Assessing What Counts: Learning to Teach for Pupil Learning

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ASSESSING WHAT COUNTS: LEARNING TO TEACH FOR PUPIL LEARNING

Dissertation
by

LISA ANDRIES D’SOUZA

submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

ASSESSING WHAT COUNTS: LEARNING TO TEACH FOR PUPIL LEARNING

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Most would agree that pupil learning is a fundamental purpose of schooling. Differences arise, however, when conceptualizing what form that learning should take and how it should be assessed. In recent years, there has been increased pressure to improve pupil achievement through educational reform initiatives intended to ensure that all pupils meet high academic standards through strict accountability measures. This dissertation seeks to understand how teacher candidates/beginning teachers, working in this era of accountability, focus on pupil learning over time. An interpretive qualitative approach was employed to complete cross-case analyses on 55 interviews conducted with five participants over a 3-year period.

Based on a sociocultural framework, and drawing on constructivist assessment theories and prior research on learning to teach, this dissertation argues that the end objective of improving pupil learning led teachers to enhance their teaching practice by holding high expectations for pupil learning, building personal relationships with pupils, maintaining strong classroom management strategies, and utilizing formative assessment. However, engaging in these practices was often a result of a complex process of negotiation between aspects of the school context that functioned as obstacles and the teachers’ moral sensibilities. Overall, contrary to claims made by stage theory, the beginning teachers in this study demonstrated that focusing on pupil learning was possible with perseverance, commitment to social justice, development of an inquiry
stance and an understanding that learning to teach is a life-long process that involves continuous reflection and professional development.
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CHAPTER 1: PUPIL\textsuperscript{1} LEARNING IN AN ERA OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The knowledge and expertise our children gain during their schooling years makes a difference for the future of our society. As a democratic nation, we need to prepare pupils to be active, engaged, problem-solvers, not mere repositories of facts. The key venue for ensuring such learning is our schools. Although most would agree that pupil learning is a fundamental purpose of schooling, differences arise when conceptualizing what form that learning should take and how it should be assessed. Often, assessment is conceived as an end or final product, instead of an opportunity for teachers to provide pupils with valuable feedback on their learning, to hone the focus of one’s teaching, and to promote continued learning.

In recent years, there has been increased pressure to improve pupil achievement through educational reform initiatives intended to ensure that all pupils meet high academic standards through strict accountability measures. These state-created, federally-mandated accountability systems are designed to hold districts, schools, teachers, and pupils responsible for meeting specified standards of academic performance (Valencia & Villarreal, 2003). This high-stakes testing paradigm typically embraces a summative perspective to assessment, emphasizing an evaluative judgment of what pupils know and are able to do at a specific point in time, rather than addressing the more formative potential of assessment. This difference can be noted in the language embraced by the accountability culture to improve pupil “achievement” rather than improve student “learning.”

\textsuperscript{1} For this study, K-12 students are referred to as “pupils.” The exception is Chapter 2, in which K-12 students remain “students.” The reviewed studies use the term student, and I decided to keep the language consistent.
Focusing on accountability systems and high-stakes assessments may lead to a narrowed curriculum and explicit instruction aimed at preparing pupils for tests through drill-and-practice and test-taking strategies (Johnson & Johnson, 2002). When assessments become the primary means of evaluating pupil learning, for example, teachers often decrease demands for higher order-thinking (Shepard, 2001) and reshape instruction to emphasize “rote and superficial learning” (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p. 141). Consequently, as Johnson and Johnson (2002) stated, “the use of high-stakes tests is changing what goes on in classrooms to the detriment of the arts, problem solving, creativity, and the joy associated with learning and discovering . . . passing a high-stakes test does not mean that pupils are well-educated any more than passing a written or behind-the-wheel driver’s test means that someone is a good driver” (p. 203).

Nichols and Berliner (2007) suggested that alternatives to high-stakes testing which focus on assessment for learning instead of assessment of learning are necessary. In this view, assessment would become a frequent, informal, and flexible means by which teachers receive ongoing feedback on their pupils’ learning which, in turn, can inform their instruction and alert them to the needs of their individual pupils (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). Such practices are often called formative assessment, as they provide constant information to both the learner and the teacher about all aspects of the learning process (Lambert & McCombs, 1998). Thus, effective learning takes place when appropriately challenging goals are established and shared with pupils during the learning process. Unlike high-stakes tests, formative assessments may be individualized to meet the learning needs of each pupil.
Preparing Teachers in an Era of Accountability

If, as noted above, children need to learn to be active members of society and school impacts that learning, then teachers are clearly key participants in the process. Research has shown that teachers play an important role in pupil learning and achievement (Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine, 1996; Sanders & Horn, 1998). In fact, Sharon Feiman-Nemser (2001) suggested that pupil learning is directly related to teacher quality:

After decades of school reform, a consensus is building that the quality of our nation’s schools depends on the quality of our nation’s teachers. Policy makers and educators are coming to see [that] what students learn is directly related to how teachers teach [and] depends on the knowledge, skills, and commitments they bring to their teaching and the opportunities they have to continue learning in and from their practice. (p. 1013)

Thus, how teachers conceptualize and interpret pupil learning is vital to the learning process; consequently, preparing teachers to focus on pupil learning is essential.

Given the centrality of teachers to pupil learning, surprisingly little attention has been given to preparing teachers for the complexities of understanding pupil learning. However, the dominant accountability movement plays a significant factor in this lack of attention. First, the current climate views teacher education in a traditional manner, where learning to teach is a process of acquiring knowledge about various, discrete teaching-related dimensions of classroom practice, such as exposure to skills, theory, and field experiences (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). Thus, teacher education programs typically emphasize “the acquisition of standardized routines that integrate management and instruction. . . . rather than focus on student learning” (Athanases & Achinstein, 2003, p. 1487). Put simply, teacher education seeks to equip pre-service teachers with as many instructional strategies as possible before they begin teaching (Hiebert, Morris, Berk, & Jansen, 2007). When assessment is addressed, programs typically

3
emphasize the construction of tests and other traditional assignments, giving less attention to the ‘formative’ potential of assessment, or to how assessment might inform instruction and enhance pupil learning (Hiebert, et al., 2007; Shepard, 2001).

Furthermore, the accountability movement promotes measured outcomes in teacher education, just as it demands at the k-12 level. These outcomes are most often narrowly defined and focused on quantitative measures used to assess the impact of teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2005). For example, the dominant view of “highly qualified teachers” under the NCLB legislature is defined in terms of subject matter preparation or GRE scores (Zumwalk & Craig, 2008). Such measured outcomes provide little data on what teacher candidates actually learn while in the program; thus, the complexity of learning to teach is lost.

In response to the narrowed focus on outcomes, some teacher education programs have shifted to a constructivist approach to learning to teach. By building upon pre-existing beliefs and knowledge and continuous reflection on the process of learning to teach, these programs hope to change or at least challenge individual beliefs which may, in turn, change the practices of these individuals. However, this shift to a constructivist approach has not necessarily clarified the role of teacher education in learning to teach. Due to the complexity of learning to teach, Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon (1998) argued that there is limited evidence to support the assumption that changes in belief equate to changes in practice. Thus, researchers must capture the complexity of changes in teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and practices as they learn to teach, thus seeing the matter as a non-linear and somewhat unpredictable process, and thereby exposing the multiple, complex dimensions of learning to teach.
In particular, during teacher preparation, an understanding between assessment practices and pupil learning must be thoroughly developed. Teacher preparation can play an integral role in developing qualified teachers who examine pupil learning through a focus on formative assessment. Ideally, formative assessment would be described and demonstrated as a process that occurs over time and includes inquiry into practice and examination of pupil work as feedback for instruction (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Cowie & Bell, 1999; Lee & Wiliam, 2003). Learning to value these methods helps to prepare teacher candidates to better meet the needs of their pupils and improve their learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Shepard et al., 2005; Shepard, 2001).

Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to advance our understanding of the learning to teach process in two particular ways: first, by examining the longitudinal perspective on learning to teach over the course of three years, and second, by focusing on formative assessment. Typically, when a longitudinal perspective on learning to teach is used in educational research, the study either uses survey data to examine teacher candidates’ beliefs before and after a particular course or the student teaching period, or the study uses a qualitative approach following a small number of teacher candidates through their teacher preparation program, focusing on their unfolding conceptions of teaching. In addition, few studies have included data gathered beyond the preservice period, which limits the longitudinal perspective to one aspect of the learning to teach process, the preservice period. In response to the research on learning to teach over time, this study examines teacher candidates’ focus on pupil learning from teacher preparation through the first two years in the classroom. This longitudinal focus provides a sense of how teacher
candidates/beginning teachers’ values, beliefs, and practices evolved over time and, in particular, how these ideas influenced their conceptions of assessment.

More specifically, this study explores teachers’ understanding of formative assessment practices. As a relatively new field in educational research, formative assessment explores “all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged” (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p. 7-8). To date, most formative assessment studies have explored teachers’ beliefs and practices during full-time teaching. These studies focused on professional development interventions designed to enlighten teachers about formative assessment. Thus, little attention has been given to the role teacher preparation plays in teachers’ understandings of formative assessment.

Using an overarching sociocultural framework, which seeks an in-depth understanding of individuals’ experiences and how they are shaped by one’s values and beliefs (McQuillan, 1998), this study highlights teacher candidates’ experiences learning to teach for pupil learning, and, in particular, their use of formative assessment, from their teacher preparation through their second year of teaching.

Research Design and Framework

This study explores the following research question: To what extent do beginning teachers focus on pupil learning from the preservice period through the first two years in the classroom? More particularly, this study investigates the following sub-questions:
In what ways do beginning teachers focus on pupil learning?
- How do various contextual factors influence the extent to which beginning teachers focus on pupil learning?
- How do teachers’ moral sensibilities influence the extent to which they focus on pupil learning?
- How do contextual factors and teachers’ moral sensibilities mutually influence one another over time?

How do beginning teachers understand and use assessment in their teaching?
- What role does formative assessment play in beginning teachers’ focus on pupil learning?
- How do their notions of assessment change over time?

To answer these questions, in-depth, qualitative analysis using interviews with five teachers over the course of three years—one year of teacher preparation, including student teaching, and the first two years of classroom teaching—served as the empirical foundation for exploring the process of learning to teach for pupil learning. Specifically, data from eleven interviews with each of the five teachers conducted across the three years served as the primary basis for analysis. In this research, I assumed that what the teachers brought to teacher education, how they experienced the teacher preparation program, and how they made sense of their learning opportunities over the three year study, were all important elements in understanding how the teachers conceptualized learning to teach for pupil learning.

Furthermore, I assumed that learning to teach cannot be understood through an overly narrow focus on one course or the student teaching period; instead, thorough analysis of data collected across multiple years was needed to “untangle the relationships between teachers’ knowledge and beliefs, their professional skill and performance in classrooms, and their pupils’ learning” (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005, p. 100). In this way, the process of learning to teach could be explored more fully, as the interviews began at the start of teacher education and continued through student teaching, finding
and securing a teaching position, and then through the entire first year and second years of teaching. This lengthy timeframe is almost unheard of in educational research, as it requires a long-term commit for both the researcher and participants (Feiman-Nemser, 1983).

To guide this study, an analytic framework was developed after systematic analysis of the 55 interviews. The framework was informed by the sociocultural theoretical perspective in combination with the literature on learning to teach from a longitudinal perspective and constructivist assessment theory. Using these perspectives, I made assumptions that the process of learning to teach is complex and multi-faceted and varies based on what individuals bring to the process, how they interpret their development, and how they experience the opportunities and challenges they are presented with over time (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 1983).

Furthermore, assessing pupil learning extends beyond summative practices to include formative assessment as well as other practices teachers use, like holding high expectations, to focus on learning.

Building from the theoretical perspective, the framework provides a complex approach to examine learning to teach for pupil learning through exploration of teacher practices over time, various factors in school contexts, and moral sensibilities—“the ways in which the teacher chooses to act in response to knowledge and circumstances” (Burant, Chubbuck, & Whipp, 2007, p. 405). Three specific dispositions and stances are included under the term moral sensibility—perseverance, commitment to social justice, and engagement in critical self-reflection. For the teachers in this study, these dispositions and stances were central to their success when faced with obstacles. Teachers who
demonstrated critical self-reflection, for example, raised thought-provoking questions and continued to see themselves as learners across their professional lives (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). In addition, teachers who had a commitment to social justice sought to enhance pupils’ learning and their life chances by challenging the inequities of school and society (Cochran-Smith, 2004). The third aspect of moral sensibility highlighted in this study, perseverance, describes teachers who felt a constant responsibility to improve the learning of all their pupils (Haberman, 1995). Collectively these three dimensions, coined moral sensibility for the purposes of this study, are important dimensions of the beginning teachers’ practice.

Based on this framework, analysis suggests that the process of learning to teach is complex and continues long after the teacher preparation period. This is due, in part, to the interaction of multiple factors that are in constant flux for beginning teachers, such as changes within the school context, like new pupils and standardized tests, among others. Thus, teachers engage in a continuous process of negotiation which, when successful, allows teachers to focus on pupil learning, and when struggles persist, inhibits a focus on pupil learning. For example, one teacher, due to limited resources, was unable to purchase novels for her class, but due to her strong sense of perseverance, she eventually located funders. In other instances, the teachers negotiated their challenges by seeking support from a colleague, modifying their lessons, or seeking professional development opportunities.

As might be expected, the five teachers in this study focused on pupil learning to varying degrees based on the success of their negotiations, which again, were a result of interactions between and among factors found in their school context and their moral sensibility. Moral sensibility provided a foundation for navigating the challenges that inhibited teacher focus on pupil learning. Just as school contexts were constantly
changing, so too were teachers’ moral sensibilities based on exposure to new ideas and learning experiences. Thus, the teachers who engaged in continuous negotiations were far more likely to focus on pupil learning. Overall, the teachers in this study provided evidence that beginning teachers are far more capable of focusing on learning than stage theorists claimed is possible during the early years of teaching. Stage theory is built on the idea that learning to teach requires teachers to progress linearly through stages of development beginning, and often remaining for a number of years, in a stage focused on concerns with “self,” including issues of class control, content adequacy, and working with colleagues, and therefore, not focusing on concerns related to pupils’ learning (Fuller, 1969).

As this longitudinal study reveals, teachers vary over time in the extent to which they focus on pupil learning. For instance, a supportive student teaching context, in which a cooperating teacher provides guidance during planning and instruction, may provide opportunities to focus on pupil learning, which then becomes more difficult during the first year due to a loss of such support. To account for such shifting over time, I developed a “living continuum” which placed the five teachers, in relation to one another, comparing their focus on pupil learning over the three years of this study. The continuum provided a means to compare the teachers and to show shifts over time. Their placement on the continuum was the result of extensive qualitative analysis of their practice. Realizing that change over time is expected, I looked holistically at the teachers’ experiences over the three years to determine their placement. However, as a “living continuum” the teachers would likely shift, some more than others, over the course of their careers.

Learning to teach for pupil learning, as I argue, does not have a final goal. Instead, teachers must embrace the process of continual negotiation, which enables them to extend
their focus on pupil learning in new ways, reaching more pupils, always aware that new challenges are inevitable. The teachers in this study demonstrated that beginning teachers are capable of focusing on pupil learning as they move beyond concerns about themselves as teachers, and instead use their energy to consider how to improve the learning opportunities and outcomes of their pupils.

Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter sets the stage for exploration of learning to teach for pupil learning. It places the research within the larger context of accountability and high-stakes testing, paying particular attention to how the current era affects teacher preparation. This study stands in opposition to the current push for outcomes based on narrowly defined, quantitative measures used to assess the impact of teacher education.

Chapter 2 is a multi-layered chapter beginning with the broad sociocultural perspective guiding this research. A sociocultural lens provides a means to explore the complex interactions beginning teachers encounter during their experiences learning to teach. Within this larger sociocultural frame, I begin with an historical perspective on teacher development and examine how it has progressed over the past thirty years, paying particular attention to stage theory as posited by Fuller and Brown (1975), which builds upon the understanding that teachers progress through phases of learning to teach in a linear fashion. I then review conceptual and empirical work concerning learning to teach from a longitudinal perspective. Although previous conceptual studies have indicated that learning to teach occurs across a teacher’s career, the majority of the empirical studies were limited to the preservice period—few studies spanned both teacher preparation and the early years of teaching. Thus, this study offers a sense of how teachers learn to teach for pupil learning over time.
The literature on learning to teach is followed by an overview of literature on assessment, in particular the constructivist assessment paradigm, authentic assessment, and formative assessment. This research focuses on teachers as an invaluable facet of the assessment process, as suggested earlier in this chapter. Although limited in scope, research on preparing teacher candidates for constructivist-oriented assessment practices suggests that analyzing assessments and, more abstractly, reflecting on learning opportunities, enables teachers to better understand the process of pupil learning and the inherent relationship between instruction and assessment. This summation of the broader aspects of assessment is followed by a review of the conceptual and empirical literature related to formative assessment. However, these studies were mainly focused on full-time teachers’ experiences with formative assessment, whereas the learning to teach studies focused on experiences of teacher candidates. Thus, Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the literature and a clear indication that longitudinal studies spanning both teacher preparation and the beginning years of teaching are imperative.

Chapter 3 begins with an overview of interpretive qualitative research, as this is the broad methodology guiding the Qualitative Case Study Project. This is followed by a description of general ethnographic methods, which heavily influenced this study. Next, an overview of the research design for the Qualitative Case Study Project is described, followed by the design of this study, including: participants, data collection, and data analysis. The final section addresses the integrity of the study, focusing on the role of the researchers’ assumptions and biases in the research process, the credibility and transferability of findings generated by this study, and finally, my efforts to make the structure of my research transparent to the reader.
Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the analyses of this study. Chapter 4 begins by presenting the analytic framework that was used to examine the data. This framework was the result of a reciprocal process: the framework emerged from analysis of the data at the same time that it was used to guide analysis of the data. Four aspects of practice that teachers used to focus on pupil learning were identified in the framework: relationships with pupils, high expectations, classroom management, and instruction/assessment. Analysis revealed a need for teachers to negotiate the interplay between their contexts and their moral sensibilities in order to exert a greater focus on pupil learning. Teacher’s school contexts included numerous factors functioning as either supports or obstacles—mentors, administrative support, schedule/teaching load, pupil effort/motivation, professional development, and resources. In cases where teachers were presented with obstacles, they often relied on their moral sensibility to navigate through challenges and focus on the aspects of practice serving as supports for pupil learning. In other cases, teachers’ negotiations failed, and they were therefore unable to focus on pupil learning. This process is described for each teacher in a stand alone case. However, only three of the four aspects of practice are included in the cases—assessment/instruction is so central to this study that it is explored in a separate mini-case for each teacher in Chapter 6. However, because instruction and assessment are so intertwined with the other aspects of practice, there are certainly elements of both found in the initial cases.

After presenting the framework, Chapter 4 describes and compares two cases. The remaining three cases are presented and compared in Chapter 5. The chapters are organized in this fashion for a number of reasons. First, it enabled me to make comparisons in a layered approach between the teachers who were most similar in their focus on pupil learning. For example, after presenting each case I continued to draw comparisons between and among the
teachers. Second, it made the review more manageable for the reader due to the length and complexity of the cases. And finally it provided opportunities for additional cross-case analysis across the cases contained in each chapter. After describing the three remaining cases in Chapter 5, a cross-case analysis across the five cases is presented at the end of the chapter.

As noted, Chapter 6 presents the final chapter of findings. Each teacher’s instruction and assessment practices are described in detail in this chapter. These five cases are then compared, specifically in terms of assessment, but with necessary inclusion of the analysis from the cases found in Chapters 4 and 5.

The three analysis chapters (4, 5, and 6) present the conclusion that beginning teachers can focus on pupil learning during both their preservice experiences and their first two years of teaching. However, the process is complex and dependent on many interrelated factors. The beginning teachers used varied strategies to focus on pupil learning over time. Some were able to incorporate all four aspects of practice related to pupil learning, while for others, using just one was difficult.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I conclude with a review of the central arguments of this study and the implications for research, policy, and practice. In general, the findings from this study suggest that despite the current push for accountability based on test scores, successful learning requires teachers to focus on pupil learning in varied and complex ways. There are no easy solutions to prepare teachers to teach for pupil learning; teaching and learning are complex endeavors that must be approached with the idea that teachers should be prepared as intellectuals who have a knowledge base to work through challenges and make individualized decisions based on the complexity of a situation.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section outlines the study by first examining key aspects of sociocultural theory, the theoretical framework that guides the larger Qualitative Case Study (QCS) Project from which this study derives. To illuminate an historical perspective on teacher development and how it has progressed over the past thirty years, an overview of the conceptual literature on learning to teach is provided. Next, to hone in on the current research most closely related to this study, a review of empirical, longitudinal, learning to teach studies is included. Following this, the literature review addresses conceptual understandings of the constructivist assessment paradigm, which provides a foundation for the empirical review on formative assessment.

Theoretical Perspectives

Sociocultural theory provides a broad lens for exploring social behavior by emphasizing the role that culture plays in social interaction. The complexity of the term “culture” has been noted by many social science theorists, who vary in their interpretation. For example, Seymour Sarason (1971), a psychologist, studied the culture of schools through patterns of interaction within the institution, including relationships and roles among teachers, administrators, and students. He defined culture as “a matrix of existing relationships, practices, and ideas” (p. 71). Clifford Geertz (1973), an anthropologist, suggested that culture is “the framework of beliefs, expressive symbols, and values in terms of which individuals define their world, express their feelings, and make their judgments” (p. 144-145). Using this definition, culture provides insight into an individual’s interpretations of what occurs in everyday life, which, in turn, shapes subsequent actions and interpretations (McQuillan, 1998).
Educational anthropologist Margaret Eisenhart (2001) argued that changing conceptions of culture have important implications for research on teaching. She described the dominant definition of culture, derived from a combination of anthropology and general public discourse, “as patterns in a way of life characteristic of a bounded social group and passed down from one generation to the next” (p. 210). Eisenhart suggested that the problem with this definition is that it views individual cultures as distinct entities. She argued that contemporary life can not be captured in terms of distinct cultures because individuals are constantly navigating among various cultures, multiple roles, and identities in their daily lives. Eisenhart noted that individuals adapt to constantly changing contexts by “actively appropriate[ing], construct[ing], and manipulat[ing]” (p. 211) meanings based on given environments. For many students, school and home are very different cultures in their daily lives, so those for whom home life is most similar to school will likely have the easiest time assimilating to the school environment (Heath, 1983). The larger QCS project, of which this dissertation is a part, borrows ideas from each of these theorists, relying most heavily on Eisenhart’s conception of culture as a framework through which individuals interpret and act on the world. Applied to the topic of this dissertation, this suggests that understanding how people learn to teach is a matter of uncovering the beliefs and value systems they develop over time and, in turn, how these value systems shape and are shaped by this action in both university and school contexts.

From this perspective, sociocultural theory conceptualizes learning as something socially constructed and shaped by the interactions of individual persons within broader
and multiple cultural contexts (Erickson, 1986; Gee, 1996). In general, a sociocultural perspective takes into account the interaction of multiple internal and external factors influencing how individuals negotiate new learning experiences (Gee, 2003). Furthermore, since cultural values encourage individuals to interpret their worlds in particular ways, those values can also obscure alternative perspectives such that what we observe is considered obvious and normal from our perspective. Consequently, as culture shapes individual preferences, it inevitably values one thing over another (Varenne & McDermott, 1995). Thus, teaching and learning are not neutral activities.

