Urban Students becoming Urban Teachers:

interviews with alumni of the teacher education program at

Milwaukee Area Technical College

interviews, research, and writing
by
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ABSTRACT

This is a story about urban students becoming urban teachers. It begins with the 1988 U.S. Department of Education funding of a bold idea: attracting multicultural/multilingual students to begin their teacher preparation at a two year college, preparing them to continue at a 4 year college. This is how the Milwaukee Area Technical College became one of the first (if not the first) 2 year colleges in the country to offer such a program. The Cooperative Urban Teacher Education Program (CUTEP), then the Teacher Education track, and now Educational Foundations has, throughout these name changes, aimed to recruit and prepare students of color and their allies for success in K-12 licensing tracks at 4 year colleges and then as teachers in the Milwaukee Public School district. The characteristics of Star Teachers of Children in Poverty, as posited and discussed by Dr. Martin Haberman in his 1995 publication, are discussed and then exemplified by the words of CUTEP alumni, gleaned and directly quoted from interviews conducted with the author, a 10 year teacher and coordinator of the program now known as the Educational Foundations track of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The interview questions were shared prior to face-to-face conversations and were intended to surface the students' thoughts on how their personal backgrounds and educational experiences within the 2 year college program contributed to their ability to navigate the 4 year college environment and, subsequently, guide their professional practice, decision making, and relationships in their school buildings. Their responses reveal a profound commitment to students, but also a frustration with time-consuming reporting mandates, constantly changing curriculum standards, over-filled classrooms, insufficient support from other professionals, and resistance to addressing the systemic causes of racially identifiable gaps in achievement. As school districts face staffing shortages due to veteran teachers retiring, younger teachers leaving the profession, and college-age students choosing professions with greater monetary and psychological compensation and respect, the words of these former students, now teachers are instructive. Their reflections on their own educational backgrounds, near misses and achievements, reveal a deep desire to be effective teachers of "their own", knowing that for poor children, having an effective teacher is, as Haberman puts it, "a matter of life and death."

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foreword

A STAR NURSERY

In the summer of 1988 UW-Whitewater contacted the Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Milwaukee Area Technical College. The reason for the call was to ask Dean Scully Sykes if a meeting to discuss collaboration could be scheduled. The particular articulation that UW-W sought to develop with the college was aimed at boosting the number of students of color graduating with teaching licenses and heading into urban classrooms. The statistics were clear and the rationale was obvious to those concerned with the educational experience and success of Black, Latino, Hmong, and Native American youth. With upwards of 80% of minority students and only 20% of teachers from those same racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, student success in urban schools was and continues to be a challenge at best. The reasons for this are many and systemic; they deserve and have received their own explorations apart from this writing. Both parties agreed to the meeting; the result was a successful grant proposal to the U.S. Department of Education, and subsequently, an articulation agreement administered by Associate Dean Tony A. Báez. This first agreement became a template for others between MATC's Cooperative Urban Teacher Education Program and seven other university based Schools of Education in the Milwaukee metro area.

Over the next years, a handful of Liberal Arts and Sciences faculty worked to develop and implement the program: Dr. Terry Meyer, Dr. Wilma Bonaparte, Dr. Lesbia Borras, Helen Robertson, Willette Calvin. The program name was eventually tweaked as enrollment increased, partnerships expanded, and majority students were admitted to the transfer track within Liberal Arts and Sciences . Throughout those years and until now, through negotiation and careful curriculum alignment, the program has provided a pathway for students to graduate prepared to begin their pre-service preparation in the

4 year institution of their choosing. Their preparation, in addition to LAS graduation requirements, included 7-10 credits in what were first Social Science and are now more specifically designated as Educational Foundations courses . These courses which were developed and taught by other LAS faculty (June Roque, Reggie Finlayson, Willette Calvin, Pablo Muirhead, Cathy Caldwell, and Eva Hagenhofer) were designed to provide MATC's pre-education students with a solid understanding of (1) how schooling has been impacted by social movements, philosophies, and public policy and (2) how critically important teachers' cultural competence is in mitigating and/or addressing the school and non-school issues facing increasingly impoverished students of color today. The capstone course requires students to complete a 50 hour classroom placement in Milwaukee Public Schools. Indispensable to students' success have been the LAS faculty advisors who work with each student according to his/her transfer and licensing goal. An advisory committee, comprised on K-16 partners has provided feedback and support throughout the past 30 years.

STAR TEACHERS FOR URBAN SCHOOLS

In 1995, Professor Marty Haberman, an esteemed and somewhat irreverant member of the faculty of the School of Education at UW-Milwaukee for many years, was asked to write a book by Kappa Delta Pi, the education honor society that he had belonged to. He begins Star Teachers of Children in Poverty[1] by saying that what sets apart the 8% of teachers that he identifies as 'stars" is that they understand that for poor children having an effective teacher is "a matter of life and death".

To my mind, this characterizes perfectly the men and women - alumni of MATC's Teacher Education / Educational Foundations pre-professional track – whose words follow these introductory pages. Some graduated 10 years ago, others are more recent

[1] Haberman, M. (1995). *STAR teachers of children in poverty*. Kappa Delta Pi. West Lafayette, Indiana.

graduates. They are diverse in several ways, but what they have in common is an intimate understanding of how poverty works to degrade and marginalize the bodies, minds, and souls of children. They know this from their own experiences, from having grown up without the certainty that they would ever have the aptitude or resources to go to college. They did not need to learn about how poverty corrodes a child's self-esteem and stands squarely in the way of meeting teachers' expectations derived from middle class standards of excellence. Rather, they needed the nerve to speak their truth in college classes where they were often marginalized again; they needed the authoritative knowledge and academic language with which to make their peers and professors listen.

Haberman takes the rest of his book to define and provide examples of "effective teaching". Ideology, he asserts, is what provides the inner compass of a star teacher. It is, he says, their "remaining completely and sensitively aware of WHY they are doing what they do, WHAT they hope to accomplish and HOW to make connections" between students' lives and the subjects they teach. They reject labels and steadfastly believe in children, their parents, and their communities. Star teachers are protectors of children, modelers of life-long learning, sources of knowledge, and educators of world citizens. They know that children's classroom behaviors are often symptomatic of the stressors in their lives outside of school. So, rather than focusing on discipline, they look to developing authentic interactions with students, lessons that engage them in understanding their world, and establishing group norms for classroom behavior. They praise effort rather than ability, believe in the intrinsic rewards of learning, and reject the toxic language of blaming that so often fills teacher lounges and faculty meetings.

The following pages are filled with these stars.

Eva Hagenhofer
Teacher Education Program, Faculty Coordinator (2002-2012)

introduction

STARS IN THEIR EYES

For most of the men and women who enroll in the CUTEP/Teacher Education / Educational Foundations track at MATC, high school is a distant memory. They began living their adult lives dissatisfied with some choices they had made; then hesitantly they approached the notion of returning to school – to college. When they did, with their different reasons, they started on a path that would not end when they graduated from MATC. In order to become licensed teachers they would need to continue at a 4 year college in a School of Education. In those institutions, they would need to decide on a major field, complete unpaid student teaching, and take standardized tests. But their goal of becoming teachers, like a beacon light, drew them on in spite of work and family obligations, long hours of studying, occasional (and sometimes persistent) financial, medical, and academic challenges.

