Negotiating Discourses of Learning to Teach:
Stories of the Journey from Student to Teacher

By Jackie Sydnor

> I don't think I am the teacher I'd hoped to be yet. I would like to be but because everything's so new, I feel like most days I don't even know what I'm supposed to be doing…I didn't realize how hard it would be! (Erica: first-year teacher)

Becoming a teacher is a complex, messy, and sometimes unsettling process. It is a time when one's past, present, and future are set in dynamic tension (Britzman, 1991). It is important for those in teacher education, as well as policy makers and educators, to understand this complicated process if we are to support beginning teachers.[1] Beginning teachers leave the profession at alarming rates. On average, nearly 50 percent of teachers leave the profession all together within their first five years (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). With current policy discussions around alternative routes to teacher certification, there has also been debate about the impact of traditional pre-service teacher education. Additionally, there are frequent statements by beginning teachers about teacher education being inadequate, idealistic, and out of touch with reality.

This article explores what it is like to become an elementary teacher in today's educational climate in which standardization and accountability increasingly influence what happens in classrooms across the country. Specifically, this article, in which a student teacher's story is analyzed and restoried, reveals the tensions

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involved in this transitional time of becoming a teacher. Part of a larger, longitudinal study designed to follow nine participants from teacher education through student teaching and into their first-year classrooms, this article focuses on one of those teachers, Erica (pseudonym), as she makes the transition from student to teacher. It illuminates the varying discourses student teachers must navigate as they determine what good literacy teaching and learning means to them. The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of the various challenges we face in university teacher education programs and K-12 schools, as well as some possibilities for how we might better support student teachers, particularly those operating in reductive classrooms and forced to implement standardized curriculum.

Review of the Literature

Figured Worlds

When you close your eyes and imagine "school," what do you see? A teacher standing at the front of a classroom full of students each with his or her hand in the air? Groups of students working together to solve a problem? Students gathered around on a carpet as a teacher reads aloud? The image you create is a reflection of your experiences with and ideas about schooling. It is a snapshot of your figured world of schooling. A figured world (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 2001) is a "socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (p. 52).

In order to interpret student teachers' experiences becoming teachers, it is important to understand their figured worlds(s) of schooling. This term is tentatively pluralized as most student teachers' figured worlds of schooling are not fixed. Rather, as they engage in becoming teachers, they encounter and traverse multiple figured worlds. These "as if" worlds are significant "as a backdrop for interpretation" (Holland et al., 2001, p. 54). They provide the context of meaning and action.

Before a prospective teacher enters a formal teacher education program, he/she already brings with him/her over 13,000 hours of experience as a student in the classroom, what Lortie (1975) terms the "apprenticeship of observation." In addition to this experience, motivations for entering teaching, the type of preparation program one chooses, and incoming knowledge and other life experiences are just a few of the many elements that typically influence pre-service teacher learning. Further, the school culture and mandates of their student teaching placements, and later their first teaching jobs, also affect the beliefs and practices they bring with them into the classroom.

Ideological Becoming

Using student teachers' figured worlds as a backdrop for further investigation, it is possible to explore how the various authoritative discourses percolating within

these worlds have impacted their becoming. Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theory of dialogism and more specifically the concept of ideological becoming is particularly useful in explaining the process aspiring and beginning teachers undergo as they move from being students to entering teacher education programs to student teaching, and then into their own classrooms. According to Bakhtin (1981):

> …the ideological becoming of a human being…is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others…The tendency to assimilate others' discourse takes an even deeper and more basic significance in an individual's ideological becoming… Another's discourse performs here no longer as information, directions, rules, models, and so forth—but strives rather to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior; it performs here as authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse. (pp. 341-342)

As Bakhtin described, ideological becoming occurs in the dialogical relationship between two categories of discourse: authoritative and internally persuasive. Authoritative discourse is "the word of the fathers. Its authority was already recognized in the past. It is prior discourse" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342). In contrast, internally persuasive discourse is:

> …what each person thinks for him- or herself, what ultimately is persuasive to the individual. As we form our own ideas, we come into contact with the discourses of others and those discourses enter our consciousness much as authoritative discourse does. The discourse of others also influences the ways we think and contributes to forming what ultimately is internally persuasive for us. (Freedman & Ball, 2004, p. 8)

Teacher candidates bring with them to teacher education a range of figured worlds of schooling based, in part, on their apprenticeship of observation, each with various authoritative and internally persuasive discourses circulating within and around them. During teacher education, they are likely introduced to different figured worlds of schooling and encounter even more discourses, which interact dialogically and contribute to their ever-evolving internally persuasive discourse. Additionally, when pre-service teachers enter elementary school settings during student teaching, and later in their first years in the classroom, they come into contact with more authoritative discourses as well as the discourses that are internally persuasive to other influential individuals including their administrators, colleagues, students, mentors, and parents. The internally persuasive discourses situated in these significant others are relational and may influence the internally persuasive discourse of the beginning teacher.