Working from the idea that teaching and learning are negotiated within specific contexts, a focal belief for many sociocultural theorists is that all social practices are based on some set of cultural ideas; they are not value-free (Gee, 1996). Thus, teaching and learning are immersed in societal ideas about education, schooling, learning, and assessment. Consequently, a key aspect in understanding how individuals learn to teach involves uncovering the beliefs and value systems they develop over time. The research of critical theorist Deborah Britzman (1991) focuses on learning to teach with particular attention to the development of one’s identity as a teacher from a critical sociocultural perspective. Britzman highlighted the role that context plays in gaining a deeper understanding of beliefs and values that develop over time and influence individuals as they learn to teach. She suggested that the experience of learning to teach must be viewed as a socially negotiated process:

Teaching concerns coming to terms with one’s intentions and values, as well as one’s views of knowing, being, and acting in a setting characterized by contradictory realities, negotiation, and dependency and struggle…. The contradiction here is that while learning to teach is individually experienced and hence may be viewed as individually determined, in actuality it is socially negotiated. (Britzman, p. 8)
Emphasizing that as they negotiate the world, student teachers are both learners in teacher education programs and teachers in K-12 classrooms, Britzman (1991) noted that the “dual struggle of educating others while being educated…characterizes the tensions between being and becoming a teacher, as student teachers draw from their past and present in the process of coming to know” (p. 13-14). This means that critical studies of learning to teach are concerned with more than simple description. Rather, they attempt to uncover tensions, constraints, and taken-for-granted knowledge through interpretation and evaluation of multiple voices and practices, as fundamental values and beliefs are likely to underlie these matters. This study draws on several key ideas involved in a general sociocultural perspective on teaching, learning, and schooling: the importance of school context as a socially negotiated culture; teaching and learning as value-laden activities; and the experience of learning to teach as a process involving individual beliefs and values that develop over time as they interact with the realities of schools.

Conceptual Understandings of Learning to Teach

Drawing from both empirical and conceptual work, this section begins with an historical perspective on teacher development and how it has progressed over the past thirty years. The focus then shifts to conceptual understandings of learning to teach literature, beginning in the 1980s and moving into the twenty-first century.

In line with the process-product research paradigm popular in the 1960s and 70s, teacher education research at that time was constructed as a training problem where teaching was viewed as a technical activity related in a linear way to learning (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). Consequently, as Cochran-Smith and Fries noted, the focus of teacher preparation was teacher behaviors, which were assumed to have an effect on
student outcomes; research, however, never systematically examined this assumption. During this period, stage theory, which built off the understanding that teachers progress through the phases of teaching in a linear fashion, came to prominence as a means to understand teacher development. Fuller and Brown (1975), for instance, detailed a series of stages through which teacher candidates generally progressed during the pre-service period of learning to teach. During this period, teacher candidates often identified more with their students than with cooperating teachers because the teacher candidates were still students themselves; most often, teaching candidates were closer in age to their students than to their colleagues. The early period in the classroom was a time when teacher candidates expressed concerns about their own adequacy in regards to class control, supervisor evaluations, and mastery of content. The next stage, “teaching situation concerns,” which usually occurred after the initial shock of classroom teaching had passed, focused on teacher candidates’ frustrations with scheduling, materials, and workload. Fuller and Brown noted that “these concerns are still concerns about their own performance, their teaching performance, not concerns about pupils and their learning” (p. 39). Only the final stage stressed concerns about pupil learning. The researchers noted that although teacher candidates were committed to student learning in theory from the beginning of their teaching, they had difficulty acting on these commitments due to more urgent demands like classroom management. Consequently, transition into this stage was only possible once urgent concerns were managed, which was unlikely to occur during student teaching or even during the first few years of full-time teaching.

Extending the notion of stages beyond the pre-service period, Fuller (1969) argued that beginning teachers often returned to the “survival concerns” stage, which
highlighted classroom control, content adequacy, supervisor evaluations, and once more left little time for attending to student learning. This emphasis on self contrasted with Fuller’s research with experienced teachers, whose thinking focused mainly on student learning. The difference between beginning and experienced teachers provided additional support for the idea that teachers moved through a series of stages during both the preservice period and the early years in the classroom. Thus, over time, teachers either progressed to the final stage or became detained in one stage of development.

Building on the idea that teachers progress through stages of development, Berliner (1986) researched the differences between novice and expert teacher evaluations of classroom practice. He found that expert teachers viewed the classroom as a complex network of interactions and learning, whereas novice teachers often noticed superficial, routine aspects of class experience. Berliner’s attention to these varied dimensions of classroom instruction moved away from stage theory, yet maintained the assumption that differences between novice and expert teachers could be used to uncover aspects of teacher development. Current research rarely focuses on stages of teacher development in a strict linear form, yet Berliner (2001) claimed that stages remain useful over time when describing the course of teacher development, with “expertise in teaching” rarely appearing before the fifth year, if at all (p. 479).

By the early 1980s, research in teacher education shifted from a training problem to a learning problem (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005), adopting a focus on “pedagogy as a social exchange” between teachers and students rather than learning as transmission of knowledge from teachers to students (Cochran-Smith & Fries, p. 83). During this period, the concept teacher training was replaced by learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 1983).
However, even with a change in terminology and concepts, in many ways the complexities of learning to teach remained unclear and contradictory (Grossman, 1992; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). One reason for this confusion was the multifaceted nature of the phrase “learning to teach.” The term included complex questions like the following: who is doing the learning; what are they learning; how does learning proceed; and when/where does learning take place? (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996).

This confusion continues due to the competing views of learning to teach and the different assumptions about the nature of learning and teaching. As Feiman-Nemser and Remillard noted:

> The phrase learning to teach rolls easily off the tongue, giving the impression that this is a straightforward, easily understood process. In fact, we do not have well-developed theories of learning to teach and the phrase itself covers many conceptual complexities. (p. 63)

This lack of understanding is due, in part, to the varying knowledge and skill sets that teacher candidates are expected to obtain prior to entering the teaching profession and the fact that individuals see such knowledge and skill sets in different ways (Borko & Putnam, 1996).

For instance, in her seminal work, Feiman-Nemser (1983) described the process of learning to teach as one that begins long before teacher education and extends far beyond the first year in the classroom. Similarly, Lortie’s (1975) notion of “the apprenticeship of observation” referred to the influence of the 13 or more years that prospective teachers spend observing the work of other teachers during their own education and prior to the beginning of formal teacher preparation. The result is that teacher candidates tend to believe they already have an understanding of teaching. In many cases, however, the beliefs and assumptions that teacher candidates bring from
their own experiences contradict those advocated during teacher preparation, creating additional impediments to learning to teach (Borko & Putnam, 1996). Prospective teachers’ experiences as students provide a basis on which “taken-for-granted beliefs may mislead prospective teachers into thinking that they know more about teaching than they actually do and make it harder for them to form new ideas and new habits of thought and action” (Feiman-Nemser, 1983, p. 1016), and certainly complicate the matter of learning to teach, since one may never know, for instance, when this important development begins.

Like the training model popular in teacher education research in the 1960s, much of society continues to have preconceived notions about teachers as transmitters of knowledge who view students waiting as “empty vessels to be filled . . . Teachers tell students what they need to know and students listen and learn (that is, memorize) what they have been told” (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996, p. 70). Thus, many teachers enter the teacher preparation process with a linear view of their role as knowledge transmitters instead of a reform-minded view wherein teachers and students are co-constructors of knowledge. In order for teacher candidates to begin to consider new practices that run contrary to conventional approaches, Feiman-Nemser and Remillard argued that they need an opportunity to consider the values and beliefs associated with each pedagogical approach and to see these practices under realistic conditions. Drawing on the idea that teacher learning is influenced by past experiences, Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005) described the research on teacher learning from this period:
Teacher learning also had to do with the beliefs, knowledge, and experiences prospective teachers brought with them into preparation programs; the ways their knowledge of subject matter changed and were translated into classroom practice over time; the ways teachers interpreted their fieldwork and course experiences in light of their own school experiences; and how they developed professionally by observing and talking with other teachers. (p.84)

To suggest how this might occur in practice, Feiman-Nemser (2001) proposed a framework for thinking about teacher learning over time based on reform-oriented models. Instead of teaching as telling and learning as listening, as conventional models suggest, more reform-oriented models of teaching and learning “call for teachers to do more listening as they elicit student thinking and assess their understanding and for students to do more asking and explaining as they investigate authentic problems and share their solutions” (p. 1015).

As noted above, the process of learning to teach begins long before individuals enter teacher education. Likewise, the process continues long after graduation from teacher education. As Feiman-Nemser and Remillard (1996) noted, “No one learns to teach in a year” (p. 66). This is partly because no pre-service teacher preparation program can ever fully simulate the struggles encountered by first-year teachers in their own classrooms (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). The everyday struggles of planning and management are often so overwhelming and unique to specific contexts during the first-year that researchers have described the first year as a time of “survival” (Huberman, 1989) and “reality shock” (Veenman, 1984). This helps one understand why teaching may be called an occupation that “cannibalizes its young” (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). The first year of teaching is a period of adjustment for new teachers as they learn about their students, work through classroom management difficulties, and face the realities of having their own classrooms (Johnson, 2004). Feiman-Nemser (2003) argued that the
first years of teaching are demanding and formative; there is simply too much to be
learned for the process of learning to teach to be anything but ongoing.

Although the complexities of learning to teach may be problematic for beginning
teachers, some current research suggests that novice teachers are capable of
demonstrating effective practices that stress student learning (McQuillan et al., 2009;
Hammerness, 2005). Hammerness noted the changes that beginning teachers need to
make in order emphasize their efforts on student learning:

Beginning teachers frequently focus on their teaching practices rather than on
what their students are learning. They need to be able to figure out what they do
and do not yet understand about how their students are performing and what do to
about it. They also need to be able to ask themselves and others questions to guide
their learning and decision-making. (p. 2005)

Drawing on the role that teacher education may play in helping to prepare teachers to
focus on student learning, McQuillan et al. suggested that by emphasizing the interplay
among conceptions of social justice, the skills of classroom inquiry, and differentiating
instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners, teacher education can help teacher
candidates move beyond the more mundane aspects of learning to teach to instead focus
on pupil learning during the student teaching period.

During the 1970s and 1980s, teacher development was regarded as a process
wherein teachers were trained to transmit knowledge to students; that is, teachers talked
and students were expected to learn (Sarason, 1995). Although this view is still popular
with many outside the field of teacher education, understanding learning to teach now
focuses on teacher-student interactions and the shared experience of learning between
teachers and students. Current research also acknowledges that learning to teach is a
process that begins long before teacher education and extends long after such formal
preparation. Moreover, some research has begun to examine teacher education programs that encourage teacher candidates and beginning teachers to focus on student learning.

Learning to Teach

Over the past 30 years, seven major syntheses of empirical research addressed the literature on learning to teach (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Carter, 1990; Fuller & Brown, 1975; Kagan, 1992; Reynolds, 1992; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998; Veenman, 1984). Although each study approached the learning to teach literature with a different purpose, together they provided a cohesive overview of the trends in research, as well as some promising future directions.

As noted in the previous section, Fuller and Brown’s (1975) synthesis provided a foundation for stage theory. Using over 300 empirical studies, the synthesis cited examples from empirical research that demonstrated what teachers’ concerns were during the preservice period and beginning years of teaching. The authors openly acknowledged the complexity of learning to teach. They concluded that not much was known about the role of teacher education in the learning to teach process; thus, determining what research has been conducted is a necessary first step.

Veenman’s (1984) synthesis focused on empirical literature related to beginning teachers’ concerns during their first year. The review, which detailed the perceived problems beginning teachers encountered, focused on the “reality shock” of the first year. The synthesis, which used empirical studies completed between 1960 and 1980, argued that classroom management was the main concern of beginning teachers, followed by student motivation, student differences, and assessment of student work when possible. Veenman’s findings were similar to the stages Fuller and Brown (1975) described, where
pre-service and beginning teachers struggle with classroom organization and management during their initial stages of development. Both of these syntheses focused on the idea that beginning teachers face common demands, which prevent them from looking beyond the more immediate demands of daily planning and classroom management.

Carter’s (1990) review reflected a notable shift in scholarship from stage theories of development to emerging conceptions about how teachers’ knowledge is directly related to classroom performance. Although the shift in focus was apparent, there was limited empirical research; thus, Carter incorporated conceptual work into her review to complement the empirical studies. Carter discussed emerging bodies of research that focused on teachers’ information processing, practical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge. Her synthesis concluded with a call for more attention to the meaning behind the term “learning to teach” and greater clarity in research on teacher knowledge, as little attention was given to what teachers actually need to know in order to teach. Specifically, Carter’s final implication called for radical reforms in teacher education based on the complexities of learning to teach. Such changes included developing “forms of representation that capture the essential features of what teachers know with a high degree of situation and task validity” (p. 307). This might, for example, involve creating opportunities for teacher candidates to practice solving pedagogical dilemmas either in student teaching or using case studies in teacher education. Carter noted that such a focus on the “range and complexity of what is learned in teacher education” supports teacher education reform (p. 307).
Unlike Carter’s (1990) synthesis, Kagan’s (1992) review, which was published just two years later, reverted back to the stage theory of development. She made no reference to the Carter review in her synthesis. Instead, using 40 qualitative studies of learning to teach published between 1987 and 1991, Kagan confirmed Fuller and Brown’s (1975) developmental model of teacher concerns. Kagan suggested that during the early survival stage, which continues from pre-service through the first year, teachers gain knowledge of students, reconstruct their personal images as teachers, and develop routines for management and instruction. In conclusion, she suggested that teacher preparation programs fail to adequately address these survival stage concerns before teachers move into their own classrooms. Kagan’s review has been criticized for failing to distinguish between strong and weak studies (see Grossman, 1992; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998).

Written at the same time as Carter (1990) and Kagan’s (1992) reviews, Reynolds (1992) used learning to teach literature combined with literature on effective teaching to answer the question: “What is competent beginning teaching?” She developed her literature review as a basis for recommending criteria for teacher licensure. Reynolds focused her review on a content analysis of other reviews of effective teaching and learning to teach. As Reynolds noted, her review was not based on new literature; rather she provided a review across two bodies of literature and across paradigms. She concluded by suggesting preferred characteristics for beginning teachers, including subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge (the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted)( Shulman, 1987) and inquiry into practice skills,
among others. Working from the notion that learning to teach continues once teachers enter their first year, Reynolds suggested additional aspects of teaching that novices should master during their early years. By the conclusion of her review, Reynolds did not argue that she had exhausted her original question of, “What does it mean to be a competent beginning teacher?” Instead, she raised more questions about the preparation of teachers and appropriate priorities for future research.

Working from within the field of cognitive psychology, Borko and Putnam’s (1996) review of the literature on learning to teach assumed that this is a complicated process where novice teachers must learn various knowledge and skills sets to be well prepared to enter the teaching profession. They reviewed the literature, asking “how knowledge and beliefs change over time as novice teachers learn to teach and experienced teachers attempt to make changes in their teaching practices?” (p. 673). To answer these questions, Borko and Putnam reviewed literature about both novice and experienced teachers on general pedagogical knowledge and beliefs, knowledge and beliefs about subject matter, and pedagogical content knowledge. Borko and Putnam also suggested that learning is a constructive process in which novice teachers are active participants whose practices are influenced by their prior knowledge and beliefs. They concluded that new knowledge and learning must be situated in the contexts and cultures in which it will be used. Furthermore, they suggested that “the change process is a slow one. Researchers must be prepared to study teachers over time, certainly for more than one year, and preferably for several years after their participation in teacher education” (p. 703). Studying teachers over time, Borko and Putnam believed, enables researchers to uncover the complexities of change in teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and practices.
Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon’s (1998) critical analysis of the research on learning to teach highlighted the tensions between teacher educators’ hopes and the experiences of beginning teachers. Similar to Carter (1990) and Borko and Putnam (1996), Wideen and colleagues argued that research on learning to teach had shifted from traditional views of what beginning teachers should know and be trained to do, to what beginning teachers actually know and how they develop that knowledge. The empirical research, supporting this notion, pushed for beginning teachers to examine their own beliefs as the first step in learning to teach. The authors cautioned that the underlying assumption in this process is that a change in beliefs results in a change in practices, a theory which has not been sufficiently studied in the complex context of schools.

In the studies reviewed, Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon pushed for more attention to the role of the researcher, since most assumed their role to be neutral. Furthermore, the authors suggested that researchers take a far more critical stance when reviewing studies and the research process used in the studies. In conclusion, Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon proposed that “all players” in the learning to teach environment must be researched collectively to gain a full understanding of the learning to teach “ecosystem” (p. 171).

Looking across these syntheses, there is a clear transition in the assumptions underlying the research from the stage development of learning to teach, where beginning teachers are expected to learn certain knowledge based on their stage of development, to a more complex understanding of the non-linear process of learning to teach across one’s lifespan. However, this movement toward a more situated understanding of learning to teach is not without problems. For example, empirical studies often examine just one
aspect of learning to teach, such as student teaching or a particular course. This creates a fragmented understanding of the learning process. Furthermore, the syntheses just discussed, especially those with different underlying conceptual frameworks or foci, generally did not investigate connections with other syntheses on learning to teach. Finally, as demonstrated in these syntheses, research on learning to teach is now more copious than ever, yet there has been little reform noted in teacher education (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). The majority of these syntheses failed to address teacher educators’ work as it relates to the complex process of learning to teach. Without “appreciation of the inseparable web of relationships that constitutes the learning-to-teach-ecosystem” (Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, p. 170), it is difficult to draw overall conclusions about the process.

Drawing on these syntheses to provide a sense of the general scope of research, the next section looks specifically at longitudinal studies of learning to teach. Only those empirical studies conducted over at least one academic year (approximately nine months) and focused on pre-service preparation were included. In some cases, the studies included one or more years of full-time teaching into their designs. In line with the scope of the reviews described above, the literature was restricted to studies completed in the last 20 years. This timeframe provided an important historical perspective while still reflecting current research trends. To ensure rigor in the review, only studies published in peer reviewed journals were included. The review of the longitudinal studies was organized by quantitative and qualitative research methods and then further categorized according to specific research design and focus.
Quantitative longitudinal research on learning to teach generally focuses on teacher beliefs over an extended period of time. Most studies examine beliefs at a particular period in time, such as at the conclusion of pre-service preparation or after the completion of a course or the student teaching period. Of the six studies in this group, all were conducted in the last 10 years, and all but one had an international focus. Five of the six focused solely on the pre-service period. Across these studies, survey data, and in a few cases interview data, were collected at varying points during the teacher preparation period to determine whether and when student teachers’ conceptions of beliefs and practices changed.

In some cases, such as in studies by Trumper (1998) and Ekborg (2005b), the research centered on teacher candidates’ conceptual understanding of various science topics introduced in teacher education. In both cases, repeated survey administrations were conducted at intervals throughout an undergraduate teacher preparation program with sample of 25-60 student teachers. Calculating chi-square coefficients among alternative conceptual frameworks used by the teacher candidates across four administrations, Trumper found that the 25 Israeli teacher candidates in physics varied in their personal conceptions of physics and failed to grasp central concepts related to energy during their 4 years in teacher preparation. Similarly Ekborg, who prepared a more thorough study of conceptual understandings of environmental science, used both survey data and a small sample of interview data (n = 20). The researcher developed categories in order to show how students developed an understanding of the concepts deemed important in the curriculum. Ekborg, whose survey sample varied from 47-60
teacher candidates over three administrations, found that student teachers in Sweden did not develop the conceptual understandings in environmental science that would enable them to engage with “socio-scientific issues” presented to them from primary sources. Without this ability, Ekborg argued that the primary school teachers were more likely to teach science based on their own personal perceptions about scientific knowledge. These two studies demonstrated the failed attempts to impart high-level content to student teachers.

The four remaining quantitative studies examined pre-service teachers’ broader conceptions related to literacy, technology, and teaching English as a foreign language. Studies by Urmston (2003) and Peacock (2001) found little change in Hong Kong student teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning during a 3 year teacher preparation period. Both studies suggested that the beliefs about teaching and learning that student candidates develop in school prior to entering teacher preparation are far more influential than their experiences in teacher preparation, an idea that resonates with Lortie’s (1975) and Feiman-Nemser’s (1983) earlier arguments. Both Peacock and Urmston used descriptive statistics to compare the results on the self-reported, Likert-style questionnaires. Peacock also ran descriptive statistics on ESL proficiency scores, which were determined by combining scores in four compulsory courses in the program, while Urmston noted differences on a segment of questions by calculating chi-square coefficients. Based on a sample of 30 respondents, Urmston argued that differences between the traditional education, received by most students in Hong Kong, and the more reformed, constructivist model presented in teacher education, were contradictory. Consequently, Peacock – whose study was one of the stronger ones due to its diversified data sources,
100% response rate, and larger sample size of 146 teacher candidates—found that entering beliefs must be a focus of teacher preparation at the start of the program in order to push student teachers to broaden their conceptual understandings.

The final two quantitative studies also focused on broader conceptions in learning to teach by using a comparison model to uncover changes in beliefs. To examine beliefs about teaching English as a foreign language, Matteoudakis (2007) surveyed Greek student teachers who did not take part in a student teaching course \( (n = 36) \) in comparison with those completed student teaching \( (n = 30) \). She used two instruments, a self-reported questionnaire to investigate beliefs about language and learning, and a short questionnaire that focused on teacher candidates’ backgrounds. Survey results were analyzed using an independent samples \( t \)-test to compare student beliefs over their three years of preservice preparation. Matteoudakis found that student teaching had a limited impact on student teachers’ developing beliefs, with the 3 years of course work being far more influential in changing beliefs. However, Matteoudakis cautioned that changes were most significant between the first and last years in teacher preparation, demonstrating that changing beliefs takes time. Thus, any changes arising from the student teaching might not surface immediately or be highlighted in the survey results.

Mayo, Kajs, and Tanguma (2005) also compared two groups of teachers—this time during 2 years of pre-service preparation and throughout their first year in the classroom. They focused, first, on project evaluation using a pre- and post-survey for the teacher candidates who completed a technology program, which included approximately 100 respondents over the two administrations. Mayo, Kajs, and Tanguma then compared a sample of these teachers with another sample of teachers who did not participate in the
program in terms of comfort, teaching efficacy, and use of technology in their classrooms. To assess the technology program’s effectiveness and compare the two groups of teachers, descriptive statistics were completed for both surveys. Results revealed that the group with the technology preparation had a statistically significant higher degree of efficacy and employment in using technology in their classroom ($p < .05; t = 1.82$). Both comparison studies, which were the only studies to find significant changes in beliefs, focused on single aspects of teacher preparation – the student teaching experience in one case, and a technology course in the other. This fragmented view of teacher education is one of the main criticisms of research related to learning to teach (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998), since it does not look across the scope of the teacher preparation process for broader changes in beliefs and does not address the larger complexity of the learning to teach process.

Conclusions: Longitudinal, Quantitative Studies

There are three main limitations found in the longitudinal, quantitative research conducted in the last 20 years. Nearly all the studies in this category focused on student teachers in one preparation program, usually the program with which the author was affiliated. This lack of diversification calls into question the representative nature of the study. Furthermore, the number of respondents in each study was limited to 150, and in most cases, fewer than 50. Such numbers, again, limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, all but two studies (Mayo, Kajs, & Tanguma, 2005; Ekborg, 2005b) used strictly quantitative data in their studies, which limits triangulation of data and the multi-dimensional aspects of the learning to teach experience. Finally, only one study (Mayo, Kajs, & Tanguma) included research gathered beyond the pre-service period.
This is somewhat surprising, since the conceptual literature developed prior to these studies suggested that learning to teach is a lifelong process (Feiman-Nemser, 1983).

*Learning to Teach: Longitudinal, Qualitative Research*

Although not vast, the longitudinal, qualitative research regarding learning to teach is more expansive than the quantitative literature. I located seven studies focused on pre-service teacher preparation and seven that spanned both pre-service and 1 to 3 years of classroom teaching. The literature is divided below into three sections based on the study’s topic: studies related to the influence of personal conceptions about teaching developed prior to teacher preparation, studies concerned with the complexities of context during the learning to teach process, and the nature of reflective practice in terms of the teacher candidate as both learner and teacher.