Some were compelled, as they themselves have said, to become the teachers they had not had. Their dream was to have their own classroom, teaching black and brown young people who could have been their sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews, cousins, with whom they shared a community, for whom they felt an indignant urgency to learn, become, and rise out of the poverty they knew first hand.

Others were motivated by the indelible and grateful memories of the teacher or teachers who introduced them to a particular idea or author; who listened compassionately when they were troubled, who challenged them to think, make art, write, dream big; who understood their lives or at least tried to, who took them to new places figuratively and literally; who took extra time or perhaps some risks to advocate for or defend them.

Still others were drawn to teaching as a way of correcting the social inequalities that they believed schools perpetuated. They looked forward, earnestly but perhaps naively, to the challenges that they could hardly name, to teaching in schools that many of them had never attended.

How many times I said - over the ten years I taught the educational philosophies unit in our "Orientation to Urban Teaching" course - "If you don't know what you believe, you are a puppet. You are allowing someone else, who may also not know what he or she believes, to put their hands in your mouth"? Becoming lazy about self-reflection is how well meaning teachers loose the quality that students recognize almost instantly – authenticity. If you've got it, if they can be sure that you are you and you know it, they are freed as well . A meaningful teaching-learning relationship can begin. Because teaching, like parenting, is the ultimate symbiotic relationship, teacher efficacy is the stuff on which students grow into their own intellectual selves. In the CUTEP/Teacher Education/Educational Foundations track, the coursework was designed to stress the importance of cultural competence and the necessity of learning how to negotiate meaning in order to build authentic, empathic relationships which are foundational to students' construction of knowledge, education's promise.

During the past 30 years hundreds of MATC's CUTEP/TEP alumni attended and even graduated from 4 year colleges and universities in the Milwaukee area. There, they invariably found themselves in courses with younger, less urban, almost always white students who could rarely appreciate (and sometimes pushed back at) their urban-wise contributions to class conversations. Often these experiences, compounded by the challenge of making ends meet while completing not-for-pay student teaching caused them to derail a bit, not always finishing with a teaching license, but finishing, or at least hoping to :

Danette has been a counselor at a shelter for youth who find themselves on the streets after the adults that are responsible for their well being have disappointed… or worse. With a mind that is forever curious about human relationships, she chose to study sociology instead of education. Nonetheless she IS teaching; her subjects are compassionate self-respect, resilience, and problem solving.

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The last time I saw **Odell** was when he came "home" to the Teacher Education office with his son for a pre-college tour. So kind, so tall, the father of 5 boys, Odell went on to direct a youth program. In many ways this is perfect for him; in other ways it is a side track since his first love was History and African American Studies.

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I haven't seen **Jai** since her graduation from Cardinal Stritch's journalism program. Her bags were packed and ready to make the move she'd always talked about: Atlanta! But soon she discovered what many others have found out: Milwaukee's roots run deep. So, one day, she dropped in to visit the campus newspaper and Teacher Education offices that she used to inhabit for long hours each day. The little dreadlocks that used to sprout up on her head had been replaced by a more "professional" look, but the same ineffable, cynical-in-ways-that-matter smile still shone. She told us about her current work, writing for a community publication. What's she writing about? The same issues she would have taught about: justice, community, equality.

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Vernon believed in education – after all he'd proudly sent his three daughters to Historically Black Universities. When it was his turn, he came to MATC. After graduating with honors he entered the Community Education program at UW-Milwaukee. He'd decided that he could have the greatest impact with adults who hadn't finished their high school education. Others in the college agreed, and soon he was completing his Master's degree (There's little time to pause when you are 50 something!). Last time I saw him at a street festival he told me he'd had a few medical issues, but that these hadn't been the only set-backs that had tested his spirit. What troubled him most of all was that he'd been denied admission to the doctoral program. His only explanation was racism, the kind of racism that does not recognize true value, that looks at the messenger before deciding whether to listen to the message. It sours a person.

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When **Garee** graduated from Administrative Leadership at UW-Milwaukee, he invited me to the first ever "Lavender Graduation" celebration. Garee never did anything half-way. He was always original, whether it was his yearly transformation into Miss Sparkle for the campus drag show or the newsletters he produced as the first African American leader of the state Wisconsin Student Education Association (StWEA). He truly starred at graduation; less than one month later he began his Master's program. Today he is a Senior Student Advisor at his alma mater, UW-Milwaukee.

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Zoua was another "breakthrough" student. In addition to her academic and volleyball stardom, she was a mother of two young children (now four), a wife, and daughter-in-law, which in her Hmong culture means that she is a primary

care giver. Even with all of this going on, her drive still led to her to become the first student of color ever to hold the statewide office of StWea President. She and Garee found that without ever entering a classroom of their own, their first students were their fellow officers, whose background and professional expectations had little to do with people so different from them.

And, finally, I find I must mention 2 more former students, both of them fathers. Perhaps the reason they did not complete their degrees has to do with how earnestly they assumed the responsibilities of single parenting: **Devon** and **Scott**. I include them in case they have a chance to read their names here; I want them to know how much our schools need their thoughtful, tender way with children and how much I hope they will find the way to complete what they started.

Those that made their way through the coursework, the standardized pre-service tests, and the unpaid semester of student teaching are now urban educators who go to work every day wanting to change the prospects of urban children, who by definition are poor and mostly brown. They are daily engaged in the wrenching, but often satisfying work of teaching, work which requires a compact between teacher and student and often involves the need to first repair the egos of children who have been all but destroyed by the racism, indifference, and poverty .

Several years ago I was out in my yard, busy with spring chores when **Keith** stopped me. He was going to his graduation. In a few short hours he would be dually certified in Special Education and Elementary Education. While many young teachers are having a hard time holding onto their positions due to a

school budget which has doubly suffered due to the proliferation of private "choice" schools, things are looking good for Keith. Sadly, twenty percent of students in Milwaukee Public Schools have been identified as "special education" students.

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Eric used to write to me every once in a while. He had planned on teaching secondary English (I would have loved to see his book lists, full – I am sure – of gender bending, race conscious titles), but found his inner playwright instead. So for a while he focused there, sending emails about his latest play – an invitation to a reading or an actual performance - and at other times about horrific conditions in Gaza or opportunities to support Palestinian land rights. Now he's back to teaching, having graduated from Edgewood College in Madison, WI.

