Leaving the Profession:
The Context
behind One Quality Teacher's
Professional Burn Out

By Mary Elizabeth R. Lloyd with Alexandra Sullivan

In the spring of 2005, I began collecting data[1] for a three-year study investigating the effectiveness of preservice preparation as measured by the transfer of pedagogical practices from preservice settings into novice inservice settings. I was interested in whether or not what was being taught, modeled, and/or espoused in a given teacher-preparation program (TPP) was utilized in the practices of clinical interns and later in the practices of these same subjects during their first two years of teaching. Although some of my subjects claimed that what was taught in their TPP was too theoretical, preservice observations (conducted from the spring of 2005 to the spring of 2006) and inservice observations (conducted from the fall of 2006 to the fall of 2007) revealed 65% and 71%, respectively, adherence to TPP practices.

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While these results were favorable in terms of the effectiveness of preservice preparation, another less favorable result emerged. The subject, Sarah, who transferred the most TPP aligned pedagogical practices into her inservice action (84% of 1,370 observed pedagogical practices) decided to leave the teaching profession following her second inservice year. This is obviously problematic. This young professional was an

exemplary novice mathematics teacher. She was well prepared to teach in an innovative manner, utilizing principles and practices aligned with and advocated by (1) her teacher-preparation program and (2) the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. She was, however, clearly unprepared to sustain this kind of teaching.

In the following article, I describe Sarah's novice inservice experiences in order to contribute to the existing teacher-turnover and satisfaction literature. Her story is intended to help teacher educators and school leaders better understand the multi-faceted struggles that novice teachers face and the tensions they must negotiate. These cannot be boiled down to single, disjointed struggles that have obvious solutions, but occur in an interconnected, complex, and contextual manner which can exacerbate problematic situations and make solutions and methods for negotiation elusive (Hancock & Scherff, 2010).

Background

In telling one novice teacher's story, I am not claiming (1) that the novice inservice experience is the same for every teacher, (2) that all novice teachers who chose to leave the profession leave for the same reasons, or (3) that this story will help design a neat package for preparing all preservice teachers to teach in a manner that will lead them to persist in the profession. On the contrary, each novice faces unique challenges within his/her individual inservice setting. In addition, even when faced with similar challenges, perception of and subsequent responses to these challenges may differ. In essence, each teacher develops his/her teaching identity in a unique fashion, based on personal biographical, pretraining, preservice, and inservice experiences. In fact, during the study from which Sarah's story emerged, despite superficial similarities in my subjects' public-school, inservice settings, as they began to move further away from their common experiences within their teacher-preparation program, their (1) specific inservice settings, (2) experiences, (3) responses to these experiences, and (4) perceptions of teaching and learning gradually diverged.

I have chosen to share a single novice teacher's story because, while each professional's story is unique, Sarah's decision to leave the teaching profession in the spring of 2008 is not. According to 2004-2005 data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics, within the first three years of teaching, nearly a quarter of public-school teachers leave the profession (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, Wyckoff, & National Bureau of Economic Research, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2007). After five years, "between 40 and 50% of all teachers leave the profession" (Ingersoll, 2007, p. 166; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). The percentages of attrition are greatest for teachers like the ones in my study: (1) "Math [emphasis added], science, and elementary special education teachers have higher rates of turnover" (Ingersoll, 2007, p. 167), and (2) "[T]eachers who have stronger academic

backgrounds as measured by test scores and the *competiveness of their under-graduate institution* [emphasis added] are more likely to leave" (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, Wyckoff, & National Bureau of Economic Research, 2008, p.1; Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005).

The fact that Sarah's decision to leave the teaching profession is not unique is extraordinarily problematic. According to Barnes, Crow, and Schaefer (2007), such high rates of exodus each year cost U.S. school systems approximately $7 billion in recruitment and replacement training. Such rates of attrition "impede a school's efforts to coordinate curriculum, to track and share important information about students as they move from grade to grade, and to maintain productive relations with parents and local community" (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011, p. 48). In general, the loss of talented teachers, such as Sarah, weakens the quality of the profession (Hancock & Scherff, 2010).

The literature on job satisfaction suggests that for most professions, having good working relationships with supervisors and colleagues is paramount (Adams, 2010). These good working relationships are forged when school leaders are supportive and interactive; when teachers' voices are heard, not marginalized, in the decisions regarding teaching and learning; when the work day is structured for the occurrence of regular interactions between a network of colleagues; and when the school feels orderly and safe (Adams, 2010; Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; Feng, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005). Other factors contributing to teacher satisfaction include comfortable physical environments, frequent professional development opportunities, and adequate resources (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009).

The current research reveals that schools that offer attractive financial incentives and competitive salaries see more satisfied educators in their ranks (Greenlee, 2009; Feng, 2009; Goldhaber, Gross, & Player, 2007; Imazeki, 2005). However, much of the literature suggests that if the working conditions previously mentioned are met, even if compensation packages are less desirable, teachers report general satisfaction and remain in the field (Greenlee, 2009). Teachers who (1) teach in areas for which they are certified , (2) teach fewer students with disabilities and labeled low achievers, (3) teach in communities with average socio-economic status (low-poverty) , and (4) believe themselves to be competent and effective are reportedly more satisfied (Billingsley, 1993; Colbert & Wolff, 1992; Ingersoll, 2001; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Ma & Macmillan, 1999; Mont & Rees, 1996).

Research findings indicate relationships between job satisfaction and pre-service preparation. Teachers graduating from four- and five-year preparation programs "were one-half to two-thirds more likely to stay in the teaching profession" (Anhorn, 2008, p. 16; Barnes, Crowe, & Schafer, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2003). Similar to findings by Goldhaber and Brewer (2000) and Darling-Hammond, Berry, and Thoreson (2001), Gilpin (2011) found a positive relationship between preservice practicum experiences and novice-teacher retention. More

specifically, novice teachers who participated in practicum experiences during their preservice preparation were three to six percentage points more likely to remain in the teaching profession (Gilpin, 2011).