*Personal Conceptions of Teaching*

The qualitative studies focusing on teacher development were conducted 15 to 20 years ago. Interestingly, those findings closely resembled those presented in the quantitative literature on learning to teach. The early studies, three of which were products of the same longitudinal research project, centered on the importance of examining student teachers’ incoming beliefs in order to improve learning opportunities in teacher preparation (Hollingsworth, 1989). In some cases, the studies alluded to teachers’ stages of development (Fuller & Brown, 1975). This was likely because stage theory was still prominent in the field of educational research at this time, even though, by then, the field was shifting from understanding learning to teach as a training problem to understanding it as a learning problem (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005).
In the first of these studies, Hollingsworth (1989) interviewed and observed 14 teacher education graduate students over the course of nine months and concluded that pre-service teachers’ prior beliefs should inform all aspects of teacher preparation including, but not limited to, course design, student teaching, and supervision. Furthermore, she suggested that teacher education should attend to classroom management needs before developing pedagogical knowledge and its connection to content knowledge. This idea resembles the process described in stage theory, where immediate management needs must be met before beginning teachers can focus on student learning (Fuller & Brown, 1975). It is important to note that this study came from a larger group research project that included nine researchers who worked together on the data collection and data analysis processes. In order to select their sample of 14 teachers, Hollingsworth and colleagues interviewed all 53 teacher candidates at the beginning of the fifth year program to determine incoming knowledge and beliefs about reading and classroom instruction. From these interviews, 14 teacher candidates were selected to represent the larger group. The collaborative analysis process included achievement of 80% or better interrater reliability rates for running narrative data and coding. Adding to the strength of this study, the team met weekly to “compare cases, clarify methodological problems, and summarize findings across cases” (Hollingsworth, p. 167). Finally, each semester, Hollingsworth and colleagues interviewed and observed one teacher candidate who was not followed for the study to gauge the research project’s influence on learning to teach.

Hollingsworth, Teel, and Minarik’s (1992) case study of one teacher candidate during her 3 years in teacher education, as well as her beginning years in the classroom,
highlighted the need to meet teachers where they are during various phases of learning to teach. As with the previous study, this study drew from a larger, longitudinal research study (see Hollingsworth, 1989). This particular study drew on data for one teacher from both the preservice period and the first year of teaching. This teacher, along with seven others, agreed to continue to participate in the study during the first year of teaching. The researchers completed classroom observations twice a month and met with the group of eight teachers once a month for collaborative discussions. Hollingsworth, Teel, and Minarik used constant comparative analysis to code and summarize their findings. The strength of this work, again, was in the collaborative research process and the multi-year data collection process. The authors detailed this teacher’s difficulty utilizing information on student teaching culturally diverse children; her focus was on the more demanding, daily processes of teaching. However, by her third year in the classroom, this teacher had integrated diversified instruction and benefited from the support provided by the ongoing relationship with her teacher preparation institution.

Lidstone and Hollingsworth (1992) and Skamp and Mueller (2001) both used case study designs supported by interview data to conclude that beginning teachers learn in different ways; therefore, teacher preparation must be mindful of the varied conceptions held by pre-service teachers on entry and during work to integrate a process of “cognitive change” in learning to teach. Skamp and Mueller collected data on 12 teacher candidates using four semi-structured interviews conducted over a two-year period. They then analyzed the interview data by first locating characteristics of a good teacher using conceptions determined in other research studies, and then comparing those conceptions over time in subsequent interviews. Skamp and Mueller suggested that student teachers’
conceptions of science teaching did not change over the two-year teacher preparation period because these conceptions served as filters for new conceptions developed during the program. Using interviews and observational data from the larger study (see Hollingsworth, 1989), which included both observational and interview data, to design two case studies, Lidstone and Hollingworth examined beginning teachers’ beliefs and knowledge using a model of complexity reduction. Their conclusions provided recommendations for handling the difficulties faced by teacher educators when working with pre-service teachers. Lidstone and Hollingworth described a process of supporting teacher candidates while exposing them to other perspectives. This included opportunities to observe in classrooms other than their cooperating teacher’s, to participate in collaborative groups, to work on action research projects with other teachers, and to receive ongoing induction support from individuals who understood the process of teacher change.

Like the other researchers included in this section, Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1989) described the need for teacher educators to examine incoming beliefs and attitudes of pre-service teachers. The authors’ study presented a framework that moved beyond the “acquisition of subject matter knowledge and technical skills” to “helping prospective teachers make a transition to thinking about what teachers do in terms of what pupils can and ought to learn” (p.366). Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann then used a well-designed, two-year study of six elementary pre-service teachers to illustrate how this framework worked in practice. The six participants were selected based on initial recommendations by program coordinators and responses on a school-wide survey administered at the beginning of the program to all teacher candidates.
During each of the four semesters, the participants were interviewed about the program; during student teaching, the same researcher observed the teacher candidates weekly to document their experience. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann also observed a core university course each semester during the 2 year study. The results indicated possible movement to connecting pedagogy with pupil learning during the pre-service period, an idea that runs contrary to the stage theory of teacher development (Fuller & Brown, 1975) and instead reflects the transition to understanding learning to teach as a learning problem (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). This study, unlike the others described in this section, moves in the direction of more current conceptual work on learning to teach described earlier in this chapter.

Complexities of Context

Four studies detailed the role of context in learning to teach. These studies described the influence of university and school context on teacher candidates’ preparation. Focused mainly on teacher education coursework and student teaching placement, Ekborg (2005a) and Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, Martin, and Place (2000) explained the benefits of learning concepts and tools in teacher education coursework and then having an opportunity to practice those tools. The study by Grossman et al. utilized an unusually long-term design that included 1 year of preservice preparation and 3 years of classroom teaching. This particularly thorough study included a minimum of eleven individual interviews across 3 years and five observations during each of the 3 years of classroom teaching for each participating teacher. In addition, group interviews and interviews with cooperating teachers, supervisors, administrators and university faculty, among others, were completed. Grossman et al. then triangulated
their findings across varied data sources and investigated both broad themes of learning to teach as well as specific questions related to teaching writing. The authors noted that in some cases, teacher candidates may be too constrained during student teaching to be able to model the tools learned during coursework. Consequently, Grossman et al. described the need for teacher educators to model those tools and then provide an opportunity for teacher candidates to practice them in the university setting. Furthermore, the authors suggested that teacher educators should continue to support teacher graduates as beginning teachers.

Ekborg found that integrating authentic assignments into science teacher preparation coursework provided more structured opportunities for teacher candidates to discuss real world science topics in a manner that moved beyond personal beliefs and emotional arguments. Again, because the student teaching context did not readily allow student teachers to explore newly learned concepts, Ekborg argued that teacher education coursework should be used as an alternative context for exploring new ideas and tools. Ekborg interviewed 14 student teachers three times over a two and half year teacher preparation program. Unlike the broad data collection of Grossman et al., Ekborg’s interview protocols focused on a specific newspaper article that discussed an authentic, complex, controversial topic that did not have a single correct answer. Teacher candidates were then analyzed using a qualitative software program to help organize and compare the statements. In both cases, the studies pushed for opportunities for teacher candidates to model their learning in a supportive context through coursework, fieldwork, or both.

Grisham’s (2000) qualitative study followed 12 teachers through their pre-service year and into their first 2 years in the classroom. Grisham completed three interviews and
three observations over the 3 years to develop case studies, which were then analyzed across cases. Grisham also used a methodology called “Teacher Storylines” (Beijarrd, 1998 in Grisham, 2000) which is used to provide a graphic representation of a teacher’s beliefs over time. Constant comparative analysis was used after the completion of each interview and observation; after 3 years of data collection, case studies, including the storylines, were constructed and sent to select participants for member checking. The study illuminated the complex ways in which teachers’ professional, practical, and personal knowledge influence their beliefs and practices. The author noted that the relationship between these knowledge sets was neither direct nor simple. During the study, most student teachers described context as one of the main reasons why their practices differed from their beliefs. Unlike the commonly held assumption that conceptual change can only occur if there is congruence between field and program experiences, this study demonstrated that this was not always true. Two student teachers were placed with cooperating teachers who held a very traditional approach to teaching literacy, yet the student teachers had been exposed to constructivist teaching and learning approaches during the university coursework. In one case, the student teacher embraced the teaching style of her cooperating teacher, while the other teacher candidate did not waiver in her support for and use of constructivist models. Thus, context creates increased complexity during the learning to teach process, as it may present obstacles for integrating and modeling university learned tools.

The final study approached the complexities of context from a different angle. Mulholland (2003) developed two case studies over four years – two years of teacher education and the first two years of classroom teaching. Data collection included
interviews, observations during classroom teaching, and journals completed during the first year of employment. The author used an anthropological frame of “border crossing” to suggest that learning to teach is like being a traveler who moves from one sub-culture to another. In this constructivist-interpretive study, the teachers worked to transition across three separate borders: non-science to science, pre-service to in-service, and school subjects to school science. Mulholland suggested that it is not always possible to distinguish between the sub-cultures, as the contexts are constantly interacting and overlapping. The author concluded that in order to successfully transition across borders, there needs to be more support for beginning teachers from more experienced teachers in their school. This would enable them to cross the borders and continue the process of learning to teach as classroom teachers.

Collectively, these four studies demonstrate the importance of the varying contexts that interact during the learning to teach process. In some cases, the contexts support one another in the learning process, while in other cases, there needs to be a conscious effort to create opportunities that allow teacher candidates to work through their questions and concerns. These opportunities may need to be provided in the context of teacher education, as there are instances in which the student teaching context is too restrictive for pre-service teachers to practice concepts freely.

*Learning to teach, learning to reflect*

The final set of qualitative longitudinal studies about learning to teach examined the process of preparing teachers for reflective practice. The idea of teachers engaging in reflective practice in order to improve their own work was described by Dewey (1933) and then further developed by scholars such as Schon (1983) and Shulman (1987). The
studies reviewed in this section utilized definitions similar to Shulman’s (1987) notion of reflective practice, where evidence is used to critically analyze the teaching and learning occurring in the classroom environment through reviewing, reconstructing, re-enacting, and critically analyzing one’s experiences.

Guillaume and Rudney (1993) analyzed the reflective journals of 19 student teachers during a one-year graduate level teacher education program. The open-structure journals were required of all student teachers during the 5th year program and included approximately 90 entries over the nine-month period. Guillaume and Rudney’s multi-layered analysis process included interrater validity checks, coding and categorization, and participant validity checks. However, the study only utilized one data source for interpretation. The study’s findings revealed changes in the student teachers’ concerns over the course of three semesters. Guillaume and Rudney found that in addition to worrying about their own survival, student teachers expressed concerns related to their teaching practice and their relationships with students during student teaching. As the authors noted, these findings were inconsistent with Fuller and Brown’s (1975) stage theory. Furthermore, through their reflective journals, study participants posed questions and reflected on their experiences as beginning teachers, their students’ experiences as learners, and on theoretical issues surrounding teaching and learning. Most importantly, the authors noted that student teachers reflected on their practice in order to improve. Although there was no direct focus on student learning in this study, there was evidence in this study, as well as in others, that the stage model of learning to teach is moving further from the forefront of learning to teach research.
Four additional studies, all conducted in the last 8 years, utilized aspects of reflective practice to capture the value of focusing on teaching and learning during teacher preparation and into the first years of teaching. One study (Wood, 2000) focused on learning to teach during the pre-service period using phenomenographic analysis, which “seeks a multifaceted understanding of the domain of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 79). After analysis of four semi-structured interviews with 24 student teachers, Wood made an argument for moving away from stage theory as a perspective, and instead focused on how student teachers experience and understand the learning to teach process. The author suggested that designing a teacher education program that mirrors the same teaching and learning processes that teachers are encouraged to use with their students is beneficial in creating reflective teachers who focus on student learning. In this study, the program used a spiraling design that focused on planning, teaching, and reviewing, or, in educational research terms – theory, action, and reflection design. This learning process places student learning as the proposed outcome of the teaching process and as the main object of a teacher’s reflection while still in teacher education. The hope was that this process would continue into the teaching experiences after graduation. However, as Wood argued, this requires strong support from school-based personnel.

The remaining three studies looked across both pre-service and 1 to 3 years of classroom teaching. Donnell (2007) investigated the complexities of learning to teach in an urban environment using three to five in-depth interviews per participant. Following a constructivist grounded theory approach, the study followed nine teachers over an eleven-month period, pre-service and the first year, to examine how they constructed, questioned, and connected their learning to daily practice. The author suggested that the
key aspect to developing transformative teaching practices involved developing a mutual relationship between teachers and students that focused on learning together.

So and Watkins (2005) and Trumbull (2001) collected data on teachers during two years of teacher education and up to their first three years in the classroom. The studies focused on teachers’ personal conceptualizations of themselves as teachers, as well as their beliefs about their students. So and Watkins (2005) identified four aspects of teacher thinking—conceptions, planning, teaching, and reflection—that they desired to study. Through interviews, concept maps, observations, and reflective journals, So and Watkins explored the specified aspects of teacher thinking with nine teachers. They used a coding scheme from the constructivist perspective to analyze interview data, while six domains of constructivist practice were generated for use in analyzing observational data. After their analysis, So and Watkins revealed positive developments in terms of teachers’ abilities to reflect in-depth on their teaching over the course of teacher preparation and classroom teaching. However, they also found that during the beginning years of teaching, planning became more simplistic and less coherent in structure. This concern was described as an important implication for future longitudinal research on learning to teach.

Trumbull’s (2001) study, which followed two teachers through a two-year pre-service period and then into the first three years of teaching, noted how teacher candidates theorize the process of learning to teach at different rates. She analyzed her semi-structured interviews by identifying conceptions of teaching and the process of theorizing about their work. The author commented on the fact that theorizing can be accelerated, but teacher education should still help teacher candidates reflect on their own
thinking. Thus, both studies emphasized the importance of supporting student teachers during teacher education, through the transition to classroom teaching, and through the early years of full-time classroom teaching. A continued process of support would encourage additional theorizing by teachers about their roles as teachers, as well as about their students’ learning.

Conclusions: Longitudinal, Qualitative Studies

The longitudinal, qualitative literature was quite limited because very few studies followed teachers through their teacher preparation period and into their beginning years of teaching. There were only seven qualitative studies (Hollingsworth, Teel, & Minarik’s, 1992; Grossman et al., 2000; Grisham, 2000; Mulholland, 2003; Donnell, 2007; So & Watkins, 2005; Trumbull, 2001) conducted over the last 20 years included data that spanned both of these phases of the learning to teach process. The field would benefit from longitudinal studies that followed teachers through many years in the field to uncover the continuing process of learning. Such studies would provide insight into Feiman-Nemser’s (1983) notion of lifelong learning.

Further limitations were due to the lack of triangulation of data sources. Six of the studies relied on one data source (Skamp & Mueller, 2001; Ekborg, 2005a; Guillaume & Rudney, 1993; Wood, 2000; Donnell, 2007; Trumbull, 2001), mainly interview data, to draw conclusions about learning to teach. Doing so calls into the question the notion that beliefs and practices are always congruent. Lacking observational data, the veracity of teachers’ descriptions of classroom events is questionable. Of the remaining eight studies (Hollingsworth, 1989; Hollingsworth, Teel, & Minarik, 1992; Lidstone & Hollingsworth, 1992; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1989; Grossman et al., 2000; Grisham, 2000;
that utilized interviews, observations, and in some cases other data sources, all had fewer than fourteen participants, a common occurrence in qualitative research in order to effectively manage data collection. Such small samples limit the generalizability of the findings. Thus, future research is necessary to uncover the process of learning to teach across teachers’ careers. Such research should include multiple methods of data collection in order to triangulate findings.

Conceptual Understandings of the Constructivist Assessment Paradigm

This section begins with an overview of assessment practices during the last thirty years, in particular, the proclaimed mismatch between instruction and assessment. As a result of this disconnect, Lorrie Shepard (2001) proposed a constructivist assessment framework. The following section details the structure and development of her framework, as well as its connection to Fred Newmann and his colleagues’ (1996) notion of authentic assessment. Next is a brief look at the definitions of assessment terms with a particular focus on formative assessment. Finally, a synopsis of conceptual literature related to the benefits of formative assessment and preparing teacher candidates in terms of assessment practices is detailed.

An historical overview of curriculum, learning, and measurement shows a clear disconnect between newer, more constructivist-oriented views of instruction, on the one hand, and traditional views of testing that are more in-line with older paradigms like social efficiency and scientific measurement, on the other (Black, 2001; Shepard, 2001). These older paradigms follow “scientifically” generated procedures and often use standardized tests that produce easily interpreted findings (Kliebard, 1997). These
paradigms tend to view teaching and learning as the transmission of knowledge from
teacher to student, with assessment practices emphasizing standardized tests for
evaluative purposes (Graue, 1993; Paris, 1998).

Commenting on these traditional paradigms, Broadfoot and Black (2004)
highlighted the belief that external testing provides an objective means to categorize
students and indicate the quality of institutional performance. The researchers argued:

We have become an ‘assessment society’, as wedded to our belief in the power of
numbers, grades, targets and league tables to deliver quality and accountability,
equality and defensibility as we are to modernism itself. History will readily dub
the 1990s …‘the assessment era’, when belief in the power of assessment to
provide a rational, efficient and publicly acceptable mechanism of judgment and
control reached its high point…. (p.19)

Thus, Broadfoot and Black pointed to the mismatch between current modes of
assessment, on the one hand, and 21st century curriculum and instruction reform focused
on learning to learn, on the other. However, change is only feasible if tensions can be
resolved “between the demands of accountability testing and the requirements for tests to
be valid in reflecting and reinforcing good pedagogy” (Black, 2001, p. 73).

In response to the disconnect between newer, more constructivist-oriented views
of instruction and traditional views of testing, Lorrie Shepard (2001) drew on
constructivist learning theory to develop a framework for understanding a reformed view
of assessment. The framework promotes assessment that emphasizes deeper student
learning through higher-order thinking and authentic problem solving. Shepard’s
framework is a strong contrast to older assessment paradigms, where measurement-
driven instruction, used to enhance student performance, caused instruction to become
de-contextualized and narrowly conceived based on test content (Graue, 1993).
Consequently, a narrowed curriculum often results from teachers changing their
instructional practices to match the content and structure of standardized exams (Broadfoot & Black, 2004; Madaus, 1988). Shepard called for classroom assessment practices more closely aligned with constructivist learning theory. These changes included a classroom culture emphasizing student responsibility for learning (Boston, 2002; Black & Wiliam, 1998), assessments informing the next phase of instruction (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2003), and opportunities for students to self-assess learning using explicit criteria like a rubric (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

Shepard called for student learning that is self-monitored and motivated, intellectually challenging, and scaffolded, in part, by the cultural perspectives of students (Shepard, 2001). In addition, she emphasized assessment as a means to extend student understanding to a new level of learning:

Substance of classroom assessment must be congruent with important learning goals… the content of assessment must match challenging subject matter standards and be connected to contexts of application. … assessment must mirror important thinking and learning processes, especially modes of inquiry and discourse, as they are valued and practiced in the classroom…. more specific principles of classroom assessment require that expectations and intermediate steps for improvement be made visible to students and that students be actively involved in evaluating their own work. (Shepard, p. 1077)

Through this process of ensuring connections between instruction and assessment, Shepard reflected on the importance of emphasizing higher-order thinking and problem solving where learning opportunities remain in context. This allows students to make connections between school and the outside world.

In this way, Shepard’s framework is consistent with Newmann et al.’s (1996) concept of authentic intellectual work, where teachers use assessment to develop deeper understanding through real-word learning tasks. Newmann et al. proposed that “authentic assessments” are more meaningful when they mirror the tasks undertaken by
professionals in the various fields of study. Authentic assessments are “more likely to motivate and sustain students in the hard work that learning requires” (p. 27) due to underlying explicit meaning and purpose, which bring value to learning beyond the classroom. Unlike traditional assessments, which focus on student deficits, authentic assessments enable students to demonstrate their knowledge by showing their level of expertise (Graue, 1993).

Newmann et al. (1996) described authentic learning environments as those in which teachers and students work collaboratively to draw on prior learning, investigate misconceptions, and work through areas of confusion. In addition, teachers evaluate and redesign instruction based on systematic analysis of assessment data. These ideas are consistent with Shepard’s framework for understanding a teacher’s role in cultivating deeper student learning through improved assessment practices. One way to bring about such changes in classroom practice involves presenting students with complex learning problems that promote deeper understanding and consequently enable students to develop inquiry skills that will help them solve other problems in the future (Shepard, 2001).

In many cases, these reformed assessment practices focus on formative assessment, an idea that emerged over three decades ago, yet continues to be the focus of much debate in terms of its definition. The terms “formative” and “summative” were first used by Michael Scriven in 1967 when describing the general functions of program evaluation (Scriven, 1967). Then, in 1968, Benjamin Bloom used the concepts formative and summative to describe assessments (Frey & Schmitt, 2007). However, it was not until 1989 that Royce Sadler used the term formative assessment in conjunction with student learning (Brookhart, 2004). Sadler provided a conceptual framework that placed
formative assessment in the context of curriculum and instruction. According to this framework, three elements were required for formative assessment to promote learning: a clear view of learning goals, information about the present state of the learner, and action to close the gaps (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser 2001).

The definitions and use of assessment terms like formative assessment have been disputed for over two decades. Some experts believe that the purpose of formative assessment is to adapt teaching and better meet students’ needs (Boston, 2002; Sutton, 1992); others feel that it must emphasize feedback to students (Marsh, 2007; Stiggins, 2002), while still others argue that students need to be a part of the assessment process (Atkin, Black, & Coffey, 2001). Using current assessment literature as a basis, definitions of formative assessment focus on enhanced learning by encouraging active involvement of students through effective feedback, or, more generally, assessment carried out during the instructional process to improve teaching and learning (Marsh, 2007; Shepard, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Rust, et al., 2005). That is not to say that controversy does not still exist over definitions surrounding formative assessment, merely that these are the aspects most commonly included by scholars in the field.

Much research has been conducted on the benefits of formative assessment. A more detailed look at the empirical research on the benefits of formative assessment is provided in the next section. Drawing from conceptual literature, research has concluded that by connecting instruction and assessment, students realize that there is more to learning than simply measuring outcomes (Shepard et al., 2005). Furthermore, greater influence on instructional practices is possible due to the frequency with which formative assessment occurs during instruction (Shepard et al.). Student learning may be enhanced
through frequent feedback to students about their work (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001). Finally, formative assessment practices value teachers’ knowledge of students in the learning process (Shepard et al.).

The idea that teachers are an invaluable aspect of the assessment process justifies a look at the research related to preparing teacher candidates to use reformed assessment practices in their classrooms. Although limited, research on preparing teacher candidates for constructivist-oriented assessment practices suggests that analyzing assessments and student work “help[s] new teachers develop an understanding of how such evaluations of learning can inform their instructional choices… [and] develop an appreciation of how learning unfolds over time, how different students learn, and how these students respond to their instruction” (Shepard, et al., 2005, p. 316-317). If analyzing samples of student work is not possible, then evaluating learning opportunities in a more abstract way may also be an alternative (Shepard et al.). Having teacher candidates engage with assessment design, as well as having them work with curriculum standards, also provides opportunities for evaluating important aspects of assessments (Atkin, Black, & Coffey, 2001). For example, “domain mapping,” which links curriculum frameworks with test items, enables teacher candidates to see if a test focuses on important aspects of the curriculum or simply those aspects of the curriculum that are easiest to test (Shepard et al.). However, the main conclusion drawn from this research is that:

Teacher candidates need experience identifying, constructing, and evaluating assessment tasks that tap conceptual understanding. They need opportunities to focus on assessment as a step in instruction so that they can see how assessment insights lead to next steps for students and for themselves. (Shepard et al., p.326)
In effect, such a focus on assessment during the preservice period ensures that teachers both understand the value in having students learn to transfer knowledge to new contexts and avoid narrowed instructional practices that promote rote learning and teaching to the test (Shepard et al.).

