No Teacher Left Behind: The Development of a Professional Collaboration

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to describe how a collaborative partnership between a public school teacher and university teacher-educator positively influenced their thinking about effective literacy practices in schools. The collaboration began when the two attended a state initiative summer literacy project. During the workshop they engaged in personal and collective reflection of their teaching practices and those presented during the training. These informal discussions became the basis for a collaborative partnership in which Vicki, the teacher, would periodically attend Denise's university reading methods course to work with preservice teachers and Denise to teach Vicki's first graders. In connections such as these, learning communities are established that benefit both teachers and university professors.

Providing high-quality, effective professional development for teachers, especially in the area of literacy, is no small task (Allington, 2001; Duffy & Hoffman, 1999). Achieving high levels of literacy for all children requires expert teachers and schools that are organized to support teachers' continuous learning. Many times, however, schools engage in a district-directed, knowledge-transmission staff development approach used to train teachers (Becker & Reil, 2000). This type of externally mandated teacher training may result in only superficial changes in teachers' pedagogy. Often teachers do not play a central role in developing the rationale for the change, constructing the strategies for implementation and choosing the resources to be used (Cunningham & Allington, 2003). According to Jaggar (1989)

> If we really want to make lasting improvement in our schools, then we have to think seriously about how teachers learn. Their role is central to the improvement of education. Yet, it seems that state departments of education, textbook publishers, the lay public, legislators, and judges have more to say about policy and practice than do classroom teachers. (p. 67)

Simply dispensing pronouncements and imposing structure without individual investment results in lack of commitment and a feeling of powerlessness. Effective professional development must take into consideration the individuals served and the context in which the change is implemented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Acquiring sophisticated, in-depth knowledge that results in reflective and analytic practice is an ongoing process that takes time, support, and a variety of experiences that are more powerful than simply reading and talking about research-based best practices (Hiebert & Stigler, 2000). Teachers learn best by studying, observing, analyzing, doing, and reflecting; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing their perspectives (Becker & Reil, 1999; Darling-Hammond & Falk, 1997; Commeyras & DeGroff, 1998; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Through collaborative conversation, teachers become active in the knowledge-building process. They discuss, elaborate on concepts, and mediate relationships between themselves. They view multiple perspectives on concepts or issues and generate understanding based on prior knowledge and current understandings (Cunningham, Duffy, & Knuth, 1993). According to a recent survey of U.S. teachers, increased time spent on collaborative activities is associated with the perception of significant improvements in teaching (Winters, 1999).

This kind of collaborative learning cannot occur easily in university teacher preparation classes that are removed from practice or in school classrooms that

are removed from knowledge about how to interpret practice. Howey and Zimpher (1994) note the need for collaboration between schools and colleges of education:

> Preparing teachers for more potent yet realistic teaching roles, without considering changes in schools needed to enable contemporary conceptions of learning and teaching, is folly. Just as those in schools and colleges of education very much need those in PK–12 schools to assist in preparing teachers, those in schools need those in teacher preparation to assist in tackling the major challenges of school reform and restructuring. (p. 159)

Good settings for teacher learning—in both colleges of education and schools—provide many opportunities for research and inquiry, for trying and testing, for talking about and evaluating the results of learning and teaching. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) use the term "local knowledge" (p. 291) to describe both a way of knowing about teaching and what teachers and communities come to know when they build knowledge collaboratively. In this way, preservice teachers join practicing teachers and teacher-educators on a joint academic adventure to discover the "limits of expert knowledge" and to "cultivate competence in reflective conversation with the [teacher,] stimulating him to reflect on his own knowledge-in-practice" (Schon, 1983, p. 302).