At first glance, Sarah's situation seemed replete with these professional attributes. She graduated from a five-year teacher preparation program that required multiple practicum experiences. She talked about her supportive principal, who heard his teachers' voices, and the good relationships she had with her colleagues. She was pleased with her salary. She requested to work in one of the mobile trailer classrooms so that she could conduct an active classroom that would not disturb neighboring classes, initially believing this to be the ideal physical setting. She taught (1) in her area of specialization, (2) very few students with Individualized Education Plans, and (3) in a community with a middle- to upper-socio-economic status. While many other teachers felt pressured by the accountability standards mandated by No Child Left Behind, Sarah was not threatened by these, but saw them as necessary for setting high expectations for teachers and equitable learning outcomes for students. She never had problems with classroom management, and, as was revealed by my study on preservice transfer into inservice action, Sarah was transferring innovative pedagogical practices, suggesting that she was an extraordinarily competent, effective mathematics teacher. Why, then, did Sarah choose to leave the profession? Why were these conditions not enough to keep Sarah satisfied professionally? In the following sections, with close inspection, Sarah's complex novice experience is brought into focus, shedding some light on why she chose to leave the teaching profession.

Methodology

I employed a longitudinal qualitative approach to investigate the effectiveness of preservice preparation measured by the transfer of pedagogical practices from preservice settings into novice inservice settings. Utilizing Russell and Schneiderheinze's (2005) description of Activity Theory both as a conceptual and analytic framework, I examined the preservice setting and identified the practices and conceptions of learning and teaching mathematics that the preservice program intended to impart and observably appeared to impart to its students. To identify the intended practices and beliefs, I conducted interviews with professors and three cohorts of mathematics-education students, and I collected program information and course syllabi. To identify the observably imparted practices and beliefs, I conducted participant observations within the fifth-year Secondary Mathematics Teaching seminar (Cohort 1: fall 2005) and the fourth-year Teaching Mathematics course (Cohort 2: spring 2006, Cohort 3: spring 2007).

To determine what transferred from preservice to inservice settings, I continued to observe and interview five members of Cohort 1 throughout their first two years of inservice. I purposefully selected these five subjects because they were entering the

2006-07 school year as first-year, public, middle- or secondary-school mathematics teachers in the same state as their preservice program. Between August 2006 and May 2008, I observed all five participants a total of nine or ten full school days. I witnessed their classroom activity settings in which they were interacting with their students and the curricula. Through observations of the teachers during their planning, breaks, and school duty periods, I also witnessed their out-of-classroom school interactions. In addition to observations, I talked informally to subjects during planning and lunch, between classes, and before and after school when they did not have students in their classrooms; conducted three formal, in-person interviews; and communicated via email throughout their first two inservice years. I reviewed school and district archives and demographics and the literature on traditional and innovative mathematics classroom settings.

My data analysis occurred in two phases. In the first analytic phase, I examined the preservice activity setting and determined its intended and observably imparted practices and conceptions of teaching and learning mathematics. In this phase, observational data of Cohort 2 and 3 during their Teaching Mathematics course, observational data from Cohort 1's Secondary Mathematics seminar, professor interviews, and syllabi were analyzed. First-phase analysis began before and continued throughout the collection of my inservice data. During the second analytic phase, I examined the inservice activity settings and determined what transferred from preservice preparation to inservice action. Cohort 1's inservice data were analyzed for this analytic phase. Again, this article focuses on only one of my five Cohort 1 subjects—Sarah, the one who left the profession after her second inservice year, despite being the one who transferred the most from her preservice preparation into her inservice experiences.

Who Is Sarah?

To fully understand Sarah's situation, one must have a sense of who she is. Sarah entered a five-year, teacher-preparation program in her second year of college which resulted in her receiving a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics and a Master of Teaching. During her enrollment in this program, she maintained high grades in her mathematics and education courses and was never on academic probation. Sarah was confident in her ability to learn and to teach and, subsequently, in her ability to teach upon graduation. She recognized both tacit knowledge and knowledge gained from her preservice experience contributed to her teacher development. She was realistic and reflective about her ability to transfer the innovations promoted in her program, thus balancing traditional and innovative pedagogical practices during clinical internship and her inservice experiences. When Sarah was hired as a full-time teacher after graduation, she was given a two-prep workload and was not expected to float. This is a typical assignment for a novice secondary-level mathematics teacher. At the onset of Sarah's inservice experience, I detected no

signs that she would leave the profession. On the contrary, I foresaw a long and satisfying teaching career in Sarah's future.

Sarah's personality, in general, strengthened my belief that she would persist in the teaching profession. At the beginning of her first inservice year when asked, "How would you describe yourself in general (your personality)?" Sarah explained that she liked (a) "to set goals and to achieve them," (b) "challenges when working with competent people as a team," and (c) being "social, but also enjoy[ed] time alone." Sarah's perception of herself was backed up repeatedly by her actions in her classroom and with her colleagues. With regard to "setting goals and achieving them," Sarah was observed consistently using every minute of her time at school to complete tasks efficiently. During one of my visits, Sarah explained that she saw her principal while she was coming back from the restroom; he asked her, "Why are you always moving so fast?" "Because I have to eat and use the restroom in 24 minutes," she responded. After telling me this, she quickly entered her classroom and began typing grades into her computer. At the beginning of Sarah's induction year, her goal-oriented, efficient traits aided her development toward quality teaching by helping her to (1) use all of class time, (2) attend to all students, and (3) provide almost immediate feedback on assessments.

Interpretations of Competent, Highly-Qualified Teachers

Sarah's interpretations of what it meant to be, and her initial commitment to being, a competent, highly-qualified teacher also lent to my assumptions about her persistence and success within the teaching profession. She was clearly interested and invested in continual professional development. She understood that learning to teach did not simply end with the completion of her preservice program. She explained that she attended a workshop during the summer before her first year in which she adopted several new teaching strategies. She recognized, especially as a novice, that she had a lot to learn about the mathematical concepts that generally confuse students, and she knew this knowledge would develop with experience.

