The New Educator, 5:81–94, 2009

ISSN: 1549-9243 online

Paired Field Placements: A Means for Collaboration

WENDY GARDINER
National-Louis University, Chicago, Illinois, USA

KAREN SHIPLEY ROBINSON
Otterbein College, Westerville, Ohio, USA

In this qualitative study, pairs of preservice teachers were placed with single cooperating teachers in a 100-hour urban field placement. The question guiding this research was would preservice teachers collaborate in ways that contributed to their professional development and if so why, how, and to what end? Results from field notes, multiple observations, interviews, and work samples indicate that paired placements promoted multiple perspectives, led to increased dialogue about teaching and learning, and facilitated the implementation of student-centered pedagogies. Importantly, paired field placements have potential to nurture and develop skills of collaboration vital to current reform efforts.

Teacher collaboration is essential to school reform (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005; Goodlad, 1990). While reform efforts call for schools to be collaborative cultures, most teachers continue to practice in isolation from one another, follow a policy of non-interference, and do not engage in pedagogic dialogue (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Goodlad, 1990; Jackson, 1990; Little, 1999). Problematically, these conditions lead to "reactive and unanalytical teachers" (Hawkey, 1995, p. 178). Given the complexity of teaching

Address correspondence to Wendy Gardiner, National-Louis University, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60603, USA. E-mail: wendy.gardiner@nl.edu

and learning in our current political, social, and economic context, it is essential that preservice teachers learn to collaborate in practice in order to maximize all students' opportunities to learn (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Le Cornu, 2005).

Field placements in many teacher preparation programs follow a typical pattern of partnering a preservice teacher with a cooperating teacher. At our college, we have previously followed this pattern in all of our field placements. Our concern is that the prevalent single placement model maintains the status quo rather than helps preservice teachers reconstruct their understandings of teaching as a collaborative endeavor placing students at the center of learning. The intervention employed in this study was a paired placement model for an urban field practicum, Curriculum Methods. This decision was informed by previous peer placement research (Bullough et al., 2002; 2003; Smith, 2002) indicating favorable outcomes such as increased support and collaboration.

Curriculum Methods is a nine-credit-hour course typically taken by juniors in our undergraduate Early Childhood Education program. The course meets on campus three times a week and includes 100 field hours in an urban public classroom. In their field placement, preservice teachers assist the teacher; implement activities with individuals and small and large groups of children; and, most importantly, write and teach a two-week integrated instructional unit in science.

Preservice teachers in our Early Childhood preparation program were given the option of single placement or paired placement, where two Curriculum Methods students were placed with one cooperating teacher. The purpose of this study was to: (1) contribute to the developing research on peer placements (Bullough et al., 2002, 2003; Smith, 2002); (2) extend that research by investigation and speculation into the ways peers collaborated to support each other's professional development and why. Specifically, in the context of a one-quarter urban field placement, we wanted to see whether our preservice teachers would collaborate, and if so, why, how, and to what end?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Social Learning: Peer and Community of Practice Theories

Peer learning theory emphasizes the social nature of learning focusing on active participation and the zone of proximal development. Predicated on a Vygotskian framework (1978), learning is conceptualized as a social enterprise and defined as a change in level of activity or performance. In short, a more able individual helps extend the learning of another by determining his/her present level of knowledge/ability and guiding him/her to accomplishments the learner would have been unable to accomplish on his/her own. In this extension of a Vygotskian notion of the zone of proximal development, equal status peers' reciprocal interactions, such as active

helping, supporting (Topping, 2005), and giving and seeking advice (Glazer & Hannafin, 2006), promote mutual knowledge and skill acquisition (John-Steiner, 2000; A. Rogers & E. Rogers, 2007; Rogoff, 1990; Wenger, 1998).

The concept of "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998) in teacher professional development forwards that collaborative inquiry situated in the context of classroom practice contributes significantly to teachers' professional growth (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Lieberman & Miller, 1990; Little, 2002). Community of practice theory also has sociocultural underpinnings, specifically the centrality of language to learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Through dialogue, peers can sort out their ideas, distribute their collective intellect and scaffold each other's thinking, and provide alternative perspectives (Rogoff, 1990). Specifically, in a community of practice, through professional dialogue, teachers examine new practices and reexamine existing ones. On a broader scale, these communities support reform efforts by working to maximize learning for all students and breaking down individualistic cultures.