Better settings for such learning are appearing. Colleges of education have joined with local school districts to create professional development schools (PDS). The PDS is characterized by the breadth of its agenda in teaching and learning. Darling-Hammond (1998) offers the following definition:

> Like teaching hospitals, these schools aim to provide sites for state-of-the-art practice that are organized to support the training of new professionals, extend the professional development of veteran teachers, and sponsor collaborative research and inquiry. Both university and school faculty plan and teach in these programs. Beginning teachers get a more coherent learning experience when they are organized in teams with these faculty and with one another. Veteran teachers deepen their knowledge by serving as mentors, adjunct faculty, co-researchers, and teacher leaders. Thus, these schools can help create the rub between theory and practice, while creating more professional roles for teachers and constructing knowledge that is more useful for both practice and ongoing theory building. (p. 7)

According to the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE; 2001), PDSs improve the quality of teaching, increase student achievement, and boost teacher retention rates, thus reducing the growing need for new teachers. Currently, 166 of the 525 teacher preparation institu-

tions accredited by NCATE have PDSs with many of those institutions part-
nering with multiple PDS sites (NCATE, 2001).

Approaches to collaborative projects between teacher-educators and school
teachers within PDSs or other institutional partnerships vary according to the
number and roles of the participants involved, the underlying goals of partici-
pating institutions, and the level of commitment required of all those involved.
In this article, we share our story of how a collaborative partnership between a
public school teacher and university teacher-educator positively influenced our
thinking about effective literacy practice in schools and effective instruction in
literacy methods to preservice teachers.

METHODOLOGY

As teacher-researchers, it is our task to tell the story of our collaboration in a
way that informs others. Of the various strategies Hubbard and Power (1999)
suggest for teacher-researchers to use when they analyze their data, we found
the narrative thread to be most effective. As Carter (1993) reminds us, "the core
knowledge teachers have of teaching comes from their practice, i.e., from taking
action as teachers in classrooms. Teachers' knowledge is, in other words, event
structured, and stories, therefore, would seem to provide access to that knowl-
edge" (p. 7).

We begin by telling how our personal stories set the stage for our collabora-
tion; then we narrate how our collaborative partnership developed and evolved
over time. Next, through the information that we collected, we identify the
emerging themes that led to changes in our understanding of literacy teaching
and learning. Finally, we share our reflections on the benefits of the collabora-
tion for ourselves, our students, and for literacy education.

Participants: Vicki and Denise

Vicki is a first-grade teacher in central Arkansas. She has been teaching first
grade for 6 years. She holds a constructivist philosophy about how children
learn and, therefore, believes that knowledge is temporary and developmental
and that it relies heavily on social and cultural factors. As a result, she attempts
to incorporate as much hands-on experience, real-life application, group discus-
sion, and individual reflection in her teaching as possible. She regularly takes
part in professional development opportunities, and she stays active in local,
state, and national organizations. She has also supervised several student teach-
ers from local universities. Vicki is generally confident about her teaching prac-
tices and thinks that she is meeting most of her students' instructional needs,
but there are always a few students who did not show progress, especially in the
area of literacy, regardless of the teaching strategies that Vicki employed.

Vicki had an opportunity several years ago to observe a Reading Recovery teacher at a nearby school. Reading Recovery is a research-based early intervention for at-risk first-grade children designed to ensure that students build effective reading and writing processes. Vicki observed that the Reading Recovery teaching methods were very successful. Vicki realized that if these teaching methods worked well in a one-to-one situation with children who are having great difficulty learning to read, they may also be effective with students struggling with reading in her first-grade classroom, so she began reading and gathering information about Reading Recovery. Research by Marie Clay (1985, 1991) clearly demonstrates that the philosophy and teaching techniques of Reading Recovery are successful. In schools with high-quality classroom instruction and Reading Recovery, almost all of the children, including high-risk children, achieve average to high levels of literacy (Hall, Prevatte, & Cunningham, 1994). Vicki discovered that teachers share many of the same goals and approaches whether they are teaching Reading Recovery or working in the classroom. They

1. base decisions on a strong theory of learning;
2. create abundant opportunities for reading and writing extended texts;
3. provide opportunities for children to read and write whole texts;
4. help children connect reading and writing processes;
5. select texts from a gradient in order to match texts to children;
6. teach how to use strategies in reading and writing; and
7. teach children to use the visual information in print, including letter-sound relationships. (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996)

Consequently, Vicki began exploring ways to generalize the use of these teaching strategies into the broader context of her classroom.