When asked her goals as a mathematics teacher and what it meant to be a competent teacher, Sarah highlighted (1) developing positive attitudes about mathematical content; (2) making mathematical concepts relevant by connecting them to the real world; (3) making connections between mathematical concepts rather than presenting mathematical concepts as a set of disjointed facts, and (4) social/emotional role modeling. While these beliefs aligned with those espoused in her teacher preparation program, some of her beliefs about teacher competence derived from cultural views of the profession as underappreciated and taken for granted.

When talking with Sarah informally, she described in a direct manner her beliefs about competent teaching: "Do not complain, but make the most of what you have been given." She considered teachers who were unable to navigate the challenges of teaching and unable to make the most of what they were given incompetent. In

essence, Sarah's attitude about teaching was that, while it is usually not ideal, one should happily take what is provided.

Additionally, Sarah's practices and comments constantly revealed that she understood and experienced the teaching profession as complex, challenging, and intentional. This is illustrated in the following statement:

> People say, "Oh, you are a math teacher; you just throw up some notes and give them some practice problems." And I am like, "No, it's not that easy. I spend hours and hours trying to come up with best ways to teach something to as many people possible. You know, get as many of them engaged as possible." This is also one of the biggest challenges for me in teaching is making everything I do very intentional: making sure that I am never giving them busy work and that everything is connected somehow to the big picture. Not easy. And not everyone can be a teacher.

First-Year Context

Physical Setting and Classroom Expectations

Sarah's classroom was in a trailer disconnected from the main school building. She perceived the classroom's physical location as both a constraint and a support to her professional development. During her preservice experience, she was asked on several occasions by neighboring teachers to have her students get quiet during group activities and classroom discussions. Therefore, she now felt less restricted in her use of innovative activities that evoked greater student discussion and active participation because her trailer's walls were not adjacent to another teacher's classroom. On the other hand, because her trailer was removed from the main building, she was less inclined to develop collaborative working relationships with the other teachers.

Like all teachers, general classroom expectations of Sarah beyond daily instruction included assigning, collecting, and grading make-up work; providing extra help for struggling students; and conducting administrative tasks such as writing and submitting cut slips. These expectations, in particular, added to Sarah's exhaustion and gradual professional burn out because they were constant and preoccupying. All of these tasks took an unexpected amount of time away from Sarah's planning period. As a result, Sarah perceived these additional responsibilities as constraints to her planning of more innovative, quality lessons.

Student-learning culture. In addition to the concrete physical setting and classroom expectations, Sarah recognized the influence of the student-learning culture on her ability to develop increased teacher competency and quality as measured by the increased transfer of innovative pedagogical practices modeled in her teacher-preparation program. Some of the most influential (observed and perceived) elements of the student-learning culture within Sarah's classroom included students' (1) need for teacher affirmation, (2) correct-answer and grade motivation, (3) interpretations of and assumptions about teacher statements, (4) need for structure and dislike of

the unfamiliar, (5) individualistic nature, and (6) lack of confidence in mathematics ability and/or negative attitude toward mathematical content.

The results of this grade-motivated culture in which students preferred to gain knowledge directly from the teacher for their own individual gains was that many of the students were resistant outwardly to (1) student/student discourse patterns and (2) collaborative activities that were emphasized as "best practice" in Sarah's teacher-preparation program. Sarah explained,

> They are very resistant with working with each other, and they all want me to come over and coach them through it individually. I am like, "If I wanted to coach you through it, I would have just done this with the whole class. I mean there are reasons why I am trying to get you to work with each other."

They had no desire to waste time listening to their peers explain a mathematical concept or trying to work with their peers to discover the mathematical concepts that Sarah—the ultimate knower—could just tell them.

Despite resistance to working with one another, on occasion, out of sheer necessity, students had to depend on one another for assistance. Sarah explained, "Everyone wants help. And it is hard for me to be at so many places at once. … 'Alright I can't help all of you at once. You are going to have to work with your partner.'" Although Sarah was able to implement group work and student/student discourses periodically, as her first year progressed, student resistance led to a decline of both of these desired pedagogical practices. She described, "My practices have obviously changed because it was more work for me to put the students in groups because I had to reteach the concept basically five times—one per each group."

Specific influential interactions with students: Nathan and Juan. Sarah's interactions with students were usually smooth and enjoyable. Interactions with Nathan and Juan, however, illustrate some of the tensions and dilemmas that Sarah had to negotiate. Some of the potential resolutions to these tensions and dilemmas were not black or white, nor did they align with Sarah's notions of competent teaching practices. As a result, in some instances, Sarah had little choice but to compromise some of the pedagogical practices that she related to quality teaching.

Nathan. Nathan was in Sarah's Algebra I Part II course. Though he had already passed the Algebra I state-mandated, end-of-year examination, he had not passed the course which was a necessary graduation requirement. This was his third year in Algebra I. Sarah initially empathized with Nathan's lack of interest, thinking he must be frustrated by having failed the course twice before. Consequently, she routinely accommodated for Nathan's consistent tardiness, truancy, lack of effort, and failure to complete assignments. Even by the end of the year, Sarah was giving Nathan special treatment in order to help him finally pass the course. The following field note describes this pattern:

> Sarah explained that Nathan went to the library to complete his final exam and

came back with only 24 out of 49 questions completed. They were all over the place. Sarah told him that she would just grade the ones that he did out of 24. A period later, Sarah explained, "The assistant principal and Nathan come storming back in claiming that Nathan gets extra time." Sarah explained to them, "Yes, but it looks to me like Nathan did the ones he knew how to do. … So, I figured it was generous to grade the ones he knew how to do out of 24 instead of him getting wrong the ones that he didn't know how to do out of 49." Nathan decides to stick with this plan. She tells me that she averaged his grade, and to pass the class, he must get a 100 on the final project, "I emailed his mom to let her know that he has to buckle down." "So, he shows up a half an hour late to class yesterday. He wants to go to the library. I ask him, 'But don't you need me to go over the project?' He responded, 'I just thought I would ask someone.'" She signals her hand over her head to indicate that it isn't sinking in that he needs a perfect score on his project to pass the class.

