career as a behavior therapist in an organization separate from the public school system.

Clara entered the Middle Childhood Education program to earn her Master’s degree and a teaching license. She had experience in substitute teaching and believed the training program

was just “going through the motion.” Her first position after earning her license was in a 4th grade language arts classroom in a suburban school in her own community. She said she really enjoyed the experience so much more than her field placement teaching because of the way the children were treated. Her belief was that this treatment was attributable to poverty and low achievement of the people in the community. At the end of the school year, her position was terminated, and Clara found herself searching for another job. To date, she continues to work as a substitute teacher. She joined the other two participants in their lack of success in teaching careers during their first year as certified teachers.

Understanding Diverse Cultures

Teachers in the study did not believe race posed an issue in instruction when they were in teacher training. Their beliefs altered, however, as they began their own careers. Anna decided that socioeconomic status influenced what and how children experienced schooling. It was a very different way of thinking than she was prepared to face. Anna’s students were high risk, high poverty students who had not passed their standardized test. For this reason, Anna had to ensure she followed a tightly scripted curriculum written solely to improve performance on standardized tests. Anna understood that their environment and economic status influenced their experiences in school and expectations others, including herself, had for them. Anna realized that she was poorly equipped with the knowledge and skills to support students’ needs. Additionally, the school did not provide adequate teacher preparation for her, leaving Anna overwhelmed and dispirited. Expressing words that described her failures, she decided to give up her teaching career.

Betty recognized her struggle to process the issues and attitudes each cultural and racial group demonstrated in her field placement much earlier than Anna. She was overwhelmed with

the pressures placed on teachers and students to improve achievement during teacher training and field placement. At that time, she made the decision not to enter the teaching field in the traditional sense.

Clara's experiences were similar. Although her words highlighted the problems in working with diverse cultures, she was reluctant to return to the same type of environment as her teaching placement. She chose to send applications only to suburban schools, mostly where she had worked as a substitute teacher. Although she was fortunate to be hired at a school in her home district, she did not retain the position. At the end of the year, she was non-renewed and the job was given to another teacher from a different district. According to Clara, the principal shared that the person hired had more experience working with "diverse populations."

In sum, none of the beginning teachers began or ended the program with a vision for how to lessen the gap in cultural, environmental, or academic understandings. Nor did they have the motivation to improve their understandings.

Mentors and Mentoring

Both Betty and Anna found fulfillment in their teaching positions. They were supported by someone as they became familiar with the working of the job and the environment. Both of them had models to observe and use to guide them as they learned through mastery experiences.

In contrast, Anna was given a very difficult group of at-risk students. Her main objective was to ensure students received the skills to pass the end of year test and the state's standardized tests. It was not until later in the year that she and the principal discussed background needs of the students. The principal did not offer to support Anna or to identify a teacher to serve as a mentor for her. Anna did not believe she had the skills or knowledge to continue. She expressed fear and anxiety in the position and shared that several of the other new teachers had similar

feelings. Feeling unsupported and expressing great doubts in her capabilities, Anna quit her job six months after school had begun.

Locus of Control: Effects of Standardized Testing on School Culture

For Anna, standardized testing played a dominant role in her limited success with teaching 7th grade math. External pressures caused by the urgent need to improve students' mathematical performance resulted in several high-risk students being tracked into Anna's math class. Anna found herself confronted with issues stemming from achievement, limited material and human resources, and behavior barriers that culminated into serious management problems. Additionally, most students, according to Anna, did not understand the value of passing tests or performing academically since most in their community environment had not finished school and did not appreciate the value in schooling beyond high school. Anna found she lacked necessary skills and teacher efficacy to combat these attitudes.

Betty identified her career preference prior to selecting her job. She did not like the pressure from standardized testing and chose a career that did not involve them at all. Clara understood the pressures of testing on the school environment and made the decision to apply for jobs in areas that did not have stringent focus on testing and accountability. She chose the position in a suburban school where she was free to exercise teaching strategies that fulfilled her vision of teaching literacy. It was noted, however, that the school's performance, based on state standardized tests, had gone down in the past few years in both reading and math. Clara did not know if testing needs of the district had any influence on hiring decisions.

Discussion of Findings

After conducting the cross-case analysis, I discussed the findings derived from teachers' experiences. Based on data collected, background experiences and beliefs influenced beginning

teachers' capabilities in acknowledging and processing new knowledge for use in making meaning from unfamiliar or challenging situations. They were able to discuss the relevance of theory in their coursework, but did not process the information in a way that made it accessible during the act of teaching. They succumbed to the pressures that accompany new and challenging situations and reverted to past beliefs and behaviors about teachers' responsibilities to educate themselves and their students, the influence of racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds of students on learning, and connections between aggressively establishing positive relationships and productive learning environments.

Past studies have highlighted a relationship between beliefs and their influence in shaping pre-service teachers' interpretations and responses to knowledge and experiences during teacher training (Chong & Low, 2009; Mansfield & Volet, 2010). Eilam and Poyas (2009) reported that pre-service teachers process their understandings of teaching through the "lens of their prior knowledge, including their preconceptions and beliefs" (p. 88). This study found that beliefs played a role in the development of self-efficacy and contributed to the limited success and failure of the three beginning teachers.