Denise is a teacher-educator of reading methods for prospective K–5 teachers at a nearby university. She had recently taken Reading Recovery training and began to work with at-risk first-grade children at Vicki's school as a volunteer, but she did not know Vicki. This teaching experience provided her with the opportunity to work with children on a daily basis and to also incorporate her experiences into her preservice reading methods courses. When teaching her reading methods courses, Denise focused on an apprenticeship approach to assisting children with achieving reading independence, and she emphasized the role of the adult in supporting children's developing control of literacy knowledge.

According to Dorn, French, and Jones (1998), "In this model, the teacher provides clear demonstrations, engages children appropriately, monitors their level of understanding, makes necessary accommodations to ensure they are successful, and withdraws support as they exhibit greater control" (p. 15). The

instructional framework Denise presented to perspective teachers was grounded in best practices that included reading aloud; shared, guided, and independent reading; comprehension; language and word study; assisted and independent writing; genre; reading and writing workshop; and content literacy (Dorn et al., 1998; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

Educators of undergraduate preservice teachers acknowledge that teaching is a decision-making process involving systematic observation, in-depth analysis, hypothesis testing, and self-evaluation (Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord, 1993). In this context, Denise demonstrated literacy strategies and provided hands-on experiences and opportunities for discussion and reflection when appropriate for her preservice teachers. In addition to class instruction, Denise provided opportunities for students to document observations of their cooperating teacher's instructional practices during field experience placements, to administer assessments, and to use the results to inform and guide instruction through case studies. They videotaped themselves conducting a guided reading lesson and then reflected on the experience with peers; they conducted a writing activity and a read-aloud activity. She also included opportunities for her students to reflect on those experiences with their peers, with their cooperating teachers, and with her.

The university at which Denise taught had professional development school partnerships with seven local public elementary schools, including the school in which Vicki taught. There were not enough placements at these schools, however, for all of the preservice teachers enrolled in Denise's reading methods course. As a result, many students were in elementary school classrooms where they did not observe the type of literacy practices they were learning about in Denise's course. Therefore, her preservice teachers did not share a common experience observing a classroom teacher using literacy strategies they had learned about using with children. This situation prohibited the process of continual, reflective inquiry and the exchange of ideas with each other that allows for the development of a shared technical language and a shared knowledge base. Research suggests that many times what preservice teachers have learned in the college classroom abates to what they perceive as reality in their field placement unless their university coursework makes a direct attempt to address this disconnect (Duffy, 1994; Duffy & Atkinson, 2001; Labbo & Reinking, 2000; Weinstein, 1988).

Context: Development of the Collaboration

In the summer of 1997, the state developed a 3-year intensive training program called Early Literacy Learning in Arkansas (ELLA) for K–2 teachers; it was patterned on the fundamental structure of the professional development and lan-

guage and literacy instructional framework of Reading Recovery (Dorn, 1995).

The ELLA language and literacy framework includes authentic assessments, reading aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, word work, shared writing, interactive writing, modeled writing, independent writing, and literacy centers in K–2 classrooms (Dorn et al., 1998). In using the framework, teachers consider a variety of factors:

1. the strength, needs, and experiences of the children they are teaching;
2. the nature of materials they have and can acquire;
3. the requirements of the curriculum; and
4. their own experience, background, and level of confidence.

The first year of training consists of a 2-week summer course followed by 4 days (2 each semester) of training during the school year. The second year consists of 1 week during the summer and 2 days (1 each semester) of training during the school year. The third year concludes the training with only 1 day of training during the fall semester.

The first year of the program brought together several pilot schools with each school represented by a team of K–2 teachers and building principal. Each of the teachers worked with and received the professional books and materials used by the program instructors to discuss, model, and demonstrate the literacy strategies and instructional practices within the language and literacy framework. During the school year, participating teachers were expected to begin implementation of the strategies that they were learning. The program instructors came to the participants' classrooms to model lessons and observe several times throughout the school year.

The first-grade teachers at Vicki's school were selected to pilot the first year of the project. To stay abreast of the state's initiatives that would ultimately affect preservice teachers, Denise, the faculty member, attended the training. Denise and Vicki first met at the summer training workshop where they discovered that the philosophy and instructional framework of ELLA was much the same as their own. Over the course of the 2-week summer training, Denise and Vicki made many connections, realizing that each had much to offer the other in various areas of knowledge and expertise. They engaged in personal and collective reflection of their teaching practices and those presented during the training, sharing what they learned in an effort to design the best match between the needs of their students and the resources available. These informal discussions became the basis for their collaborative partnership.