Formative Assessment

During the previous 20 years, four widely cited syntheses addressed the literature on assessment practices (Natriello, 1987; Crooks, 1988; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Brookhart, 2004). Although the reviews varied in terms of their organizational structure and conceptual framework, each provided a necessary perspective on the trends in assessment scholarship. With the exception of the first two syntheses, which were published one year apart, the reviews reference the work of one another, as well as changes in the field over the last two decades.

Through the use of an evaluation framework that he developed (Natriello, 1985), Natriello (1987) reviewed the literature on assessment processes in schools and classrooms by looking at the impact of evaluation on students. Focusing mainly on literature from educational psychology, this review included the most expansive scope of research. One limitation Natriello noted was that many of the reviewed studies assessed aspects of practice that were not prevalent in schools. He explained, for example, that multiple studies sought to develop alternatives to norm-referenced standards, yet these standards were not used extensively by teachers. Additionally, the studies often focused on only one or two aspects of the evaluation process or they failed to consider that evaluation processes may be used for multiple purposes. Unlike the remaining three
syntheses, this study does not examine formative assessment specifically; rather, this study is more interested in providing a review of the evaluation process in schools, including more summative assessments.

Crooks’ (1988) review, which was published just one year after Natriello’s (1987), included more of a focus on formative assessment practices. Like Natriello, Crooks focused mainly on literature from the field of psychology and included studies that examined both summative and formative assessment practices. Through his emphasis on studies related to formative assessment, Crooks suggested that too much emphasis is placed on grading and not enough emphasis is placed on learning in the classroom. He concluded that assessments must emphasize the knowledge, skills, and attitudes considered most important in classroom learning, a finding that reflected the boom in studies on formative assessment, which appeared between this review and Black and Wiliam’s (1998).

Black and Wiliam’s (1998) review, is the most widely cited, and considered by some to be the impetus for the increase in formative assessment studies in the United States during the 21st century, as the majority of older studies were completed in England. In their synthesis, Black and Wiliam argued that formative assessment literature lacks a clear definition, as noted by the lack of overlap in studies reviewed by Natriello (1987) and Crooks (1988). Of the 323 studies reviewed by these two syntheses, only nine studies were used in both. Black and Wiliam reviewed 250 studies completed after 1988 on assessment and classroom learning. For the purposes of their synthesis, they defined formative assessment as “all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and
learning activities in which they are engaged” (p. 7-8). Black and Wiliam organized their literature review according to the following categories: assessment by teachers, students and formative assessment, strategies and tactics for teachers, systems (general strategies), and feedback. They concluded that continuous assessment and feedback from teachers can have a strong and positive effect on student achievement. However, they cautioned that “high-quality” formative assessments are not well understood by teachers; thus, many teachers have difficulty relating their own assumptions regarding student learning to their actual assessment practices (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001).

In the most recent synthesis on classroom assessment conducted by Brookhart (2004), she agreed with Black and Wiliam (1998) that formative assessment lacks a tight definition. She suggested that the confusion stems from the fact that formative assessment “sits at the intersection [of] theory and practice and that the resulting array of relevant practical and theoretical material creates tensions for those who try to chart this territory” (p. 429). Using 40 studies from 1982-2002, Brookhart investigated how these tensions have developed in the classroom assessment literature. She concluded that this intersection of theory and practice manifests itself in three teaching functions: instruction, classroom management, and assessment, each of which, she argued, must be studied collectively as part of the classroom assessment process. Furthermore, Brookhart claimed that theory related to assessment comes from various areas of study, including the study of individual differences, groups, and measurement, all of which further complicate understanding of the “patchwork of scholarship” that creates classroom assessment (p. 454). The point of her synthesis was to uncover the benefits of the research overlapping these aspects and theories of assessment to better understand the tensions and conflicts.
Looking across these syntheses, the transition from a combined focus on formative and summative assessment in the first two syntheses (Natriello, 1987; Crooks, 1988) to a central focus on studies involving formative assessment is apparent. This suggests that formative assessment has played a more prominent role in research in the last ten years. However, formative assessment is still a relatively nascent field. It is also important to note that these four syntheses mainly described studies conducted in schools and classrooms with little to no involvement of teacher preparation programs. This trend in the literature has two possible implications: that teachers most often develop their ideas and practices related to formative assessment after they have transitioned into full-time teaching, or that research has simply neglected to focus on preservice learning related to assessment. Thus, this dissertation study provides a much needed perspective on the role of teacher education in helping student teachers to understand the role of assessment, particularly formative assessment, in their teaching.

Drawing on these syntheses to provide a sense of current assessment research, the next section looks specifically at empirical studies related to formative assessment conducted in the last ten years since Black and Wiliam’s (1998) comprehensive review in 1998. Although Brookhart’s (2004) review was conducted more recently, it did not provide an extended review of the empirical literature surrounding formative assessment; rather, that study looked specifically at articles focused on the intersection of theory and practice. In order to ensure rigor in the review, only studies published in peer reviewed journals were included. Black and Wiliam’s framework was selected to organize this review because it provides an opportunity to evaluate the direction that research in formative assessment has taken in the last 10 years. This review uses the following
categories: teachers’ formative assessment practices, students and formative assessment, the role of feedback, strategies and tactics of formative assessment, and formative assessment systems implementation.

*Teachers’ Formative Assessment Practices*

The current literature on teachers’ formative assessment practices includes studies that focus on teacher’s beliefs and practices using both qualitative and quantitative analysis, as well as studies that include an intervention as a means of improving teachers’ formative assessment practices. Two studies (Tiknaz & Sutton, 2006; Brown, 2004) explored teachers’ conceptions of formative assessment without employing an intervention. Tiknaz and Sutton interviewed 12 teachers, many of them geography department heads in the United Kingdom, to explore teachers’ understanding of planning for formative assessments in the national geography curriculum. Tiknaz and Sutton found that three dimensions affect teachers’ planning of assessment: teachers’ emerging conceptions of formative assessment, national curriculum mandates, and teachers’ professional craft knowledge. The authors argued that, in many cases, teachers make formative assessment decisions based initially on their beliefs, or craft knowledge, about how their students learn. Not surprisingly, the more knowledge that teachers have about formative assessment, the more influential it becomes in their decisions surrounding practice.

Brown (2004) conducted a survey of 525 teachers and administrators from schools across New Zealand to gather data on conceptions of assessment. The 40% response rate generally represented the population of primary school teachers in the country. Based on prior research, the survey was organized around three major purposes...
of assessment: improving teaching and learning, holding students individually accountable for their learning through testing and qualification exams, and holding schools and teachers accountable. Brown then added a fourth conception related to assessment – the idea that “assessment is fundamentally irrelevant to the life and work of teachers and students” because it can be ignored or be inaccurate (p. 304). Using these conceptions to determine whether teachers’ notions of assessment were accurately represented by the model presented, Brown used structural equation modeling. This analysis enabled him to determine how strongly the conceptions were held and how they interrelated. Of the 65 statements on the questionnaire, 50 items fit in the measurement model, predicting that all four factors were correlated. Finally, MANOVAS were completed to ensure that the results were generalizable and stable across teachers and schools. This research found that teachers agreed that assessment improves teaching, learning, and accountability, while rejecting the notion that assessment is irrelevant. Brown’s most important conclusion, similar to findings from the longitudinal literature on learning to teach, suggested that for policy and training to be effective, teachers’ prior conceptions about assessment must be addressed. These conceptions may be addressed during the preservice period and/or teacher professional development. One weakness of this study was found in Brown’s conceptualization of the three purposes of assessment. Although drawing from the literature for three of the four aspects, he failed to include an aspect directly related to formative assessment.

The majority of the studies related to teachers’ understandings of formative assessment included a professional development intervention (Wiliam, Lee, Harrison, & Black, 2004; Lee & Wiliam, 2003; Dekker & Feijs, 2005; Torrance & Pryor, 2001;
Cowie & Bell, 1999). In the only study completed prior to Black and Wiliam’s (1998) review, Cowie and Bell (1999) gathered data from 10 primary grade science teachers and their students in New Zealand over a two-year period. The data included 65 teacher interviews and 73 student interviews, 128 classroom observations, and audiotapes of 11 professional development meetings. The professional development meetings were used to analyze data and discuss the emerging model of formative assessment. Cowie and Bell found that “planned” and “interactive” formative assessment are both integral to the teaching and learning process, as planned assessment addresses the learning of the entire class, while interactive assessment focuses on the concerns of individual students or small groups. The researchers also found that the teachers in their study were not always aware that what they were doing was formative assessment; with increased awareness of professional development, the teachers reflected on their practice in new ways. Although Cowie and Bell’s study did not provide radically important findings, it set the stage for continued value and use of professional development in supporting teachers’ use of formative assessment.

Two of the studies involving a professional development intervention (Wiliam, Lee, Harrison, & Black, 2004; Lee & Wiliam, 2003) came from the same larger research project, King’s -Medway-Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project, which was developed as a result of Black and Wiliam’s (1998) recommendation that more studies include a longitudinal perspective to see if student learning gains are sustained when formative assessment is utilized. Lee and Wiliam (2003) investigated two teachers over an 18-month period to better understand their use of assessment to support student learning. This multi-dimensional study included analyses of lesson observations, journal
entries, and interviews for each of the teachers to draw their conclusions. The authors consistently triangulated their data sources. The study, however, did not describe the analysis process that was used to draw conclusions. Although this weakness may be due to length limitations for publication, it is difficult to assess the findings with no basis for how they were constructed. The uniqueness of Lee and Wiliam’s study (2003) lay in its reliance on teacher-led professional development. This runs contrary to most professional development opportunities, which include specific curricula and detailed lesson plans for teachers to implement. This study, instead, enabled teachers to decide for themselves which aspects of practice they were most interested in developing. The researchers believed that teachers need to be responsive to their students’ needs. Over the course of the study, Lee and Wiliam noted how teachers’ conceptions of formative assessment shifted from a set of strategies to broader understandings of the relationship between teaching and student learning gains. However, the researchers also found that the changes the two teachers made in their classrooms were most often extensions of ways in which they already preferred to work. Lee and Wiliam were not surprised by this finding, as the two teachers considered themselves successful and were, thus, unwilling to completely change their teaching practices. Furthermore, the professional development was designed to be flexible enough to meet an individual teacher’s needs; it was not designed as an overarching ‘what works’ approach.

Wiliam, Lee, Harrison, and Black’s (2004) study also came from the King’s-Medway-Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project. This study focused on the achievement of students who worked with 24 math and science teachers, in six schools, who promoted formative assessment practices. These teachers were provided professional
development aimed at formative assessment over the course of six months. Like Lee and Wiliam (2003), the researchers hoped to work collaboratively with teachers in the professional development workshops and observations. During visits to the schools, researchers worked with teachers to plan how they might make their practices more effective. This model was intended “to build on the professionalism of teachers” (p. 56). Due to the collaborative nature of this study, researchers called their quantitative approach, which drew from a more interpretive (rather than positivistic) paradigm, “local design.” In this way, researchers used student achievement scores on assessment instruments already administered by the school to lessen the disruption. In order to compute effect size, a comparison group was selected for each class in the study. The findings for effect size demonstrated a median value of 0.27 and a mean of 0.34 – which was skewed by some extreme values. Accounting for the skewed results using the jackknife procedure (Mosteller & Tukey, 1977, in Wiliam et al., 2004), the mean effect size was adjusted to 0.32 and a confidence interval of 95%. After a thorough description of the data collection and analysis process, Wiliam et al. described the difficulties in interpreting the findings, which included variations among comparison classes, particularly for the negative effects. Furthermore, the study was limited by the school sites, since each school self-identified as interested in exploring formative assessment. In conclusion, Wiliam et al. argued that improving teachers’ formative assessment practices does benefit student achievement on mandated assessments, meaning that teachers do not have “to choose between teaching well and getting good results” (p. 64). However, the study did not provide analysis of the quality of the mandated assessments that were used.
Similar to the two studies described above, Dekker and Feijs’s (2005) study used data from a larger project – Classroom Assessment as a basis for Teacher Change (CATCH). The overall project was intended to improve a professional development program on formative assessment in two school districts in the United States. The researchers conducted three interviews with each of 12 middle school math teachers over two-and-half years. The professional development provided teachers with an opportunity to learn about a pyramid model of mathematics competency that outlined three levels of questioning on most tests. This model was used during professional development to help teachers design higher-level questioning on their assessment tasks, to embed assessments in their instruction, and to vary assessment practices. The interviews were coded to determine changes in teachers’ views and attitudes towards classroom practices and assessment over the three interviews conducted before, during, and after professional development. Dekker and Feijs concluded that all teachers in the study changed their attitudes after the initial professional development program and, in most cases, continued to exhibit these changes one year later, especially if they worked in a supportive environment. Due to the reliance on interview data, it is difficult to know how much teachers practices changed due to the professional development. To come to these conclusions, the researchers used qualitative analysis software to determine absolute code frequencies (the number of times a code appeared in each interview), which were then compared to frequencies across the other interviews. Interestingly, the researchers argued that they used code frequencies due to the small sample size; however, they failed to consider that frequencies in qualitative research may not be an accurate means of
analysis. It is difficult to consistently determine how much data is included under each code, especially if multiple researchers complete the coding process.

Torrance and Pryor (2001) also conducted a study in which professional development of teachers was implemented to change classroom assessment practices using a collaborative action research approach. The collaborative approach included 17 meetings between the researchers and teachers, ranging from half-day meetings to two-day workshops. The study included three sets of data from 11 primary school teachers in the United Kingdom: audio and video of assessment practices, research diaries, and samples of pupil work. Similar to Brookhart’s (2004) review, which concluded that the intersection of theory and practice manifests itself in three teaching functions—instruction, classroom management, and assessment—Torrance and Pryor suggested that formative assessment is a “key theoretical and practical interface for teachers to engage in research and development on teaching and learning” (p. 627). The researchers argued that through the action research project, teachers developed an understanding of the necessary aspects of formative assessment, such as communication and feedback with students about expectations and criteria for assessment tasks. The researchers suggested that some of their most interesting findings were from students’ perspectives on the process, including peer- and self-assessment, which were not a major focus of this study. These are, however, discussed in the studies included in the next section on students and formative assessment.

Students and Formative Assessment Practices

Two studies focusing on students and formative assessment have been completed in the last 10 years. As noted above, several studies (Cowie and Bell, 1999; Torrance and
Pryor, 2001) included data from students; however, the main purpose of those studies was to describe teachers’ use and understanding of formative assessment practices. Brookhart (2001) used classroom observations, pre- and post-surveys, and interviews with 50 high school students of varying achievement levels to determine how students perceived the purpose, usefulness, relevance, and importance of specific classroom assessments. Interview data were coded by two researchers, who agreed on initial categories and then used a constant comparative approach to develop additional subcategories. Brookhart noted that the students integrated ideas about formative and summative assessment. Of particular interest were students’ perceptions of formative assessment, which Brookhart organized into the following categories: completing an assessment or studying for a test, applying learning to future jobs or schooling, and learning to transfer knowledge to new situations. In their descriptions, the students did not force their learning into formative or summative distinctions, but instead, described their overall process of learning, which included both aspects of assessment.

The second study related to students and formative assessment looked at the effects of formative assessment and learning style on student achievement in a web-based learning environment. Wang, Wang, Wang, and Huang (2006) used a quasi-experimental design that included pre- and post-achievement tests and web-based course results for 462 junior high students in Taiwan. A one-way ANCOVA showed that learning style \((F = 6.81, P < 0.01)\) and formative assessment \((F = 3.78, P < 0.05)\) were significant factors affecting student achievement in a web-based learning environment, but there was no interaction between the two factors \((F = 0.58, P > 0.05)\). Due to the study’s dual focus on enhancing student achievement through formative assessment strategies on a web-based
course, it is difficult to determine if the gains were a result of the web-based component or the formative assessment strategies that were utilized.

The Role of Feedback in Formative Assessment

Three studies focused on the role of feedback in formative assessment practices (Smith & Gorard, 2005; Dibu-Ojerinde & Awolowo, 2005/2006; Fox-Turnbull, 2006). Smith and Gorard conducted an experimental study designed in response to the findings of the King’s-Medway-Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project (noted above with Wiliam, Lee, Harrison, & Black, 2004; Lee & Wiliam, 2003) which found that teachers’ use of formative assessment practices can improve student achievement. Smith and Gorard’s study divided 104 Year 7 students from one Welsh school into four mixed-ability teaching groups. In three of the groups, teachers provided grades and minimal comments, maintaining existing school assessment policy. The fourth group, the treatment group, was provided with only formative feedback on their work and no summative grades. Teachers in this fourth group were provided with training on formative assessment practices prior to the start of the school year. The researchers administered a survey to all students and received a 100% response rate. The survey focused on students’ background in areas that might affect school performance, such as motivation. In addition to background information, survey results, and prior examination data from past years, the researchers conducted two unstructured group interviews with two groups of six students in the treatment group. A linear regression model was created for each school subject to evaluate student achievement. The resulting correlations between background predictors and test scores were as follows for R-scores: English-0.70, math-0.73, science-0.75, Welsh-0.64. Smith and Gorard concluded that student
progress in the treatment group (formative feedback only) was inferior to that of the other three groups. This finding directly contradicted those of the King’s-Medway-Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project. However, Smith and Gorard provided some sound evidence for why this might be the case. First, this study only used data from one school, where the larger project used data from six schools. Further, the pilot study from the larger project might have worked better due to Hawthorne effects, regression towards the mean, and motivational factors. Although not mentioned by the researchers, an additional factor may have been the professional development provided to the treatment group, as the study did not provide details or results from the training. This might have influenced the results of the study, as the training program might not have successfully prepared the teachers to utilize formative assessment feedback.

The final two studies (Dibu-Ojerinde & Awolowo, 2005/2006; Fox-Turnbull, 2006) in the feedback section could have been organized under *Teachers’ Formative Assessment Practices*, as both relate to teachers’ knowledge and conceptions of formative assessment and how those conceptions relate to student achievement. However, these two studies emphasized the role of feedback in the formative assessment process; thus, they are included in the feedback section. Dibu-Ojerinde and Awolowo selected 20 teachers from each of five private, secondary schools in Nigeria. To collect initial data on teachers’ backgrounds and knowledge and use of formative assessment, Dibu-Ojerinde and Awolowo designed and administered the FAMS (Formative Assessment Monitoring Scale). After completing descriptive analyses, they found that 22% of the teachers listed their main purpose in conducting formative assessment as “ensuring learners’ concentration during lesson,” which they interpreted to mean that some teachers use
formative assessment as a tool for improved classroom management. In the second stage of the study, Dibu-Ojerinde and Awolowo selected samples of students’ notebooks to assess the type of feedback that teachers provided to students. Dibu-Ojerinde and Awolowo found that, in general, the teachers did not provide feedback strong enough to improve learning. In most cases, the teachers listed the raw score over the maximum obtainable score followed by a comment of “excellent, good, bad, fair, or poor” (p. 359). Thus, Dibu-Ojerinde and Awolowo concluded that most teachers fail to understand the purpose of formative feedback in improving student learning. A major weakness of the study, however, was the researchers’ failure to provide information on how analysis of the notebooks was conducted.

In the final study on feedback, Fox-Turnbull (2006) used the same assessment task for two different purposes with 8-11-year-old children from Christchurch, New Zealand. One group of students completed the task once “out-of-context,” meaning before exposure to the learning activities related to the assessment task, and then again after completing the exercises. The second group, the control group, was only presented with the task after completion of the learning experiences. To ensure strong analysis, Fox-Turnbull initially developed categories for coding the assessments using information from the National Education Monitoring Project in New Zealand. Because she was the only assessor, Fox-Turnbull then added additional categories to help ensure consistency. The findings indicated that the students who received lessons and activities prior to completing the assessment produced detailed, workable plans in response to the problem presented. The percentage of students who produced detailed explanations increased from 18% to 75% between the “out-of-context” group and the group that received instruction.
prior to the assessment. In conclusion, Fox-Turnbull suggested that teachers who provide quality feedback during the learning process enhance their students’ learning. The key to providing this feedback is teachers’ knowledge, both pedagogical and content specific. Furthermore, through planning, teachers were able to think through formative assessment opportunities and provide timely feedback to students.

The three studies in this section provided differing conclusions about the role of feedback in formative assessment. Similar to Black and Wiliam’s (1998) synthesis, both Fox-Turnbull (2006) and Dibu-Ojerinde and Awolowo (2005/2006) concluded that feedback to students improve learning when completed during the instructional process. However, Smith and Gorard’s (2005) study, which was the strongest and most comprehensive of the three, determined that using purely formative feedback produces inferior student achievement gains when compared with students who receive traditional grades. As noted above, there are suggested reasons for this differing outcome.

**Strategies and Tactics of Formative Assessment**

The empirical studies related to strategies and tactics of formative assessment (Hodgen & Marshall, 2005; Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2006; Aschbacher & Alonzo, 2006) were all content specific, unlike the general studies found in other sections. Hodgen and Marshall (2005) decided to study content-specific approaches to formative assessment because the majority of studies focus on generic strategies for all disciplines. In their qualitative study, they examined two lessons, one in English and one in math, to compare how formative assessment practices were similar and different in two very different subjects. The English lesson was observed by Marshall, and the teacher was interviewed immediately following the lesson. The math lesson was video recorded by a technician,
and the teacher wrote a short commentary on the lesson to share with the researchers.

Hodgen and Marshall stated that their selection of two lessons was not intended to
generalize to other lessons; rather, the lessons enabled the researchers to illuminate their
interpretations of content-specific formative assessment. The researchers’ frame for
analyzing the lessons focused on aspects of formative assessment, including scaffolding
of learning, regulation of learning, and guild knowledge (understanding the “business” of
English or math). Hodgen and Marshall concluded that although the lessons were very
different on the surface, the formative assessment strategies were largely the same. Both
strategies demanded that pupils engage with and think about an issue or problem; both
probed students to extend their thinking; both scaffolded learning through activities; and
both encouraged peer feedback.

Using a mixed-methods approach, Aschbacher and Alonzo (2006) studied the
purposeful use of elementary students’ science notebooks to improve teaching and
student achievement. The study compared eight teachers who had 25 hours of
professional development on using science-based inquiry notebooks with 17 who did not
have any special training. Data sources included the following from 10 randomly selected
students per class: structured science notebooks, scores on a performance assessment
from the unit of study, and scores on a multiple-choice test on unit concepts. To analyze
the notebooks, Aschbacher and Alonzo developed a rubric and two raters with science
knowledge scored each notebook. The scorers reached an 80% or greater agreement on
their scoring. The researchers then used linear regression analysis to determine the
relation between notebook scores and multiple-choice test scores. Although the results
indicated that notebook scores predicted performance on other measures, they only
accounted for a small amount of variance (.058, \( p < .01 \) and .036, \( p < .05 \)). Aschbacher and Alonzo suggested this might have occurred because the notebooks demonstrated emerging conceptions in real time, while the tests were a summative measure. In addition to this quantitative analysis, the researchers also completed a more holistic, qualitative analysis focused on how much guidance the teacher likely provided, whether students copied sections from teacher notes, whether teachers provided written feedback, and whether students responded to this feedback. Through their encompassing analysis, Aschbacher and Alonzo concluded that teachers’ knowledge of content and learning goals is most important. Thus, professional development needs to help teachers learn how to evaluate student work using feedback and revision—key aspects of formative assessment.