These two types of discourses, authoritative and internally persuasive, are often in tension. It is this tension and conflict that is most effective in the development of the ideological self. Bakhtin (1981) contends that these tensions are needed in order for people to come to new understandings: "The importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming

to ideological consciousness, is enormous" (p. 348). This tension is a dialogical relationship between the various discourses that produces development to a new internal state.

Because of the dialogical tensions of discourse, becoming a teacher can be a deeply unsettling and conflictive process. In this study, one student teacher, Erica, tried on various authoritative discourses she encountered along the way in order to determine which ones and to what degree they were internally persuasive to her. This improvisation and approximation of discourses greatly affected the kind of teacher she is and will continue to become.

Research Methodology

Context

The impetus for this study occurred while I was teaching an advanced literacy methods course at large research university in the Midwest. This class occurred during the final semester of coursework in a pre-service elementary teacher education program. At the end of the semester, in an attempt to ease some of the anxiety my students were experiencing about whether or not they were prepared for student teaching, I invited several of my former students who were just finishing student teaching and others who were first-year teachers to my class for a question and answer panel with my students. Unfortunately, this attempt backfired as almost all of my former students shared stories of tension and stress. More than one shared that they had to create two different sets of lesson plans, one to teach from and the other to turn in to administrators.

The following semester, while teaching the same course, I set out to dig deeper into what exactly my students, and other student teachers and beginning teachers, were experiencing after they left the university and went out into the "real" world. That semester, I recruited and began to follow nine elementary education students who were finishing up coursework and beginning student teaching. This article focuses on one of my former students, Erica.

Erica is a White, middle-class female. At the start of her student teaching experience, she was 21 years old. She attended a large, public university in the Midwest. Her student teaching placement was in a third-grade classroom at Maplewood Elementary (pseudonym). Maplewood is a K-5 public school in a rural town serving approximately 300 students, 62% of whom received free/reduced lunch. All of the students in Erica's third-grade class were White, as were most of the students in the school.

Role of Researcher

Because my participants were also once my students, it is important to note my varying roles during the research process. While only our initial interview occurred when Erica was still a student in my class, her view of me as an instructor,

and therefore someone with some authority, undoubtedly influenced how she acted and the answers she gave during our subsequent interviews. In an attempt to counter this impact as much as possible, I was explicit with Erica that the purpose of this study was to better understand what she experienced as a student teacher and that I, in no way, was judging her thoughts or actions. I kept a record of the various roles I assumed during our interviews, which at times included that of mentor, coach, observer, expert, and counselor, and reflected after each interview about how my role may have impacted my data. I believe Erica was open and honest with me throughout our conversations. Still, I must acknowledge that I had been the voice of many of the authoritative discourses of teacher education.

Data Collection

Data collection began at the end of our literacy methods course, one month before Erica and the other participants entered their student teaching placement. Data sources included multiple in-depth interviews and video-stimulated recall sessions. The first interview took place before Erica began student teaching. Interviews continued monthly during student teaching, January through April, with a follow-up interview after student teaching. The in-depth interviews while Erica was in the process of becoming a teacher allowed for exploration of her lived experiences in a meaningful, naturalistic way. For two of the interviews, Erica provided 30-minute video segments of her teaching a literacy lesson in her student teaching placement. These videos served as prompts for guided reflection on her teaching practice. During these video-stimulated recall sessions (Powell, 2005), Erica and I viewed the recordings together, and she was asked to explain the thinking underlying her actions. I encouraged her to stop the video at any point when she viewed herself making a decision and comment on why she decided to do what she did. This technique helped to make her personal theories of teaching explicit and to uncover how authoritative discourses may have influenced her decision-making. Her engagement with and reflection on her own teaching practice provided an insider perspective on the enactment of her understandings of what it means to teach literacy. Data collection for the larger, longitudinal study continued beyond student teaching and included classroom observations; however, this article focuses on Erica's transition from teacher education to student teaching.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis began during data collection as I listened to and transcribed interviews, and involved iterative reading of data and initial coding. These initial codes, for the most part, organized the data around the topics Erica discussed during her interview. For example, *control*, *mandates*, and *gaining confidence* were some of the initial codes in Erica's student teaching story. I considered a topic a theme if Erica discussed it at length or if it was discussed over multiple interviews. The goal of these initial codes was to "restory" (Reissman, 2008) Erica's narrative of