Vicki invited Denise to her classroom at the beginning of the school year to observe several times a week. Both benefited from the opportunities afforded from shared observation, reflection, analysis, and discussion of children with each other in the context of the learning environment. This opened up the idea

of providing a way for Denise's preservice teachers to experience the power of sharing, reflecting, and discussing common literacy practices. This could be achieved, at least to a degree, through a teacher swap; Vicki would go to Denise's reading methods course at designated times that correlated with the course syllabus, and Denise would go to Vicki's class to teach first grade.

The two met with and gained the support of Vicki's principal. They then agreed on selected topics and set tentative dates for Vicki's presentations at the university. During this planning phase, Denise continued to go to Vicki's classroom several times each week to work and interact with the first-grade students, continuing to learn from them as she become acclimated to the daily routine so she could to take over the teaching responsibilities.

During the beginning of the university reading methods courses, Denise discussed the apprenticeship approach to literacy learning and the need for ongoing informal assessment to inform instruction. Since Denise wanted her students to experience authentic assessment and evaluation of early learners, a date was set up for the preservice teachers to come to Vicki's school and administer the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993) to the first-grade students. The university students wrote case studies from the data they collected, each describing a student's overall literacy development, strengths, and weaknesses. These results were shared with Vicki, and she used the assessments along with the Developmental Reading Assessment (Beaver, 1997) to group students with similar abilities and needs. The purpose of the small flexible groups was to develop strategies for teaching reading and writing. This process and results were shared with Denise's preservice teachers and laid the foundation for the decision-making process for all future instruction of Vicki's students. Finally, each preservice teacher was required to spend 1 day in Vicki's classroom.

Data Analysis

Both teachers kept a journal in which they documented their thoughts after each teacher swap. According to Moon (1999), "journals that accompany field work or work experience provide a method of developing the meaning of experience so that the learner can relate their unique experience to establish theory or develop their own theory" (p. 190). The use of journaling was an excellent way to capture the evolution in-depth of reflection that occurred as a result of moving from the novelty of the teacher swap to familiarity. The journals allowed the opportunity to look and then look again—documenting initial impressions and then returning to the situation to reflect on it again.

Denise and Vicki also kept field notes documenting their observations of the students they were teaching during the teacher swap. The two teachers e-mailed one another, spoke on the phone, and had face-to-face meetings throughout the project.

The data were displayed and analyzed in terms of the particular context and interpreted in relation to the larger context of literacy education. For the analysis, what turned out to be key experiences have been placed into a narrative that shows changes in Denise and Vicki's relationship to each other and to the larger context of teacher and literacy education.

THE TEACHER SWITCH

Early in the semester, following the preservice teachers' administration and analysis of the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993), the two teachers conducted the first of five classroom swaps that were distributed over the course of the semester. The day started with Denise coming to Vicki's first-grade classroom and going over the day's schedule prior to the beginning of the school day. Denise then took over the teaching duties in Vicki's classroom, and Vicki drove to the nearby college campus and taught two sections of Denise's senior-level elementary reading methods course, Principles and Practices of Elementary Reading. Principles and Practices is the last reading course in the final semester the preservice teachers are enrolled in before doing student teaching. The purpose of this course is to understand effective instructional strategies for assisting all children in achieving literacy. Since a majority of students were seeking an early childhood endorsement for certification in the state, a major focus of the course was on early childhood literacy. The selection of topics Vicki presented was based on the language and literacy framework presented in ELLA (see Table 1). The sequence of topics attempted to build on preservice teachers' personal, practical, and professional knowledge in literacy education.