In the final study focused on formative assessment strategies, Ruiz-Primo and Furtak (2006) examined whether four middle school teachers’ use of questioning improved student learning. The four teachers were trained in the Foundational Approaches in Science Teaching (FAST) curriculum and then asked to videotape each of the 12 FAST lessons. The researchers collected various formative and summative assessments completed during the unit, but only formative assessments were examined for this study. All video transcripts were analyzed using the ESRU (elicit student response, recognize, and use) coding system by two raters who had an intercoder reliability coefficient of .89. The researchers then tested differences between the four groups in the pretest using a one-way ANOVA, which found no significant differences among the four groups (\( F (3, 95) = 1.68, p = .176 \)). However, to determine differences on the posttest, the researchers used a general linear model with teacher fixed effects and
pretest scores. After determining that score gains were not related to the pretest \((F(1, 85) = 1.62, p = .205)\), Ruiz-Primo and Furtak determined that gains were still dependent on teachers \((F(3, 85) = 16.23; p = < .001; R^2 = .396)\). Following these analyses, the teachers who most closely followed the assessment conversations frame (ESRU) had students with better performances. Thus, the more that discussions, concept-focused questioning, and diverse strategies are used in a classroom, the more that student understanding improves.

**Systems Implementation**

Only one study was found in the last ten years that related to comprehensive systems, in which formative assessment plays an important role. This study by Sharkey and Murnane (2006) examined the lessons learned from one large, urban school district’s attempt to implement a formative assessment system in math. The district selected the formative reform model in hopes of obtaining better data and using it to inform all aspects of the education process. The researchers conducted 42 one-hour interviews with various members of the district: the superintendent, district-level administrators, school-based administrators, instructional specialists, teachers, a school board member, a teacher union leader, and a representative from the vendor providing the math formative assessment system. In addition to interviews, Sharkey and Murnane examined documents such as the district’s strategic plan, assessment results, and demographic information. The researchers concluded that a variety of factors must be addressed when a district invests in a formative assessment system. First, the goal of the system must be clear to all participants in the process. Is the primary goal for the system to provide schools with information to improve student learning, or is the goal to hold administrators accountable
for student achievement? If schools have already provided teachers with training focused on analyzing pupil work collaboratively, one school’s needs may be very different from another school that has not provided such training. Sharkey and Murnane also noted that teacher turnover needs to be reduced, and a data system must be accessible additional data will likely be needed once questions and topics arise from the formative system. One major weakness of this study was the lack of specifics regarding the coding process involved in identifying emerging themes.

Conclusions-Formative Assessment

Overall, the empirical articles related to formative assessment provided valuable perspectives on the direction of the field. The studies used a variety of methodologies and data sources to draw conclusions about formative assessment. With the exception of the Smith and Gorard (2005) study, which found that using purely formative feedback was detrimental to student learning when compared with students who received traditional grades, all the studies found that formative assessment provided positive results. One limitation found in three studies (Lee & Wiliam, 2003; Dibu-Ojerinde & Awolowo, 2005/2006; Sharkey & Murnane, 2006) was the lack of detailed information on data analysis procedures, which made it difficult to rely on the study’s findings. Furthermore, six of the studies (Tiknaz & Sutton, 2006; Dekker & Feijs, 2005; Brown, 2004; Wang, Wang, & Huang, 2006; Fox-Turnbull, 2006; Hodgen & Marshall, 2005) used only one data source to draw their conclusions. As noted in the learning to teach review, reliance on one data source calls into the question the notion that beliefs and practices are always congruent. Additionally, three studies (Cowie & Bell, 1999; Lee & Wiliam, 2003; Dekker & Feijs, 2005) followed Black and Wiliam’s (1998) recommendation that
formative assessment studies include a longitudinal perspective. A longitudinal approach provides a perspective on the process of formative assessment, which all three studies demonstrated. Although Black and Wiliam also noted the opportunity to view long-term student learning gains that might result from using formative assessment, none of the studies focused on such gains.

The final limitation found in the empirical literature was the lack of emphasis on the process of learning about formative assessment practices during the preservice period. All studies included in this review focused on full-time teachers. In many cases, the studies described professional development interventions, which were used to help teachers learn more about formative assessment. This lack of research attention to formative assessment during teacher education highlights the need to explore the developmental aspects of this learning process. With this concern in mind, this dissertation study provides a longitudinal perspective that includes a focus on both the preservice period and the first two years of classroom teaching.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, I provide an overview of Hillside College, the TNE Project, and the project from which my study draws, the Qualitative Case Study. I also provide an overview of the principles of interpretive qualitative research, the research design, and limitations of the study. All interview protocols are included in the appendices.

Background of the Study

A Jesuit university, Hillside College’s School of Education prepares approximately 300 undergraduate and graduate teacher candidates\(^2\) per year. The mission of the School of Education includes an explicit commitment to preparing teachers to teach for social justice and building a community of learners, teachers, and scholars to improve education at all levels. For more than a decade, five themes have been central to the school’s philosophy: promoting social justice, constructing knowledge, inquiring into practice, affirming diversity, and collaborating with others.

The Qualitative Case Studies (QCS) Project, from which this dissertation derives, is one of six studies that comprise the portfolio of studies created by the Evidence Team of the Hillside College Teachers for a New Era (TNE) initiative (see Appendix B). The purpose of the TNE initiative, funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and other contributors, is to change how teacher education is understood and enacted at eleven selected institutions across the nation. The initiative is guided by three design principles. The first, respect for evidence, emphasizes that decisions about teacher education should be driven by empirical research, with an explicit focus on pupil education.

\(^2\) In addition to methods courses and practica, candidates at the master’s level, the focus of this study, take foundations courses in the social contexts of education, teaching students with diverse and special needs, and human learning, as well as an inquiry seminar focused on classroom research. Students are urged to take courses in teaching bilingual students and language acquisition models; the Urban Scholars program focuses explicitly on teaching in urban schools.
learning. The second principle emphasizes participation by arts and sciences faculty members in the education of teachers, as strong content knowledge is essential for effective teaching. Finally, TNE views teaching as a “clinically taught practice profession,” where universities are closely connected to k-12 schools with induction programs extending at least 2 years after graduation.

To assess teacher education, the TNE multi-disciplinary Evidence Team concluded that no single outcome or research design could capture the wide-ranging impact of teacher education. With this assumption in mind, the team developed an evidence portfolio that included quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies designed to examine the relationships among teaching, learning, learning to teach, and social justice (see Appendix B for portfolio of studies and Appendix A for the Conceptual Frame).

The QCS Project was designed to explore the interrelationships represented in the Evidence Team conceptual framework (see Appendix B) by providing “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of the process of learning to teach. In keeping with the work of Geertz, this description intertwines cultural threads in participants’ experience, providing in-depth qualitative data from multiple perspectives to explore and explain the experience of learning to teach. The multi-dimensional case studies examined the process of learning to teach from entry into the pre-service program through the second year of teaching. Twenty-two longitudinal case studies examined relationships among participants’ entry characteristics; teacher learning in Hillside College coursework and fieldwork; teacher candidates’ developing understandings of teaching, pupil learning, and social justice;

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3 Due to attrition, some participants were only followed during the preservice year.
teaching practices enacted during student teaching and the first year of teaching; and pupils’ learning.

Research Methods

Using the QCS data, this dissertation examines how beginning teachers address issues of pupil learning and how they understand and use assessments in their teaching from pre-service through the second year of teaching. The study is guided by the following questions:

To what extent do beginning teachers focus on pupil learning from the preservice period through the first two years in the classroom?

In what ways do beginning teachers focus on pupil learning?

- How do various contextual factors influence the extent to which beginning teachers focus on pupil learning?
- How do teachers’ moral sensibilities influence the extent to which they focus on pupil learning?
- How do contextual factors and teachers’ moral sensibilities mutually influence one another over time?

How do beginning teachers understand and use assessment in their teaching?

- What role does formative assessment play in beginning teachers’ focus on pupil learning?
- How do their notions of assessment change over time?

An in-depth investigation of five teachers over the course of three years—one year of teacher preparation, including student teaching, and the first two years in the classroom—was used to explore these understandings of the learning to teach process. Using an overarching sociocultural framework, this study embraces an interpretive qualitative research stance, as it relied extensively on “interest in human meaning in social life and its elucidation and exposition by the researcher” (Erickson, 1986, p. 119).

This chapter begins with an overview of interpretive qualitative research, the guiding methodology of the QCS Project. This is followed by a description of general
ethnographic methods, as this study draws on aspects of the methodology. Next, the research design for the larger QCS Project and this study, including participants, data collection, and data analysis, are described. The final section addresses the integrity of the study, including the role of the researchers’ assumptions and biases in the research process, the credibility and transferability of the study, and finally, the transparency of the research process.

*Interpretive Qualitative Research*

Paradigms guide how a researcher “approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis),” which means that “every researcher speaks from within a distinct interpretive community” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 30). As such, the QCS project was framed by sociocultural theory, guided by interpretive qualitative research, and relied heavily on ethnographic research methods.

The broad domain of qualitative research is a “field of inquiry in its own right. It crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subject matters” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 3). Viewed as a set of interpretive activities, qualitative research does not privilege any single methodology, but instead draws upon and utilizes various approaches, methods, and techniques (Denzin & Lincoln). The qualitative paradigm focuses on gathering and analyzing data to create meaningful explanations of cultures, groups, or behaviors.

Moving from more broadly defined interpretive qualitative research to the foundations of ethnographic methodology, the QCS project used interviews, observations, and artifact collections gathered over a three-year period to develop a holistic perspective on learning to teach. In creating this longitudinal view, ethnography
assumes that “a variety of forces combine to define any social situation, and through the
process of identifying and describing the interrelationship of these forces, it is possible to
understand and ‘explain’ the social and cultural context of behavior” (Muncey &
McQuillan, n.d.). This process of creating shared meaning suggests that individuals
engage with the outside world while working within their distinct cultures. As noted
earlier, the QCS research team defined culture as a framework through which individuals
interpret and act on the world. Thus, individuals are not “free to choose for themselves
any view of the world;” rather, they are “constrained by their culture and the enduring
social structures that culture mediates” (Eisenhart, 2001, p. 215). Such constraints lead
individuals to negotiate their understandings of everyday behavior based on co-
constructed historical perspectives, power, and societal traditions (Wenger, 1998;
Sarason, 1971).

These negotiated understandings of everyday behavior may make it difficult for
one person to understand complex human interactions (Geertz, 1973; Whyte, 1993).
Consequently, ethnographic researchers often use microcosms to provide a more
manageable and clearly defined means of understanding cultural organization (Burawoy,
1998). Geertz (1973), for example, positioned himself in a small village in order to gain a
sense of Balinese culture. He used Balinese cockfighting as a representation of the
macrocosm, or window to view the larger societal structures of Bali, including
masculinity, violence, and social hierarchy. In this way, the QCS research team explored
the process of learning to teach over time through close examination of a small group of
teachers. For these teachers, the process of learning to teach was heavily influenced by
the culture of schools, a unique yet socially negotiated experience.
The QCS project drew broadly from interpretive qualitative research and specifically from aspects of ethnographic methodology. Drawing on ethnographic methods, the project delved deeply into the mutually influential and overlapping cultures of teacher education, K-12 schools, and society-at-large in the process of learning to teach. The longitudinal, qualitative approach of this study is of particular importance to the field of teacher education because of the limited number of studies that address the complex process of learning to teach over a sizable time period. In addition, few studies focus on teachers’ understandings of pupil learning and assessment practices over time.

Research Design

Participants

The QCS project selected 12 participants from the 2005-2006 Master’s level program in the Hillside School of Education to participate in cohort 1 of the study. Five of the 12 participants from cohort 1 were selected for this research. QCS team researchers recruited participants from master’s classes during the entering summer term. The following guidelines were placed on prospective participants: a) they had no experience as full-time classroom teachers; b) they planned to complete the M.Ed. program within one year; and c) following graduation, they planned to teach in the area. Eighteen potential participants responded to our recruitment efforts. Each was invited to a 20-minute interview with a QCS researcher. These interviews ensured that candidates met the requirements noted above, that they showed interest and dedication to the research project, and that they were articulate and forthcoming in response to open-ended interview questions. Interviewers compiled notes on each candidate, and the full QCS team met to choose a group of 12 individuals who a) represented elementary and
secondary grade levels b) included a range of secondary content areas, and c) reflected the gender and minority diversity of Hillside College’s Master’s program as much as possible. Participants were offered a substantial financial gift for participating in the first and second years of the study.

Of the five teachers selected from this study from the larger QCS sample, two were elementary teachers, two were secondary (one English and one history/science) teachers, and one was a middle school science teacher. Four were female, one was male, and all but one taught in an urban school. Three were employed in other careers before beginning the Hillside teacher preparation program, and two came directly from their undergraduate institutions. Table 1 outlines the key characteristics of the five teachers selected for this study, while the narrative presented in Chapters 4 and 5 provide more details.

*Table 3.1: Dissertation Study Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age (fall '05)</th>
<th>Under-grad major</th>
<th>Full-Time Work before Hillside</th>
<th>Hillside Program of Study</th>
<th>Student Teaching Placement</th>
<th>1st Year</th>
<th>2nd Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lola</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>Math/Science</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Elem. Urban</td>
<td>5th Grade, Urban</td>
<td>Middle School Science</td>
<td>Middle School Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26+</td>
<td>Liberal Arts/ Humanities</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Sec. History</td>
<td>H.S. History, Urban</td>
<td>H.S. Science, Urban</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riley</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>Liberal Arts/ Humanities</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Elem.</td>
<td>2nd Grade, Suburban</td>
<td>H.S. History, Urban</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonia</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>Liberal Arts/ Humanities</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Elem. Urban</td>
<td>4th Grade, Urban</td>
<td>H.S. Grade, Bilingual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

80
**Data Collection**

This study drew primarily from five interviews conducted across five QCS participants over a three-year period. However, sections of data from the other six interviews conducted for the QCS study were also used to provide insight on beliefs about assessment practices over time. The following section describes the collaborative process employed by the QCS team to develop each interview protocol. Next, the research designs for each year are described with a focus on the content and structure of the interview data, including details about the TAPL Protocol, of particular relevance to this study.

Informed by the work of Susan Moore Johnson (2004) and studies conducted at the National Center for Research on Teacher Education (Kennedy, Ball, & McDiarmid, 1993), semi-structured interview protocols were constructed through a rigorous and systematic group process. These semi-structured interviews enabled the researchers to guide conversations using consistent general questions and probes, yet provided flexibility to probe further or pursue important topics. The research design was parallel, but allowed for flexibility depending on the experiences of participants. In designing each protocol, the QCS team discussed the overarching purpose of the interview. Next, a smaller group of team members drafted a protocol and returned to the larger group for comments and revisions. Team members then piloted the revised protocol with two teacher candidates or classroom teachers who had background characteristics similar to those of the study participants. Based on the pilot, team members completed suggested changes to both the content and organization of the protocol and then brought the revised version to the QCS team for final approval. This iterative process was followed for each
interview protocol conducted during the first two years of the study, providing consistency and validity across multiple interviewers.

Permission to conduct research with human subjects was sought by following the procedures through Hillside’s Institutional Review Board. Consent was obtained from every participant in the study (see Appendix E for consent form).

*Year 1 Design – Qualitative Case Study*

During Year 1, participants were followed through the preservice period, documenting how they understood and experienced course work, student teaching, and the interrelationship among program elements. During this time, six face-to-face interviews, varying in length from 1-2 hours, were conducted with each participant. The interviews focused on the following topics:

- Interview 1—educational background, program and teaching expectations
- Interview 2—pre-practicum experience
- Interview 3—teacher education and A&S coursework
- Interview 4—full-practicum experience
- Interview 5—assessment and pupil learning, including TAPL
- Interview 6—general program experience, expectations for how this would influence teaching, and future plans.

In addition to the topics noted above, questions about pupil learning and social justice were woven throughout each interview to explore the development of participants’ conceptions of these central themes of the QCS project. This longitudinal design enabled researchers to capture an in-depth look at the teacher candidate experience from the participants’ perspectives over time.
Year 2 Design – Qualitative Case Study

During the second year of the study, three additional, two-hour interviews were used to document the first-year teaching experience. These interviews linked the preservice experience to the realities of classroom teaching and life as a first-year teacher. The interviews included a continued focus on the central themes of the QCS project introduced in Year 1, teaching for social justice and pupil outcomes, as well as additional topics deemed important during the first year. These included

- Interview 7—general experiences as first-year teacher, mentoring, and induction
- Interview 8—pupil learning, assessment, social justice
- Interview 9—overview of first year, future plans, reflection on preliminary research findings concerning pupil learning and social justice

Year 3 Design - Qualitative Case Study

The team’s original research plan did not include a third-year design. However, due to the continuation of the doctoral researchers on the project and the extensive relationships built with participants over the course of the study, the project was extended with a modified design. During the third year, the novice teachers were interviewed twice, once during the first semester and once at the conclusion of the school year. The interviews were similar in structure to those conducted in the second year, with a focus on the QCS project themes of pupil learning and social justice. Specifically, the two interviews focused on the following:

- Interview 10—differences between the first and second years of teaching, pupil learning, and social justice
- Interview 11—big picture perceptions of the role as teacher and completion of a longitudinal teacher growth chart.
The Interview 11 protocol included a longitudinal examination of participants’ perceptions of their general growth as teachers over time. This was first completed using a general approach. Data were then grouped into three strands—development of content knowledge, pedagogy and practice, and understanding of the role of the teacher. The team hoped to gain a sense for how teachers viewed their growth processes during the various stages of learning to teach: prior to teacher preparation, during teacher education coursework, during the student teaching experience, and finally, during the first and second years of teaching. (All 11 interview protocols are located in Appendix C.)

Teacher Assessment/ Pupil Learning Protocol (TAPL)

As noted throughout the three-year designs, pupil learning remained a central theme. Since the QCS team hoped to gain a better sense for how teachers articulate their understanding of created learning opportunities and the ensuing pupil learning, an internal evaluation⁴ was developed and inserted into five of the eleven interviews (5, 8, 9, 10, & 11). The internal TAPL evaluation involved participants collecting assessment tasks and pupil work samples during student teaching, as well as the first and second years of teaching. These included one culminating assessment and two assignments leading up to that assessment. In the interview, teacher candidates described the assessment tasks and larger unit from which the task derived. Teachers also evaluated learning goals, pupils’ performance on the assessments, and changes they might make on the assessment. Teachers then selected examples of “high,” “medium,” and “low” pupil performances from the work samples and addressed questions related to pupils’ learning on these assessments. (See Figure 3.1 for details on TAPL project categories.)

⁴ The TAPL protocol included both an internal and external evaluation. Only the internal evaluation was used in this study. See D’Souza (2008) and Gleeson, A. M., Mitchell, K., Baroz, R., and Cochran-Smith, M. (2008) for details on the external evaluation.
**Figure 3.1: QCS Internal TAPL Protocol - Question Categories and Interview Questions**

**Interview Question Categories and TAPL Interview Questions:**

1. **Description of Assessments and Classroom/School Context**
   Questions related to the creation, implementation, sequencing, and rationale for use of the assessment.
   - How do these assignments fit into a larger unit?
   - Probes:
     - Was this something you devised yourself?
     - Was any part of this lesson from a preexisting lesson that you adapted?
     - Why did you decide this lesson/assignment/assessment would be appropriate? How much autonomy did you have in creating the lesson or assignment?

2. **Evaluation**
   Questions related to pupil learning goals on the assessment and teachers’ understanding of how pupils met goals and demonstrated proficiency.
   - What did you want students to get out of this activity?
   - How do you know whether or not students accomplished what you wanted them to get out of this activity/lesson/unit?
   - Probe: How did you evaluate these assignments (rubric, scoring, etc.)?

3. **Change**
   Questions related to how well the assessment worked and how it might be altered for future use.
   - Is there anything you would change about this lesson or assignment or unit? What? Why?

4. **High, Medium, and Low**
   Questions related to the selection of high, medium, and low examples of pupil work; the context related to these examples and pupils; and comparisons between these pupils' performances and the performance of the whole class.
   - Let’s now look at your examples of a high, a medium, and a low-level response. How do these samples compare to the overall class?
   - Probe: Is this work representative of the class? Is this what you expected?
   - Did the students who completed these examples meet your expectations? Why or why not?
   - Probe: What might you do differently in the future for each of these students?
   - Why did you choose these?
   - Probe: Tell me about these three students (SPED, ELL, Bilingual).

---

**Data Analysis – Part 1: Qualitative Case Study**

As a research team, our data analysis was informed by what Hill, Thompson and Williams (1997) call a “consensual” approach to qualitative data analysis. This approach uses inductive analysis to build explanations from the bottom up, rather than testing...
hypotheses from the top down. Moreover, with consensual qualitative research, all data are collected using standardized protocols to provide consistency across data collection methods, and a team of researchers works to arrive at “consensus judgments” (p. 521). Although time consuming, we used this labor-intensive approach for analysis because we worked as a team of two faculty and nine doctoral researchers. This process allowed for a larger number of cases than a single researcher could complete, but maintained the integrity of themes that emerged inductively from multiple readings of the data.

The first stage of interview data analysis was a collective endeavor that began with a general discussion of the first set of interviews and focused on the central themes of the research: conceptions about the nature of teaching, social justice, teacher quality, and pupil learning. Overall categories and more specific codes within each category were determined after considerable group discussion. These discussions clarified how to interpret a code, sharpen definitions, and suggest new codes. Preliminary coding and group discussion, conducted over a period of several months, increased the reliability of the analysis, as all researchers were engaged in these efforts at creating common understandings about our codes and categories. Based on this initial analysis, we then sought to explicitly define each code and provide specific excerpts from our data to further clarify our understanding. Ultimately, we created a code dictionary (see Appendix D) in HyperRESEARCH, a software program designed to manage large amounts of qualitative data (Hesse-Biber, Dupuis, & Kinder, 1991). The code dictionary included each code, its definition, and excerpts from the interviews. Figure 3.2 shows an example of a code, “Teacher Candidate Learn,” used to code comments about the teacher candidates’ learning in the teacher preparation program or in other learning experiences.
Two excerpts, one about a teacher candidate’s experience learning math and another more general comment about how a teacher candidate understands her own learning style, are provided with this code.

*Figure 3.2: QCS Code Definitions and Excerpt*

**Teacher Candidate Learn (TC Learn)** - Conditions and Contexts under which Teacher Candidates learn, either in the program or in other learning experiences. (NOTE: this is not the code for references to what they specifically learned in a particular class, but instead more general comments about TC learning)

*Excerpt 1:* “I mean, math was one thing that I struggled with all throughout school, and now when I got to the college level and had to take calculus it was a cinch, and I really attributed it to the teachers.” (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 1)

*Note:* double coded MATH

*OR*

*Excerpt 2:* “The first thing that comes to mind is that I would characterize myself as a pretty independent learner. I wasn’t really so much into group work. If you had to do it, you had to do it. I liked learning things on my own.” (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 4)

After completing the code list with definitions and examples, each team member coded the same set of excerpts from Interviews 1-5, first independently and then with a partner. As an additional measure to ensure inter-coder reliability, the group collectively examined one coded interview and discussed questions concerning the coding. This recursive process clarified code meaning, leading to a shared understanding of the entire code list. This rigorous, iterative process ensured that researchers could eventually code independently with a reasonable degree of reliability.