It is important to note that in these professional communities, collaboration and collaborative dialogue are neither guaranteed, nor are they necessarily an "unqualified good." Collaboration is facilitated through certain conditions and factors. Wallace and Louden (1994) detail an array of conditions that promote successful collaborative relationships. These conditions include trust, risk sharing, mutual respect, balance of power, differences (to promote multiple perspectives and push forward each other's thinking), and similarities (such as shared values). As such, collaborative dialogue does not guarantee learning. Too much similarity between peers can lead to merely reinforcing existing notions. Also, dialogue can be silenced and dissenting voices suppressed when relationships lack trust (John-Steiner, 2000), are hierarchical (Freire, 2002), or convey judgment (Glazer & Hannafin, 2006). Furthermore, Feiman-Nemser (2001) warns that collaboration needs to be critical, defined in this paper as exposing and exploring multiple perspectives and alternatives. However, critical collaboration can be difficult to attain given norms of noninterference and teachers' tendencies to avoid challenging conversations.

Peer Placement

Bullough et al.'s comparative studies of single and peer placements in an early field placement course (2002) and a student teaching semester (2003) indicate student and mentor teachers' preferences for peer placements, citing collaboration, and increased support as primary strengths. Bullough et al. (2003) placed student teachers either in pairs or alone with a cooperating teacher in an elementary school for a semester long placement. In paired placements, Bullough et al. report that paired student teachers were highly invested in their partner's development and success, supported each other through planning (brainstorming) and implementation

of lessons (observing, assisting students, and giving feedback), demonstrated richer and more varied lessons, and engaged in more frequent and open dialogue than what was observed in student teachers in single placements. While mentors and student teachers indicated overwhelming support for peer placement, mentors voiced concerns over how "realistic" peer placement is, given that teaching is often considered a solo activity (Bullough et al., 2003).

Smith's (2002) three-year action research on partnered student teaching in secondary schools also identified support as the most salient benefit. Smith, however, employed a more hierarchical model of a "lead" and "backup" teacher. Unlike in Bullough et al.'s study (2003) focusing on collaboration, student teachers' roles were more clearly delineated and planning occurred separately. Smith states that paired student teachers were better able to apply student-centered pedagogy because of the role their peer played in providing "backup" support. Specifically, the "lead" teacher knew that support was at hand (assisting with behavior, materials, and providing other forms of support to facilitate the flow of the lesson) and therefore felt more secure in attempting challenging practices. Still, Smith identifies several challenges to the triad model: roles not being clearly defined or followed, domination by one of the peers, and mentors treating the peers as a single unit.

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Context

Participants in this study included 10 students in an Early Childhood Curriculum Methods course at a liberal arts college adjacent to a large Midwestern city. The students were white females from rural and suburban backgrounds. Their ages ranged from twenty-one to twenty-six years. Participation was voluntary and all names are pseudonyms.

Curriculum Methods is taken during the junior year. While reading methods and a freshman early field experience practicum provide opportunities to be in classrooms and engage with students, Curriculum Methods is quite often the first time our students plan and teach a lesson to a whole class of students. Indeed, prior to taking the course, seven of the 10 preservice teachers had not taught a whole-class lesson. By completion of Curriculum Methods, students are expected to have taught lessons in each content area as well as plan and implement a two-week, student-centered, integrated science unit.

The two K-6 schools in this study were part of a large Midwestern urban school system. According to NCLB guidelines, neither school was "making adequate yearly progress" and teachers were required to employ district wide scripted reading, math, and science curricula. Stemming from the pressure to raise student achievement in the areas of math and literacy, all but one teacher stated she did not teach science.

Principals of both schools solicited teachers who they believed were very effective with children. Teachers had the choice to host single or partner placed students. All volunteered for either type of placement.

Prior to placements, preservice teachers were asked to specify whether they wanted peer or single placement and to rank order preferred grade levels. Their requests were honored. In the end, there were four peer placements and two single placements. Given the small number of participants, we opted to focus our investigation on the eight peer placed students. Placements were determined by grade level request. The four partner placements occurred in kindergarten, first, second, and third grades.