By fourth quarter, Sarah expressed frustration with the situation as seen at the end of the previous quotation. She found herself changing from empathetic to apathetic. She explained, "Nathan wanted to go back to the library because he didn't want to do anything. And I don't really care." By this point, Sarah was aware that she had compromised on some of her perceived ideal teaching characteristics (e.g., by becoming apathetic), but it was not until the end of the year that she was faced with a dilemma in which she felt uncomfortable both (a) in compromising and (b) in acting in accordance with her ideals.

Nathan knew that he needed a 100% on his project to pass the class. According to Sarah, "Nathan did complete the project, and it was absolute crap." Sarah was uncertain how to proceed. She agonized,

> If I want to give Nathan a 100 on the project, I can do it, and he will pass. Half of me just wants to do that so I can get them [Nathan, Nathan's mom, Karl (the AP)] off of my back so I don't have to deal with them, and the other half of me is like, "No, you didn't do anything all year. But you've got your mom down my back, you've got your tutor asking me for special treatment – a colleague of mine asking me for special treatment for you. It is not fair to me to put me in this position, and then for me to pass you." So part of me just wants to fight everyone and fail him because I am just so ticked off about it. …The tutor the last time we talked said that if he fails, he is just going to drop out and give up, and he is going to be a failure in life. So that will be on my shoulders … My beliefs are definitely in conflict.

She approached one of the assistant principals about the situation who explained, "Well, I guess you go ahead and give him a 70 [the lowest passing grade]." Sarah was displeased with this advice: "I was fuming for a bit. I know that it is really unimportant at this point; in my opinion, he will never 'get' the material, but at the same time, I hate 'giving' him the grade without legitimate effort." Sarah never anticipated this being a problem before her inservice experience. She explained that when she was in college, "I would have just said to stick to the numbers, and if he

passes he passes, if he fails he fails. But now that I am actually in the situation, I am like, 'Oh great, I have to deal with it.' It is a little different."

Juan. Similarly, Juan needed to pass the course to remain on track for graduation. By the end of the year, he, too, did not have the grade needed to pass. And, similar to Nathan's case, Sarah was torn between (a) being fair and sticking to the numbers and (b) "giving" the student a grade that he did not earn. Despite this similarity, Juan's scenario was quite different.

At the beginning of the year, Juan was a nuisance in Sarah's class. By midyear, however, he began to (1) respond to Sarah's instruction and (2) participate in class activities. Despite his decision to begin taking her class seriously, he got into trouble that Sarah worried would destroy his high school career. In the following excerpt, Sarah explained Juan's situation:

> …to make a very long story short, Juan was involved in the fight. When the fight started, I was the only teacher there…Apparently the fight was gang related which means that all of them were expelled for 10 days. I am completely shook up about this, "What is Juan going to do if he is expelled for 10 days? He is going to go get into more fights or get himself shot." I was so worried about the kid. So I told David, the assistant principal, all of this. After 10 days, David had a meeting to talk about Juan coming back to school. Because Juan has an IEP, they do a special review of his suspension. So David explained, "I just want you to know that I want you to be in on the meeting because obviously you were at the fight and you developed a relationship with Juan." So it turned out that Juan could get extra tutoring while he was expelled or suspended because of his IEP. David asked me, "Would you be interested in doing it. You are going to have to catch him up anyway. You can get paid for it. Juan responds to you, and that is what he needs right now is to stay on track."

Regardless of the special tutoring Juan received, Sarah realized that he could not pass the class even if he earned a 100% on his final project. Juan was aware of this situation, but, according to Sarah, he still completed an "awesome" final project. Again, Sarah faced the same dilemma of passing a student who had not earned an official passing grade. The following was an explanation of how she negotiated these two dilemmas:

> To make myself feel okay with the decision to pass Nathan, I also passed Juan. I told Juan before the project presentation that he didn't have a chance to pass (even with a 100%), and yet he worked well with his group and made an awesome Power Point presentation. I know that he didn't do much first semester, but his change in attitude and effort was impressive. I basically legitimized to myself that if I had to pass Nathan, I would also pass Juan (because he actually deserved it in my opinion) and then be okay with it.

Sarah acknowledged that she compromised her ideal teaching practice of absolute fairness when she gave only these two students extra points in order to

pass. She perceived, however, that she was able to preserve relative fairness in relationship to these two students because the decision she made for one was the decision she made for the other. This perception helped her cope with her overall unequal treatment.

<div align="right">***School***</div>

School expectations, procedures, and routines. As within the classroom setting, being a part of the greater school setting demanded that Sarah fulfill responsibilities beyond those that impacted her students' learning outcomes. These included being the math representative on the literacy committee, attending faculty meetings, attending to her tutoring duty, and being a class advisor. She explained that committee involvement, faculty meetings, and class advising were not a drain on her time and so not perceived as a constraint to her continued growth toward competent teaching. She did, however, perceive her school tutoring duty as an embedded constraint because it took the place of her planning time every other day.

Resources. As evidenced in Sarah's description of a good teacher, she (a) was critical of teachers complaining and (b) believed that they should make the most of their situations. When asked, however, she revealed to me that she was surprised by the lack of resources in her school, as the school is in one of the most affluent counties in the state. She talked about how the lack of certain resources limited her ability to perform in ways consistent with her image of competent teaching. For example, she asserted that not having a classroom phone negatively impacted her communication with parents, which she saw as essential to quality teaching. She discussed, too, the fact that when she requested needed supplies, she was told that they would not be in until second semester. Unable to do without supplies such as dry erase and overhead markers, scissors, mini-dry erase boards, and paper, Sarah (1) was able to borrow some from her colleagues and (2) had to buy some of her own, for which she was never reimbursed.