The final code list includes four major categories (Entering Characteristics, Teacher Education, School Context, and Teaching as a Profession) with a total of 108 codes. For example, the overarching category, “Entering Characteristics,” has thirteen codes. (Figure 3.3 details this category and its codes.)
**Figure 3.3: QCS Category and Code List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entering Characteristics (EC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC-Family</strong> - information about TC’s own family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC-Ident</strong> – participant’s identity; sense of self (e.g. quiet, religious); personal characteristics; ideas about one’s strengths and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC-Prev Know</strong> (Previous Knowledge) - what TC already knew about teaching, content, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC-Reasons Hillside</strong> - reasons for choosing/attending Hillside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC-Reason T</strong> - reasons the participant offers for choosing to teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC-SchExp</strong> - any description of the participants’ previous school experiences (K-12, college)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC-SchExp Coll</strong> - college experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC-SchExp Elem</strong> – high school experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC-SchExp HS</strong> – elementary school experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC-SchExp MS</strong> - middle school or junior high experiences (6th-8th grade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC-SesDemo</strong> - Any information regarding the participants’ SES/Demographics (e.g., financial aid, community in which s/he grew up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC-Trans</strong> - any information regarding the transition to teacher education (e.g., what teacher candidate did prior to or while taking first program courses, his or her feelings about moving from working or college to teacher education/graduate school, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC-Work</strong> - work experiences, including volunteering, part-time work, camp counselor, tutoring, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis- Part 2: Dissertation Study**

This section provides details about the data analysis that moved from the general coding for the larger QCS study to the specific analyses related to this study. A review of the case narratives was drafted by the QCS researchers (myself and two others) who had worked with each participant since the beginning of the study. The narratives, which ranged in length from 30 to 45 pages, provided in-depth detail about the teachers’ backgrounds, schooling experiences, entering beliefs and characteristics, opportunities to learn in the program, experiences during their first two years of teaching, and their focus on content, pedagogy, learning, assessment, and social justice. In creating the narratives, each researcher drew on data from interviews with supervisors, cooperating teachers, and mentors; observations of participants’ teaching; sample assignments from participants’
education coursework; and samples of their pupils’ work. The narratives provided a broad reflection of the participants’ experiences learning to teach over the three-year period. Moving from this holistic overview of the five teachers, I reviewed the initial phase of coding, which addressed general QCS research questions, and thus, remained relatively broad.

Reviewing the QCS initial codes provided an opportunity to examine each interview in its entirety while identifying categories related to pupil learning. The data were read in a number of ways to ensure openness to “new perspectives” of the material and “unforeseen directions” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 515). For instance, each interview for all five participants was read chronologically; next all the interviews were read in groups—meaning the interview 5s were read consecutively, followed by all interview 8s, and so on. While doing so, I focused specific attention to the QCS codes related to assessment and pupil learning. (See Figure 3.4.)

Figure 3.4: Focus Codes from QCS Code Dictionary for Dissertation Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category: Teaching as a Profession (PRO)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRO-Theories: Theories of teaching and curriculum; conceptions of the nature and activity of teaching, learning, and curriculum (transmission, critical thinking, social change, etc.) and notions of curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO-T Models (teaching models): Models of good and bad teaching; examples and descriptions of good and bad teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO-Curric Models (curricular models): Models of good and bad curricula; examples and descriptions of good and bad curricula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO-Curric Und (curricular understanding): notions of curriculum; ideas about good and bad curricula, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO-Effic (efficacy): self-perceptions, reflections of self as teacher, sense of confidence in making a difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO-Auto (autonomy): references to the teacher candidate’s/teacher’s autonomy in the classroom (e.g., did the teacher candidate create his/her own lesson, or did s/he use the cooperating teacher’s lesson plans?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO-Teach Role (teacher role): what participants believe is the role and job of a teacher in the classroom, school, and community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Category: School Context (SC)

SC-SchCult (school culture): comments about curriculum that school or district or state requires, including frameworks, standards, mandated materials, and texts.

SC-Account Req (accountability required): any comments about school, state, or district required assessment and/or accountability.

Stand Alone Codes (no category)

Assessment: assessments related to K-12 pupils (that are not imposed from district, state, etc.).

Expectations Pupils: teacher candidate/teacher expectations of pupils (i.e., are there high expectations for all students, or are there some students “who just won’t get it?”)

Teacher Candidate/Teacher Learning: conditions and contexts under teacher candidates/teachers learn, either in the program or other experiences.

Pedagogy: the teaching methods, strategies, actions taken in class (broadly defined) setting, or general judgments about pedagogy.

Assignment: nature of an assignment, the practice of teaching regarding creating assignments, understanding or rationale for assignment, criteria for judging.

Grades: grades or marks given to pupils as a form of evaluation; also refers to ranking of pupils.

Levels of Thinking: references to such things as higher order, literal, inferential, critical; the level of cognitive complexity.

Dissertation study coding. After reviewing the coding completed by the larger QCS team, paying particular attention to the codes listed in Figure 3.4, a set of codes, specific to this study, which incorporated some codes from the QCS study and some additional codes related to pupil learning (see Figure 3.5 for code list), was developed.

Using HyperResearch, one interview from each participant was initially coded using the new list. After coding several interviews, the code list was examined to determine which were being used and which needed modification. For example, the code labeled “pupil ability” was merged with “pupil effort/motivation,” as the two were coded together in most cases. A revised list of codes was then applied to several more interviews. This process continued several more times as codes were revised and tested against the data. After establishing the final code list, all interviews were reviewed one final time.
The next step in data analysis involved collapsing codes to define larger categories, which were used to develop a framework for understanding how beginning teachers focused on pupil learning. Developing these categories involved “successive iterations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 256), wherein data were reorganized according to broader analytic interpretations (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For example, developing the category “moral sensibility” (Hansen, 2001; Burant, Chubbuck, & Whipp, 2007) involved combining perseverance, reflection, and social justice into one category, as these were the primary dispositions and stances supporting the participants’ negotiation of their contextual challenges. The process of grouping codes facilitated the development of the framework used to explain the main research question—To what extent do beginning teachers focus on pupils’ learning from the preservice period through the first two years in the classroom?

One of the more important aspects of category development involved verifying that the relationships made sense by searching for “patterns, themes, regularities, as well
as contrasts, paradoxes, and irregularities” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 47).
Consequently, a process of testing various data sources, both confirming and disconfirming, and revising the associated categories, was used. For example, school context, initially an individual code, was determined to be a category that subsumed other codes like scheduling/teaching load and pupil effort/motivation, because these were key factors in shaping the school context. This process of constructing a framework that represented teachers’ focus on pupil learning involved a close examination of category formation to see if meaningful explanations were included (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Due to the cross-case nature of this study, category development was conducted by grouping codes through a process of critical reflection on and identification of themes as they were found in the accounts of multiple respondents (Swanson-Kauffman & Schonwald, 1988 as cited in Ayres, et al., 2003). This process enabled identification of possible connections between categories through the comparison of participant experiences over the three-year period. For example, the development of categories representing teachers’ practices related to pupil learning—relationships with pupils, classroom management, high expectations, and instruction and assessment—manifested through a comparison of teachers’ experiences over time.

**Theoretical coherence.** The ultimate goal of this study was for the interpretations to move to broader conceptual understandings accounting for the “how” and “why” of learning to teach for pupil learning (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These interpretations were intended to build from the theoretical foundation of the study and be generalizable beyond the study (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 197). In this study, the analysis built, first, upon the sociocultural theoretical framework with additional insight from stage
theory (Fuller, 1969) and constructivist assessment theory (Shepard, 2001). The supporting interpretive frameworks offered a lens for interpreting the data and organizing data into two broad categories: teaching practices and negotiating the context. The relationships between these categories, the theoretical groundings supporting this analysis, and the resulting framework (see Figure 4.1) that explained the phenomenon of beginning teachers focusing on pupil learning are applicable beyond this study.

Integrity of the Study

Reflexivity

Reflexivity offers a means to acknowledge the influence of qualitative researchers on interactions with participants as well as on the interpretive research process. As Rossman and Rallis (2003) noted, “qualitative research is quintessentially interactive . . . the researcher is involved, face to face, with participants in the study. . . . This implies that the knowledge constructed during qualitative study is interpretive . . . data are filtered through the researcher’s unique ways of seeing the world—his lens or worldview” (p. 35). Consequently, reflexivity involves making a researcher’s assumptions and biases clear and revealing to the reader how these assumptions might impact the subsequent findings and what efforts were made to limit doing so. With this concern in mind, Schram (2003) pushed for researchers to develop self-awareness, “examining what I know and how I know it” in order to construct “an authentic understanding of what’s going on” (p.8). Through self-questioning, the qualitative researcher makes explicit perspectives and assumptions in order to provide credibility for a study, not undermine it (Schram).
Using a reflexive approach, the QCS team used the conceptual framework for assessing teacher education from the larger Evidence Team (see Appendix A) to give a central focus for constructing a research design that accounted for those aspects of teacher education considered integral to the learning to teach process. The team’s bimonthly meetings created an opportunity for researchers to work collaboratively on each step of the research process, including design of interview and observation protocols, participant access and relationship building, and the cyclical data analysis process. Furthermore, the group dynamic created an iterative process of data analysis in which all researchers were part of the code development, refinement, and analysis process. Through this consensual (Hill et al., 1997) approach, a variety of opinions and perspectives helped to prevent the biases that might surface from only one researcher’s analysis. Additionally, Hill et al. suggested that “the whole process of reaching consensual agreement hinges on the fact that there will be initial differences” (p. 524). Working as a researcher within this group dynamic, I regularly reflected on my own beliefs and assumptions and how they fit into the larger group’s perspective. Independent reflection, coupled with the group research dynamic, made for a reflexive, transparent research process.

**Validity**

Validity in qualitative research is often described in terms of credibility and transferability, meaning the extent to which conclusions are believable, trustworthy, and able to transfer to another context (Lather, 2001). Kvale (1996) described three criteria for validating qualitative research: validity as quality of craftsmanship, as communication, and as action or pragmatic validity. Quality of craftsmanship refers to
the credibility of the researcher and the research project. The QCS project worked to ensure craftsmanship by checking, questioning, and theorizing the research process through participant feedback during interview protocols, triangulation of data sources, and seeking connections to theoretical frameworks (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). For example, in terms of participant checking, teachers were asked to respond to findings from two of our broad research themes—social justice and pupil learning—during the final interview of the Year 2 research design.

Communicative validity refers to the open dialogue of findings with others in the field. This includes those making competing claims on a given topic. For QCS and other studies from the Evidence Team (see Appendix B), the research findings were constantly shared with the teacher education faculty at Hillside College, as well as with a broader audience through presentations at national and international conferences and publications. Through these open dialogues, the research methods and findings were constantly challenged, refined, and strengthened.

Kvale’s (1996) final dimension, pragmatic validity, looks for “action” outcomes (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006), or the extent to which research findings affect both the persons studied and the larger community. Pragmatic validity “raises the issue of power and truth in social research,” as questions are shared about who has power and what should be funded (Kvale, p. 251). For the QCS Project, pragmatic validity was two-fold. First, QCS participants were influenced by the interpretive qualitative research process. For example, participants shared examples of their pupils’ work on multiple occasions. Such reflection may have influenced how candidates understood their assessment efforts as they pondered questions posed in interviews. Second, pragmatic validity was evident
in the larger Evidence Team portfolio of studies, which investigated a far wider set of research questions and whose findings, in turn, set the agenda for future research projects and funding. Finally, Evidence Team findings informed programmatic decisions made by teacher education faculty at Hillside College.

**Rigor**

Another criterion for judging the credibility of research is how rigorously the research was conducted. Unlike quantitative research projects, which mainly focus on the ability to replicate findings, thoughtfulness and dependability are key aspects of rigor in qualitative research (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Rossman and Rallis suggested the following questions for uncovering rigor in qualitative research: Were multiple methods used to collect data? Was the process of gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data transparent? The QCS project used interviews, observations, and artifact collection to diversify data collection, and a consensual approach to qualitative research was utilized throughout the study, thereby promoting transparency in data collection and analysis, as all members were involved in the research process (Hill et al., 1997).

**Limitations**

The diversity of data in the larger QCS project enabled strong triangulation of data across multiple sources. This study, however, focused only on interview data across five participants over the three-year period. While limiting in terms of triangulation, the longitudinal view of learning to teach for pupil learning provides valuable data on a topic that has not been given much attention, as noted in the literature review. In addition, there may have been limitations in terms of the level of intimacy developed for the two participants I followed through the project. For these two participants, I completed twelve
interviews, nine observations, and interviews with the cooperating teacher, university supervisor, administrator, and mentor. These additional sources of data may have influenced analysis of these two individuals. However, every effort was made to limit analysis to the interview data for consistency across the five participants. Furthermore, continuation of the QCS group process provided additional opportunities to reflect and share progress with the research team.
CHAPTER FOUR: UNDERSTANDING HOW BEGINNING TEACHERS FOCUS ON PUPIL LEARNING

Since the 1970s, stage theories of teacher development, particularly, that posited by Fuller and Brown (1975), have argued that beginning teachers are so preoccupied with their own performance that they cannot focus on pupil learning. On the contrary, I maintain that beginning teachers can and do focus on pupil learning during their early teaching years when the conditions are optimum. Interview data from five teacher candidates and the beginning teachers they became, collected throughout the student teaching period and the first two years of full-time teaching, provided persuasive evidence that beginning teachers can emphasize pupil learning. In contrast to prevailing notions that new teachers operate in a “survival” mode (Veenman, 1984), to varying degrees, the five teachers in this study had clear personal expectations for pupils, worked to build relationships with pupils as a means to establish trust, targeted classroom management as a way to influence pupil behavior and ensure learning opportunities, and concentrated on instruction and assessment as a way to understand and enhance pupil learning. Although practices were emphasized more by some teachers than others, all five teachers—to varying degrees—focused on pupil learning during both the student teaching period and the first two years of classroom teaching, even when faced with substantial challenges.

To explore these matters, this chapter begins with a review of guiding theoretical frameworks, which was discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Next, I present an overview illuminating the aspects of practice that arose from cross-case analyses of 55 interviews with five participants over the course of a three-year period. A framework for understanding the findings is depicted by Figures 4.1 and 4.2. These cross-case
interpretations were informed by sociocultural theory (Erickson, 1986; Gee, 1996; Gee 2003), particularly the notion of schools as cultures with value systems that influence the behaviors of teachers and students (Sarason, 1971; Eisenhart, 2001). Thus, these figures offer not only a way of understanding that beginning teachers focused on pupil learning, but also how they did so within differing and complex school contexts and in light of varying individual dispositions and stances toward teaching for social justice and becoming a reflective practitioner.

The final section describes the extent to which Elizabeth and Riley, two of the five participants, focused on pupil learning. The main reason Elizabeth and Riley were placed together in this chapter was due to their similarities in terms of their focus on pupil learning. This organization enabled me to present Elizabeth’s case and then draw comparisons to her as I described Riley’s case, creating a layered approach to analysis that continued through chapter 5 where the remaining three cases are presented. Such a layered approach enabled me to detail the across and within case analyses described in Chapter 3. This approach continues in Chapter 5 where I begin with Sonia and Lola, the two teachers who were constantly improving in their focus on pupil learning. I build the case of each teach while making comparisons between these two teachers before continuing to Mark who was the teacher who struggled the most with pupil learning. In Mark’s case I note the differences in his focus on pupil learning compared to the others. Those aspects that were most salient for each teacher are described in a ‘theorized storyline’ (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2006), a narrative grounded in data analysis and connected to literature pertinent to the field. Collectively, the five theorized storylines revealed how beginning teachers could focus on pupil learning in their daily teaching.
Although slightly different for each teacher, this theme remained consistent across the teachers.

**Understanding Beginning Teachers’ Focus on Pupil Learning**

During the 1970s, stage theory was broadly accepted as a way to understand teacher development, particularly the early years. In light of the incredible demands on teachers during the first year, Fuller (1969) argued that beginning teachers focus on what she called “concerns of self”—class control, content adequacy, and supervisor evaluations—a perspective that gives little attention to pupil learning and contrasts the thinking of more experienced teachers. Building on these and other differences between beginning and experienced teachers, Fuller and Brown (1975) maintained that teachers move through a series of developmental stages as they gain experience: survival concerns, teaching situation concerns, and pupil learning concerns. This occurs in a more or less linear fashion. Thus, over time, teachers either progress to the final stage, where they concentrate on pupil learning, or become stuck at one stage of development and never reached a stage where they focused on pupil learning. In keeping with this theory, it was assumed that the survival stage often encompasses the entire first year of teaching, as new teachers face constant struggles in terms of planning and management; demands are assumed to be so overwhelming that researchers have described the year as one of “reality shock” (Veenman, 1984).

Although stage theory no longer dominates the field of teacher research, it is widely agreed that the first-year of teaching is a period of adjustment for new teachers as they learn about their pupils, work through classroom management difficulties, and face the realities of having their own classrooms (Johnson, 2004). Feiman-Nemser (2003)
argued that the first years of teaching are demanding, formative, and critical to teachers’ decisions to stay or remain in the profession.

In what seems a related development, and despite substantial theory and research to the contrary, the public and policymakers generally assume that teaching is, broadly speaking, a one-way process of transferring knowledge from teachers to pupils (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996). Consistent with the ‘survival’ and ‘teaching situation concerns’ stages, the focus here is on the teachers’ behaviors and strategies rather than understanding how pupils make sense of information and connect it to what they already know. Given this focus on teaching as transferring information, many teacher candidates have preconceived notions about teachers as transmitters of knowledge who view students waiting “like empty vessels to be filled . . . Teachers tell students what they need to know and students listen and learn (that is, memorize) what they have been told” (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996, p. 70).

Juxtaposed with this popular vision of teachers and teaching as a linear process, this study provides strong evidence that learning to teach is anything but linear. Beginning teachers in this study spent much of their time pondering how their pupils learned, reflected on their practice, and attempted new strategies to create better pupil learning outcomes. Consequently, this chapter explores the complexities of learning to teach—how beginning teachers focus on pupil learning, how they access support, and how they negotiate obstacles in their various schools contexts.

To understand how beginning teachers focus on pupil learning, this study drew on sociocultural theory, particularly the idea that learning to teach is a socially constructed process that continues across a teacher’s lifetime. Figure 4.1 was developed after detailed
cross- and within-case comparisons (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003). Specifically, data analysis revealed that four aspects of practice were central to how these teachers focused on pupil learning: holding pupils to high expectations, building relationships with pupils, maintaining classroom management, and delivering sound instruction and assessment. Within these aspects of practice, there were distinct differences in the teachers’ experiences that were shaped, in part, by such contextual factors as professional development opportunities and the degree of administrative support.

Furthermore, I selected the term “moral sensibility” to encompass key dispositions and stances that influenced teachers’ ability to focus on pupil learning. I found the term accurately portrayed my intention of identifying teaching as a moral activity in that critically examining pupil learning reveals that ethical and moral issues pervade the work of teachers. For instance, if some pupils fail to learn, it undermines both their life chances and our democratic government (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; D’Souza, et al, 2007). Thus, pupil learning remains a key focus and inheres in the everyday aspects of classroom life. Due to the centrality of pupil learning to this study, moral sensibility, or the “way in which a teacher thinks and acts” (Hansen, 2001, p. 33; emphasis in original) affected how they negotiated their school context. Burant, Chubbuck, and Whipp (2007) provided a more exhaustive definition of moral sensibility that detailed how I used the term in this study:
A moral sensibility is an orientation toward the student and the profession that serves as the foundation of teacher thought and action. Thus, a moral sensibility (or its lack) produces, underlies, shapes, and sustains what the teacher knows, how the teacher makes sense of that knowledge, and the ways in which the teacher chooses to act in response to knowledge and circumstances. This moral sensibility is more deep-seated than either measurable beliefs or observable behaviors and, though perhaps related to personality traits, it is less static and immutable and can be encouraged, learned, and chosen. Though a moral sensibility may be manifested and made visible in behaviors, such as making oneself available to students after hours or giving students multiple opportunities to succeed in a class, and may prompt belief statements, such as the conviction that all children can learn, it is deeper and more foundational than either knowledge or skills. (p. 405)

In this view, moral sensibility provides an overarching term for understanding how teachers’ beliefs and actions manifest themselves in daily practice in this study. Many scholars have identified personal qualities, dispositions, and stances believed to be key attributes of teachers (Dewey, 1964; Haberman, 1995; Freire, 1998). In this study, the term “moral sensibilities” refers specifically to teachers’ perseverance, commitment to social justice, and engagement in critical self-reflection. These dispositions and stances provide a foundation for how the teachers navigated their teaching cultures. It is important to note that one’s moral sensibility may be modified based on exposure to new ideas and learning experiences. For the teachers in this study, who were graduate students/graduates of a program that explicitly sought to integrate social justice and inquiry, this exposure may have shaped their teaching practices.

To visually display this framework guiding Chapters 4 and 5, Figure 4.1 outlines the interrelationships among key facets of beginning teachers’ focus on pupil learning—the four aspects of practice, key contextual factors, and moral sensibility. The arrows labeled “negotiation” demonstrate the interrelationship among the key facets that influence teachers’ practice.
Beginning teachers used four aspects of practice to focus on pupil learning. This section details those aspects of practice, as well as the contextual factors and moral sensibilities influencing their practices, before moving to the individual theorized storylines. The first aspect of practice, maintaining high expectations, was demonstrated in ways similar to those suggested by Lee, et al. (1999): class time devoted to instruction, level of academic work expected, amount of homework assigned, and the integration of standards into instruction. More specifically, the teachers in this study provided pupils with the opportunity for deeper learning (Shepard, 2001) and promoted development of independent learning. With the exception of Mark, the teachers in this study demonstrated high expectations for pupil achievement.
Teachers also encouraged pupil learning through relationships with their pupils. Researchers have long noted teachers’ desire to build relationships with their pupils. Fuller (1975) suggested that developing relationships simply increases a teacher’s popularity, while Johnson (2004) noted that teachers use relationship building to engage and motivate pupils. Each of the five teachers in this study strove to make personal connections with their pupils to promote academic, social, and emotional growth. As demonstrated by each case, these connections moved beyond a focus on “self” (Fuller, 1975) toward engaging pupils in the learning process (Johnson, 2004).

The third aspect of practice that influenced pupils’ learning was classroom management. Inadequate classroom management is often considered an impediment to pupils’ learning and a troubling issue for many first-year teachers (Huberman, 1989). In fact, research on learning to teach has continually noted the struggles that new teachers face in terms of classroom management. Fuller (1975) argued that beginning teachers are unable to move beyond how management affects their ability to teach, regardless of how pupils react. Contrary to Fuller’s claim, teachers in this study, although challenged by management issues, continually modified their practices to focus on learning outcomes, matching Johnson and her colleagues’ (2004) claim that “the first year of teaching can be a period of adjustment and rapid learning – adjusting to the group of students in the class and learning how to reach them” (p. 74). The teachers in this study struggled, in some instances, with classroom management; however, they sought support, made changes to their practice, and reflected on those adjustments.

The final aspect of practice is the one most commonly assumed to be connected to pupil’s learning—instruction and assessment. Many would agree that the process of
constructing, implementing, and understanding instruction and assessment is one of the more important concerns of a teacher (Newmann et al., 1996; Black, 2001; Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). In terms of understanding the graphic (Figure 4.1), instruction and assessment was only one of four ways in which beginning teachers focused on pupil learning. Certainly constraints and supports, which affect the other three aspects of practice, continued to influence instruction and assessment (which are analyzed in detail in Chapter 6).

In addition to the four aspects of practice just discussed, various contextual factors served as either constraints or supports for teachers’ emphasis on and attention to pupil learning. The difference between a contextual factor assisting or inhibiting a teacher’s focus on learning was sometimes related to teachers’ existing moral sensibilities. The key facets of moral sensibility found in this study were teachers’ engagement in critical self-reflection, commitment to social justice, and ability to persevere.