The instructor, one of the authors, met with the preservice and cooperating teachers at the start of the quarter. Smith's (2002) terminology of backup and lead teacher, team teaching, and solo teaching was used to identify peer roles and potential interactions. Teaching expectations were discussed and a rubric for the science unit was distributed. In terms of teaching, preservice teachers were required to follow Smith's patterns of interaction, but were to collaborate in planning. Peers had the freedom to determine which pattern of interaction they would use, but had to employ each pattern at least once. The rubric's categories included "uses of assessment to guide instruction", "unit/lesson plans to demonstrate developmentally effective approaches" (hands-on, collaborative learning emphasized), "unit/lesson plans to demonstrate content knowledge", and "unit reflection" (emphasizing critical reflection on how practices impact students' learning).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection included observations, field notes, journal entries, student work samples (the two-week units), surveys, and individual interviews with our students, the preservice teachers. Each preservice teacher was observed biweekly for 10 weeks for a total of 20 observations. Observations lasted 30–60 minutes. In-depth interviews (Seidman, 1998) occurred at the end of the quarter after grades were submitted. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and returned to participants.

For the first phase of our analysis, each of us independently surveyed the entire data set. We then analyzed the data inductively through open and then axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). To this end, we separately compiled and reviewed data across individual students and then paired placements to identify recurring and/or contrasting experiences (Miles & Huberman, 1994). During this recursive phase, constant comparisons of the data were made (Corbin & Strauss, 1990): We met repeatedly, shared interpretations, and discussed emergent themes. We returned to the data, reading and rereading, testing, and narrowing our interpretations. We followed this pattern until we neared consensus. At the final phase of analysis, a matrix was constructed to identify similarities, differences, and the salience of emergent themes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

RESULTS

Results indicated that two significant forms of collaboration supported preservice teachers' professional development. First, preservice teachers engaged in more frequent and varied discourse on teaching and learning with each other than they did with their cooperating teachers. Each preservice teacher indicated the value of talking about teaching and learning and how his/her ongoing conversations helped him/her to see alternative perspectives. Additionally, five of our eight preservice teachers observed that the act of collaborating with their peer helped to build their collaborative skills. Second, six preservice teachers believed the presence of a peer during lessons made them both more comfortable and more likely to take pedagogic risks. However, two preservice teachers were concerned that the extra support could be a crutch that hindered their preparedness for student teaching. Observations and verbatim quotes from interviews will be used to elaborate upon these findings.

Talking About Teaching and Learning: Finding Time, Promoting Multiple Perspectives, and the Beginnings of a Culture of Collaboration

Our preservice teachers reported, and instructor's observations corroborated, that dialogue between cooperating and preservice teachers was significantly less frequent than communication between peers. Preservice teachers described their cooperating teachers in positive terms including: "nice," "flexible," and "supportive." Even so, finding time to talk with the teachers was difficult. Personal lives were busy (one teacher was getting married, another was about to have a baby) and other school demands often took precedence. Talk with cooperating teachers often occurred "on the fly" (in the halls, before or after school, on the way to lunch) and in the mix of competing school responsibilities. Even though preservice teachers indicated that their cooperating teachers were open to answering their questions, time was at a premium and several preservice teachers indicated they didn't want to impose on their cooperating teachers' already busy schedule. Amy explained, "Even though I know I could ask her questions, it was like, why do I want to make my cooperating teacher more busy and ask her those laborious questions that I know she'll have to really think about" (interview, June 5, 2007).

While cooperating teachers were open to preservice teachers' teaching lessons, cooperating teachers were not particularly involved in the planning process. Additionally, cooperating teachers' feedback was described as "vague," "general," and "rare." Three of the four pairs stated their cooperating teachers usually did not read the preservice teachers' lesson plans in advance. Amy described how she enjoyed her relationship with her cooperating teacher, chatting about "school stuff, life, family, and friends." However, she recalled, "Our cooperating teacher wasn't very involved with our lesson planning…or giving us feedback" (interview, June 5, 2007). Similarly, Kelly noted, "Feedback not authentic, don't think she really

looked over our plans in depth or knew what to look for" (interview, June 4, 2007). Kelly's partner, Beth, concurred, "Mrs. Tyson was very nice to us…[but] we didn't get any feedback from her. She told us what she did and that was about it, we didn't get any suggestions really" (interview, May 31, 2007).

In contrast, preservice teachers described conversations with peers as more frequent and more rich. Peers were creative and resourceful in making time to talk together about teaching and learning: sharing rides, eating lunch, e-mailing, text messaging, and phoning. In addition, peers met at each other's homes, the campus library, and elsewhere, whenever they could (before, during, and after the on-campus class). Colleen's statement was reflective of each partner's experience:

> We would meet on campus and plan for the first week, then we'd plan for the second week. During lunch at the school if we had extra time, we'd talk about tomorrow's lesson. We usually, each morning, before we went to school, Amy would call me or I'd call her, each morning, we'd confirm, any materials, what time are you going to get there? do you want to get there early so we could go over it? We'd usually get there an hour early, if it was my lesson, she'd read my lesson to know the order of things and I appreciate it a lot (interview, June 4, 2007).