becoming. Restorying is a way to make visible the teacher's negotiations of multiple, often conflicting authoritative discourses. It allows us to see the evolution of her literacy beliefs and practice in various contexts, including teacher education and student teaching. After each transcript had been coded, I returned to them again, collapsing, broadening, deleting, and modifying codes in order to most accurately represent Erica's story as she told it. When the data had all been coded using this coding scheme, I copied the coded chunks of data into a separate document. For example, I placed all of the *control* chunks into one section of the document. I re-read all of the data chunks for a particular code and assigned it a heading using Erica's own words. For example, the theme *gaining confidence* became *I actually know what I'm doing!* After I headed each section, I began reconstructing Erica's story of becoming. I first rearranged the sections so that they built on each other and made sense chronologically. For example, *I actually know what I'm doing!* made the most sense at the end of the student teaching section. I also drew timelines of the important events in Erica's story to help create a structure. To "restory," I then used the chunks of data that were in each section, Erica's own words, as a guide. I filled in important information from the data that was not a direct quotation and included as much of Erica's own words as possible.

Erica's "restoried" story was then analyzed to understand Erica's figured world(s) of schooling and uncover authoritative discourses Erica negotiated. The chunks of Erica's words, which ranged from sentences to paragraphs, were the unit of analysis. I read through Erica's story again, this time focusing on the actors (e.g., teachers), artifacts (e.g., worksheets), significant acts (e.g., standardized testing), valued outcomes (e.g., students sitting quietly), and authoritative discourses (e.g., control) in each of Erica's figured worlds—the figured world painted by teacher education and the figured world painted by K-12 schools.

Next, using Erica's words, I created a storyline associated with each of her figured worlds of school. This served as the backdrop for interpretation, allowing me to better understand the context in which she was negotiating the disparate discourses she encountered. I then identified the most salient authoritative discourses in each figured world and present those here, valuing Erica's voice by including her own words as much as possible.

Findings

Figured World(s) of Schooling

According to Holland and colleagues (2001), "people have the propensity to be drawn to, recruited for, and formed in these [figured] worlds, and to become active in and passionate about them" (p. 49). Erica's figured worlds of schooling began taking shape when she entered school. This is the figured world she was "formed in" as she first encountered the actors and artifacts, experienced the significant acts, and learned by experience which outcomes were valued in this world. While

there were likely moments of tension that disrupted the assumptions associated with this figured world during Erica's 13-year apprenticeship of observation, Erica undoubtedly internalized many of these assumptions. When she entered teacher education, she was "recruited for" and "drawn to" another somewhat different world of schooling. During student teaching, however, Erica returned to a figured world that was very similar to that which she experienced during her apprenticeship of observation, when she was the K-12 student. There were similar actors, artifacts, significant acts, and valued outcomes. Because of the striking similarities, at least in Erica's interpretations of these experiences, her apprenticeship of observation and student teaching figured worlds are described together in a section that follows. Therefore, Erica experienced two distinct figured worlds—that of elementary school, which includes her apprenticeship of observation and her student teaching placement in a similar elementary school setting, and that of teacher education. While there was overlap between these two figured worlds, there were also clear differences that created ruptures or "zones of contact" (Bakhtin, 1981) where Erica was forced to confront the assumptions embedded in each.

Erica's teacher education figured world. Erica began her teacher education program during her sophomore year of college. As Erica reflected in our interviews on what she had learned during teacher education, especially her three literacy methods courses and accompanying early field experiences, she helped to populate and furnish this figured world. Based on her experiences in teacher education, Erica had an image of schooling which included the following: Vygotskian theory, especially the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), hands-on activities, critical thinking, creating community, differentiation, Reading and Writing Workshop models, conferencing, social justice, critical literacy, running records, miscue analysis, critical thinking, Daily 5 (Boushey & Moser, 2006), student engagement, and authentic books/texts. Each of these concepts and practices she encountered in teacher education helped to paint this figured world of schooling.