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In an email, **José** had a lot to say about the challenges he met after leaving MATC determined to continue his education and licensure to teach in one of Milwaukee's public high schools:

> Institutions have the power to change and to mold individuals. However, within higher education I think that if the individual (student) has a strong core of beliefs and values that particular individual has the power to change the institution itself by changing the discourse within the classroom……there are realities that we must face within higher education and within the education programs in many universities……. I noticed that my opinions, past experiences and belief systems were different than that of my fellow classmates. There is definitely a cultural disconnect between upper middle and middle class, suburban, white students and working class, inner city, minority students. As an adult I can deal with that. I appreciate diversity within any context….. [They are] preparing educators to teach in urban contexts, yet many of students are ill prepared to face such

> realities. The real problem however is that some students show indifference when these subjects are brought up in the classroom discourse. I have often brought up subjects that are part of the realities of inner city-urban education classrooms only to be "dismissed" by some of my fellow classmates. I am a product of the inner city and I think I have a pretty good grasp on the issues that affect my community, since I encounter them every day. However, when I try to talk to a "suburban" education students about such issues (that they will face in their classrooms) many of them don't know how to react, mainly because many of these experiences are alien to them. This is why programs like TEP are important [providing] the diversity that is truly needed in our classrooms.

I haven't heard from José lately, but given the state of immigrant rights, I am sure that whatever time and devotion he is not showering on his family or his high school Social Studies students, he is expending on behalf of undocumented young people ("Dreamers" like him) in Milwaukee and the nation.

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IN ANOTHER GALAXY

Now I give over these pages to a few graduates of the Teacher Education / Educational Foundations program at MATC who agreed to let me probe their thoughts and experiences, recording their words so others could hear them. Vanja starts that conversation. She is a very busy, very talented, award winning English as a Second Language teacher and … bellydancer! When she hugs you, you have been hugged. When she laughs, it fills the room. She also cries; I've seen it when she tells the stories of growing up in a Muslim-Christian family in war-torn Bosnia, having to make choices that really aren't choices at all, much less the kind that children should ever be asked to confront.

VANJA

I am half Catholic and half [Eastern] Orthodox. In Bosnia, where I grew up, everyone was Muslim, so I was a minority … but it didn't matter because we were all in the same situation. That's what kept us safe.

I always wanted to be a teacher … ever since I was little. I used to gather up all the neighborhood kids and I would teach them. This was in Bosnia during the war; we couldn't go outside because we would get shot, killed, or step on a land mine. So we stayed inside; I would get them all together. Everything I learned in school, I would teach them; I would steal chalk from my school. My dad knew I loved this so much, he even got me a grade book. I would make the younger kids bring homework and I would help them with it. And, together we would study our Bosnian language by reading literature

We came to this country as refugees … with two suitcases. In Minneapolis; the ESL teachers were like my mom and dad. They pushed me and made me love English, but I thought that teaching was a dream I had to give up.!

Then when we moved to Milwaukee, I learned about a grant for refugees through UW-Milwaukee that would pay for me to start my education classes at MATC. What really made me want to be an *urban teacher* was the Orientation to Urban Teaching course. In that class, I met and learned to relate to people from who, like me, were from different backgrounds but all had one goal in mind – teaching. After that I never thought about going to the suburbs to teach. I had had a rough life, so I thought I could show kids who had also had a rough life that there's more.

The Teacher Education Program office was where we all gathered. We all went through classes together and helped each other like a community. We would come to the office to vent and be listened to. The staff and instructors wouldn't tell us what to do; they would just ask questions and I would end up solving my own situation. Now we do the same with our students: we look at them as people first, then as students. If we gain their trust, they'll do their best.

I remember walking through metal detectors into the Aurora Weier Bilingual Alternative High School for my internship. I was 21 years old; some of the kids were older than me. I thought, "Oh my God, what have I gotten myself into?" But, then, I formed such close relationships with the kids – I'm still in contact with them 10 years later.

People blame "those urban kids" for teachers not taking jobs in urban districts. But the kids are awesome! The problem is all the policy changes that require us to do so much. For example, for evaluation we now have to keep a portfolio proving that we are meeting the teaching standards. It's a lot of extra work, at least 2 hours a day, which has

nothing to do with the students. I end up doing it at home - only to please the people above us. Everything is data driven. I have to set the objectives and then, on my own, go to the data warehouse to prove that I met the objectives…. Even the administrators' plates are too full.

I never go into the teachers' lounge. It's so negative … they don't want to spend their nights doing all these extra required things. They are burned out and because they have so little time, they end up giving students worksheets. So, the kids are disadvantaged by all of this.

In my advisory class I have 46 students – all ELL. I'm there by myself, no para. Ten different languages. What I want to do is focus on the kids, do projects with them. I want to be involved with them, with our 'learning community'.

All the curriculum changes were meant to address the achievement gap, but I don't like that word "gap". Their school achievement is connected to their background knowledge. So, to close the 'gap' the teacher has to get to know the students personally. The first thing we do is get to know each other – in their home language and in English. Then the kids are more open to reading; mine do all the time. I have a little bean bag chair in the corner; if a kid has a bad day (I tell them that we all have bad days) they can sit back there. The only rule is that you have to be reading – I don't care what. The more they read, the more English they are going to learn; that's how I did it. Many don't have books at home, so I tell them "grab a Bible," "grab a Qur'an." Whatever. Read <u>something</u>. I tell them that being literate is what will make them successful.

In the high school ESL class we use the same book that I used in college. They may not know what a word means, but they know how to attack it : prefix, suffix, root. I give them ACT prep material … I have to create new rubrics for them, but it's working.

Everything starts in the classroom; we have to be there for our students, we have to provide for them. I remember a student, Billy. He would come to class and sleep. The first time, I let it go. The second time, I let it go. The third time, I kicked him out of class. He said, "Ms. Vanja, can I talk to you when everybody has left?" I told him, "Sure." …. He was a huge kid, taller than me, and he started crying, "Ms. Vanja, I'm so sorry. Your class is the only class where I feel comfortable sleeping. Last night I slept on a bench; we got kicked out of our house and my grandma didn't want to take us in." …. I just started bawling; I didn't know this was happening. Now, I go into their files first – I'm not supposed to – but I want to know where they come from.

Then there was Richard. I had him throughout middle school and he followed me into high school. He'd been in 11 foster homes, his dad was locked up, his mom was in an institution. None of the teachers wanted him in their classroom; he would go to their class, get his work, and then come to my room. Now Richard has graduated high school and has become a minister. We still stay in touch….. I expect my students to do great things, but if you don't care they won't know that there are people who won't judge them, they won't know that they can achieve. They don't have to go to college. Some of my students have become barbers and they're making more money than I am as a teacher.

When I was the new kid in high school going through a rough time – my parents got divorced, my dad tried to commit suicide twice, I started skipping school – my ESL teacher noticed. She came to the library where I would hide, go into chat rooms, and talk with kids overseas. She told me, "You can't do this." She made me her monitor, so I could get a credit for that….. Without her I never would have graduated.

Other teachers ask me how to get them to talk. I say, "How do I get them to shut-up?" It's the little things: When I had my baby, there were like 20 kids in my room; the

nurses were freaking out. When I was going through my marriage break up, my 'gang-bangers' wanted to go get that guy….. I believe that if I am just human with my kids, they will want to do the same for somebody else.