Without exceptions, peers' interactions encouraged multiple perspectives that provided divergent interpretations of teaching and learning. In some cases, the act of collaboration was foundation building for future collaborative efforts. For example, Emma recalled, "We had different ways of coming at things… Jenny was very detail-oriented, whereas I would figure out the whole picture, she would figure out the nuances and how to do it. We played off of each other really well" (interview, May 31, 2007). Kelly, echoing the observations of her peers, noted that discourse with her peer "kept [their] ideas fresher" (interview, June 4, 2007).

Jenny explained the importance of talking with her partner after their lessons: "We would go back and discuss what we could do to get our students to learn from our lessons, how they could learn better, and take apart the activities and understand how to make them [more effective]" (interview, May 31, 2007). Laurel noted the same experience, and along with five of her peers observed that sharing perspectives not only helped instructionally, but also prepared her for future collaborative efforts: "You have different ideas coming in which are helpful because you have different ways of looking at things. It helps you think about teaming and working with other teachers" (interview, June 6, 2007). While Jenny talked about the value of working with a partner, she also talked about the challenges:

> You get more input, different ideas…We both brought something to the table…[but] collaborating was something I struggled with this quarter. Understanding how to work with a partner. Like, I had just never done that before. I think it was a good struggle for me…We have to learn to collaborate and work with others (interview, May 31, 2007).

Amy stated that a hurdle she and Colleen encountered was learning to be "open to telling each other that [their] ideas aren't necessarily going to work with [their] students…[That made her a] better communicator" (interview, June 5, 2007). This experience supports Topping's (2005) research indicating that peer learning places great demands on communication skills. As such, students learn both the skill or content they are working on, but also develop their communication skills. It appears that what was observed in school-age children was also experienced by our preservice teachers.

In this study, cooperating teacher/preservice teacher dialogue was limited. Observations and interviews indicate that cooperating teachers were welcoming and supportive, and they cared about preservice teachers' development. It appears that cooperating teachers were open to talking with preservice teachers, but in keeping with Hawkey's (1995) findings, we saw that competing responsibilities prohibited opportunities for more open and ongoing dialogue. Furthermore, Feiman-Nemser's (2001) observation may relate here that teachers typically practice in isolation and are not used to engaging in discourse about teaching and learning.

Finding time to talk, though easier with a peer than a cooperating teacher, was also difficult for our preservice teachers: Three students reported this was a major challenge. Regardless, peers found ways to talk and engaged in professional dialogue. Relevant to this study is Topping and Ehly's (2001) research on school-age peer learners: Feedback between peers was more frequent and more immediate than teacher-student feedback; furthermore, a difference in quality of feedback was mediated by frequency and immediacy. It appears that a similar experience occurred in our preservice teacher/cooperating teacher interactions.

An Extra Set of Hands: Support for Risk Taking or a Crutch Forestalling Reality

Feiman-Nemser (2001) refers to the "powerful learnings that can come from classroom inquiry, coplanning, coteaching, and other forms of assisted performance that would enable teacher candidates to learn with help what they are not ready to do on their own" (p. 1016). We recognize that our course assignment was an important factor in facilitating what we are calling "risk-taking." The students were required to create and plan a science unit. The instructor urged them to use manipulatives and to engage students actively. Cooperating teachers knew in advance of this requirement and were supportive; however, with the exception of one classroom, science instruction did not normally occur. Additionally, the instruction in each classroom was primarily teacher-centered; inquiry-based or active learning occurred infrequently if at all.

Supporting Bullough et al. (2002, 2003) and Smith's (2002) research, interview data suggest that the presence of a peer during planning and implementation emboldened preservice teachers to take risks during their science unit lessons.

However, similar to Bullough's (2003) student teachers' concern that peer placement would not prepare them for the "reality" of teaching, two of our preservice teachers expressed concern that peer field placement would not prepare them for the "reality" of solo student teaching.

In terms of planning and implementation, analyses of unit plans, interviews, and observations confirm that preservice teachers implemented a variety of student-centered activities. For example, kindergartners experimented with states of matter and predicted and analyzed data with sink and float activities. First graders constructed and cooked with solar ovens, and did partner research and presentations. Second and third graders created models of sedimentary formations, identified different types of soil, and created advertisements about the benefits and utility of their particular soil type.