Erica's figured world of elementary school: Her apprenticeship of observation and student teaching experience. During student teaching, Erica returned to a figured world similar to that which she described when she was a K-12 student. This figured world included: grades, data, high-stakes testing, standards, teacher evaluations, report cards, "time out," scripted programs, worksheets, desks in rows, procedures and routines, basal readers, "being held back," and compliance as a valued outcome. These were the actors, artifacts, and practices that populated and furnished this figured world of schooling.

Dialogic Discourses

It is clear that the two figured worlds described above, which Erica bestrode during her process of becoming, contradict each other much more than they overlap. It is no wonder that becoming a teacher can be such an unsettling process for

many, including Erica. Her role as a student inherently put her in a less powerful position, compounding the impact of the authoritative discourses she encountered. Dialogic perspectives, such as Bakhtin's (1981), however:

> …explicitly free us from the idea that we as a group or as individuals can hold only one perspective at a time. Humans are both blessed and cursed by their dialogic nature—their tendency to encompass a number of views in virtual simultaneity and tension, regardless of their logical compatibility. (Holland et al., 2001, p. 15)

This dialogic perspective helps us to understand Erica's process of becoming a teacher in a nuanced way, which takes into account the contradictory nature of her internally persuasive discourse.

Authoritative Discourses in Teacher Education

There were a number of authoritative discourses circulating in and around Erica's time in her teacher education program. Because these discourses were institutionally sanctioned by the university and presented to Erica, a student, by me as well as her other instructors, they had authority already embedded in them. She then, had to determine how to negotiate them. In various instances, this meant taking them up, trying them on, dismissing them, talking back to them, or approximating them.

Constructivism. Social constructivist learning theories (Vygotsky, 1978) shaped a strong authoritative discourse throughout Erica's teacher education coursework. In the literacy methods course I taught, in particular, we read about and discussed Vygotskian theory in relation to literacy learning and the field placement. When envisioning her own future classroom at the end of teacher education coursework, Erica tried on this discourse as she described a classroom where students worked together to construct understandings of texts and concepts. This discourse was one Erica carried with her into student teaching. Although her student teaching place-ment did not allow her to enact it, she described her role as a teacher as that of a "tour guide." She elaborated:

> I'd like to show them stuff, but let them take in the learning on their own and own it! [Erica, 5/3/12]

In addition, Erica demonstrated that this discourse was internally persuasive during student teaching when she described how her own classroom would differ from the one in which she was student teaching.

> I think mine, I like a lot more group work and more creative than just worksheet, worksheet, worksheet, and I think she's more traditional as far as that goes, like with worksheets and basals, and sticking to the textbook. But, I mean, I think we both desire to see them succeed…we would just maybe go about it in different ways. [Erica, 1/27/12]

Engagement. Engagement was another authoritative discourse Erica encoun-

tered during teacher education. This discourse touted students' full participation in the learning process as a desired outcome. Interesting, relevant curriculum should to be presented in order for the students to connect to it personally. According to this discourse, engagement in the classroom leads to achievement and contributes to students' social and cognitive development (Marks, 2000). Erica carried this idea with her into student teaching, although this was not a valued outcome in her student teaching placement. When Erica and I met for her first video-stimulated recall session, Erica was clearly somewhat embarrassed and ashamed to show me what was going on her classroom. The students were sitting at individual desks around the classroom, many of them with their heads down when the video started. She described the lesson this way:

> A lot of the video is them reading and then I just go through and ask the sidebar questions. It's just a big struggle…And so normally during reading they just sit there like this, and nobody answers questions, and I don't know, it's just not engaging and it's frustrating, and I don't like doing it. [Erica, 2/29/12]

Erica had learned in teacher education that student engagement was important and her frustration with the lack of engagement during student teaching exemplified identification with this discourse.

Authenticity. Throughout Erica's teacher education, authenticity was taught as a vital part of learning. This discourse draws, in part, on the Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory. According to this discourse, learning should be culturally relevant and based on students' interests. Also, authentic texts were a valued artifact in the teacher education figured world of schooling. Erica tried on this discourse as she explained how she would structure the Reading Workshop model she hoped to use in her future classroom.