Critical self-reflection, for example, promotes learners who raise thought-provoking questions and remain life-long learners. At Hillside College, an explicit attempt is made to engage teacher candidates in inquiry practices with the ultimate goal of deepening their understanding of their own and their pupils’ learning, thereby enhancing their pupils’ learning and life chances, and enacting a commitment to teaching for social justice (Cochran-Smith et. al., 2009). As Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) noted, there is more to teaching than content and pedagogy; there is also the process of developing questions that address the ongoing challenges that teachers constantly face.
A commitment to social justice, the second facet of moral sensibility, influenced teachers’ negotiation of their context in this study (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Like becoming a reflective practitioner, teaching for social justice was a major theme of the teacher preparation program at Hillside College. The goal of teaching for social justice is that “all students—whether or not they have special learning needs, are English learners, are considered ‘at risk’ by the system, or live in poor neighborhoods—have access to rich opportunities to learn basic skills as well as more complex thinking and reasoning skills” (Cochran-Smith, Mitescu, & Shakman, 2009, p. 5). To accomplish this, teachers help all pupils gain knowledge, skills, and the ability to think critically, all under the premise that teaching is enhancing pupils’ learning and their life chances by challenging the inequities of school and society (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Michelli & Keiser, 2005; Zeichner, 2003).

Perseverance, the final aspect of moral sensibility described in this study, was a quality identified by Haberman (1995) in practitioners whom he deemed “star teachers” for urban students. He described successful teachers, working in challenging school settings, as resilient in the face of challenge:

Stars believe it is their responsibility to find ways of engaging their students in learning. Stars describe their jobs . . . as the continuous generation and maintenance of student interest and involvement. . . . [F]or the class as a whole, they feel a constant responsibility to make the classroom an interesting, engaging climate that, on a daily basis, involves children in all forms of learning. . . . [O]n an individual level, stars are persistent in meeting the needs of [all students]. (Haberman, 1995, p. 13)

Furthermore, Corbett, Wilson, and Williams (2002) identified two middle schools that accepted “no excuses” for pupil failure. The teachers at these schools, like those in this study, felt compelled to persevere and address “perceived student challenges directly and creatively, taking responsibility for providing students with learning opportunities”
Collectively, critical reflection, a commitment to social justice, and perseverance, or the ‘moral sensibility’ of the teachers, played an integral role in how the teachers negotiated their contexts.

For some teachers, a balance among these facets of moral sensibility influenced their focus on pupil learning, while for others, one factor dominated. In addition, the sociocultural theories that guided this study highlight how school contexts and moral sensibilities are interrelated. A sociocultural perspective takes into account the interaction of multiple factors influencing how individuals negotiate new learning experiences (Gee, 2003). When combined with moral sensibility, it was evident that the factors that teachers considered obstacles to their work and those which they considered supports varied from teacher to teacher.

The “living continuum” figure below (see Figure 4.2), which compares the extent to which each of the five teachers in this study focused on pupil learning, was developed after extensive cross-case and within-case analyses over three years to interpret teachers’ experiences both as individuals and in a generalizable way across the five cases (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003). This process preserved the richness of the individual cases, yet the continuum’s use of “greater” and “weaker” descriptors provided a comparison of these five teachers to one another. It is a “living” continuum because teacher placement regularly shifted with new experiences, opportunities, and obstacles. The continuum remains in a state of flux as it evolves and changes as the teachers progress through their careers. For example, as teachers move to new positions or to new schools, there is potential for an improved support system which could move them further to the right on the continuum.
Figure 4.2: Extent to which Beginning Teachers Focused on Pupil Learning

The continuum in Figure 4.2 is used in combination with Figure 4.1 to describe aspects of practice, key contextual factors, and moral sensibilities that revealed the extent to which beginning teachers focused on pupil learning in each of the five cases in the study.

Beginning Teachers’ Focus on Pupil Learning

Each teacher’s theorized storyline demonstrated not only his or her focus on pupil learning, but also the how, when, where, and why they did so in their daily practice. These cases and the cross-case findings provided strong evidence for rejecting the notion that new teachers are not developmentally ready to consider pupils’ learning (Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Brown, 1975). Rather, the teachers in this study were concerned about issues that could be described as focusing on ‘self’ at the same time that they focused on understanding and enhancing pupil learning, suggesting that the concerns of new teachers are not linear, one-at-a-time singular preoccupations, but rather develop in tandem with one another. Overall, these teachers influenced pupil learning to a great extent; however, each worked toward the goal in a different manner. Just as each teacher entered teaching with a different background, each teacher negotiated school and larger contexts in unique ways.
As noted on the continuum graphic in Figure 4.2, when compared to the other four teachers, Elizabeth focused on pupil learning to the greatest extent. She influenced her pupils’ learning through each of the four aspects of practice, successfully navigated contextual obstacles through her perseverance, and was highly reflective and committed to social justice in that she made an effort to meet the needs of all learners in her class. Therefore, I use the case of Elizabeth as the entry point for analysis. Elizabeth’s theorized storyline begins with a summary of her trajectory during the three years in the study, followed by a detailed analysis of the aspects of her practice that influenced pupil learning. I then discuss how Elizabeth negotiated her very challenging context through a look at her moral sensibilities.

*Overview of Elizabeth’s Case*

Elizabeth, a 22-year-old white female, grew up in an affluent suburb of a large New England city and excelled in the classroom. She was academically self-motivated and sought extra help in math, her most difficult subject in high school. Elizabeth entered the Hillside College Master’s program in secondary English directly from her Jesuit undergraduate institution. As an undergraduate, she majored in English and sociology with an urban concentration. She was not planning to pursue a teaching degree until she had a rewarding experience tutoring inner city youth during the latter part of her undergraduate experience. Elizabeth only applied to graduate programs with a strong emphasis on preparing teachers to teach in urban schools. At Hillside College, she was accepted into the Urban Scholars Program, a cohort model focused on preparing urban teachers.
Elizabeth’s pre-practicum and full-practicum placements were with the same cooperating teacher in her 11th and 12th grade English classes. Elizabeth secured her cooperating teacher’s position upon her retirement at the conclusion of the school year. Due to major renovations on the building, the school was temporarily housed in another building for Elizabeth’s first two years of teaching. The transfer placed Elizabeth in an older building with few resources. Her classroom lacked a computer, printer, overhead projector screen, locking filing cabinets, or white boards. However, for her third year, the school returned to the renovated building, and Elizabeth was provided with additional resources.

As a white female who grew up in an upper-middle class, Catholic family, Elizabeth was very different from the pupils she taught at one of the city’s more challenging high schools. Her greatest challenge was the poor attendance records of many of her pupils. Although initially discouraged by this trend, she remained optimistic and committed to teaching urban pupils.

Elizabeth’s commitment to urban youth, combined with her work ethic and organizational skills, all contributed to her success in both the Master’s program and teaching. Elizabeth remained in the same position through her third year of teaching, with variation in grade level taught. She has no plans to leave her current position, as she sees it as her career and is saving to purchase a condominium. Her dream job would be as an English department chair at an urban high school. Her current school does not have department chair positions.


text

Practice

Holding Pupils to High Expectations

Elizabeth’s intense focus on pupil learning during her early teaching experiences provided key evidence, contrary to stage theory, that beginning teachers can focus on pupil learning even in difficult teaching contexts. Elizabeth made high expectations a priority in her planning, instruction, and assessment. She consistently demonstrated this through the high expectations that she set for her pupils with regards to class work and homework. Elizabeth explicitly described her role in holding her pupils responsible for their learning even when they failed to prepare for class:

I expect them to do their work all the time. I expect that I’m going to always have something that [the students] have to do. They always have work to do, and it’s fairly rigorous and it’s due the next day. I expect that they come in and sit down and listen to me, which is not always the case. And I expect that they’re putting in time after school. I will not stop giving them homework because they don’t do it. That’s one thing I refuse to do…. I feel like I’d be cheating them if I just planned my lessons every day. It makes it harder when they come in and they don’t have their homework, but that’s then my job to make sure they learn something even though they didn’t do the prior night’s homework….They’ve said that they’ve had English teachers in the past that have not given them homework and I know why [because they will not do it]. I said, ‘Absolutely not. You need to have homework.’ (Interview 8)

Elizabeth decided that her pupils would be assigned homework each night, even if many failed to complete it on a regular basis; lowering her expectations was not an option in her mind. Although Elizabeth took full responsibility for her high expectations, she put significant ownership of learning on her pupils. She believed that her expectations were challenging, yet reasonable, if her pupils were willing to put forth effort:

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5 In this and the next two chapters, minor modifications have been made to the participants’ interview comments. These changes include the removal of “like” and “you know,” and omission of repeated words such as “I mean, I think, I think.” These omissions are intended only to facilitate the flow of the comments and thus are not represented by ellipses. Ellipses are used when more substantive material was omitted.
I think no matter what their learning style . . . or how long they’ve been in this country, if they really want to do the work . . . if they put the effort in then, yes, my expectations will be met. . . . If they really want it enough, to turn it around they will. . . . And they understand and they just continue to work hard and they continue to come and be attentive and do their homework and if it’s not done right and I say “do it again,” they come back and they do it again and . . . it’s great. So if they really want to do it, yes, then they will; yes, they will rise to the expectation. (Elizabeth, Interview 8)

Elizabeth did not lower her expectations for pupils who faced challenges in their learning or language proficiency. She scaffolded pupils’ learning in different ways and provided additional resources for some, but she was adamant about not changing her expectations.

Elizabeth also believed that one of her main goals was encouraging pupils to become more independent in their learning. As a high school teacher, she hoped to prepare her pupils for the realities of post-secondary schooling:

My goal really is for them to be more independent. . . . more focused on what they can do for themselves, not so much me doing everything . . . I probably always thought that anyway, but giving them the resources to do things on their own because they’re so coddled all the way through anyway. So that’s definitely a focus now. They need to learn to do things more on their own. So I’m not really quite sure if I was focused on that last year; maybe I was, but it seems like this year . . . I just really want them to be more independent. (Elizabeth, Interview 10)

Elizabeth believed that her goal of developing independent learners was essential; she did not feel that her pupils had been challenged in school and consequently would not be prepared for college, a goal she hoped each of her pupils would achieve.

In her end-of-year essay assignment, Elizabeth continued to push for more independence. She wanted her pupils to gain experiences similar to those they would find in college, where essay questions were not provided, but instead, pupils had to develop their own topic of exploration. She stated, “So essentially I wanted them to have practice with coming up with their own ideas, like picking an idea that they’re interested in and
then trying to develop their arguments” (Elizabeth, Interview 11). Elizabeth was committed to developing independent learners because she believed that her pupils needed such skills to go on to higher education. In part, she attributed her commitment to holding high expectations to her school administration’s failure to do so. She was incensed during the interview at the conclusion of her first year as she shared the administration’s willingness to make accommodations for pupils who had not met graduation requirements:

Now when it’s come time for seniors to see if they are eligible to graduate . . . there are so many accommodations being made. . . . We’re doing them such a disservice by continually raising the amount of accommodations we make like “Oh, you can hand this in late. Oh, you can take your final exam whenever you want even though you’ve been here everyday letting these seniors take their final exams.” That is not helping them. . . . we should stand on the corner of . . . [a local] road and just hand out diplomas the way that this school treats this whole issue. . . . students need to be held accountable for what they do no matter how shitty their life is. . . .That’s why I want to be a teacher in the city because they need to be pushed hard. You can’t let them pass when they don’t deserve to pass. That will not help them. (Elizabeth, Interview 9)

The school’s failure to follow stated graduation requirements further compounded Elizabeth’s push to develop independent learners because such exceptions meant there was no school-wide accountability for learning.

Building Pupil Relationships

Elizabeth developed relationships with individual pupils whom she believed needed personal attention and were not achieving their potential. Elizabeth hoped that her efforts to develop personal connections with pupils would motivate them to become independent learners. She recounted approaching a pupil after class:

[I said,] “What’s going on? I’m just kind of disappointed. You can do much better than this. You’re very bright.” He just got teary [and] he walked away. That was it. I didn’t bring it up again. But he knows that he can be working harder than he is. I don’t know if it’s just the peer pressure where he just wants to hang out with
his friends. He doesn’t make the time anymore. But I feel like he’s on the cusp. I’m trying to pull him back in to really work hard. (Elizabeth, Interview 8)

Elizabeth’s push to motivate this pupil stemmed largely from a desire to support pupil learning. Likewise, she found one-on-one conversations to be an effective means of conveying her interest in her pupil’s learning:

I pulled one of them aside the other day . . . we have a nice relationship and I said, “Listen, I think you’ve got a lot going on in your life. I don’t know what your living situation is like. If you ever need to talk, please do, but you need to turn it around because now you’ve got two F’s and you won’t be a 12th grader next year.” (Elizabeth, Interview 8)

Elizabeth’s commitment to challenge her pupils academically and push them beyond their comfort zone demonstrated her commitment to pupil learning. She even went so far as to admit that education should “hurt” sometimes because learning new things is difficult and challenging.

In addition, when working with another pupil who openly shared his dislike for writing multiple drafts, which Elizabeth saw as a critical academic skill, she shared a copy of her own writing for a professional development course she was taking on the revision process:

I showed [my own rough draft to] a 10th grader who hates rough drafts. He had mistakes. I showed him one of my rough drafts that had comments all over it. He was like, “Oh, my god. Oh you made a mistake, but it’s so long.” I said, “Do you see length had nothing to do with it. Like look, I have to do it again.” So that’s become a nice mechanism to use myself. . . . Everyone continues to learn. It’s not something you get perfect at. (Elizabeth, Interview 11)

Elizabeth’s willingness to share her rough draft demonstrated her own continued learning and associated risk-taking. In another instance, she participated in a teacher-student soccer game, knowing that she was a terrible player, which would demonstrate to her pupils their superior skills, as well as her comfort taking risks:
It really was great for me to . . . put myself in the learner role and to feel . . . completely vulnerable. I was a complete fool on the court, but I just loved it that students showed up to see that learning is a two-way street. . . . It’s very difficult to learn something and I think that by showing them that I can see that, that hopefully it encourages them to see the importance of really pushing themselves hard to do well in school. (Elizabeth, Interview 7)

By demonstrating her lack of skills, Elizabeth enabled her pupils to see her as a real person with strengths and weaknesses to be improved upon—something she hoped she could develop in her own pupils.

Furthermore, as a secondary English teacher, Elizabeth hoped her personal connections with pupils would push them into higher education through an increased awareness of the relationship between school and one’s future opportunities. Through her discussions with pupils, she came to realize that very few saw college as a possibility. As a consequence, she created lessons that included discussions of statistics describing the relationship between race and income in the United States and the phenomenon of redlining in real estate. Unfortunately, Elizabeth did not feel as though her pupils were engaged. An alternative strategy for realizing these goals was to develop individual relationships with her pupils to promote their understanding of education and future opportunities:

I talked to Marco quite a few times because he is in the mindset that he is not going to any further education, and that really gets me, because I don’t like to hear him say that. . . . [I asked him,] “How are you going to be able to support yourself in a city like this if you don’t have an education? . . . you’ll be washing dishes and you’ll make $6.50 an hour and you won’t be able to live on your own, let alone if you’re ever in charge of supporting someone else.” (Elizabeth 8)
Through such conversations, she took it upon herself to talk with pupils openly and honestly about their futures after high school, demonstrating how her role as teacher extended beyond her English lessons.

For Elizabeth, the relationships she built with her pupils became a source of empowerment. As noted earlier, Elizabeth’s school environment presented many challenges, including poor attendance rates for pupils, lack of consistent discipline from administrators, and minimal resources. The relationships Elizabeth built with her pupils—which began during student teaching and continued through her first two years of teaching—were an invaluable source of support. As a first-year teacher, Elizabeth had only two formal teaching observations from a school administrator. Thus, the pupil feedback she received was not only empowering, but also some of the only feedback she received. For example, one of her pupils, during student teaching, wrote her a card on her last day:

She wrote, “You changed my life”... I was like, wow, I was flabbergasted. I was [shocked] because half the time she didn’t do the work, but she was always nice to me and so on. She’s always just very respectful, and she always used to say when it was evident that I felt I wasn’t doing a very good job, she goes, “You’re doing a good job”... There was one day I was kinda like, “Really? Do you really think so?” And in front of the whole class I was like, “Do you really think I am? Because I don’t think I am. This is hard.” She said “No, you’re doing a good job. Just keep it up.” (Elizabeth, Interview 5)

Elizabeth felt comfortable admitting that she was not always sure if she was helping her pupils learn—again an indication that she was a learner even as the teacher.

Furthermore, Elizabeth believed that there was more to school than academic learning. The relationships that Elizabeth built with her pupils became opportunities for her to foster social and emotional growth as well:
Someone said some catchy thing like, “[Students] don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care about them”. And I’ve seen that come through. A lot of them had to write reflective essays for their portfolio and I have seen that come through. I had an idea of what they thought about me as a person but like many said, it’s very clear Ms. Sigel cares about us. So even though maybe I didn’t teach them all the English terms that we’re to cover this year, I think that maybe they’re more apt to listen because they knew I did care about them. I’m glad that I conveyed that message to them.

Elizabeth sought to promote high expectations for her pupils through her relationship building (Eisenhart, 2001). This goal was often complicated by contextual factors like lack of pupil effort and inadequate resources. However, despite these obstacles, Elizabeth pushed pupils to see the importance of their role in the education process. In many cases, Elizabeth did not find immediate success in turning pupils’ focus back toward academics, but she believed that even small instances of success like a pupil meeting with her after school to work on drafts were necessary steps toward improved learning outcomes.

*Maintaining Classroom Management*

Unlike most teachers, Elizabeth had minimal struggles with classroom management during her first year. By her second year of teaching, she noted that classroom management was one of her strengths. Elizabeth believed that classroom management was a key element in promoting pupil learning; without strong management, she did not believe she could effectively implement her lessons. She noted, “Classroom management, that’s like 80% of your job; otherwise, no one listens to you” (Elizabeth, Interview 8). Elizabeth knew that classroom management was a struggle for most beginning teachers and realized that her student teaching placement did not provide her with the potential challenges of management. Elizabeth stated, “I didn’t realize how huge that was until I was on my own because my cooperating teacher, everyone listened to her.
She didn’t have an issue with classroom management” (Elizabeth, Interview 8).

Classroom management was not always easy for Elizabeth, but the examples of her cooperating teacher and others at her school enabled her to make continuous improvements to her practice.

At the mid-point of her first year of teaching, Elizabeth emphasized the improvements that she had made in classroom management. For instance, when pupils had difficulty focusing, she had a pupil sit at her desk, which moved that pupil further away from others:

I have been using my desk as a place for students to sit and that worked well . . . even though it’s just one student that changes his seat, it’s made a monumental difference, not only in the behavior of him and the rest of the kids around him, but just in his work ethic. He seems to be a little bit more focused. (Elizabeth, Interview 8)

In line with promoting pupil learning, Elizabeth focused on classroom management stages with that goal in mind.

Also during her first year, when describing her 9th grade reading class, Elizabeth commented on the role that planning played in keeping pupils engaged during class. She stated, “I’ve had some issues. But I think now that I’m more comfortable teaching [9th grade reading] or at least figuring out how to go about doing daily lesson plans that the students will be a little bit more engaged” (Interview 8). Although Elizabeth understood that engagement did not ensure pupils were learning, it was a step toward improved achievement and an area she hoped to improve upon during her first year.

By her second year of teaching, Elizabeth considered classroom management a strength. She attributed this largely to her experiences with pupils during her second year, but acknowledged that she now dealt with situations differently:
I think that’s one strength I have [referring to classroom management]. . . . Yeah, I’m pretty good . . . kids like me. I guess they like me for the most part. . . . I can kind of read them and know when to be sarcastic and funny and then strict and I think the way I balance it for most of them works. . . . And I take things a little more lightly. Like instead of getting upset I try to keep my cool more often. I think I’m much better at that this year, and then instead of getting upset sometimes, I try to turn it into something funny. (Elizabeth, Interview 11)

Elizabeth’s confidence and flexibility with management provided a noted contrast to the “survival” phase of stage theory (Fuller, 1969).

Despite obstacles, Elizabeth focused on pupil learning in many aspects of her practice. She is a clear example of a beginning teacher who can move beyond the constraints described in stage theory, where the focus remains on the teacher; instead, she centered her attention on pupil learning (Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Brown, 1975). Elizabeth demonstrated teacher learning in a reform-oriented manner, where a teacher does not promote teaching as telling and learning as listening, but instead works to understand her pupils’ weaknesses and integrate authentic learning in her teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Negotiating the Context

Contextual Struggles

As noted in the overview, Elizabeth student taught and continued to work at a challenging urban high school with a drop-out rate of 25%, limited resources, and poor communication between administrators and teachers. Thus, multiple factors impeded her success in the classroom. First, she found the administration had no long-term goals for improving learning at the school:
It would be very difficult, I think, to . . . be collective as a whole and . . . address some of the issues that are going on in the school because . . . most of us are not on the same page as our headmaster. I don’t think we are. I’m not. I’m not really on board with the way, just the way she does anything. (Elizabeth, Interview 9)

Elizabeth also described the lack of communication between the administration and faculty. “I think 98% of [these unclear expectations] could be avoided if someone would sit down . . . and really just plan it out and just clearly explain what is expected of teachers, because teachers aren’t certain in terms of . . . these final [portfolios for graduation]” (Elizabeth, Interview 11). Although she had a good relationship with her immediate supervisor, Elizabeth was only observed on a few occasions and received almost no feedback. This lack of support was disappointing, as Elizabeth knew she had room for growth. She found this particularly frustrating when she was granted professional status as a teacher at the conclusion of first year (standard practice after the 3rd year of teaching in Massachusetts) yet had experienced only a couple of observations that year. Furthermore, during her first year, Elizabeth was assigned a formal mentor, with whom she was mandated to meet once a week after school for one hour. Unfortunately, she found this relationship fruitless, as the mentor was a former kindergarten teacher with no high school experience. Elizabeth glibly described the relationship as follows, “If I needed help in something, she wouldn’t be the first person I’d think of to ask for help” (Elizabeth, Interview 7). Elizabeth also found the school schedule frustrating, as there was no rotation. Therefore, she had the same pupils at the conclusion of each school day, which caused difficulties with behavior management and pupil attention. In addition, the week before school started, Elizabeth learned that she would teach one section of ninth grade reading during her first year. She did not feel adequately prepared to teach or that she was given ample time to plan for the course.
To worsen these matters, the school lacked resources, especially during her first two years, when the entire high school was housed in a vacated middle school while the original building underwent massive renovations. As a first-year teacher, Elizabeth’s classroom had a very small black board, no overhead screen, and no computer or printer. The English department’s books were locked in storage closets throughout the school, which meant it took her multiple attempts with the janitor to locate a set of books she could use with her classes. When the school year began, the library was still full of unpacked books and no working computers. The only photocopier was located in the main office and each teacher had to receive training before obtaining a copy code. Consequently, Elizabeth spent the early portion of the school year at a local copy center preparing for her courses. She reflected on her frustration:

I don’t have an overhead screen . . . that make[s] things frustrating. Paper is always a rarity, but that hasn’t been a major issue yet. But resources are very scarce. We don’t have a library yet. Kids do not have access to computers really at all. There are no printers in the building. So resources aren’t good. We don’t have any more money. I don’t know how they divvy up money across the city but there’s no extra private donors giving any money to the school. So things like sporting goods… there aren’t enough shoulder pads . . . for kids to play sports all at the same time. So the football team, they can only practice [with] as many as they have the equipment for. And that’s been an issue . . . I would say we’re very, very limited in our resources. (Elizabeth, Interview 7)

Besides lacking resources, Elizabeth struggled daily with poor pupil attendance and lack of effort. In many classes, only half of the pupils listed on the roster came to school regularly enough for Elizabeth to know their names:

They don’t care about school. They don’t want to be there. . . . They don’t do any homework. You know their expectations for themselves are very low if they’re there at all. . . . There’s a complete apathetic tone to this school and no one really cares to stay here or be here after school hours. That totally translates into, “Do I really want to do my homework? Like who cares?” If I was a student, I’d probably feel the same way because there was nothing else to do but go home every day. (Elizabeth, Interview 8)
Elizabeth believed that the school’s laissez-faire approach to attendance and limited after-school activities only exacerbated the low expectations pupils set for themselves. These factors represent exactly the type of environment which stage theory argues prevents new teachers from moving beyond survival mode (Veenman, 1984; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). Yet, being in the same context for the entire three years of the study helped Elizabeth successfully navigate some obstacles.