Interview data suggest that ideologically our preservice teachers' pedagogical orientations were student-centered. They described the dilemma: In previous classes, they had many opportunities to plan student-centered lessons, but not to implement these lessons. Emma explained, "I'm a big fan of hands-on activities… [but]I hadn't really done a whole lot in the classroom" (interview, June 1, 2007). In the same vein, Laurel stated, "In the other classes you plan [lessons], but don't do them" (interview, June 6, 2007). Now preservice teachers needed to translate theory into practice in a context where the theory and science content they were attempting were not generally employed. Colleen described the challenge of employing unfamiliar pedagogies, even in the presence of a supportive teacher:

> I always planned lessons that always were hands-on, which I never saw the students use before. Manipulatives, they hadn't seen before, even [the cooperating teacher] said they hadn't used it…She thought it was great and that the students would love it…[but] it was challenging. They [the students] didn't know, more interested in messing around with the manipulatives since they never used them…Amy made things go smoother. It was more comfortable and made me more relaxed… having her there if I needed (interview June 4, 2007).

Colleen's partner Amy also described how the extra support from a peer made implementing different pedagogies in the classroom not only easier, but more likely to occur:

> Because with hands-on activities with students who are not used to hands-on activities, they just get excitable. You can tell that some of them just really can't handle them, so it was good to have Colleen there, we didn't want to take away the activity, but we didn't want students to get ridiculous" (interview, June 5, 2007).

Similarly, Laurel explained, "My philosophy is hands-on…I wouldn't have started off being brave enough" (interview, June 6, 2007).

Observations and reviews of lesson plans and reflections indicate that of the three possible interactive roles (team-teaching, lead teaching with backup support, and solo teaching with no backup support), "lead and backup" was by far the most prevalent model. Through this pattern, peers took a highly active role in each other's teaching by providing what Smith (2002) terms as "backup assistance" such as working one-on-one with struggling students and redirecting behavior. Interview data indicate that for six of the eight preservice teachers, backup support was welcomed and allowed them the ease of comfort to explore and experiment in their planning and instruction. Kelly recalled:

> I provided background assistance, like passing out materials, answering questions, helping with the discipline, walking around the classroom and answering questions. Beth did the same thing, [it was] very helpful. Still a lot of pressure on me, but two bodies better than one. It made me feel very comfortable in trying things, knowing I had somebody there backing me up and supporting me" (interview, June 4, 2007).

Beth described her lessons on solar energy as "pretty complex… They required a lot of materials and a lot of staying on top of everything. With the more creative lessons, something is bound to go wrong at some point." Beth said she appreciated "knowing that she (her partner) was there and would help pick things back up" (interview, May 31, 2007). However, in one instance, "helping out" was not perceived as helping: Janice recalled, "There was one lesson where I got really aggravated, Laurel chimed in and it made me mad because she was talking over me. That was only one lesson. We talked about it" (interview, June 4, 2007).

Two preservice teachers expressed concern that in the long run, the extra set of hands peers provided could hinder their development. Beth later added, "My only worry is that I'm used to having Kelly around. When I go into student teaching, I'll be the only one" (interview, May 31, 2007). Janice stated that partner placements should not be offered in future classes, "It's a crutch in a way that you are not going to have …the purpose of methods is to prepare you for student teaching" (interview, June 4, 2007).

DISCUSSION

We began this research by wondering if our students would collaborate, and if so, *why*, *how*, and *to what end*? Paired together in their pre-student teaching field experience, our students did collaborate. Peers shared ideas, observed each other's teaching, brainstormed, gave and sought advice, and problem solved. Through these "reciprocal interactions" (Glazer & Hannafin, 2006), peers supported and contributed to each other's professional development.

In terms of *why* our students collaborated, we believe that was due in large part to the structured situation of partner-placements. Structured situations can engender

joint problem solving (Rogoff, 1990) and facilitate development of a professional community (Kruse, Lois, & Brik, 1994). From the beginning of this field-based course, structures were in place to promote collaboration: Peers shared a classroom, roles were provided, and a coplanned, student-centered science unit was required. Such structures also contributed to a shared purpose (Rogoff, 1990), a vital precursor for collaboration.

While peers in separate classrooms could be partnered (e.g., in the same placement school) and encouraged to engage in meaningful collaboration, we believe it was the structured situation of a shared classroom context (common students, curriculum, teachers, and course goals) that made the peer collaboration so rich, frequent, authentic, and necessary. Had the classroom not been shared, we doubt that our students would have worked so hard to create the time to engage in substantive talk about teaching and learning which ultimately manifested into "real classroom activities" with "real children."