At the end of her preservice experience, during which she had a SMART Board, projector, and laptop, Sarah reported that she could not teach without these technologies. Except for a class set of graphing calculators, her inservice school had limited technological resources. Some of these resources, such as SMART Boards, were inaccessible for use in her classroom. Others of these resources, such as laptops, had to be checked out from the library on a daily basis. Even if what she planned on using was accessible for her classroom and had not already been checked out by another teacher, she had to haul the equipment to her trailer. I observed this process during one of my visits: "The bell rings at 8:55. Sarah enters the classroom immediately after the students. She is out of breath from rushing to class with the laptop cart. She struggles to pull the laptop cart into her room over the threshold."

Teaching culture. Sarah recognized that she had entered a collaborative, positive, and caring teaching culture. During her first semester, she referenced several

occasions when her mentor was available for assistance but was never overbearing. This combination of independence and assistance suited Sarah. As such, Sarah looked to her mentor for instructional and management support as needed. She never worried that her mentor would (1) be annoyed by her questions or (2) be suffocating and demanding of her independent planning time. Sarah recognized that other teachers were also just as willing to assist Sarah if needed. In part illustrated by most teachers' willingness to collaborate and share, Sarah recognized (1) the positive and caring nature of the teaching culture of which she had become a part and (2) the sense of camaraderie among her colleagues. This perceived sense of camaraderie was confirmed in multiple observations. Though Sarah preferred to teach and plan alone, she enjoyed the social/emotional support that came with being a member of such a positive, kind culture.

While her colleagues were positive, caring, and willing to collaborate, Sarah had the overwhelming perception that some of the mathematics teachers prioritized teaching mathematics over teaching students mathematics. She explained:

> We do have a good math department that cares about the students, but there are a few people that only care about teaching the math versus teaching the students math. … I am just going to shove all this information down your throat and see how it goes. And that is frustrating for me. At the beginning of the year, one of the teachers said, "Is anyone still taking late work because my kids keep complaining?" And others responded, "No, no, I don't take late work." And I said, "I do, and I am not going to stop because you feel like the mean teacher because you don't take late work. It is something that I am willing to spend my time doing because I think it is important." … I don't think they went into teaching to teach; they went into teaching because they had a math major and a lot of them wanted to stay home half time. And they wanted to have the summer off. And they aren't in it for teaching; they are in it because it is a job, and it is easy. If you know the math and all you are doing is teaching the math, it is the easiest job in the entire world. You put up some notes, give them a test, and check off numbers. It isn't teaching. It's giving them math. So that is frustrating. There are just not enough people in the world that are willing to work 100 hours a week for not a lot of money.

This quotation reiterates Sarah's concept of quality teaching and of what is meant to be a competent, highly-qualified teacher: (1) teaching is not supposed to be an easy job, but a challenging one; (2) teaching is not supposed to be solely teacher-centered lecturing; (3) teaching is about facilitating meaningful lessons so students can be active agents in the construction of their knowledge rather than "empty vessels" to be filled with knowledge; and (4) the ultimate goal of teaching is not about turning in assignments on time but about learning something through the completion of a meaningful assignment.

School leadership, overall freedom, trust, support, and voice. Dr. Mark, the principal, was the type of leader for his teachers that Sarah hoped to be in her classroom for her students. He respected his teachers. He gave his teachers a voice

in management and instructional decisions, instead of being an authoritarian. For example, when Sarah expressed her discomfort around another faculty member during her duty assignment, Dr. Mark cleverly rearranged the duty location without revealing Sarah's discomfort to the other teacher. Dr. Mark modeled management consistency—that is, when he said he would do something, he did it. Sarah explained, too, that he trusted and supported his teachers. He gave them the autonomy to be active agents in the construction of their teaching and encouraged them to try innovative pedagogical practices. Consistent with how Sarah wanted to run her classroom, Dr. Mark's modeling of freedom, voice, consistency, and trust potentially influenced Sarah's professional development toward this goal. She perceived that his modeling "rubs off."

Sarah perceived that while, of course, Dr. Mark and the other administrators' object was to have "the school look good" with "low expulsion /suspension rates and high graduation rates," they also were invested in the goal of quality teacher development and teacher satisfaction. In helping teachers develop increased competency and quality, administrators modeled desired practices and offered teachers freedom to be innovative. They also relied on conducting classroom observations, reviewing lesson plans, and providing constructive criticism and feedback in order to meet this goal.

Sarah commented on the additional support provided to new teachers. As well as having a year-long mentor, new teachers were provided additional time at the beginning of the year for instructional planning. They were also treated to some beginning-of-the-year entertainment to get them motivated. For Sarah this was a major social/emotional support.

Specific influential interactions with school personnel. Most of Sarah's interactions with her colleagues—other faculty, administrators, and staff—were positive, as clearly conveyed in her interpretations of the positive, collaborative teaching culture for which she was a part and in her appreciation and respect for Dr. Mark. There were, however, a few notable interactions that negatively impacted Sarah's first-year experience. These included interactions with (1) the media specialist, (2) the dean of special education and a guidance counselor, and (3) one of the assistant principals.

I previously mentioned that much of the technology in the school was either difficult to access, as in the case of checking out and transporting laptops, or inaccessible, as in the case of the mounted SMART Boards. Adding to the deterrents for using instructional technology was an interaction that Sarah had with the media specialist:

> As I am leaving (4:20), a woman comes into Sarah's room. She is there for the laptops. She points to her watch and scowls. Sarah politely says, "I was coming in just a minute." She responds rudely, "Well, I was leaving." "So I guess there isn't any way I could just keep them for tomorrow," Sarah asks with playful and hopeful anticipation. The woman hastily and rudely replies, "No, that isn't allowed!"

While Sarah endeavored to be kind and respectful to most of the staff and expected the same in return, she and I were both surprised by the rude treatment she received from the media specialist. Sarah was annoyed that instead of being appreciated for and assisted in her attempts to infuse technology into her instruction, she was reprimanded.