TIM

MATC was a game changer. I had a daughter and a family, but I had left all my friends. I was trying to change patterns in my life that had me stuck in a place that was unproductive. Growing up I had felt that I didn't have opportunities; I also did some things that got in the way of the dreams I had. But I kept on learning on my own, so (I don't know if I can translate my experience to another person, another student) a big part of what I told myself was "I'm prepared and I know I can be disciplined." You have to look at the big picture – your life. If you stayed focused there can be a pay-off at the end. The discipline comes from deep inside; you have to live your day to day life, but you also have to think "Who do I want to be? How do I want to live most of my life?"

When I was 26 I finally committed to my education. I was thinking that I had been through so much until then that this – college – was going to be easy. My questions were: How do I learn? How do I get good grades? How do I get a job?

I was hyper focused just trying to take advantage of every opportunity. (I guess I see every challenge that way.) I was an honors student and I was in student government for a brief time. These were mostly my own decisions once I got started. I took cues from my professors' professionalism, but really it was all me. I thought I wanted to go into Political Science; I wanted to be an advocate for kids who'd experienced what I had. Then I took a Biology course and that started my interest in Life Sciences.

Eventually one professor I worked with through work-study encouraged me to go into teaching and to apply to Marquette. I did that and was accepted into the College of Education where I majored in Broadfield Science. There were required courses like Philosophy and Religion that I couldn't have taken at MATC. Plus, I was a double major – Education and Science - taking 4 courses each semester. So, I took 4 years to complete my degree. Being an older student was different; being a minority was different, but I think my drive - being a dad and a student - focused me; I ignored the things I might have thought more about and just pushed through.

I didn't live on campus, but there was a "commuter lounge" in the Union where I did a little socializing and again was in student government for a time. My commuter friends nominated me J. .. I also had a job on campus and was a building manager when I left.

I recognize that by now I am fairly well educated … graduating from Marquette and then getting my Masters in Environmental Studies at UW-Madison. Along the way I've substitute taught, been a mentor to high school science students, taught in private schools, worked with Extension. I'm working out what I do next in this political climate. There were more environmental jobs when I was studying during the Obama years. I'm very good at research, but I don't think I'd like to be in an academic environment exclusively. My ideal job might be a combination of community work and academic work …. like urban agriculture.

The lessons I've learned come out in my teaching. Right now I'm teaching in a middle school and thinking a lot about differentiation – not trying to give direct instruction to student who will not respond very well, not giving an assignment to a student who will get off-task right away – so, I'm just trying to keep all of that in mind. As a new teacher, I'm already on-board with some of the school's changes, but the

teachers that have been there for a while are just trying to get there. So, we're a different places, but at the same I want to be on the team with them because sometimes it can feel like us versus the administrators.

The "achievement gap" or "opportunity gap" - what you call it determines which facets of inequality you look at .. and here are so many. Socio-economic status really has an impact; students that have hard lives outside of school usually don't do well. Going beyond that, minority students that have fairly stable lives outside of school often come to school but don't see themselves in the staff and faculty. So they don't understand what role school is playing in their lives, they disengage. That can lead to academic failure…. I have the same expectations of all students, but I also try to get their back story because I want to know the reasons for their behaviors. I'm not trying to be a hero, but I don't see how you can separate the out-of-school factors from academic achievement.

CONSTELLATIONS OF DIFFERENCE

The words of Dr. Beverly Tatum and Theresa Delpit rang through the Orientation to Urban Teaching course that Vanja remembers.

In Can We Talk about Race? Spellman College President Tatum insists on our understanding how this nation's legacy of slavery has affected and infected the education of students of color until this time. Through an examination of history she leads us to her call for teaching based on "wise criticism" ; that is, guidance from teachers who respect students' intellect and desire to learn to students' who can be certain that rigorous expectations and correction are given by teachers who care about their success.

Dr. Lisa Delpit, Executive Director/Eminent Scholar in the Center for Urban Education & Innovation at Florida International University writes about "codes of power" that are enacted within classrooms and schools in another of the texts studied in this course: Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom. Her thoughtful exposé explains how verbal and non-verbal messages from white teachers who have not examined their practice, disadvantage and further marginalize poor and minority students and how these same teachers' treatment of students of color as "other" , sabotages the educational enterprise. Briefly, these codes are:

- …. the power of the teacher over the students; the power of the publishers of textbooks and of the developers of the curriculum to determine the view of the world presented; the power of the state in enforcing compulsory schooling; and the power of an individual or group to determine another's intelligence or "normalcy." Finally, if schooling prepares people for jobs, and the kind of job a person has determines her or his economic status and, therefore, power, then schooling is intimately related to that power.

- There are codes or rules for participating in power….. linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and presentation of self; that is, ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing, and ways of interacting.

- The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power…. success in-institutions—schools, work places, and so on—is predicated upon acquisition of the culture of those who are in power. ….. The upper and middle classes send their children to school with all the accoutrements of the culture of power; children from other kinds of families operate within perfectly wonderful and viable cultures but not cultures that carry the codes or rules of power.

- If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier. In my work within and between diverse cultures.

- Those with power are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge—its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence.

The alumni who will now "speak" are proof of Delpit's last point. They know that their education and professional lives have been a battle with these codes sanctified by the society and institutions with which they have interacted. They are not just committed to equality, they are wise about the dynamics that they hope to interrupt.

CHRIS

When I was younger I really didn't know what was going to become of my future because, coming from a minority group, I didn't really think I had a future.

Some kids fantasize about having a big house, a car, becoming a doctor. That wasn't me; I just coasted through school, inner city schools – half of my life in Los Angeles. My parents were immigrants. Living here was a whole new experience for them; meanwhile I was being 'Americanized'. My parents weren't really involved in my education, so I really didn't have guidance or encouragement to focus my efforts.

Over time I realized there was a pattern of schools in the impoverished neighborhoods where we lived having low expectations. I didn't graduate from high school. I went to work, but you get to a point where you really want something else to happen, so I decided to give it a shot. I went to the Milwaukee Literacy Services and took the test for my GED; the instructor was impressed with my scores – I tested like a high school graduate. So, I knew I could do it …Now I realize that there are so many people whose potentials are not being developed– probably many are among those who are incarcerated and labeled as criminals, but who never really got a chance.

Other things happened that started helping me make the decision to go to MATC. I knew I wanted to be a teacher. Having the support that we all got from the Teacher Education Program, having you believe in us being able to finish MATC and then continue at a 4 year campus, really made the difference.

[When Chris graduated from MATC, he transferred to a 4 year School of Education. The following observations grew out of the semesters of student teaching that were required by his licensing program.]

There's all this bureaucracy, people who have no idea what happens in the classroom and are just fighting for power among themselves. That is the obstacle... and then there are the state threats of taking over the school district and setting up voucher schools without the right intentions. Instead of 'improving' they are hindering good teaching… there's more accountability, but less support. When classroom sizes are increased, disadvantaged students - such as English Language Learners or Bilingual students who need a lot of one-on-one instruction and support - are hurt further. In addition, school closings, reduced funding, fewer teachers and resources, and the additional work of meeting reporting obligations all feel like jabs at our profession ….. not respected profession as it used to be.