Different factors influenced teachers' motivations to choose a teaching career. These motivations contributed to teachers' career outcomes. None of the three teachers had chosen a teaching career as their first career choice. Contrarily, it appeared that for two teachers, a teaching career was selected by default since there was dissatisfaction in other selected majors. The third teacher had chosen a teaching career after having served as a school volunteer and substitute teacher. It was her second career choice, selected after her children had grown. Her reasons for selecting a teaching career appeared to be motivated by intrinsic factors, whereas, the other two teachers were extrinsically motivated to teach. Whereas, Clara had talked about

helping children with literacy, the other two teachers did not mention helping children learn as their primary motivation.

Teacher training experiences through coursework and field placement did not support beginning teachers' self-efficacy development. Activities during this phase of teacher training presented varying opportunities to process and practice connecting theory and practice, an important step to beginning teachers' development of self-efficacy. The program's mission statement and teacher preparation initiative established specific criteria to ensure teachers gained important skills and knowledge, and teacher candidates were required to complete courses specific to the content areas. Also, there were written descriptions of expected responsibilities of both teacher candidates and mentor teachers.

Teachers shared, however, that coursework and experiences in the field were not quality learning experiences and did not engage them in experiences that promoted positive self-efficacy development. Johnson (2010) suggested teacher efficacy development was strongly influenced by the environment of the field placement. All three voiced criticisms of their field placement and the program's activities. They shared that teacher training in practice did not align with the program's written mission statement, the criteria or description of coursework requirements. One teacher candidate shared that teachers and teacher candidates should be held to higher standards. She explained that teachers should have a GPA of higher than a 2.8. Findings from this study demonstrated the strong effect teacher coursework and field placement had on self-efficacy development for the beginning teachers.

Bandura's mastery and vicarious experiences (1977) were major sources that influenced self-efficacy development for beginning teachers. During field placement, teachers' experiences during observations of various teaching styles and outcomes from teaching practice influenced

their beliefs about teaching, teacher effectiveness, and teacher empowerment. Another contributing element was locus of control or the amount of power teachers believed they had in making decisions on what and how children should learn. Proper training and field placement experiences were important elements for guiding teachers through understanding these complex issues of current-day schooling. The development of self-efficacy and motivation to teach demand that teacher candidates have opportunities to work through social barriers and challenges. Although these beginning teachers did have the experiences, they did not engage in opportunities to reflect on experiences, experiment with various instructional approaches, or observe master teachers during instruction. As candidates, these teachers required opportunities to engage in and reflect on experiences with appropriate mentors so that mastery engagement would lead to positive self-efficacy development. Findings from this study revealed that field placement was a major influence on beginning teachers' self-efficacy development and level of success during the first year teaching experience. Lack of opportunities to observe good teaching models or reflect upon placement teaching activities with mentors, however, impeded positive development of self-efficacy.

Expectations from external sources generated negative beliefs about teaching for beginning teachers. Standardized testing and accountability efforts created an environment focused more on testing performance than students' learning needs. This focus led beginning teachers to believe that schools, particularly those with high minority and disadvantaged populations, engage more in practice testing activities than authentic learning experiences for students. This focus in their placement failed to create a nurturing, caring environment where students' needs were the priority.

Results from data collection showed that pressures from external sources tested beginning teachers' self-efficacy. They were disillusioned by the intense focus on testing and accountability in the field placement, believing that students' quality of learning suffered because of attention placed on state tests. They also believed that external involvement or controls limited teachers' abilities to deliver quality instruction.

Concluding Statement

These findings have the potential to guide educators in designing teacher training programs more appropriate for supporting teacher efficacy development within increasingly complex and diverse settings. Results also showed that instructors and students must engage in authentic learning activities that challenge mindsets and demand deliberate efforts to guide teacher candidates in recognizing, processing, and confronting the multitude of issues that come with today's schooling responsibilities. Teachers must be aggressive researchers and change agents, seeking ways to help improve the social circumstances for all students.

Although the study was limited to three participants, their views on the Middle Childhood Program highlighted gaps between theory and practice. It is of great value to the Middle Childhood Education program's instructors to examine how teacher candidates interpret and their training in the program to use in a way that best suits their needs. This focus will provide guidance in ensuring the Program's written guidelines and expectations survive not only in theory but also authentic practices of prospective teachers and those charged with training them.

CHAPTER 5

Answering Questions and Implications of the Study

This chapter reported on pre-service teachers' lived experiences as teacher candidates during the last semester of training through their first year as certified, practicing teachers. Utilizing the self-efficacy construct (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998), I aimed to answer the questions of the research:

- How do three novice teachers describe self-efficacy-forming experiences during training in the teacher education/training program?
- What were three novice teachers' lived experiences as first-year practicing teachers?
- What types of self-efficacy beliefs and behaviors do novice teachers utilize in their classroom in the first year as practicing teacher?

In the sections that follow, I responded to the questions of the study by discussing participants' perspectives on self-efficacy-forming experiences during their training as teacher candidates in the Middle Childhood Education Program. Secondly, I shared teachers' experiences in response to research questions two and three. Themes identified through coding and constant comparison of data provided a frame for gathering perspectives and presenting findings of how teachers' beliefs, behaviors and experiences in the Middle Education Teacher program influenced their careers as teachers. After this discussion, I followed with implications of the study and lastly, possibilities for future research.