In an incident with the dean of special education and a guidance counselor, Sarah felt this same lack of (1) appreciation and (2) willingness to help her improve her teaching. She knew that she needed assistance from them in order to meet the instructional and assessment needs of one of her students. Thus, she sought them out in order to get the information she needed to fulfill her teaching responsibilities. She explained,

> I was really concerned that my new student had some disability. I wasn't sure what to do. So I went to the dean of special ed. She blew me off and told me to go to the guidance counselor. She, too, blew me off and told me that he was a new kid and that she didn't know what other placement to put him in because he was in geometry. I explained to her, "I am not here to change his placement. I am here because I don't know what to do. He is writing on a second-grade level." The people I should be able to count on to help me just completely blew me off. And it was frustrating because that is why kids fall through the cracks.

This same sense of under appreciation, lack of support, and some colleagues' unwillingness to help her fulfill her teaching responsibilities was exacerbated by interactions with one of the assistant principals. She only had one bad interaction with Karl (the one previously described in the discussion of Nathan), and she found Karl's instructional suggestions, feedback, and willingness to answer questions helpful. However, the Nathan incident had a more lasting impact on her professional development than Karl's instructional suggestions and feedback. Sarah claimed, "Part of me still wants to go back to that day and say, 'Are you kidding me? Nathan deserves to fail.' … It gave me a bad taste for Karl. Before that we had nothing but good interactions." This incident also made her aware that often the administration favored the parent's voice over the teacher's with regard to some of the students, contributing to a feeling of little support: "The parents want to put up a fight, and the administrators want to support the parents."

Although Sarah felt an overall sense of support and camaraderie within her school, these few disrespectful, unsupportive, and unappreciative interactions reduced her professional drive. Sarah perceived that while she was putting in maximum effort to be highly qualified by using innovative instructional practices and caring for the individual needs of all of her students, she was not receiving adequate appreciation or support.

Outside of the School: The Local Community and Policy

General description of the local community. Based on the U.S. Department of Education's 2006 American Community Survey, the per capita income of the

community in which Sarah taught was $40,380, making it one of the wealthiest counties in the state. Knowing that she worked in one of the country's most affluent counties, Sarah was surprised by the lack of available resources in her school. She explained, "I buy a lot, but I don't get reimbursed. There is no money. It is amazing that this is the county voted the richest in the country, yet I can't get reimbursed for any money I spend on supplies." She recognized the irony in the situation, and this contributed to her attitude that teaching is (1) usually not ideal, (2) under appreciated by society, and, thus, (3) comprised of a select few who "are willing to work 100 hours a week for not a lot of money."

Parents. Sarah assumed that parents wanted their children to succeed in school. For most parents, she judged that success was measured by a "good" grade. In addition to being grade motivated and competitive, Sarah perceived that many parents thought their children were "God's gift to the world and can do no wrong" and so would often take their child's side over their teacher's.

Sarah realized, from the Nathan situation, that often the parents who complained, pressured, and placed guilt trips on teachers and administrators were extended preferential treatment. She acknowledged that she perpetuated this "squeaky wheel gets the oil" scenario when dealing with Nathan, although it was completely against her concept of fairness.

Sarah acknowledged that she did have some pleasant interactions with parents. She learned that when she called parents to convey something positive about their child, on most occasions, they assumed the call was to report that their child was struggling academically, was behaving inappropriately, or both. Sarah liked the idea of breaking down this parental assumption, and this positive interaction motivated her to call parents with positive news. While her intent was to do so, because she had to go to the workroom to make calls, she was unable to meet fully this desired goal.

Policy. Sarah's perceptions of district and state policies were largely positive. Consistent with her beliefs during her preservice experience, she did not object to adhering to the state's standards policy, explaining, "I think that I stuck to my belief that the standards are extremely basic, and if I teach at the level that I would like them to learn, then they should be well prepared for the standards-based, end-of-year test." She appreciated, also, the guidance provided to her by the district's "Scope and Sequence" documents. These were year-long pacing guides with bolded state standards and county objectives per topic per course.

End of First Year

Interpretations of and Investment in Becoming a Highly-Qualified Teacher
Indicating further her interest in continued professional development, at the end of her first year, Sarah (1) acknowledged the lack of desired transfer regarding several pedagogical practices and (2) expressed her intent to adopt these practices

into her second-year teaching repertoire more fully. She explained, "[Next year] I would like to include more real-world applications … [and] figure out how to do more group work. … [I]nstead of checking the homework like I do every day, I want to create a unit stamp sheet."

Interestingly, by the end of her third quarter and more noticeably in the fourth quarter of her first year, Sarah was completely exhausted by maintaining this "make the most of a challenging situation" attitude about teaching and by having to work so efficiently to achieve all of her goals. Her sheer exhaustion was both apparent in her classroom actions and acknowledged in our informal conversations.

Not Enough Time

While Sarah claimed "not to be offended" by the time she spent in meetings or working on extra- curricular projects, by the end of her first inservice year, she was exhausted by all of the teacher responsibilities including (1) instructional responsibilities such as constantly trying to motivate her students, (2) non-instructional responsibilities such as writing cut slips, and (3) school responsibilities such as her math-lab (i.e., in-school tutoring) duty during lunch. There were occasions in which Sarah expressed this sentiment. With an air of disappointment, she told me, "I would love to be able to do more investigating and having the kids come up with things on their own. … there is just not enough time for everything."

Waning Patience and Encouragement

By the end of her first year, Sarah experienced a transformation in her initial belief that she could get along with and be patient with all students in order to encourage and engage them. She realized that due to differences in personality, she really did not think that this was true. This change in belief impacted her practices away from the TPP practices of being patient, encouraging, and engaging. She explained this transformation in belief and its impact on her practices,

> What I realize is that sometimes there are just going to be conflicts because you put one person in charge and someone not in charge. And at some point you are going to butt heads. … And so my belief —that I would have the patience with every student (a) [so that] no student would slip through the cracks and (b) so to encourage every student that there is a way to be successful—has changed.