Closing the 'achievement gap' is a big part of the school agenda, but many of our students (and their parents) need bilingual support. So, our principal has decided to train the staff, hire more bilingual staff, and give parents access to translation. She, herself, is very aware of how women have been marginalized. So, she is very sensitive to how language difference operates this way too. In our school, we also do mindfulness practice, which maybe isn't directly related to closing the achievement gap, but it does give those students who in their lives outside of school don't have a moment that isn't chaotic.

One of the things that's hanging on the kids is schools and teachers having a pretty low standard of what "success" is…. A good teacher helps students realize that it's not enough to be satisfied with what you are offered. That just repeats a cycle. To achieve a higher standard, to do homework at home, to struggle with Shakespeare, our students need to have a reason. For me, it was having educators who believed in me as well as me feeling I could reach for a higher level.

If we let them know that we believe in them, that's something they will always have….They may even become activists.

ANNA

I graduated from West Allis Central in 1992 with bad grades; I didn't like school at all. But I decided that I would give college a try and go to MATC. I enrolled in 2 classes, to them once, and then went to work waiting tables. But I read a lot, and I learned to type by writing in AOL chatrooms…. 18 years later I was still working in the service industry. By then, I had this amazing 3 year old daughter, and I didn't want her to grow up and say to me, "You didn't go to college."

My sister actually gave me a blank check and said, "Go. You are the smartest one on the family." It was just days before the start of classes and after looking at the catalog, I didn't know what to do. Then I saw that there were 3 prerequisite classes for the teacher education program. I thought, "Well, I'll just start there." .. After all, I was already teaching my daughter and knew that nothing felt better.

They didn't let me take the math class without taking a test. So, I went to an advisor at the South Campus and told him my ACT scores from 18 years ago. He said I could take the class, "But, don't disappoint me." That was immediate encouragement. I had what I call 'terror sweats' until I got confident. I busted my butt that first semester and got all A's. Finally, I wasn't ashamed anymore; I was redefining myself. I knew "this is where I'm supposed to be."

At first I was doing college for my daughter, but then I started doing it for myself. When I went full time, I got financial aid including extra so that my daughter could go to the MATC Child Care Center – it was the coolest thing in her life!

I got classes that were small and teachers who were so helpful; I felt so lucky. I felt like I was attending a private school that the public was paying for. I started meeting a lot of people and working as an Educational Assistant in the Bilingual Office. One of the staff there told me about a grant and encouraged me to apply, saying that "I would be amazing." I thought, "I can't work at MATC," but I did the interview and ended up working there for 3 years …. Before that I hadn't had any exposure to diversity or urban issues. As I began working there, though, I wanted to embrace everyone! I'd just never had the opportunity to learn and think about cultural competence. I was learning so much.

From my experience at MATC I knew that I could help students learn, but I never thought I would be teaching students with intellectual disabilities. When I transferred to

the university and got to my first field experience, I was assigned to an EBD classroom with first 5 and then 4 African American boys (one was suspended). They could be super naughty .. but when they were interested in something they were like kittens.... I didn't know how to help them yet. I would take it home with me.

I think a self-fulfilling prophecy plays into the "achievement gap". If we don't believe in our students then they are not going to achieve. If we have decided that we won't work that hard to engage them in learning, plan lessons that are interesting or relevant enough, the achievement gap will persist. But, if we keep it interesting, the kids are going to want to learn. Special Ed classes need to be more rigorous -strategically rigorous - so that the kids can at least get up to grade level. We have to trick them into working hard until they're working hard and thinking it's the coolest thing they've ever done ..... Another thing is that there are too many rules, like one finger means this, two fingers means another thing. Just talk to them like they are people!

They all had stories about absent dads. They didn't seem to have anyone in their corner to make sure they weren't hunger, had shoes, slept. .....And all these cuts in social services aren't going to help at all. They have to have food and clothes. They have to have safety. Some kids lived only 2 blocks from the school, but the bus comes to pick them up because it's too dangerous for them to walk to school! Couldn't there instead be community people who walk kids to school? Give someone a job!

The first IEP meeting I sat in on had one Regular Ed teacher, who didn't even know the student, an administrator, and a special Ed teacher. The mom didn't show up. So basically they just whipped through it, checking boxes, and we were out of there in 10 minutes. In another situation the teacher, who didn't speak Spanish, had a classroom filled with ELL students. She observed for 10 minutes, wrote up their IEP's, and that was

it. I was appalled! She could have had the support of other Spanish speaking teachers, but the administrator would have had to realize this was needed and organize it.

I think they don't really expect parents to come to these meetings so they don't prepare. When parents don't speak English, it's usually the child that is translating; there's a breakdown in communication because the child may not really understand what are they actually saying to their parent and the parent may be feeling intimidated by the teachers …. One can completely flop in teaching if you don't work to develop these relationships with parents. When there is a relationship between parent and teacher, it's usually because the parent has instigated it out of concern for their child. The parents, they're not all neglectful; they're just super busy. They care a lot.

I think a lot of teachers don't accept having two roles – teacher and advocate. They think, "I'm just here to teach them." Once when I was being introduced to each student by the teacher in charge she would include information about whether the student was receiving free lunch or not. I don't care! I wanted to know if he liked math!! …When teachers talk about parents or the other kids in the family, they're just looking for an excuse for not teaching.

The political atmosphere for teachers is pretty hateful. And the bureaucracies in Schools of Education and in the State Government feel disconnected from each other. School districts should spend their funds on the people who are closest to the students - the teachers. When, as a child, I was in school teachers were respected, bathrooms were clean, walls were painted, ceiling tiles weren't missing. Things weren't broken all over, there wasn't clutter; if you are in a cluttered classroom, it doesn't feel that good.

A huge problem in many urban schools is that teachers don't stay. It takes the kids so long to trust the teacher, and then the teacher is gone. I understand because there's so much work and it is so draining and stressful for the teacher. But, when they

leave the kids have to start over. And they know that the next teacher will probably also leave, which makes it hard for the next teacher too. I think teachers I need fewer after school meetings and more support and maybe even higher pay …. They should make "high-need" schools into amazing magnet schools, not just in the 'better' areas. Maybe if the schools were looked at as special, if they were able to figure out how to get community and parent support, teachers would stay. Instead they rationalize, thinking that the kids will just end up in prison anyway.

Teachers and students planning to become teachers have to get out of their box, and when they do, when they learn more, how can they not care? … You have to look at the big picture too. It's not just one kid in one classroom; we have to look at all of them.

IVELIS

MATC was my first college experience. I think that if I had gone directly to the university I would probably have been lost. In the Teacher Education Program I really felt a connection with the teachers. And the classes – even though I was raised in Milwaukee and have always been surrounded by diversity – helped me understand the history of oppression behind the way things are today. We talked about social justice in class. We read Paulo Freire. Wow! …So, when I started at the university, my personal experience of having been an English Language Learner on top of my classroom and field experiences at MATC really put me ahead of everyone else.