Discussion

Research Question One

The first question that guided the study was as follows: How do three novice teachers describe self-efficacy forming experiences during training in the teacher education/training program?

Teachers offered criticisms of some courses in Middle Childhood Education program. They explained that although there was a strong focus on theory, the information did not translate into practice, leaving them poorly equipped to respond to some of the issues they encountered in their teacher placements. The dichotomy of theory versus practice was a recurring theme among all three participants. How much of what they learned in their coursework did they believe could be applied in practice? Prior beliefs and personal experiences in classrooms influenced their interpretations of what teaching meant.

Schmidt (2013), in agreement with Bernard (2009) and Schmidt (1998) suggested that “pre-service teachers filter their learning in the pre-service programs through preexisting beliefs, whether that filtering takes place outside their conscious thought or through conscious experiences, with guidance from instructors and other mentors, or through self-directed growth” (p. 28). Learning about knowledge and skills through the lens of its theoretical origins required cognitive manipulation and appropriate guidance from mentor teachers and instructors for successful transferability into practice. Unfortunately, teacher candidates did not believe their instructors possessed adequate knowledge of how to interpret theoretical ideas for application in current schooling issues. They expressed frustration with their limited knowledge of classroom management strategies or skill in addressing various issues provided through some of the courses they were required to take.

Two courses which all three teacher candidates discussed in particular were Classroom Management: Middle Childhood (CMMC) and Teaching and Learning in Diverse (TLDC) classrooms. According to the University’s description, the CMMC course was “designed to develop the ability to create and maintain a positive learning environment in the middle childhood classroom” (p. 3). Also, an objective emphasized in the course was for students to learn

strategies for effective teaching, including issues related to diversity. Teachers stated that they did participate in activities that fulfilled the written objective of engaging in exercises for analyzing, resolving, and preventing managerial problems and reflective teaching practices (2011). They also stated that during their practice teaching, the information lacked relevant to their situations.

Regarding the TLDC course, teachers stated that while it did expose them to problems, issues, and experiences of different groups based on race, ethnicity, language, and socio-economic status, they did not feel they had adequate time to reflect on what they had experienced or receive adequate support in sorting out how actions related to theory and what strategy was most appropriate to handle the situation. They expressed frustration that learning seemed to happen in isolation which caused them to try sorting out individual issues, rather than look at the overall problem and apply their learning to the situation. One example Anna gave concerned how to teach all the standards, build relationships, manage the class, and incorporate diversity “all in one 50 minute class. It can’t be done.”

Teachers were also frustrated with their field placement. They did not believe the University’s teacher training program successfully accomplished its objective of preparing them to work in high needs schools or in diverse settings. They reported that the diversity in the placement school was not viewed as positive, but as detrimental to the overall achievement and progress of the school community. For this reason, teachers were required to utilize teacher-directed instruction, district-approved curriculum, and scheduled assessments. Research emphasizes the potential of field experiences in influencing teachers’ beliefs, whether positive or negative, and providing a safe and appropriate environment for mastering the craft of teaching.

Pre-service teachers were disillusioned by the highly politicized environment of testing and accountability. They believed the students in this community were not recipients of a rich, in-depth learning environment because of the heavy focus on testing. Teacher candidates witnessed the lack of teacher authority in making decisions for their students and adapted the helpless demeanor of their mentors.

Teacher candidates expressed criticisms that the mentors knew their teaching and the curriculum did not fit the learning styles or achievement needs for students. They had no choice but to follow the prescribed curriculum, however, because the district's administration had instructed them to utilize the materials and the strategies. Administrators' rationale for this type of instruction was because of the students' low performance on the state's standardized tests. Teacher candidates believed that there could not be proper instruction in this type of high minority, high poverty school because there was more attention given to testing results than students' learning needs.

Teachers described their field placement environment as not conducive to offering mastery experiences necessary for developing positive self-efficacy. They were not able to learn new teaching strategies or practice the ones they had discussed in their coursework. Teacher candidates were not able to benefit from the exposures gained in planning lessons and practicing, and revising them. Their mentor teachers taught using traditional methods which included teacher-directed instruction, worksheets, and practice tests in preparation for state assessments. The overall environment lacked enthusiasm and energy, although it was orderly.

The relationship between the teacher candidates and the mentors did not give them the type of guidance they required. They stated that although there was a positive relationship with

their mentor teachers, they did not model teaching styles or demonstrate the knowledge, skill, or authority to provide proper guidance.

Motivation to teach children influenced self-efficacy development. Clara explained that her love of literacy drove her passion. She explained that although she did not have a good relationship with her mentor, her past experiences prepared her to teach. She believed she was just putting in her time. Betty was not motivated to teach children in public schools. She stated that she was not suited for working in that type of environment and preferred working with special needs students in small groups. She did not understand or accept the attitudes and hostilities students displayed toward each other. Anna also expressed her preference for working with smaller numbers. She complained that there were just too many students with so many needs to address. She was not motivated to work in an environment where there were limited materials and tight guidelines. Her original motivation for teaching to do a better job with her students than her teachers had done with her was not mentioned after the first interview session. With the exception of Clara, all three teachers exhibited low self-efficacy.