Table 1. Vicki's Teaching in the University Setting

Sequence of Topics

Class 1	Setting up literacy centers
Class 2	Phonemic awareness and shared reading
Class 3	Word study
Class 4	Guided reading
Class 5	Writing

The first topic that Vicki taught dealt with setting up literacy centers and scheduling the day's work in a classroom. She brought copies of her daily and weekly schedule so that the college students could see how the days would flow. She also brought a videotape of her students engaged in centers. She stressed the need for careful planning for multilevel, developmentally appropriate centers based on ongoing classroom assessment; for teacher modeling of appropriate behavior and tasks in centers; and for effective classroom management.

The second session was devoted to phonemic awareness and shared reading. Vicki brought samples of poems that her students enjoyed and showed the many teaching points that could be made with the poems by using magnetic letters to manipulate onset and rime. She brought big books and demonstrated ways to teach concepts about print, phonemic awareness, and reading strategies. She brought samples of her students' poetry folders and their poetry as well as big book center activities.

The third topic that Vicki discussed with the university students was word study. Vicki brought magnetic letters and letter cards and taught a word-building lesson just as she would with first graders. She also picked a preservice student to demonstrate how to focus attention on a student's name to develop some important understandings about words and letters (Cunningham, 1999). Students enjoyed making words, an activity in which they used letter cards to make little words and then bigger words and to look for patterns that guide the groupings of letters in the words they made.

Guided reading was the main topic of the fourth class. Vicki brought books at various text levels for the preservice students to examine. They discussed what made a book appropriate for guided reading and what criteria to use to determine text level. She also brought a videotape of two guided reading groups from her classroom. She had the university students break into small groups and practice teaching a guided reading lesson. Since one of the course assignments was for the preservice teachers to videotape themselves teaching a guided reading lesson, this session led to a lively discussion and many questions.

Vicki's fifth topic was writing. She brought many samples of student writing including interactive writing, modeled writing, independent writing, editing on the overhead, and journals. She demonstrated interactive writing with a small group and brought a video of her teaching modeled writing to her first graders.

During each class session, Vicki provided opportunities for the preservice teachers to share their thoughts and reflections with each other about the literacy strategies being discussed, modeled, and observed. She also involved them in the decision-making process in which she engaged on a daily basis as she used observation and informal assessment data to plan for future instruction.

In the first-grade class, Denise followed Vicki's daily schedule. Since Denise was able to come to Vicki's class several times each week between teacher swaps,

she was able to participate in the ongoing assessment that informed daily instructional decision making such as running records and a variety of writing products. Denise's knowledge of the students' literacy strengths and needs was essential for her to provide effective instruction on the days when she taught the class.

School started at 8:30, but students began arriving in the classroom at 8:15. When the students arrived, they put away their book bags, made their lunch choice for the day, and then chose a book to read from their book box of familiar texts. After the 8:30 bell, students were allowed to continue reading for 15 minutes. Denise walked around the room listening to each student read. At 8:45, the students put away their books, and then moved to a carpeted area for calendar activities and shared reading. Shared reading materials included the alphabet chart (early in the year), poetry, and big books (new and familiar).

From 9:30 to 10:30, the students went to centers or guided reading/interactive writing, according to what was on the work board. These centers focused on listening, writing, alphabet, poetry, and word work. Each center was designed to meet the multileveled instructional needs of all the students. Each student had a notebook to record what they were learning in each center. For example, in the poetry center, the students wrote down the rhyming words they found in the poems they read. Denise had participated in analyzing the students' running records and had selected just-right books prior to teaching the guided reading groups, facilitating her ability to scaffold the students' work during the book introduction and independent reading.

At 10:30, the students went back to their seats for word study. Denise involved them in word wall activities, such as recording the word wall words for the week in the students' personal dictionaries, making the words with magnetic letters, or manipulating the onset or rime of the words to make new words. From 10:50 to 11:05, the last activity before lunch, Denise read a picture book aloud to the students. Many times, Denise stopped during the read-aloud to model reading strategies or to think aloud. She involved the students in discussing the book throughout the read-aloud.

At lunch, Denise and Vicki debriefed about the day's experiences at the elementary school. This sharing was extremely valuable to both teachers and led to discussion on how to be more effective in both their classrooms.

FINDINGS

Creating Community

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from this collaboration was the importance of creating the learning environment and the community for students. In Vicki's classroom the walls are covered with valued student work.