> I think at any grade I would do Reading and Writing Workshop starting with a mini-lesson based off…an authentic text because I believe that using an authentic text that students can actually pick up or [borrow] from the library is really important. [Erica, 12/5/11]

Neither the workshop model nor authentic texts were a part of Erica's teaching practice during her student teaching placement, however. Rather, she taught reading using the basal reading series and the accompanying profusion of worksheets, just as her cooperating teacher had done.

Authoritative Discourses in Student Teaching

After completing all of her teacher education coursework, Erica began her student teaching placement in a rural school about 20 minutes from her university. There, she taught third grade for the first 10 weeks, and then moved to working with small groups and individual students as a reading specialist in the same school for another six. During this time, Erica encountered and had to negotiate discourses

very different than those encountered in her teacher education course work. These discourses included: control, skills mastery, and productivity.

Control. During student teaching Erica was extremely concerned with controlling her students' behavior. According to this authoritative discourse, disruptions in the classroom were viewed as and dealt with as control problems (Millei, 2005). Further, this discourse of control positioned teachers whose students were not all in their seats, quiet, raising their hands, or standing in a straight line as inherently ineffective. This discourse circulated throughout the school culture of her student teaching experience. In negotiating this discourse, Erica often judged her cooperating teacher as ineffective because she was not able to wield the type of control over her students demanded by this discourse. Erica, too, began to view herself as an incompetent teacher because she was not able to control her students' behaviors either. This focus throughout her experience was dominant; she fixated on trying to gain this control rather than on instruction. She described her struggle:

> So that's been really hard trying to manage them and to get anything done and like last week was a really bad week for them. I don't know if it's because they had a three-day weekend or what…but there were a couple of times when I was like, okay, just do this yourself. If you're not going to listen to me, I'm done talking over you. It's just been crazy with behavior. And they don't really listen to my teacher either, and so it's not helpful. [Erica, 1/27/12]

Standardization. Additionally, Erica encountered a standardization discourse during her student teaching semester. This autonomous view of literacy (Street, 1995) was evident in her talk of the focus on standards, standardized testing, and new accountability measures that were being thrust upon the teachers in her school by various government mandates. This discourse, as well as the control discourse, was in direct opposition to the social constructivist discourse she encountered in teacher education course work. Because many of the practices that manifested out of the standardization discourse were mandated, this left Erica feeling hopeless and defeated. In this discourse, the goal is to master an isolated skill well enough to pass a test. Erica described the focus by the State and, in turn, the administrators and teachers on standardized tests:

> They're doing the [state test] this year for the first time, and they're only allowed to have two kids not pass or they're deemed ineffective teachers by the State and we have probably about six or seven kids who will likely not pass. [My cooperating teacher has said], "This is on the [state test], so we need to make sure we teach this before then." [Erica, 1/27/12]

Productivity. Hand-in-hand with a standardization discourse was one of productivity. In this discourse, teachers were judged by how busy their students were. It did not necessarily matter what they were busy doing, as long as they were busy.

This discourse was evident in the sheer number of worksheets students were given as busy work and then never looked at by the teachers. The following excerpt shows how her cooperating teacher viewed an attempt by Erica to get the students' behavior under control as counter to productivity.

> I was tired of always [disciplining] them instead of actually learning….So I told them to put their heads down for two minutes. Then I told them at the end of two minutes, "If you're ready to learn, put your head up, but if you're not ready to learn, then just keep your head down because I don't want to deal with it, and you're distracting other people"…Then [my cooperating teacher] came in the room and she was like, "Why are your heads down?! I'm going to put in the newsletter that you guys can't stay awake!" [2/29/12]

Here, not only did Erica's cooperating teacher undermine any bit of authority Erica was beginning to feel with her students, but she also stressed that teaching practices that slow productivity are undesirable.

What Was Internally Persuasive to Erica?

During teacher education and student teaching, Erica encountered a barrage of authoritative discourses. As demonstrated, for the most part, these did not mesh well and often were in direct contradiction of each other. This was a difficult time for Erica, as she was forced to straddle these two disparate figured worlds with conflicting authoritative discourses. She was still a student in teacher education, but she was forced to enact the identity of competent teacher in her student teaching placement. Erica attempted to make this a livable space by viewing student teaching as a sort of waiting room before she was able to enter the teaching profession and have her own classroom where she could enact the practices in which she believed. After student teaching, she explained:

> I'm excited to make my own decisions and not have to check with somebody or feel like I have to copy what someone else is doing because in student teaching, I was like, "I can't really change this whole class or my teacher does this so I don't want to do that and confuse [the students]." [Erica, 8/8/12]