Research Question Two

The second research question focused on experiences of beginning teachers in their first year of practice: What are novice teachers' lived experiences as first-year practicing teachers?

Two of the three teachers failed to make a smooth transition from teacher candidate to practicing teacher. Anna described the experience as a “nervous nightmare.” She continued to express self-doubt and fear of failure prior to starting her new job. Once her school year began, she described being overwhelmed by the differences she found in the new school and what she had experienced in her placement. She said working with students described as “at risk,” placed her with all the students who struggled with math just as she had during her schooling years.

Anna described the resources at her new school as being all web-based. She criticized her training program for not providing more exposure with the new software and technological resources available. She explained that she really felt inadequate because of her lack of familiarity with various technology software; inexperience with writing lesson plans, and limited success in classroom management strategies. Anna was overwhelmed by the multitude of challenges she encountered by being “thrust into the teacher’s shoes.” Feeling unable to harness feelings of self-doubt and low self-efficacy, she quit her job and gave up her teaching career within a few months.

Betty shared that teaching in a traditional setting was not the career for her at all. She stated that she preferred working with small groups instead and decided to work with special needs children at a separate facility. She described her teaching position positively, stating that she loved working as a behavior therapist and teaching children with autism. She was happy that she had small groups and no standardized testing. According to Betty, students’ parents were supportive and involved with their children, most likely because of their disability and the tuition they had to pay.

Betty’s decision to work with special needs children originated from working with special needs students during her placement. She stated that she had not realized how much she “loved working with special needs kids.” There was passion in her tone as she shared that this would be her career choice. She also shared that she planned to return to college for her Master’s degree in special education later on. The reason she did not switch while already in school was because she had switched so many times already and had been in school for six years.

Lastly, Clara obtained her ideal teaching position. She described her time teaching literacy skills in language arts class and working with other members on her team as the ideal

job. She enjoyed the culture of the building, attributing a lot of the positive energy to the tone set by the building principal. Although she shared mostly positive examples of her teaching progress and activities, she was not hired for the job on a permanent basis. She returned to her position as a substitute teacher at the end of the year.

I asked the teachers to elaborate on how their teacher training had helped them make the transition from training in the program to their teaching position. Each teacher commented that their experiences at the university had helped them understand the theory behind learning but beyond that, the program did not help them in their teaching position. One teacher exclaimed that she felt like she had been lied to.

Research Question Three

The third and final research question for the study focused on the following topic: What types of self-efficacy beliefs and behaviors do novice teachers utilize in their classroom in the first year as practicing teachers?

Teachers' sense of efficacy has a strong influence on their behaviors (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998, 2001). Often comparing her students' struggles to personal failures, Anna looked to others to initiate advancement in her training. She lacked the self-motivation, determination and resourcefulness required to confront the challenges of 21st century teaching. Her words underscored her fear of failure and self-doubt. To avoid having to face another episode of failure, Anna placed blame in areas of the Middle Childhood Education training program and her field placement for her deficiencies. These experiences led to low self-efficacy.

Anna entered the teaching profession with low self-efficacy. Although she believed she was ready to teach, she admitted that she had "no idea" it would be as bad as it was. Her

description of her experience as a “nervous nightmare” included various problems she was not able to manage. She identified organization or classroom management as her main problem and believed mandated tests created additional pressures for her because she did not have resources to prepare students.

Of the three certified teachers, only Betty discerned that working in a traditional school setting was not a good career choice for her. The placement had demonstrated the negative impact testing and accountability had on the teaching and learning environment. She could not comprehend the idea that students’ learning needs would not be the primary concern for educators and politicians and chose not to become part of the problem. Additionally, she was disillusioned by the harshness of the children who used words to hurt each other. She believed she would provide a greater service working with children with special needs. Johnson (2010) explained that “some of the most powerful influences on the development of teachers’ sense of efficacy for literacy instruction may be the experience of teaching during pre-service field placement and students” (p. 24). This statement can be applied to Betty’s situation also.

Clara, in contrast, believed she had the perfect job. She had the supplies she required, working in a suburban community teaching literacy the way she envisioned it should be done. She described her professional working relationship as positive and praised the principal whom she described as very involved with his students.

As she spoke, she described the best part of her day being the time when children could relax and sit around the room and read. There would be small group discussions and group work. Clara’s description centered on how teaching and learning for literacy should look. She advocated for one-on-one interaction and promoted respect for literacy and learning. Her teaching style and philosophy were developed from her learning style and past experiences.

From the tone of her voice and the rich descriptions of the activities in which she engaged her students, Clara exhibited a sense of satisfaction with her job. She shared just one negative interaction involving a group of female students who defied her authority. She was not successful in dealing with the behavior, possibly attributable to her lack of flexibility in utilizing alternative methods for children who learn differently or have different interests. She also shared that the principal had encouraged her to use other methods prior to sending students to the office.

Management issues with student behaviors create major concerns for beginning teachers. Failure to maintain relationships and work through difficult situations in the classroom may escalate problems and lead to low self-efficacy. Although Clara did not describe classroom management issues, this glimpse into one classroom issue may shed some light on reasons behind her not securing a teaching position in the district, particularly since she had previous experiences there as a substitute teacher.