There is a carpeted area with bookcases full of hundreds of interesting books, an area for Vicki to work with students in small groups, places for students to store and retrieve their work, and areas with materials for students to read and write independently. The room is bright, colorful, welcoming, and celebrates literacy. The students are with Vicki the majority of 6 hours per day, allowing time for her to get to know them and for them to know her and each other. Because Vicki teaches all content areas, she is able to teach thematically and make vital connections between subjects. Denise's classroom is quite different. The university walls are painted off-white, and professors and students are not allowed to put anything on them; desks are bolted to the floor in a predetermined arrangement and are not comfortable; there are no displays for books or other materials. The room is sterile, cold, and uninviting. Students are in class with their professors only two to three times per week for approximately 50 to 75 minutes per class.

Although stark differences exist between the learning environment and time students spend with their teachers in college and elementary classrooms, the importance of establishing community at both levels is critical in developing a shared basis for trust and understanding. When working with preservice teachers, Whatley and Canalis (2002) point out, "When trust is established, students are free to take risks, engage in intellectual exploration, and envision themselves as teachers contributing to the learning of others" (p. 479). Upon Vicki's first visits to the college classroom, her journal entries expressed her concern:

> How does Denise bond with her students? How can I ever bond with these students? The magic of being a teacher is that bond. You must have that trust. (September 1997)

On the other hand, Denise was experiencing the benefits of belonging to a community in Vicki's first-grade classroom. As Denise read books aloud and engaged children in small-group guided reading and interactive writing, she observed how children made connections to their prior experiences in and out of the classroom, with books, with each other, and with Vicki as their teacher. The classroom routine provided predictability yet opportunity for shared responsibility, inquiry, and choice. Denise noted how this climate of community had been carefully crafted to support each child's strengths and needs within the classroom.

Denise became acutely aware that the constraints of the college classroom prevented the creation of the kind of community she experienced in the elementary classroom. As a consequence, she attempted to make the most out of the time and space she had available by reading aloud to the preservice teachers every class period and providing time for the students to share their responses to the book with each other. Small-group discussions about field practicums were also provided on a regular basis so students could share their experiences

with each other in relationship to the course content. Denise also provided opportunities for students to become actively engaged in and reflect on the course content, to ask questions, to make comments, and to express concerns— all in an effort to create a common vision and a common understanding about how children progressively become readers and writers. In her journal, Denise reflected on the difficulty of developing community for her preservice teachers:

> It is obvious that providing an atmosphere that supports a learning community is not a priority at the university, but is so critical for pre-service teachers to experience. Though I try to provide opportunities for my students to share their experiences with each other through a variety of avenues, it is by no means at the level that can be created in the elementary classroom. (October 1998)

When students feel like they belong to a community of learners, they become invested partners in learning. In a college class, this can make the difference in students' beliefs that what they put into the class is just as important as what they take from it. In conversations prior to the teacher switch, Denise shared with Vicki her observation that for many of her preservice teachers coming into the reading methods course, the only investment they had was to get a grade. Up to this point, the preservice teachers had taken years of general education courses and only a few methods courses. Most had approached these classes as courses that included reading the textbook, taking tests, completing assignments, and earning a grade. They did not think of themselves beyond the college classroom; they did not think of themselves as teachers. After the first teacher swap, Vicki experienced firsthand the preservice teachers' apathy, which she noted in this journal entry:

> I understand exactly what Denise meant by the students only wanting to get a grade from this class. Since the students knew I was going to be teaching the class and I was not evaluating them, I don't know if they took me seriously. There were no bright-eyed faces or eagerly raised hands waiting to ask me questions. I want them to see themselves as teachers, and learn to value the trust students place in them. I want to help them to make the link to the actual classroom. (September 1997)

Differences in Students

A theme related to the community issue also emerged: the differences in students' attitudes and conduct when they were with different teachers. As mentioned earlier and documented in Vicki's journal entries, the preservice teachers' attitude toward Vicki in the beginning of each semester was apathetic; they focused on completing their assignments. Slowly, however, their focus began to

change. Rather than experiencing a sense of apathy from the students, Vicki began to feel a sense of comfort:

> As I have continued to teach Denise's classes, the students are starting to feel more comfortable with me. I have worked hard to let them know that I have been in their shoes and am still learning, too. I have also let them know that there are no dumb questions. Most of the students are starting to become involved and ask more questions. Many even stay after class to ask questions about how I obtain so many books, the cost of books, or how I organize my books. (November 1997)

As the semester continued, the preservice students began to realize that they would soon be in the role of the teacher, and they began to understand the importance of effective literacy instruction for all children. Vicki worked hard to build a sense of trust in the students and to get them to see her as a colleague who was there to assist them in linking college course content to the elementary classroom. The students began to feel safe asking Vicki questions that they might not ask Denise, possibly from fear that Denise would make judgments about their competence—judgments that might have implications for their grades. Perhaps they did not think Denise knew the answers, especially to procedural questions.

The first graders also conducted themselves differently when Vicki was away. During the times when Denise worked in the classroom with Vicki, the students responded to Denise as they would Vicki, following classroom rules and routines. However, on the days when Vicki was teaching Denise's university class, the students tested Denise's ability to manage the class effectively. Vicki's class consisted of a very diverse group of children, several of whom had severe emotional and behavioral issues. Vicki had established a sense of trust and respect with her students that provided a strong foundation for observation and responsive teaching that plays a critical role in literacy development. Though Denise spent many days with the children prior to the teacher swaps, she did not know the children as well as Vicki, and she felt that this might compromise the quality of instruction:

> I know that it is only natural for the children to test my management skills when Vicki is not in the room. But, effective classroom management is so important to effective teaching, and the time I spend dealing with management issues takes away from time I should be teaching and time the students should be learning. I have such a great appreciation for the relationship Vicki has with each of her students and how that facilitates the teaching/learning in her classroom. This experience has provided me with a renewed sense of this important understanding. (October 1999)

Similarity in Students

The similarity between Vicki's and Denise's students was another theme that emerged during the teacher swap. Vicki and Denise shared an apprenticeship philosophy in which children "acquire a diverse collection of skills and knowledge under the guidance and support of more knowledgeable persons" (Dorn et al., 1998, p. 2). As the two colleagues planned and delivered instruction for the teacher swap and then debriefed afterward, it became clear that the apprenticeship approach was just as appropriate for adult learners as for children. Vicki modeled and demonstrated instructional strategies for the preservice teachers using clear and relevant language while assisting them in transferring new knowledge to previous learning and experiences that they could apply in varying situations. She provided opportunities for Denise's students to engage actively in the demonstrations (through hands-on activities or videos of herself using a specific strategy with first graders); she provided them with immediate feedback and encouraged questions and discussion. In this way, the preservice teachers began to take ownership of the strategies.

Obviously, the motivation to learn for preservice teachers is different from that of elementary students, but over the course of each semester Denise and Vicki observed a transition in the preservice teachers from external motivation (grades) to intrinsic motivation (assisting children in their journey to literacy) as they began to think less like students and to think more like the teachers they would become.

Deepening One's Theory and Practice

In the following journal entry, Vicki expresses her thoughts about the seemingly reverse process of teaching elementary students as opposed to preservice teachers:

> When teaching my own students, I don't have to explain why or how I am doing a particular activity or using a specific strategy, I just do it. But, when I teach the college students, I must really think about a way to explain why a strategy is valuable and what it accomplishes. It is a different way of thinking and reinforces my own philosophy. (December 1998)

Vicki found that the chance to explain the why and how of her teaching provided an opportunity to reflect on her own understanding of the theory behind her practice. Additionally, the questions from the preservice teachers provided opportunities for Vicki to reexamine her own classroom practices and the effects of certain instructional techniques on the teaching and learning process.

Denise's experience teaching first graders was just the opposite of Vicki's.