I had wanted to be a teacher since I was young. Year later, while I was studying for my teaching license, I worked with a non-profit that supports parents of children with special needs. Now I am teaching in a K4 bilingual Special Ed classroom at Vieau School … it's what I love! We have to believe in our kids, not their labels. We have to learn what they need and how they learn. And, with the gift of bilingualism, they are able to learn in two languages. I am really glad that I have a background in both

Bilingual and Special Education, so I can also communicate with the children's parents and speak up more publically when I have to.

Politicians are ignoring the whole child and all of the issues that affect him or her; they are always trying to find someone to blame – now it's teachers. I feel that's one of the reasons people are not choosing to go into the teaching profession.... You have to care for the whole child. It's tough especially for the more senior teachers. They are the ones that felt the cuts – their salaries, their health insurance; it really impacted them financially.

Teaching is not an 8 hour job. I feel we need leadership especially in Bilingual Special Ed because those students are always the last to be thought about. So, I always end up in leadership roles in the community because I speak up for my students. You can make a difference in your class, but the solution is working on the issues that impact communities in poverty in urban areas. Parents' issues affect their kids – mental health issues, drug abuse issues. So, when we're not teaching , we need to advocate for more jobs, reducing crime, improving health care – all the issues that affect our families. Fix those issues, don't just blame families and schools.

Every year they're changing the testing and the curriculum. Don't blame the students or the schools for low test scores, for not closing the "achievement gap."... And, how valid are they when you are testing kids who have so much trauma in their lives? or have only been in the country for a year? Teachers in the suburbs, their students don't face these same circumstances. We, urban teachers, do.

Why are kids in Milwaukee worth less than kids in the suburban schools? … I have 32 kids in my class. Imagine what a teacher could do with half as many or with a community-school model that brings in resources from the community to work with teachers. If we're serious about closing the achievement gap, we have to provide

resources and invest in the schools. It's really tough to provide that individualized support when you have 32 kids .. You can be a great teacher, trying your best, but you don't have a magic wand.

In schools, every day, there are good things happening, even in the schools with high needs. But the news can be so negative. The parents hear this. So do student teachers who are sometimes scared before they come to their assigned schools thinking "The kids are going to beat me up." But once they start they often realize, "Oh my God, these kids are just amazing!"... My own kids go to MPS, I went to MPS.

A lot of behaviors have reasons. When they're struggling, we need to find out why. I had a kid this year who was just out of control. I brought in the psychologist, the social worker, the mom; I got him all kinds of help from outside of school … You don't want to exclude kids like that, but you need more support.

Another child's dad was deported; he was always depressed. I connected him with the school psychologist, with community resources, but this bright child was really impacted and so were others. They'd worry and say, "They're going to take my parents." You have to understand them and their reality, but also teach them.

Teachers don't leave the building at 3:30. You have so much work to do, but you know, someone has to teach our kids. We have to care.

SEEING STARS

When Jeanette speaks, it is with the voice of a future school administrator, perhaps even professor of education. She is a passionate critic, sharing many of the same concerns as Vanja, Chris, Anna, and Ivelis …… She insists on accountability, starts with herself, and extends that same ethos to her students, all of whom have a Special Ed designation. Responsibility is everyone's responsibility she would say: to each other, to the classroom they share, to oneself.

Jeanette's students are in very different circumstances from Rafe Esquith's – another star educator whose writing stimulated our classroom conversations - but I would love to listen in on a conversation between the two, beginning with these words from his book There Are No Shortcuts:

> It is wonderful to have a terrific mind, but it's been my experience that having outstanding intelligence is a very small part of the total package that leads to success and happiness. Discipline, hard work, perseverance, and generosity of spirit are, in the final analysis, far more important.

JEANETTE

You shouldn't go into teaching because you "like kids". You have to love lesson planning and working with colleagues; you have to enjoy the details of the job of teaching. If you can't manage a classroom, then it won't be for you.

I think is starts with your core beliefs, what you are already bringing to the table, your previous exposure to diversity and what you have been taught to believe …. how you view the world. As a teacher, you most likely will not be teaching a mirror image of yourself. The MATC classes that we had either opened up students who were more close minded or less aware of the problems urban youth experience, helped them understand that there is more to society than what they had experienced and changed their perspective, or it confirmed what we already believed and knew but educated us more so that you had more research behind your opinions.

Also, those courses helped us know how to have conversations in our communities. Our classrooms at MATC were safe places to practice difficult dialogues. Hopefully everyone had read the same central text and then we learned to talk respectfully while making our points. They led me towards social justice as a passion; And now I am an advocate for my students who don't have my economic security or race privilege.

In college, so many students just wanted to do the bare minimum to which I ask, "Is that going to be your professional practice? You're going to have a license! Doctors and nurses have to pass exams and we too should have to. Are you going to aim for a 2 on your performance review instead of the highest score you can get?" Now, because there are standards, teachers have to work to attain them. The standards encourage them to prepare for class and participate in the conversations we have in our classes and with our colleagues.

Some of the layoffs were because of the budget, but maybe they also created an opportunity to get rid of those teachers who weren't really qualified or just burned out, who had stopped growing and adapting to new challenges. We are modeling for your students. If we are not motivated, how will your students be motivated to learn?

In my classroom I have open conversations with my 'kiddos' and because we are in a Special Ed classroom the students are very aware that they are not privileged and I am aware of how they see me as different from them. With practice you get comfortable..... I want to make all people human to them. They'll say, “Oh, that white girl...” And I'll say, “ That girl has a name; what is it?” Or, sometimes they'll say, “That Hispanic kid...” and I'll say, “No. His Mamma gave him a name just like your Mamma gave you a name. If you don't know it, then describe them carefully. Observe.”

I don't think many other teachers talk the way I do, but that's because social justice is important to me. It's just me trying to open them up because their home culture is different from the classroom culture. I tell them, “When I talk about you to other teachers, I say good things…. The way to break their ideas about you is to do your best and not do *those* behaviors.” So, we talk about how we want to be viewed and how we should treat others; if we don't want to be bullied, then we shouldn't bully others. When I say, “Hey!” in that special way, they know to stop what they're doing and will even call each other out. … You have to take the time to explain these things and the consequences. I am not afraid to talk about the barriers they are up against. I don't avoid them. Sometimes, I'll start the day with “Is there anything we need to talk about today?” Or, they'll come up to me and say, “Ms Nowak, we need to have a discussion.” But it's always “we”.

We also talk about what they are bringing from their home culture, accepting it, not bashing it … but we also talk about the modifications they may need to make for the school setting.

In our classrooms we have to problem solve also. If we run short of paper, maybe we should take recycling more seriously. If 70% of the students can't afford supplies, let’s be creative: a student can still write with a crayon – who cares? ; janitors find pencils

at the end each day. If they're broken – who cares? My class understands that that's how we work, we'll figure it out. Instead of complaining, we'll find some other solution cheap and smart.