Implications

Universities have determined their list of teacher dispositions that outline expected characteristics for teachers. There is no form of measurement, however, for ensuring teachers entering the education arena possess the characteristics desired or the appropriate beliefs to help all children learn. According to Pajaras (1992) teachers start to form beliefs prior to entering the education training program. With this understanding, appropriate questions to ask may be those that challenge scholars, politicians, communities, families, and students themselves: what are the responsibilities for identifying prospective teachers' beliefs, what course of action must be assumed when beliefs do not match the need, and to whom do these responsibilities fall to suggest a change?

Researchers (Woolfolk-Hoy & Spero, 2005; Johnson 2010) recommend working with pre-service teachers early in their training to identify motivation and provide guidance. This work may start during early schooling years through university- school partnerships that establish the criteria for quality teaching and employ teachers who demonstrate these characteristics in their behaviors. Through collaborative efforts, programs may be offered in the schools for secondary students who show interest. Younger students may benefit as well.

School districts have a vested interest in supporting pre-service teachers in their schools. Working in collaboration with a university partner works to establish a seamless program aligned to the goals and needs for both entities. Programs, such as one offered through the University of Cincinnati, are encouraged to engage prospective teacher candidates in vicarious experiences during introductory educational foundational courses. Preparing teachers for the increasing diversity is another important step education stakeholders must address, particularly since the majority of teacher candidates are White, middle-class females. Bleicher's (2011) Urban Education Field Practice (UEFP) program introduced a different concept for exposing suburban and rural teacher candidates to urban settings in a safe learning environment early in their training. These initiatives engender respect for the profession, interest in the schools, and additional support for achievement in the schools. Both schools and the prospective teachers benefit from the venture as well as parents, students and the communities. University instructors benefit by conducting research in their local communities as well as other places throughout the world, building, maintaining and sustaining professional working relationships.

Educators should place deliberate emphasis on introductory coursework in education, sociology and psychology as interdisciplinary courses offered with the objective of enhancing foundational knowledge of society holistically. Offering these learning experiences early in

prospective teachers' college years may help channel those who are truly motivated to teach into their areas of interests as well as guide those who are better suited for other fields in the proper direction. Early intervention saves precious time, energies, and money.

State departments of education gain from the work of schools and universities. The research will inform them on decisions that impact teacher evaluations, performance expectations, policies, social commentary and global engagement. Working together builds strength, character, and solidarity. The benefits are endless.

Future Research

Research has demonstrated the benefits of providing mastery experiences for prospective teachers, but less is known about the effects that physiological/ emotional arousal plays in teachers' development. Research into areas exploring prospective teachers' emotions may contribute to the existing literature on teacher efficacy. Emotions also influence motivation. Teacher education programs need to take a more aggressive approach toward exploring the motives behind prospective teachers' reasons for wanting to pursue a career in education. Investing time and efforts in conducting mixed methods or qualitative and longitudinal studies sample a greater population. These studies have the potential to identify gaps in specific areas of their programs, as well as field placement sites.

The importance of establishing university-school partnership as training sites for pre-service teacher cannot be easily debated. Investigation into current issues in schools and their relations to training programs has the potential to support schools in improving their programs and ensuring authenticity in the training and practices provided. There has been some work in this area, but the field would be greatly enriched by more qualitative research exploring the relationship of in-service to pre-service teachers. What value to schools place on the program?

How aligned are the expectations in coursework to the realities of the placement? How many university-school partnerships have a team of teachers and administrators and college instructors who work together as a community of learners to provide a service to the greater good? These are important areas that must be explored.

Concluding Statements

We are what we believe ourselves to be. What does this statement mean for educators? Is education truly “the great equalizer of the conditions of men” as Horace Mann described it to be? If so, then what responsibilities do all stakeholders have in assuring that only the best teachers fill the classrooms? Those whose passions motivate them to perform daily the important work for all students, even those who don’t have the same skin, culture, or beliefs?

The demographics of our schools have changed, and as the nation continues to grow and re-define itself, so must the educational system. Students from culturally, socially, and linguistically diverse backgrounds demand that teachers be motivated to reach across the boundaries and teach them the skills that will guide them to their futures. The next generation of teachers must be prepared to confront every aspect of social living and meet the responsibilities of schooling in the 21st century. The nation is in need of good teachers whose beliefs and behaviors demonstrate their capacity to confront the challenges of today’s schools. The challenges of *how* to support them through the transition from teachers in training to successful practicing teachers is just the tip of the iceberg.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Recruitment Flyer & Script for Meeting in the Class

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED for a RESEARCH STUDY

Be a part of a teacher education research study!

- Are you over 18 years of age?
- Are you a beginning teaching or a student teacher in reading, math, or science?
- Are you interested in exploring best practices for 21st century learners in a highly political environment?

If you answered **YES** to these questions, you may be the perfect participant in a study to support teacher preparation programs.

The purpose of this research is to explore novice teachers' experiences in their natural settings to seek an understanding of their perspectives as they transition from student teaching to practicing teacher.

The study is by principal investigator Anita Williams

Department of College of Education Department,

the Midwestern University

Email Anita Williams at _____ for more information

SCRIPT FOR MEETING IN THE CLASS

Good morning,

My name is ----- . I am a doctoral student in ----- . I am working on research that explores pre-service and beginning teachers' perceptions on the sociopolitical factors and federal policies that influence education and their feelings in regard to meeting the expectations outlined in the policies.