Dialogue and assisted performance in planning and implementation best describe *how* peers collaborated. Directly connected to *how* peers collaborated is the question *to what end*? What were the outcomes of their reciprocal interactions? Below we discuss outcomes related to the students' risk-taking as well as their perceptions of the value of the peer placement in their own professional development.

Theories on language and learning (John-Steiner, 2000; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978) contribute to our understanding of the pedagogic risks taken by our students. Vygotsky (1978) stipulates that language mediates thinking. Through observation and dialogue with an equal status peer, preservice teachers were able to clarify, reflect upon, and construct meaning from their experiences. As our students wrestled with how to bring theory into practice, they shared ideas, resources, and talents. In doing so, they moved into and out of each other's zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), built upon and expanded each other's understandings (Rogoff, 1990), and enhanced each other's ability to plan for and implement instruction.

Peer dialogue supported multiple perspectives on planning and implementation, and also led to distributed risk and cognition (John-Steiner, 2000). By engaging in frequent discussions about teaching and learning as well as talking through their planning, peers shared ideas, problem solved, and broadened each other's perspectives. As a result, peers were intimately familiar with the details of each other's lessons. Deep knowledge of both the lessons and the students they taught facilitated more targeted "backup" intervention during lesson implementation. It was the knowledge that support was available that helped students implement lessons that they considered "risky" with students who generally did not have many prior experiences with collaborative, hands-on learning. It is also important to note that cooperating teachers were supportive of preservice teachers' risk taking. Without such support, we doubt that single or paired preservice teachers would be able to move beyond normative teacher-centered classroom instruction.

Darling-Hammond (2006) argues that it is essential to prepare teachers to be "expert collaborators who can learn from each other" (p. 305). According to Topping and Ehly's (2001) research on peer-assisted learning, language not only promotes learning, but also promotes the development of communication skills. As developed communication skills are favorable to collaboration, the act of collaboration can serve to foster future collaboration. In the case of five of our preservice teachers, that certainly seemed to be the case. Yet, reflecting Bullough et al.'s (2003) study, two of our preservice teachers worried that this methods experience was not like their upcoming single placement student teaching or, perhaps, even real teaching in general. The extent to which preservice teachers appreciated or questioned the presence of a peer speaks to concerns of what is "real" teaching: Is an extra set of hands developmental scaffolding or a crutch? Does "real" teaching entail developmental progress and professional support or does it equate to "sink or swim"? For us, as teacher educators, it bespeaks the question of how we prepare preservice teachers for what should be (ongoing professional collaboration) rather than what is (relative isolation).

Moving forward we note the following promises and pitfalls of peer collaboration that will inform our next steps. First, we believe that peer placements have the potential to induct preservice teachers into collaborative mores and situate them to enter the teaching profession with the skills and dispositions to actively seek out and join in professional communities of practice, to engage in discourse about teaching and learning, and to be receptive to multiple perspectives. As such we advocate their continued usage, but this study also indicates that two specific modifications are needed. First, we found, despite our efforts to structure the collaborative context, we did not "prepare" our preservice teachers to be "expert collaborators." Structured situations support collaboration, but do not teach or reinforce requisite skills such as how to express differences of opinion or use strategies that might promote cooperating teachers' participation in dialogue. Second, we did not explicitly frame collaboration as true preparations for the next steps in their program (student teaching) or in their future as classroom teachers. Critical understandings need to be nurtured, such as why differences can be beneficial, or how collaboration, not autonomy, is a desired norm. Providing space and time in class for skill development and problem solving is necessary if we are to maximize the potential this model appears to have.

While this study supports research citing the benefits of peer placement (Bullough et al., 2002, 2003; Smith, 2002), more study is needed. Given the primacy of autonomy in our schools, we raise questions for future research seeking to reconceptualize preservice preparation to develop "expert collaborators:" What conditions support or impede mutual problem solving and reciprocal interactions? What support and/or structures facilitate and promote a favorable attitude towards and ability to collaborate? How can we encourage more frequent and more collaborative dialogue between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers?

If teachers are to make the cultural shift from isolation to collaboration and participate in building a new, professional culture, part of their early induction needs to include developing habits of collegiality (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Given the complexity of collaboration, it is incumbent upon teacher educators to research and develop the means for successful preservice teacher collaboration. Given the norms of autonomy that promote "sink or swim" mentalities, it is also essential to reframe teaching as a developmental process that is aided, not encumbered, by engaging in collaboration.

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