Education is continuously changing. So, schools have to use a business model and plan for the future. If we look at population growth and decide that in 5 years we are going to need x more teachers, we have to plan for it. To deal with class size, students can be shifted to empty school buildings which can start off small and then grow. To attract teachers, the teachers themselves have to stop bashing their profession and put an end to the hateful culture within teaching. The principals, who help build the culture within each school, can help by creating a positive climate that discourages teachers from criticizing each other and the expectations they find burdensome. You might not get 100% buy-in, but maybe meeting to talk through these issues more often would help. We'll need to attract more people to teaching.

STARSHINE

It's not that the teacher is necessarily the brightest orb in the classroom, but if he or she doesn't emit light, all prospects for engaged learning are dulled, if not extinguished.

Returning to Professor Haberman's explication on "star" teachers and teaching, "they steadfastly believe in children, their parents, and their communities… they are protectors of children, modelers of life-long learning, sources of knowledge, and educators of world citizens." And it is their passion for their chosen profession and the well being of the children whom they literally live with each day, that – as stars are to the planets that orbit them – reflected back in students' academic achievement and personal growth. Children, whose greatest asset (and vulnerability) is being able to distinguish between authentic vs. dutiful interaction, absorb the affirmations of the former, come to know themselves as learners, explorers, makers. What follows is real learning that they know matters…. that, as Haberman reminds us, makes the difference between a life lived or deadened by all the social forces that oppose it for children growing up in poverty.

When I think of Peter, I first think of his smile – ready, broad and sincere. He chose special education because, as he says, it was personal. Everyday, his passion for children, equality, and learning as the best weapon against poverty (along with the smile that reveals his love for his work and students) enters the classroom with him. The children who are fortunate to call him "teacher" see it, know him, and warm themselves in his light.

PETER

I am from Brazil in Rio De Janeiro in a pretty big city called Santos. Santos is an island, off the coast of Sao Paulo. I had a lot of great experiences growing up there.

During my childhood, I could not remain focused on education because I had to fight to survive. I was 11 years old when I started working and gaining firsthand knowledge of how to interact with customers of different races, social classes, and backgrounds. At 16, I graduated from a public high school; then started college. I did 2 years of law school; I hoped to become a fair judge. But at one point, I realized that I didn't want to judge people. Instead I wanted to understand them. So, I started studying psychology and learning about how human beings behave and what I could do to help them.

I worked as an H.R. and Benefits manager. On the side, in order to give back to the community, I became involved in helping children and adults with disabilities. In Brazil, "regular" education classes don't provide enough support for kids with special needs to develop and learn. Teaching seemed a perfect career for me. So, I received my certification to teach children and adults with Asperser's and Down's Syndromes in both math and Portuguese. That experience was so fulfilling and rewarding that I let go of the business world. I had found out what my passion was, and once I got that calling, I didn't let it go. I then decided to pursue my education here in the United States.

I came to the United States when I was 22 and started studying ESL at MATC mostly because I wanted to be able to understand and communicate. I didn't have any plans to transfer my credits and experience at first. However, after a year and a half, almost two years, I decided to start in the Teacher Education Program. By then, I had enough of a command of English to be able to understand the classes and be successful.

As I have said, I grew up in a city which is almost as big as Milwaukee, but not as segregated. I'm not saying Brazil has no racial problems because it does, but at the beach I saw many, many inter racial couples. But the segregation I saw here was a really big and interesting challenge for me. In schools that are 100% African American, the dilemma is that the segregation may be comfortable for the students because they can feel that they all belong, their identity is affirmed by their peers. But it is also not beneficial because they don't get exposed to different people and backgrounds, different point of view. What matters really is how long children are kept apart by race. If it is throughout their whole childhood, I don't see it as beneficial.

What I found very beneficial during my college years were classes tin which we talked about race. Although I didn't understand how race was such a big issue here in the U.S., these classes which allowed us to explore, discuss, and be able to address race and racism did help me become prepared to teach in U.S schools.

Students in segregated schools and classrooms can be exposed to other people and experiences through lesson plans e.g. Geography. My students know that I speak 3 languages fluently and am working on 2 more. They are curious about where I come from. So, I tell them stories and use maps a lot in my teaching to integrate and develop many skills. It is also important for them to understand their own culture and see that reflected in classroom lessons.

In Milwaukee I have seen how white supremacy is passed on through generations. However, I think our generation is starting to walk away from this; there are so many opportunities these days to meet people from different races and backgrounds depending on how much effort and determination one puts into the opportunity that is available.

To become an effective teacher, it is very important to be educationally prepared and trained in order to deal with the everyday situations that occur in classrooms and schools. My background allowed me to grasp the intersections between class & ethnicity and teaching & learning. College courses give you that understanding some of the time, but some- I would say - don't. I do believe in the 10% - 20% - 70% formula for learning. 70% you get from your experiences, 20% from being taught in classes and 10% from what you think about what you are learning….. SO, I would say that I was 80% ready before taking those classes :)

I talk to kids a lot about their behavior: for example, how to listen to their teacher, follow instructions. I tell them that if they build a good foundation, then in the future they will have a chance to get what they want. Education is not a guarantee, nothing in life is guaranteed. However, if they learn they will have a better chance in the future. Some kids stop and think about what I tell them. Other students need me to break it down into simple examples. I use what I know about them to help them understand that paying attention in class will give them an enormous advantage. Sometimes I tell them about myself - how I started working at 11, paying rent, taking care of my brother and my mom, but I still went to school. I didn't not find or make excuses. I knew I needed to change my life. Today I have achieved huge milestones in my life that many people don't. I have my own house, a car, and can afford to live comfortably.

A problem I find with education in the U.S. is that teachers have lost the authority over the kids who know they will be promoted whether they learn or not. So, the motivation to show up and pay attention is not there. Much research says that in the long run it is not beneficial for kids to repeat grades; however, the students should not know that they won't be held back. In Brazil, kids are held back but they don't want to be left without their friends, so they try their best.

There are many reasons why children in the U.S. are failing in school. Some say it is poverty, others say it is because of learning disabilities or that they didn't receive the foundation or didn't take advantage of the teaching in kindergarten or the primary grades. As the children advance through grade levels they need the foundation of the previous grade. What I believe the main problem is the lacking support from School Boards and policy makers, the lack of funding, the lack of parent involvement, the lack of student motivation. Hopefully all of this will all be addressed with the Every Student Succeed Act which will be managed by each state in order to close the achievement/opportunity gap and replace No Child Left Behind.