I am looking for volunteers over 18 years old who are ready to start their student teaching in reading, math or science. Participants will need to agree to be interviewed and observed during their teaching practice.

If you are interested in hearing more about the research study or in participating, please contact me at the email address on the flyer. I will leave a few with your instructor for you to take if interested.

Are there any questions?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix B

Email Correspondence to Superintendents

Dear Superintendent,

My name is Anita Williams. I am a doctoral student in Urban Educational Leadership Department at the University of Cincinnati. I am writing to share the topic of my research and to request your help in recruiting volunteers. The research study explores pre-service and beginning teachers perceptions on the sociopolitical factors and federal policies that influence education and their feelings in regard to meeting the expectations outlined in the policies.

If you agree, I request that you present the attached flyer to pre-service and beginning teachers. For additional questions, please feel free to contact me at this email address or you may call me at (513) 703-7571 for additional information.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Anita J. Williams
Department of Urban Educational Leadership
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, OH 45221

Appendix C

Email Correspondence to Principal

Dear Principal,

My name is Anita Williams. I am a doctoral student in Urban Educational Leadership Department at the University of Cincinnati. I am writing to share the topic of my research and to request your help in recruiting volunteers. The research study explores pre-service and beginning teachers perceptions on the sociopolitical factors and federal policies that influence education and their feelings in regard to meeting the expectations outlined in the policies.

If you agree, I request that you present the attached flyer to pre-service and beginning teachers. For additional questions, please feel free to contact me at this email address or you may call me at (513) 703-7571 for additional information.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Anita J. Williams
Department of Urban Educational Leadership
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, OH 45221

Appendix D

Follow up Call to Principals

Date _____,

Dear Dr. _____,

I am a third year doctoral student in the Urban Educational Leadership Program at the University of Cincinnati. This school year, I will begin my research investigating the influence of education policy on pre-service teacher's sense of efficacy and instructional practice. I hope to contribute to the general knowledge by obtaining data that will inform educators when revising curricula for 21st teacher education programs and professional development.

In order to obtain data for my research, it is necessary for me to work with student teachers assigned to schools for their practicum experiences. The extent of this work involves interviewing pre-service teachers in the school and observing them during instructional practice experiences. At no time will my work involve the students or teachers in the school. No identifying information about the students, the school, or the teachers will be used in my research. My focus is on obtaining data about pre-service teachers and their experiences with education in the 21st century.

Beginning in autumn semester 2012, your district may agree to have pre-service teachers assigned to work with teachers in your schools. These pre-service teachers may be participants in my research study. In these instances, I will need your consent to visit them at your school. If you agree that this research may be conducted in your district, please respond (email response is permitted) to this message indicating your consent. If there are additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Anita J. Williams
Urban Educational Leadership Doctoral Program
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio

Appendix E

Email Reminder to Students

Dear Student,

I want to follow-up with you to ask if you have any questions about the research study I shared with your class recently or interest in volunteering to participant. As a participant, you will agree to be interviewed and observed during instructional practice.

I have attached the flyer about the project. Please review it and contact me with additional questions or comments.

I appreciate your time and consideration.

Thank you,

Anita J. Williams
Department of Urban Educational Leadership
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, OH 45221

Appendix F

Interview Discussion Points

- Tell me how teaching fits into your career goals.
- What contribution do you want to make to education?
- How does your goal compare to your personal experience(s) with education?
- Describe your vision of the perfect classroom environment?
- Explain your perspective on the greatest challenge facing schools in the 21st century.
- What role do you think the federal government should play in education?
- In what ways do you think the government's role in education has influenced teaching?
Education's mission? Classroom instruction? Social attitudes
- What recommendations would you make to improve No Child Left Behind (NCLB)?
- What do you believe is the root of the problems in education?
- In what ways does race/poverty/bilingual language/culture influence or does not influence education? Should these factors be considered in determining instructional practice?
- What place do assessment practices and accountability have in education?
- What do you think is the best approach to addressing and overcoming the achievement gap?
- Do you believe all children can achieve the goals described in NCLB or standardized testing?
- What are the core elements of teacher effectiveness (efficacy) in working with high poverty and minority groups? Do these elements change with different student groups?

- How do teacher education programs improve teacher capacity to work in today's diverse educational system?
- What understandings are important for politicians and teachers and parents and the media in relation to the achievement gap and the role of teachers in addressing the issues?
- How do the media impact the assumptions and attitudes people make in regard to NCLB?
- During the interview, I was confused by...and wondered what you meant by... How can the relationship between policy and practice be improved?

Stem Questions

- Is there anything else you think I may need to know?
- In my last meeting, I noticed...
- Interview may contain probing questions if the participant brings up a topic related to the study
- Please share a bit about the demographics of your teaching position.

Follow-Up to your comments:

- You explained that your ...Why do you believe you assumed everyone was a reader?
- Tell me more about your comment that...
- What do you mean when you state... when describing your idea of the perfect classroom.
- You commented that the government should/should not oversee education.
- What do you believe the education system would be like for minorities and disadvantaged groups if the government had not overseen education to some degree?
- You stated that ... With that in mind, how do you explain...?