While this was something she was looking forward to, this also caused some anxiety as well, as she was not completely confident in her abilities. She continued:

> But that is also what makes me nervous because they [will be] my kids, so if something goes wrong or they're not learning, it's all on me. There's nobody behind me, so that makes me nervous. [Erica, 8/8/12]

Erica tried on many of the authoritative discourses of teacher education as she thought about the kind of classroom she hoped to have one day. Each of these, however, was taken up in word only. At no point during student teaching was Erica able to actually enact any of the practices implicit in the authoritative discourses of constructivism, engagement, or authenticity. It was the authoritative discourses

of student teaching—control, standardization, and productivity—which actually manifested in Erica's teaching practice.

Discussion and Implications

Erica's transition from student to teachers was, indeed, a struggle. While her specific experience is unique to her, the discourses she had to negotiate during this time are not. Her story is illustrative of the struggle with which many student teachers must contend. As teacher educators, administrators, and policy makers, we must understand this uncomfortable process of becoming and the various discourses circulating through it in order to properly support teacher candidates, student teachers, and beginning teachers during this journey.

Erica's experience was full of tension—tension between her cooperating teacher and her, tension between the authoritative discourses she was encountering and the figured world of schooling she entered in teacher education, and, most importantly, internal tension pushing and pulling her in opposite directions, causing her to confront the assumptions embedded in the discourses of her figured worlds. Although this conflict may not have been a comfortable place, Erica learned a lot. As Freedman and Ball (2004) explain, "the social interactions that are most effective in promoting learning are those that are filled with tension and conflict" (p. 6). What, then, does this tell us about the types of student teaching placements that may be most beneficial to beginning teachers? Is it possible that those placements that are the most different from the student teacher's vision of teaching and learning can be the most effective at promoting learning? I believe they can; however, care must be taken during teacher education and throughout the placement to prepare and support the student teachers for the struggle they may encounter.

As a teacher educator, it is easy to say that a process that turns out a teacher who believes in the theory I endorse and who teaches in the way I think best is a success story. What is more difficult, though, is aiming to help develop professional educators with their own visions who make thoughtful decisions about what is best for their students—even if those visions are different than my own. Just as we advocate for helping elementary students to become critical thinkers who can take multiple perspectives, we must do the same for our teacher candidates. It is imperative they learn about and understand multiple views of literacy teaching and learning. Only then can they make informed decisions about what is best for their students, talk back to theories and practices with which they disagree, and be knowledgeable advocates for the changes in schools they think are best. This is the challenge. To do so, we must be explicit with our students about our own views and beliefs, so that they can recognize the authority embedded in the discourses of the university. We must prepare them for the authoritative discourses they will encounter when they enter K-12 schools, so that they know that they can be negotiated. We must help them to construct their own vision of teaching,

focus upon that vision, and realize that it will be necessary to revise this vision based on future learning.

During student teaching, particularly in placements that are the most incongruent with the theories and practices taught in teacher education, it is vital to provide adequate support from the university. University supervisors who are only tangentially associated with the teacher education program are likely not capable of providing the type of guided reflection sessions necessary to ensure student teachers are examining the tensions they are experiencing in fruitful ways. It is possible to help student teachers see these tugs in opposite directions as sites of learning and becoming. If not supported, however, student teachers may internalize this struggle as sign of weakness or lack of preparedness. Therefore, continued contact with course instructors from the university during student teaching, and ideally beyond, could be a productive avenue of further exploration.

Conclusion

This study illuminates what it is like to make the transition from student to teacher in today's educational climate in which more and more educators are being asked to operate in reductive environments and being forced to implement standardized curriculum. The results are intended to assist teacher educators in understanding what happens after our students leave the supportive environment we strive to create in our classrooms. Throughout my exploration of student teachers' experiences, my findings have served as a means of professional development, as I have adapted my own teaching to better prepare my students for becoming teachers. As such, I encourage other teacher educators to explore, if only informally, what their own students encounter as they enter the "real" world of teaching. In addition, I hope other researchers, teacher educators, and those involved in teacher education program design and reform find the design, findings, and implications of this study valuable as they consider ways to better prepare and support teacher candidates, student teachers, and beginning teachers on their journey of becoming.

Note

[1] Throughout this article, the term "beginning teacher" is used to refer to one who has completed student teaching and is in his/her first five years in the classroom.

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