Sarah was accurate in her perception. By the end of her first year, there was a decrease in Sarah's encouragement and patience—sometimes she became sarcastic or irritated with student questions or lack of responses.

Along similar lines of not encouraging or being patient with all students, Sarah's beliefs regarding the teacher's responsibility to motivate seemingly unmotivated students changed. By the end of her first year and throughout her second year, Sarah believed—contrary to what was taught within the education school—that it was a waste of time to try and motivate the unmotivated. She explained, "I wanted to

make sure that I was in touch with each kid. I kind of realized that some of them just beat me up, and I can't pester them anymore."

Before her inservice experience, Sarah believed that only when all students understood the current topic should the teacher move to the next mathematical concept. During her inservice experience, however, she altered this belief. She realized that a teacher could not hold to this belief and, at the same time, keep all students engaged in an untracked, academically heterogeneous setting. This new belief translated into her practices as well. Sarah had to negotiate her engagement practices. If she proceeded to act on her initial belief, she realized that she could "lose" most of the class by trying to engage a few students that were having difficulty. If she acted in accordance with her altered belief, she would be able to engage most of the class but, likely, cause the few confused students to shut down. She opted for having the majority of the class engaged. Her hope was to work independently with the other students to clear up their confusion at a later point in time.

Looking Up at the Beginning of the Second Year

Though by the end of her first year Sarah's beliefs and practices seemed to be diverging from those that she initially associated with quality teaching, at the beginning of her second year, her professional efficacy seemed restored. She was clearly less exhausted, and a year's worth of experience coupled with a new group of students positively impacted her ability to implement innovative instructional strategies. These included instructional technology, collaborative learning activities, and real-world problems.

By her second year due to experience teaching both of her courses, Sarah was able to anticipate the need for instructional technology. She was able more frequently to request resources from the media center before they were checked out by other teachers.

Sarah attempted to implement collaborative activities again in her second year. She explained that her students during her second year were much more willing to try innovative learning activities: "I haven't had any problems with my kids. I haven't had any management issues, power struggles. Everybody seems to be pretty receptive, and if they aren't, they are at least keeping their mouths shut for now." In part due to less student resistance, she was able to utilize this instructional practice frequently.

This trend occurred, too, in regard to Sarah's desire to use real-world examples. She was unable to implement real-world examples in her first year as frequently as she had hoped. She explained at the end of her first year, "My instruction has changed. It is not nearly as real-world based. I think that is different because I am dealing with a different level of kids. It is much easier to do these things with honors kids." But again, partly because her second-year students were so willing to try innovative activities, Sarah was able to implement real-world problems during her second year more often.

At the end of Sarah's first year, I was concerned about her fatigue, disillusionment at having to compromise on some of her "best-practice" ideals, and other disappointments. At the beginning of her second year, however, I had renewed hope that she would persist and be successful in the teaching profession. She seemed revived and able to implement innovative pedagogical tools such as technology, real-world problems, and collaborative-learning activities. This revival and her ability to utilize innovative strategies appeared to add to her professional self worth.

Professional Self Worth

First Inservice Year

Throughout Sarah's preservice and inservice experiences, she struggled with her belief that every child can learn, one of her teacher-preparation program's most widely espoused conceptions of teaching and learning. At the end of her preservice experience, she admitted to a loss of idealism that every child can learn. She explained, however, that she hoped that when she entered her inservice experience, she would have renewed idealism. At the beginning of her first year, she tried to make sense of (1) her belief that every child can learn and (2) experiences that tended to suggest otherwise. She rationalized, "I think my philosophy is that every child can learn. They just learn a different amount of things in different ways." At the end of her first year, when I asked how her conceptions of teaching and learning had changed, she explained,

> I think while I was in school, I was a little more optimistic that all students could learn if they could connect content to the real world because they would be able to see how each problem was done. And what I have realized, for a lot of them, making connections to the real world only makes learning the concept more confusing. And that it is easier for a lot of students to learn just by seeing one example and memorizing [rote learning] the process [procedural learning]. I don't necessarily know if that means that they are learning the math, but they are learning how to do the procedure versus learning the concept. I think that before I had the idea that every student eventually —if they could make the connections, would get the math concept. They would see the bigger picture. But now, I think there are some kids that conceptually just can't put any of that stuff together.

Second Inservice Year

At the beginning of her second year, Sarah explained,

> I think in the beginning, my belief was that if I were an effective teacher then I can get every student to learn from one method in a certain time period. So my belief has changed. I think that most students can learn, but they will not learn the same way in the same time frame. And so my practices have shifted because of that.

This excerpt reveals how Sarah's belief about how "every child can learn" swung back to her earlier conception, voiced at the beginning of her first year. She seemed

to want desperately to believe that every child can learn, continuously fluctuating in her articulation about this conception of learning.

Sarah attached her professional worth to her ability to translate this belief into practice. When she had difficulty doing so, she struggled with whether (1) some students' lack of academic success was a reflection of her professional competence or (2) an indication that not every child can learn. By the middle of Sarah's second year, she began to express more fully her doubts about her teaching capabilities. She explained,

> Around November, I started realizing that ten years from now, I'll still be answering the same questions and dealing with the same crap. I just don't know if I can do it! I can see myself teaching for a couple more years, but I just don't know if I will still be a "good" teacher after too long. I've found that the only way to not go completely crazy is to let go of a lot of the little things... Unfortunately, as time goes on and I get older, I think I'll have to let more stuff go in order to survive, and that's definitely not a recipe for good teaching!

What did not change for Sarah was her conception of quality teaching; what did change, however, was her belief that she was capable of continued development toward quality teaching. At this point in the year, she debated whether or not to sign her contract for a third year.

By the end of her second year, she, again, was trying to negotiate whether or not she believed that every child could learn. When asked, "How has this year changed you—in your beliefs about teaching and learning mathematics," she responded, "Some kids just have to be 'let go,' which is truly sad." This was a major shift in belief from the onset of her second year when she said, "Most students can learn, but they will not learn the same way in the same time frame." Minutes later, she fluctuated in her response and explained, "Despite my failures with certain students, I am still an eternal optimist and my practices still seem to reflect my college beliefs." This was true. Her inservice practices became increasingly aligned with those taught in her preparation program.