- Do you believe teacher education programs adequately prepare students for the issues present in today's schools? Or lean more toward traditional practices?

Follow-up Interview Session

1. What do you believe are the core elements of teacher effectiveness in working with high poverty and minority groups? Do these elements change with different student groups?
2. Do you think teachers' beliefs and attitudes about different groups influence their classroom behaviors and instructional practice?
3. In what ways can teacher education programs *equip* or *better equip* pre-service and beginning teachers to process and/or respond to the assumptions and attitudes people make in regard to educators and education policy?
4. What responsibility/responsibilities, if any, does/do teacher education programs have in preparing or improving teacher capacity to work in today's diverse educational system?

Appendix G

Mentor Responsibilities and Qualifications

All mentors must be nominated and recommended by their principal or supervisor, have the appropriate licensure, and have at least three years successful teaching experience. Mentors with masters' degrees are preferred. Mentors must provide documentation of their preparation and experiences. Specific web-based forms and submission calendars are available on the Middle Childhood Field Experiences website.

The mentor:

- agrees to participate in any pre-placement activities if necessary (interviews, meetings with the university supervisor, etc.). These meetings are designed to support the placement process and to participate in mentor training.
- is expected to display a commitment to the dispositions described by the University of Cincinnati Educator Preparation Unit.
- is responsible for ensuring that the candidate is oriented to the school. This orientation should include a description of the field school's expectations, use of support staff and office equipment, use of materials, availability of supplies, and classroom routines.
- ensures that the candidate has a variety of experiences with students, including small group, individual work, and team teaching. Additionally, the mentor teacher will support the candidate with guided practice.
- conducts both formal and informal observations of the candidate. Notes taken during formal observations should include commentary about the candidate's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the candidate's skills and dispositions and other criteria contained on the evaluation forms.

- is responsible for preparing an end-of-quarter evaluation of the candidate. The evaluations are to be discussed in meetings with the candidate. The final field experience grade is assigned by the university supervisor after reviewing the evaluation and other pertinent information.
- meets regularly with the candidate to provide constructive feedback and make suggestions.
- coordinates a field school on-site conference between the candidate, mentor, and university supervisor near the end of each quarter and at other times, as needed.
- communicates with the university supervisor regarding the candidate's professionalism, attendance, teaching, lesson quality, and communication skills.
- is expected to participate in an annual survey related to UC College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services programs and the mentoring experience.
- agrees to work with university personnel in connection to any problems in the candidate's field performance in accordance with applicable school and university policies by contributing to the development of a remediation plan for a candidate who needs to improve his/her practice. Documentation of specific instances and incidents should be in writing.
- keeps information about the candidate private.
- remains in the classroom with the candidate.

Appendix H

Middle Childhood Program Mission Statement

The Middle Childhood Education Program at the University -----is dedicated to improving the educational experiences of children in Grades 4 through 9. The program's central goal is the preparation of committed, caring, and competent educators who are:

- Qualified to meet the unique intellectual, social, and emotional needs of children in middle childhood
- Reflective and responsible professionals who demonstrate an inquiry orientation toward teaching and professional development
- Committed to working with children who are diverse in learning style, ethnicity, language, gender, age, class, physical and intellectual achievement, and family background
- Experienced in thinking critically, solving problems, and working collaboratively with children, families, and other professionals
- Knowledgeable about disciplinary subject fields, curriculum integration, and technology

In order to prepare such dedicated, knowledgeable, and experienced teachers, the Middle Childhood Program is committed to providing an innovative and outstanding teacher preparation program that bridges theory and practice. Toward that end, the program includes:

- Extensive and authentic field placements in Professional Practices Schools and Professional Development Schools
- Thorough mentoring by experienced professionals committed to reflective practice
- Collegiality and collaboration among teachers, students, and school and university faculty

- University course work that emphasizes student diversity and inclusiveness, integration of technology, an inquiry approach to teaching and learning, and a foundation of contemporary theory and research
- A focus on lifelong learning and development through involvement in professional organizations, classroom-based inquiry, and collaboration with children, families, and other professionals who use assessment to inform their efforts

Appendix I

Mission of the Educator Preparation Program

The mission of the MDL program falls under the greater mission of the Educator Preparation Programs at the University of Cincinnati, which seeks to produce educators who are able to support learning and the development of efficacy in a variety of contexts. The primary activities through which this mission is implemented are teaching, research, and service. Therefore, the mission of UC's educator preparation programs is to educate teacher candidates who:

- are able to work in diverse educational environments;
- go beyond mere application of technical skills, engaging in inquiry and reflection so as to bring about changes in their practice;
- recognize and address a wide range of setting events, persistently supporting learners in the construction of knowledge and development of efficacy;
- engage in the development of new meanings about teaching and learning;
- provide supportive environments that enhance the development of resilience in students;
- are adequately resilient themselves, so as to be able to work in adverse situations;
- go beyond prevalent practice;
- are able to work and communicate appropriately with families and the community at large;
- use technology to strengthen their professional learning and pedagogical knowledge to enhance the learning of those with whom they work;
- engage in practices that are likely to have positive outcomes for learning.