Parent involvement is critical to students' success and closing the achievement gap. Parents have to work with their child's teacher, talk with him or her, reinforce the teacher's lessons at home, and participate in projects. Unfortunately, I don't see a lot of that. There are holiday events, but out of 350 kids, maybe only 20 parents show up to see their kids' presentations. Sometimes the kids have challenges and the parents need resources to help them, but then don't follow through. Sometimes they see the school as just day care where they can drop off the kids and leave, but their kids suffer. Parents do have their reasons - being a single parent, having to work to provide a roof and clothes for their children. Many teachers try to reach out to parents; but they have to make that phone call, tell them that their kid needs support, in order to bring them to the school. We also need to think about other ways: in my school we have "Night Out with the Parents"; this week we will have a soup night. We have to work with and make the best out of what we have … it can be a challenge.

Children crave their parents' participation, but not all have it. Sometimes children come to hug me and I hug them back because I know that they are missing this at home. I am an advocate. I will confront a parent if needed.

I work with some amazing professionals. They have gone through 4 years or more of college to become teachers. They care about children. They want to educate. But if the kids don't have the foundations from the class before or if the teacher doesn't have classroom management skills then there are problems with delivering the curriculum. Having to do so much paper work and write so many reports gets in the way of teaching. Instead of administrative things, teachers should be doing what they do best, which is to craft lessons that address the needs of the students. There is a lack of support for teachers to teach and involve parents. Instead of speculating about what schools need, policy makers should ask teachers and parents. For now, though, we have to work with what we have and make the best out of it … it can be a challenge.

I am hopeful.

FINAL WORDS

SHOOTING STARS

an interview with Pablo Muirhead, Faculty Coordinator

E: What is the source of the passion you have for educational equity?

P: Since I was a child issues of societal inequities always were part of our discussions at home in the family. I'm a huge advocate for public education, but having said that our public schools are not set up to address those inequities , creating a "level playing field". That is the fact that pushes me to fight for better funded schools and quality teaching in every classroom, particularly where students aren't getting the extras afforded by middle class parents. I just have a real sense that our society is unjust; it is not accident that there is such disparity between socio-economic classes.

I remember Dr. Cross at UWM once asked our class is schools were doing what they are supposed to be doing. After hearing "no" from all of us who pointed to class size and unequal resource issues, she said, "Schools are doing exactly what they are set up to do, which is to maintain power imbalance in this country." That was eye opening.

Just look at what the suburban school districts – Nicolet, Shorewood for example – are doing to prepare students versus what the large comprehensive urban high schools are doing.

E: What would educational equity look like?

P: All students would be able to access curriculum that engages them and asks them to do more than simply regurgitate information, the sort of activities we find way down on Bloom's taxonomy. Instead it would ask students to be creative and give them multiple ways of showing what they are learning … and shine. Suburban schools do

seem to do that thanks to funding, teacher expectations, students being treated by teachers in empowering ways. And, of course, there is little need for the schools to address "real issues" like hunger, lack of access to health care and insurance … and more access to the "extras" like summer camps, music lessons, trips abroad, museum memberships all of which create an unequal playing field between them and their less privileged peers in less resourced districts,

In Spectacular Things that Happen along the Way by Brian Schulz he writes about working in a very poor school, yet he was able to empower his students because he connected with them, engaged them where they were at, and took them to where they didn't think they could go. … If you look at Milwaukee Public Schools years ago, you'll see that they had wrap around services, social workers, nurses, counselors, librarians, people doing family outreach. Today Wisconsin State is throwing peanuts at the critical needs in urban schools. If a student lives in a zip code that doesn't have the same access to resources they should be funded at a higher level than schools in suburban districts that are well funded thanks to higher property values and taxes.

E: How do you see MATC's Teacher Education Program contributing to greater educational equity in the public schools of Milwaukee?

P: One of the strengths of the program is that we really target and educate students of color and other students who are underrepresented in Teacher Education programs generally. When they become teachers, connections with urban students become easier, which isn't to say that there aren't amazing white teachers – or as students say "woke" – but MATC's mission to interest and educate more nontraditional students.

Additionally, in our courses we strive to create an understanding of schooling and how non-white, non-middle class students are marginalized so that our students don't

go into teaching being blind to these issues and the struggles that they will hopefully take on. Comparing this to the undergrad experience that I had, the closest thing we had was a short course on multiculturalism - "fluffy". It didn't get into the issues that we do. At MATC, though, regardless of students' backgrounds they develop a positive disposition towards diversity and inclusion in urban schools.

E: What does or can the Teacher Education track do to encourage and support students in becoming transformative in their classrooms and schools? How can they be helped to resist acculturation into mainstream thinking once they leave MATC and work towards their licenses at our schools?

P: We need longitudinal data to understand and explain what happens wherever they end up. We also need in-depth interviews and observations to learn whether they are changing their schools or whether they just become a part of the system in order to get by. Some of my former students – very engaged and socially conscious students - who have left to continue at a 4 year college or work as paraprofessionals in MPS, have a lot to say and critique. It is my hope that once they become licensed teachers, they can accumulate what Paolo Freire called "deviance points" that suggest how the current system should be changed …. I know they are committed to equity and justice, but I worry that they will get frustrated and leave.

E: What would it take to get the data you speak about?

P: We have to continue to find ways to track students. If we are interested in looking at changes in their disposition, we will need some base line indication – which we have

in written artifacts produced in their Educational Foundations courses. That would be qualitative research.

We need a system and an alumni office that gathers and keeps data. Now that we have the "Grow Your Own" teacher pipeline with MPS and UWM, we have to work with them. Similarly MATC has to work with UWM to do this.

This would be on top of providing emotional and financial support to students as they transition from one partner to another : MPS to MATC, MATC to UWM.

Going forward with this will be easier than back tracking.

E: Do you see any other challenges to increasing equity in the teaching profession ? How can the Teacher Education track address them?

P: Our hope for our students is that they get licensed and obtain position in schools where they are treated as professionals with dignity ... and paid accordingly. We should all be concerned with how these things not happening contributes to the high turnover of teachers.

A concern that we have is our students continuing into licensed teaching…. which typically is much easier for students with some privilege. They need financial support while they are student teaching, which in essence is an unpaid internship of nearly 6 months. If you are footing your own bill or if you have other mouths to feed we need income from somewhere; this becomes an incredible gatekeeper that prevents amazing individuals from becoming teachers. One answer would be to provide paid internships and give students credit for prior experiences in schools.

E: Interest in the Teacher Education program has been episodic at MATC, not continuous. What do you think MATC has to gain from providing the Teacher Education track as an option to students?

P: MATC is clearly a pillar of the Greater Milwaukee Area, meeting the needs of so many employers and communities. It is in a wonderful position to help put more teachers in the classrooms of our city just when we expect a lot of retirements. 35% of MPS teachers are more than 50 years old.

A group of Wisconsin policy makers wrote a report last year speaking to the need to increase the numbers of students choosing teaching as a profession. Superintendents read it. Administrators and professors in Schools of Education read it.

Teachers are underpaid and facing de-professionalization, so students are looking at other career choices that pay more and are less threatened. We are fighting against a lot of things including a shift in what it means to be a teacher.

Nonetheless, MATC is in a unique position to fill this coming need for more teachers because of our current student population. They are the teachers we want going into urban classrooms.