Throughout her inservice experience, Sarah was able to transfer many of the practices espoused in her teacher-preparation program, indicative of successful teaching as perceived by faculty and supervisors within the program. Additionally, most of her students passed the end-of-year examination during both of her inservice years, indicative of successful teaching by her school district. Despite these apparent successes, by the end of her second year, Sarah realized that she could no longer neglect her physical, mental, and social health. She could no longer maintain her exhausting professional routines driven by her (1) efficient, goal-oriented personality and (2) perceptions of and commitment to developing increased professional competency. Sarah explained,

> I decided to leave teaching. … In October, I was already thinking, "Oh my gosh, these are the same issues I dealt with last year." By January, I was thinking, "I

could never do this the rest of my life." And by April, I was thinking, "Then maybe I should try to find something else while I'm young and don't have a family." … Then I went and talked to Karl – my assistant principal. … His suggestions for me were decent: (1) go to the gym in the morning, (2) have standard expectations and stick to them, (3) don't bend the rules, etc. But what really got to me was that he said something like, "In order to survive the teaching world, you have to learn to work 90% for your students and expect them to come the other 10%." And then I realized that that is exactly why I can't do it! I spend all my free time chasing kids around who don't care, who never change, and who give me attitude. And then I'm so exhausted at the end of the day that I don't even have the patience to talk to my parents, friends, boyfriend, etc. But I can't talk myself into giving only 90%. So here I am. And I have no idea what I am going to do when I leave.

Sarah's greatest transformation was that she could not continue to maintain this professional lifestyle, developing toward her ideals of competent, quality teaching. She realized, too, that she would not be happy lowering her standards and being what she perceived as a mediocre teacher. Being unable to negotiate this dilemma—exhausted and burned out, she chose to leave the profession.

Conclusion

Sarah was concerned with developing into a competent, highly-qualified teacher by way of transferring the innovative practices espoused within her program. According to my data, she had a twenty-one-to-four ratio of TPP-to-Non-TPP transferred practices. In addition to successful TPP transfer, in her first year teaching, she met the community, school, and student objective of being a quality teacher: all but three of her students passed the end-of-year examination.

Sarah was aware of her place in the broader context of learning to teach within the classroom, school, and community. Her professional role/identity seemed clear as a teacher. She admitted to having to work at teaching; growth/development was not just innate. In general, she felt as though she had ample support and seemed realistic about possible challenges inherent in the complexities of the teaching profession.

Despite her gains and growth toward the type of teacher advocated within her preservice program, by the middle of her second year, Sarah made the decision not to renew her teaching contract for the following academic year. What happened?

Consistent with the attrition literature, factors affecting Sarah's decision likely included obstacles that she faced with a few students (Taylor & Tashakkori, 1995) and instances of feeling disrespected or not valued by other members of the school community (Gigante & Firestone, 2008; Gonzalez, Brown, & Slate, 2008; Hancock & Scherff, 2010; Thornton, Perreault, & Jennings, 2008). Additionally, based on Sarah's full story, she appeared to have burned out. Burnout, first described by Maslach and Jackson (1981), is a "syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment" (Hancock & Scherff, 2010, p. 330). By the end of Sarah's first year, she acknowledged the emotional toll that teaching was

taking on her; she referred to herself as "beat up," "exhausted," and "a failure." Hancock and Scherff (2010) report that depersonalization "includes cynical attitudes toward students, parents, and the workplace" and "leads to detached and apathetic attitudes and behavior" (p. 330). This depersonalization was evident in Sarah's language and actions. She admitted that she moved from empathy to apathy in Nathan's case; she decreased in encouragement and patience, becoming sarcastic and irritated with student questions and lack of responses. In one of her final statements to me, as previously reported, she explained—revealing both exhaustion and depersonalization, "I spend all my free time chasing kids around who don't care, who never change, and who give me attitude. And then I'm so exhausted at the end of the day."

Most telling of all and consistent with Maslach and Jackson's (1981) final characteristic of burnout, Sarah, a once confident future educator, transformed in her beliefs about her professional ability. She did not change her beliefs about the overall positive value of the practices or conceptions of teaching and learning taught within her preparation program, nor did she change her beliefs about quality teaching and its challenges. In the end, Sarah summed up her decision to leave, not to a lack of preparation, but to not being able to personally handle the amount of work required to teach well—according to her program's and her personal standards—while at the same time maintaining a healthy lifestyle. That is, similar to other findings within the teacher-turnover literature, Sarah could not negotiate the tension between how she wanted to teach and how she realistically could teach (Stanulis, Fallona, & Pearson, 2002; Holt-Reynolds, 1995; McCann, Johannessen, Ricca, 2005; Hancock & Scherff, 2010).

Reflection

Sarah was prepared to teach effectively, but she was not prepared to sustain the teaching practices that deemed her effective within the inservice context. Good teachers are burning out even with some support, competitive pay, a feeling of camaraderie, good classroom management, and feeling well prepared both in their knowledge of the content and pedagogy. We are setting impossible expectations for those who do not want to compromise their standards of quality teaching. How do we as a community of educators combat this problem? Should we prepare our future teachers for an inservice context in which they are constantly faced with dilemmas that force them to compromise what we, within teacher preparation programs, have espoused as quality teaching, or do we try to change this inservice context? The answer is that we do both. We, those of us working in preservice, inservice, administrative, and policy contexts, must prepare future teachers for some challenges and work to minimize the challenges within the inservice context. We all are responsible for the Sarahs of education—those that are exceptionally effective and qualified but whose times as educators are short lived.

Note

[1] These data are from Lloyd, M. E. R. (2009). Transformation and transfer of novice mathematics teachers' practices and conceptions of teaching and learning: An examination of preservice and inservice classroom settings. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Virginia.

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