In addition to the guidelines set forth by the College and the Division, the conceptual framework of the Middle Childhood Education Program is designed to educate teacher candidates who support and exemplify the essential elements of middle level teacher preparation as identified in

a position statement from the National Middle School Association. These elements include the following elements. Middle Childhood Education Teacher Candidates:

- Learn their craft from collaborative partnerships between university and school based faculty;
- Will become experts in promoting the development and meeting the needs of young adolescents;
- Will experience school organizations that promote the personal development of young adolescents;

In addition to the guidelines set forth by the College and the Division, the conceptual framework of the Middle Childhood Education Program is designed to educate teacher candidates who support and exemplify the essential elements of middle level teacher preparation as identified in a position statement from the National Middle School Association. These elements include the following elements. Middle Childhood Education Teacher Candidates:

- Learn their craft from collaborative partnerships between university and school based faculty;
- Will become experts in promoting the development and meeting the needs of young adolescents;
- Will experience school organizations that promote the personal development of young adolescents;

Will learn about middle level curriculum that incorporates young adolescent interests as starting points for interdisciplinary and integrated curriculum;

- Will be well prepared in the content areas for two or more teaching fields and will have the opportunity to work in interdisciplinary teaching teams;

- Will be knowledgeable about and competent in their pedagogical responsibilities for planning, teaching and assessing student learning;
- Will have opportunities for early and continuing field experiences that provide a developmental structure for their learning about middle school teaching; and
- Will recognize the importance of collaborating with colleagues and with families and community members for promoting the development of the young adolescent.

Appendix J

Middle Childhood Education *Degree: Bachelor of Science in Education* General Education Requirements

General Education Courses
Free Electives

Language Arts Concentration 36

English Composition (15ENGL101) 3
English Composition (15ENGL102) 3
Intermediate Composition (15ENGL289) 3
Advanced Composition (15ENG489) 3
Introduction to English Studies (15ENG300) 3
Technical & Scientific Writing (15ENG492) 3

Social Studies Concentration 39

American History to 1848 (15HIST110) 3
American History 1848-1920 (15HIST111) 3
American History 1920-Present (15HIST112) 3
World History Elective (15HIST130, 1, or 2) 3
Multicultural History Elective 3
Introduction to Historical Thinking (15HIST300) 3
Social Studies Electives 6
American Politics Elective (15POL110 or 111) 3
Introduction to Microeconomics (15ECON101) 3
Introduction to Macroeconomics (15ECON102) 3
Human Geography (15GEO104, 5, or 6) 3
World Geography (15GEO123, 4, 5, or 6) 3

Mathematics Concentration 15

Elem. Probability and Statistics (15STAT147) 3
College Algebra I (15MATH173)

College Algebra II (15MATH174)

or

Found. of Calculus (15MATH224, + Math elective) 6

Applied Calculus I (15MATH226) 3

Applied Calculus II (15MATH227) 3

Cohort Math Classes 18

MDL School Math I (15MATH307) 4

MDL School Math II (15MATH308) 4

MDL School Math III (15MATH309) 4

Teaching Numbers in MDL I (18MDL327) 2

Teaching Numbers in MDL II (18MDL328) 2

Teaching Numbers in MDL III (18MDL329)

Natural Science Concentration

Biology I (15BIO101) 3

Biology I Lab (15BIO111) 2

Biology II (15BIO102) 3

Biology II Lab (15BIO112) 2

Astronomy: Stars and Galaxies (15PHYS121) 3

(2)Introduction to Physics (15PHYS104, 105 or 106) 6

Chemistry I (15CHEM107) 3

Chemistry I Lab (15CHEM117) 1

Chemistry II (15CHEM108) 3

Chemistry II Lab (15CHEM118) 1

Geology I (15GEOL101) 3

Geology II (15ENG102) 3

Geology Lab (15GEOL111 or 112) 3

Pre-Cohort Courses 20

Computer Tools for Teachers (18CI247) 4

Schooling & Teaching (18EDST201) 4

Human Development: Adolescence (18EDFN302) 3

Human Learning & Dev. in Education (18EDST275) 4

Found. & History of Special Education (18SPED250) 4

Introduction to Field Experience (18MDL201) 1	
Professional Cohort Courses	
<i>(Must be admitted to Cohort to register for the following)</i>	
Health in the Middle School (18HPE684) 3	
Improving Reading through Literature (18MDL525) 3	
Foundations of Literacy I (15MDL521) 4	
Teaching Associate Field Experience I (18MDL502) 2	
Phonics in Middle School (18MDL500) 5	
Literacy III: Content (18MDL523) 3	
(2) Principle & Practice (18MDL) 8	
Opening School Experience (18MDL501) 2	
Teaching Associate Field Experience II (18MDL503) 3	
Middle School Organization (18MDL511) 3	
Internship I: MDL (18MDL644) 9	
Literacy II: Assess & Evaluation (18MDL522) 3	
Capstone Seminar (18MDL561) 1	
Classroom Management (18MDL515) 3	
Internship II: MDL (18MDL645) 3	
Teaching & Learning Diversity (18CI400) 3	
Free Electives*	
Total hours	180
<i>*The number of free electives will vary depending on which courses are taken for the general education requirements. Numbers in MDL III (18MDL329) 2</i>	