Rather than explaining the why and how of specific strategies, she put them into practice. For example, when engaging a small group of children in interactive writing, Denise wrote:

> I had to integrate what I know about how to conduct the activity with what I know about the children's strengths and needs. I had to make decisions on the run and adjust my instruction as necessary to scaffold the children appropriately—much like a Reading Recovery lesson, but with a small group of children. (November 1997)

Both teachers felt a renewed sense of efficacy when returning to teach in their respective classrooms. The opportunity to teach in each others' classrooms expanded their experiences, deepened their understanding of the connection between theory and practice, and informed their teaching in their own setting. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) comment on this process:

> Working together in communities, both new and more experienced teachers pose problems, identify discrepancies between theories and practices, challenge common routines, draw on the work of others for generative frameworks, and attempt to make visible much of that which is taken for granted about teaching and learning. (p. 293)

Perspective Taking

"Change is directly related to the quality of the experience."
(Pinnell, 2002, p. 67)

The most significant theme that emerged from the collaboration was seeing each other's work with new eyes. By assuming the other role without abandoning our prior institutional roles, we expanded our understanding of what it meant to teach in the other's setting.

Through Vicki's preparation to present topics to Denise's class, she had to examine closely her own teaching and instruction, an examination that helped her stay focused in her classroom. The preservice teachers seemed genuinely to appreciate the opportunity to interact with a teacher in the field. The questions they asked prompted Vicki to voice her reasoning for implementing the strategies she employs and the philosophy that drives her decision making. Each time Vicki came back to her classroom, she felt stronger professionally. She wanted to renew her efforts in teaching reading and writing effectively. Vicki also experienced firsthand the constraints of teaching in the university setting and the challenges of teaching adults. This broadened perspective allowed Vicki to see herself beyond her classroom as part of a larger community of educators. She was able to see the importance of her contribution to improving teaching and learning in the teaching profession.

The opportunity to teach a class of first-grade children allowed Denise to put into practice, in whole and small groups, the literacy strategies that she teaches preservice teachers. Though she had been a public school teacher for 10 years before joining the professoriate and though she volunteered as a Reading Recovery teacher, she had never taught a first-grade class. The firsthand experience of encountering the daily routine, management, and decision-making process broadened her perspective from the isolated teaching and specialized research that takes place in the university. Taking on Vicki's perspective allowed Denise to reflect on the importance of connecting theory and practice in teacher preparation and to bring into fuller view the many limitations of the methods course.

DISCUSSION

> When wholesale participation in teacher learning initiatives is mandated at the school or school system level, or when teacher learning is scripted in certain ways, it becomes a substitute for grass-roots change efforts. In these instances, teacher learning becomes "simply" professional development—the production of a time- and place-bound project for individual personal growth. When this happens, teacher learning functions as an end in itself. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 293)

Effective staff development programs incorporate relevant theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, reflection, and ongoing support in classroom settings. Nontraditional formats for professional development such as coaching, mentoring, and collaboration among university and school personnel are having a positive impact (Hughes, Cash, Ahwee, & Klingner, 2002).

In this article, we have discussed one such collaboration that had a positive impact not only on the preservice teachers, but on the teachers. It is not surprising that we would have different experiences as we assumed new roles and that the students would respond differently to either of us. But, as nontraditional formats of professional development become more pervasive, it is important for educators in collaborative relationships to understand each other's perspective and to develop the skills necessary to succeed in different settings.

There are, however, many challenges working with someone with whom you feel comfortable and can trust; but comfort and trust are critical to a successful collaboration. The process takes time, flexibility, dedication, and commitment on the part of both teachers. We revised our teaching many times based on our ongoing observations and assessments. We supported each other's professional growth through shared professional literature, journal articles, and continual feedback on student assessments and observations. It is rare in the

teaching profession to get objective feedback from someone who knows your students; who intimately knows your teaching situation; and who is someone that you know, trust, and respect. Our responsibility to each other is not only mutual but reciprocal.

More importantly, our collaboration allowed us to step back from our individual teaching situations and take a broader view of our own and each other's work. Though sometimes painful, this kind of collaboration provides a meaningful context to ask questions and to explore the possibility of change. As Howey and Zimpher (1994) point out, "Efforts to forge new alternatives in teacher preparation call for parallel changes in schools and a commitment by those in teacher preparation to assist more fully than at present in achieving these changes" (p. 159). By facilitating such connections, we as professionals can establish learning communities that benefit all involved and can model participation in collaborative inquiry necessary to the success of beginning teachers.

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