Successful Navigation

Although Elizabeth faced many contextual factors that worked against her goals of improving pupil learning, she successfully navigated a number of obstacles. Her resourcefulness began during student teaching, when she found a teacher with surplus grant money who was willing to buy a class set of texts for Elizabeth to use with her 11th grade English class. The texts enabled her to use a unit plan that she had developed in her secondary English methods course. During her second year of teaching, Elizabeth found private donors to fund a book purchase through the website “DonorsChoose.org,” where she wrote a proposal for a class set of books. Interestingly, by her second year, Elizabeth believed that resources were less of a problem. “I feel like I know who[m] to ask when I need . . . something . . . people respond [when] I ask for something, so I really can’t complain, even though it is kind of hard [to find resources]” (Elizabeth, Interview 10). This forethought demonstrated both Elizabeth’s willingness to seek additional resources and her belief that such actions were simply part of her job teaching at an under-resourced school.

During her first two years in the classroom, Elizabeth also took advantage of many professional development opportunities. Some courses were brought to her
attention by school administrators; others she sought out on her own. Her continuing education courses included two extensive courses focused on the writing revision process. One required an application process and then a month-long commitment during July. Elizabeth was pleased with both courses. “I’m taking a revision class now at [University] and it’s great because I always leave with great strategies to use in the classroom with writing” (Elizabeth, Interview 10). By the beginning of her third year, Elizabeth had 36 credits, placing her at Master’s plus thirty credits on the district pay scale.

Although Elizabeth did not consider her mentor, during her first year, to be insightful, she sought multiple informal mentors in her school, as different colleagues offered her emotional support, ideas for enhancing classroom management, and access to resources. For example, a teacher who taught AP English before taking maternity leave offered Elizabeth many resources and remained a sounding board for her questions. Elizabeth occasionally visited this teacher at home. Another teacher helped her to navigate planning and instruction for her bilingual pupils, who struggled with English. For emotional support, Elizabeth relied heavily on a graduate school peer, who started teaching in the English department the same year as Elizabeth. As new teachers, both struggled with planning, classroom management, and pupil effort. In all of these actions—seeking grant funding and private donors, participating in professional development, and searching for support in her school context—Elizabeth successfully navigated various contextual factors and kept pupil learning at the forefront of her priorities.
Beyond Elizabeth’s success navigating contextual challenges, she greatly benefited from her moral sensibilities—in particular, her perseverance, critical self-reflection, and commitment to social justice. Elizabeth’s commitment to social justice was apparent even before beginning graduate school at Hillside College. As a graduate of a Jesuit undergraduate institution, Elizabeth felt strongly about her commitment to improving the lives of young people through a solid education, emphasizing what she called her “obligation” to better people’s lives. During her early teaching experiences, Elizabeth noted the importance of holding pupils to high expectations which, she hoped, would increase social mobility for her pupils. At the end of her second year, Elizabeth identified specific ways in which she taught for social justice:

My next goal for next year is making sure that they understand why each piece of literature that we read is really relevant to now because it really is still pertinent. We can always see a reflection of issues or ourselves in what we read. I did a small unit on genocide recently with the seniors . . . and I gave them some local examples of teens [who] are making a difference in their community. And so in that regards . . . making them aware that they have some sort of responsibility or they are able to do things for others. (Elizabeth, Interview 11)

Elizabeth’s commitment to social justice, which drew strength from being infused throughout the Hillside program, was closely tied to pupil learning. Elizabeth’s commitment mirrored Hillside’s social justice objective of enhancing pupils’ learning and life chances (Cochran-Smith, Mitescu, & Shakman, 2009; Michelli & Keiger, 2005). Elizabeth’s commitment to social justice was also apparent in her efforts to meet the needs of her diverse pupil population. Working with a large number of English language learners, Elizabeth adjusted her curriculum to better meet their learning needs. For example, she decided to have one group of bilingual pupils work through Of Mice and
Men using a book on tape while the other pupils in the class read *The Crucible*. She commented on her decision to make adjustments in the future when reading more challenging novels, “If I had [ELL] students[again, and] this was their first year in a mainstream ELA [English Language Arts] classroom . . . I’d have to scaffold [the novel] because it was so hard (Elizabeth, Interview 9).

In addition, Elizabeth found reflection, which she credited largely to her experience at Hillside College, to be a key aspect of her practice, as it enabled her to critically think about her teaching and her pupils’ learning:

[Hillside College] was very good about encouraging reflection all the time. And sometimes it felt like overkill, but I think that was really important because that’s a big part of teaching. So definitely, encouraging reflection was another good thing. (Elizabeth, Interview 10)

Elizabeth found Hillside’s promotion of inquiry to be somewhat overwhelming during the program; however, once in her own classroom, she valued those skills. At the conclusion of her first year, Elizabeth reflected on the importance of becoming a better teacher through critical inquiry practices:

I mean, just thinking about questions that would need further research or in-depth analysis or looking at student work or participation or even just being able to think that way has been helpful. I haven’t done anything with it, but just to know that to be a good teacher means to reflect and perhaps that’s something that I need to set goals for next year, like really look at analyzing student work more consistently or really learning from what they are writing. . . . taking the products and then reflecting on it and . . . making my own self-assessment. (Elizabeth, Interview 9)

Elizabeth believed that teachers need to reflect in order to continually improve their practice over the entire course of their careers. She considered analysis of pupil work and self-assessment important components of self-reflection. She explained the benefits of regularly reflecting on one’s practice:
I have a lot to learn and a lot to improve on next year and . . . to constantly be reflective of how could things have gone better. Maybe they didn’t go . . . the way I had intended, but that’s okay. But how can I do a better job in the future and I think once you’re willing to do that, if you can be introspective weekly, daily, then it’s a good thing. . . . And every year is a new challenge. I mean if you really are a good teacher, if you are committed to being . . . a very good teacher, you’re always trying to revise things—no matter how many years [you’ve been teaching]. (Elizabeth, Interview 9)

Pushing herself into this continual state of inquiry was key to Elizabeth’s moral sensibility. Elizabeth developed questions that addressed the ongoing and new challenges of improving pupil learning in her daily practice (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

As a reflective practitioner whose commitment to social justice was of utmost importance, Elizabeth saw her role as central to pupil learning:

I think that if anything prohibited their learning, it was me maybe not pushing them hard enough. I think I definitely could have done that more and I think that will get better over time, just keeping my expectations high and pushing them more. (Elizabeth, Interview 9)

Based on her reflections, Elizabeth believed that she could have pushed her pupils more during her first year and planned to set even higher expectations the following year.

In addition to her commitment to social justice and her belief in self-reflection, Elizabeth demonstrated perseverance in her teaching. Working in a challenging context, Elizabeth navigated for additional supports, like professional development opportunities, to acquire better ways of helping pupils learn. She was driven to find resources from grants, private donors, the internet, and other teachers at her school. Furthermore, her perseverance kept her teaching at the same school. The best example of Elizabeth’s perseverance occurred at the conclusion of her first year, when she described her newfound understanding of why teacher retention was problematic in urban schools (Ingersoll, 2003):
Now I know why teachers leave this profession. And it has very little to do with the students. It would have very little to do with the students if I was to leave. If I was to decide to like ship up and move to Guam tomorrow . . . nowhere on my list of reasons would be any student. Any name of any student. It has nothing to do with them. It’s just the way that we’re just treated as teachers . . . by our principal. It’s awful. But now I really understand . . . why teachers leave. (Elizabeth, Interview 9)

Despite such concerns, Elizabeth continued to provide comprehensive learning opportunities for her pupils. She actively searched for solutions to problems regardless of how time consuming or difficult the task (Corbett, Wilson, & William, 2002). By highlighting Elizabeth’s moral sensibility, which played a key role in her success as a practitioner in a challenging context, it became clear that learning to teach was a process influenced by an “inseparable web of relationships that constitutes the learning-to-teach-ecosystem” (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). Elizabeth’s web included her relationships during teacher education with faculty and fellow students, as well as her relationships with her administrators, colleagues, professional development leaders, and pupils during both student teaching and the beginning years.

Elizabeth Case Conclusions

Despite an extremely challenging context, Elizabeth’s case demonstrated her success. The fact that Elizabeth focused on each of the four aspects of practice was remarkable for a beginning teacher. For example, building relationships with pupils, when many struggled with attendance and exhibited minimal effort, demonstrated her strong commitment to pupil learning. Furthermore, she faced many notable challenges at her school—an ineffective mentor, lack of administrative support, non-rotating schedule, pupil apathy, and a lack of resources. However, her strong moral sensibility helped her to navigate these obstacles. In concert, her commitment to social justice, consistent
reflection on pupil learning, and perseverance helped her to meet her pupils’ learning needs. Thus, to some extent, Elizabeth’s enduring focus on learning was a result of her challenging context, as she was forced to continually focus on ways to help pupils learn. In other words, she spent considerable time pondering her challenges and discovering ways to overcome them in order to provide better learning opportunities for her pupils—all of which required her to focus on pupil learning. Elizabeth’s case was one of extremes—an extremely committed teacher who was willing to combat and overcome aspects of school context that served as significant obstacles in her pursuit of pupil learning.

**Overview of Riley’s Case**

Riley, a 22-year-old white female, entered the teacher education program immediately after completing a B.A. in painting from a New England college. She selected Hillside College because of its religious affiliation and its suburban location. Having attended a Catholic school for her elementary years, she looked forward to returning to a religious institution. As a student, Riley enjoyed school, was conscientious in her work, and performed well. After many summers teaching swimming during high school and college, Riley found that she enjoyed working with children and teaching them a valuable skill. As a result, she pursued a Master’s degree in elementary education. She felt she had strong content knowledge in both English language arts and history, but she was not nearly as confident in math or science.

Riley was quite impressed with Hillside’s commitment to preparing teachers to teach for social justice and to meet the needs of diverse learners. She believed that social justice should be integrated into one’s teaching, not simply an add-on. Furthermore,
 unlike some suburban teachers, Riley considered teaching for social justice to be an important facet of her teaching repertoire that could enrich her pupils’ learning experiences.

Riley taught both 2nd and 5th grade while student teaching in an affluent community and settled on 4th grade for her full-time position in the district she attended. The school building for her full-time teaching position was new, spacious, and had a wealth of resources, including state-of-the-art technology. Riley also had a full-time teaching assistant with whom she worked well.

Riley’s creativity and organization were key factors in her success in the classroom. Believing some might benefit, she made a point of integrating art into the core subject areas. Riley held her pupils accountable for their learning while maintaining a caring, respectful environment. She was critical of her teaching and always strived to improve her instruction and assessment practices. Riley did not anticipate leaving teaching as she considered it her career; however, she mentioned that she might pursue a Ph.D. in education at some point. Riley remained at the same school and the same grade level through her third year of teaching. In April 2009, Riley was married. She consequently will leave her teaching position and move out-of-state during the summer. At present, she has no future career plans.

Practice

Holding Pupils to High Expectations

Like Elizabeth, Riley believed that holding high expectations was an important aspect of her practice. However, Riley struggled to gauge appropriate expectations for her diverse learners. She was unsure, at times, whether she was pushing her pupils too hard
while holding them to high expectations. “I think I have high expectations. Sometimes
I’ve wondered ‘Am I strict compared to other teachers? Do I make them work more than
other teachers?’ because it’s hard to know” (Riley, Interview 8). Riley appreciated the
feedback she received from her teaching assistant, who told her, “You expect a lot from
them . . . you do a good job” (Riley, Interview 10). Riley wanted to set high expectations
for all pupils, but she struggled with differentiated instruction as she hoped to challenge,
not overwhelm her pupils:

When you’re teaching you have that expectation that you set forth, but also when
you differentiate the work, you have certain expectations for certain students.
And you try to challenge each student in their own way. I don’t think you can
have the same expectations for all students, but you also don’t want to look at a
kid that maybe struggles and have too low an expectation either because then . . .
they’re not going be motivated to do much if they don’t think that you think
they’re capable of it. (Riley, Interview 5)

Riley’s struggle with appropriate expectations illuminated her hopes of holding all pupils
to high expectations, yet it remained complicated by her vision of differentiated
instruction. Riley admitted, especially during her first year, that she struggled when
setting expectations due to lack of experience at the fourth grade level.

Like Elizabeth, Riley promoted high expectations through helping pupils become
independent learners. Even during student teaching, Riley discussed the importance of
developing independence. During this time, she devised an assignment where pupils
created and published their own poetry anthology. Through this assignment, Riley hoped
her pupils would incorporate original poems and illustrations into the anthology instead
of relying on those with prescribed forms:

I think some of them exceeded my expectations. They did make them their own. .
. . I think some of the things that I wished were a little different maybe were the
things that they struggled with and just writing more about poetry. . . . I feel like
maybe I should have pushed them more to include some original poems because
that was really one of the things that I didn’t like about this. I think that maybe the forms [e.g. haiku] kind of stifled them a little bit. (Riley, Interview 5)

Riley found that some pupils exceeded her expectations, but realized that her instructions might have prevented others from meeting her expectations.

At the conclusion of her first year, Riley reflected on the maturation process she had observed in her pupils. She said it was clear how much more her pupils could do without her guidance by the end of the year:

I can see them when they first came in, in September. They were still like little third graders and they liked to sing songs and we did that. . . . They’re definitely becoming fifth graders. I can see that change. . . . I think they’ve also gotten a lot more independent. . . . since the beginning of the year. They’re a lot more capable of doing certain things on their own and they’ve gotten used to classroom routines and what I expect of them. (Riley, Interview 8)

It is important to note that Riley’s teaching environment presented her with many engaged and motivated pupils whose families were involved in their child’s education. This context contributed to the fact that Riley’s expectations for her pupils were met more often than Elizabeth’s. Consequently, Riley did not talk about her expectations as frequently as did Elizabeth because there was less obvious dissonance between her expectations and her pupils’ learning outcomes. Regardless, Riley exemplified a teacher who, like Elizabeth, moved beyond a focus on “self” (Fuller & Brown, 1975) and instead examined her role in promoting pupil learning.

Building Pupil Relationships

Just as Riley’s fourth grade class gained more independence as learners, she noted that the pupils’ relationships with her and one another also developed and matured. For instance, Riley’s class enjoyed hearing about her life outside the classroom:

They love to hear stories about me. I’ve shared with them a little about my friend Stephanie. I’ve told stories about her. And so sometimes . . . during morning
meeting if we talk about what we’re going to do over the weekend I’ll be like, “I’m going out to dinner.” And they’ll say “With Stephanie?” (Riley, Interview 8)

Riley found these personal connections with pupils beneficial as she believed that successful learning was based, in part, on relationships established between teachers and pupils. Riley recalled one pupil drawing a picture of her car. She noted, “And to me that’s so special . . . because I feel like in a way they know me too” (Riley, Interview 8).

Riley also shared how she worked to get to know one of her shyest pupils whom she did not feel she had built a strong relationship with during her first year of teaching:

It’s interesting. I’ve thought a lot about that. There [are] some kids that I’ve gotten to know very, very well and then there are some that are still a little bit challenging to connect with. And I try to get to them a little bit but it’s hard. I have one little girl . . . she’s just deathly shy. And I try to reach to her and she’s very artistic and I’ve tried to connect with her on that level and encourage her and say, “Wow, I love your drawing. It’s so good.” (Riley, Interview 8)

As these few examples recount, Riley was not nearly as focused on building pupil relationships as Elizabeth. Partly due to the maturity of her pupils and partly due to her focus on full-class dynamics (described in next section), Riley used relationship building as a way to increase the comfort level in her classroom. However, there was very little need to promote academic progress through building strong relationships.

**Maintaining Classroom Management**

During her first year in a 4th grade suburban class, Riley rarely mentioned behavior management issues. Instead, she focused on empowering pupils to take control of classroom activities like homework organization and Morning Meeting, an aspect of the Responsive Classroom approach used to create learning environments that value social, emotional, and academic growth. To prepare her to use this classroom management system, Riley’s district provided professional development. Riley believed that this curriculum helped her to establish a respectful classroom where the pupils followed directions, stayed on
task, and developed skills as independent learners. Riley explained, “With Morning Meeting, I’m not running it all the time now. I let them. So they’re getting a little more independent with that. I’m trying to put more of it in their hands” (Interview 8). Riley desired to improve class independence. She also provided opportunities for her pupils to take leadership roles and guide their own learning:

Riley found that even small changes in her practice could promote a positive classroom environment where pupils knew what was expected of them.

At the conclusion of her first year, Riley shared the value she saw in classroom routines. She considered modifying her routines to create a positive classroom environment to be an essential element of her practice:

Establishing classroom routines enabled Riley to maintain strong management and consequently focus her efforts on planning, instruction, and assessment. In regards to Riley’s success establishing routines, she noted the benefits of having a paraprofessional working with her in the classroom. She stated, “I also really like the fact that my assistant and I kind of are on the same page because I’ve heard of things where . . . assistants and the teacher don’t necessarily mesh” (Riley, Interview 11). The only struggle Riley faced in her classroom management occurred when she switched pupils with the other fourth
grade as some of the pupils caused disruptions and failed to follow her established routines. Although Riley found the initial period challenging, she identified the problem and made adjustments to improve the learning environment with the new group of pupils.

After reflecting on her practice, Riley made changes to her classroom routines to promote independence. Although her management challenges may not have been as substantial as those of the secondary teachers, Riley continued to initiate changes to create improved learning opportunities for her pupils. In contrast with Fuller’s (1969) notion that beginning teachers are unable to move beyond day-to-day teaching concerns, Riley’s success with classroom management revealed that beginning teachers are not fully consumed by management issues; in fact, some find it a strength.

*Negotiating the Context*

*Contextual Struggles and Supports*

Unlike the other four teachers, Riley had few contextual challenges. She was well supported in her efforts to promote pupil learning. Her few challenges occurred mainly during student teaching, as she had to work within the constraints of her cooperating teacher. Riley wished that she would have integrated small group reading activities and devoted additional time to social studies during student teaching. She understood that it was her cooperating teacher’s classroom and she respected her decisions as lead teacher:

> I think I would have also done my own social studies unit because I really like history. . . . I think with social studies you can do a lot of fun activities. And I felt like sometimes just the handouts that we had [were] not even a unit. And it was like an afterthought sometimes. . . . I went in thinking that I would do some type of social studies unit because they do the American Revolution and colonial life. And I really like that aspect. I think it’s interesting. But then she steered me more into, “How about you do poetry?” (Riley, Interview 5)
In addition to negotiating her cooperating teacher’s suggestions, Riley struggled a bit with pupil effort during student teaching. Since she had not established relationships with her pupils during the entire school year, she was unsure, at times, how to approach pupils who did not turn in homework or assignments. She described her interactions with one student:

When she wouldn’t turn [an assignment] in, she’d be like, “I thought I turned it into you”. . . . I actually did get her to do some makeup [work] because one day I said to her . . . “What are you going do at the end when everyone’s binding their poetry, and you don’t have any poems to bind? I don’t think you’re going to feel too good . . . You’ll be embarrassed.” So . . . she did end up turning some things into me late then. (Riley, Interview 5)

Although Riley was not sure how best to handle this pupil’s lack of effort, she was successful in getting the pupil to complete some poetry assignments for her anthology. In another student teaching instance, Riley struggled to gather completed homework from another pupil, but in this case, a parent was her main challenge:

Julio . . . is really behind his classmates. He’s one of the boys . . . on second or third grade reading level, and he wouldn’t do his homework a lot of the time. And his situation was actually kind of difficult because his parents, you almost didn’t want to notify his mom that he wasn’t doing his homework because she would do things and take it out on him. So it was kind of like you wanted to protect him. She sometimes when he would do his homework, if she didn’t think it was neat enough, she’d rip it up, and he’d bring it in pieces and be like, “My mom ripped up my homework.” And she cuts off the tops of his pencils so he can’t erase work because I guess she thought he erased too much. (Riley, Interview 5)

Although overall parents were very supportive, some proved a challenge. In such cases, Riley relied on support from her colleagues and principal to help navigate such difficulties. For example, she asked her principal for “advice about . . . the right wording of how to deal with a difficult parent” (Riley, Interview 9). Riley found that a supportive environment benefited her teaching and consequently, her pupils’ learning.
With the exception of the minor struggles noted above, Riley found contextual factors like a very supportive principal and colleagues and ample resources beneficial. Over two years, Riley made many comments about the school’s resources and her enjoyment working in the environment. Half way through her first year, she commented, “And you know, I feel like I’m getting good support from my colleagues here” (Riley, Interview 8). By the conclusion of her first year, Riley mentioned her enjoyment of the community, her colleagues, and her pupils:

And the community too, like, the relationships with some of the other teachers, you know, it’s a nice place to work. The kids are nice, too, for the most part, and seeing them excited about certain things made me excited to be [teaching]. (Riley, Interview 9)

She felt much the same at the conclusion of her second year, “I think this particular building has a lot of camaraderie between teachers. I think teachers are really open to sharing their ideas and working together” (Riley, Interview 11). Furthermore, she acknowledged the connection between the town’s affluence and her plentiful resources:

Well, [this town] is a more affluent community so we have a lot of resources. This year you can see I’ve got a new Smart Board. I mean, the school already had so much technology and now I have even more. So there’s definitely a lot available to me. (Riley, Interview 11)

In addition to the school’s resources and positive environment, Riley was impressed by the principal’s support during her first year of teaching. The principal gave constructive feedback, positive reinforcement, and had an open door policy, which Riley found welcoming as a new teacher. Furthermore, Riley was supported through observations by her formal mentor and by another elementary school principal in the district. Although admittedly nervous before observations, Riley found each beneficial to
her teaching and her pupils’ learning. Her formal mentor even provided her with an encouraging note at the conclusion of her first year:

My mentor teacher, she wrote me this really nice note, and she said, “Your kids have learned so much more than you even realize.” I was like, oh, that’s so sweet, because maybe that’s true. I hope it’s true, because sometimes I’d have these feelings of, “I’m not doing a good job by them.” And then other times . . . “Wow, they actually learned that.” So I think you kind of go through these moments of euphoria to these moments of “I’m useless.” (Riley, Interview 9)

In addition to her mentor, Riley was supported in her teaching by school personnel, including a reading teacher, a math coach, and a full-time classroom aide. Without these additional resources, Riley did not believe she would have been as successful in achieving her pupils’ learning goals. Speaking to the value of having a classroom aide, Riley concluded:

When I talk to other teachers . . . we always say there should be two people in every classroom. . . . Sometimes in the morning during morning work when they’re working other things I try to pull that student over just to my desk and go over a problem . . . I know [my assistant] does that, too. That was what was really helpful during morning work this year. She would pull kids to help them with their weekly math homework, so it was sort of like they were getting both the help with the homework and also some small group instruction. I think that’s really the key. I think just when kids aren’t understanding it . . . management wise can be hard but that’s when they need that individual attention. That’s why I don’t understand how every classroom doesn’t have an aide. (Riley, Interview 9)

Successful Navigation

Unlike Elizabeth, who encountered many obstacles to successful teaching, Riley considered her teaching environment very supportive. Consequently, she did not need to navigate her context in nearly the same way as Elizabeth. She had positive administrative support, a formal mentor, an abundance of resources, generally supportive parents, and pupils who wanted to be in school.
Like Elizabeth, Riley took professional development courses, received support from informal mentors, and sought additional resources that she believed would benefit her teaching and her pupils’ learning. Because she found her school environment so welcoming, Riley was proactive in her search for support:

I took it upon myself to seek out mentoring from [an informal mentor] because she was sort of my mentor when I was in grad school, like, my “go to” kind of person. The principal, too, I liked just going to her office and being like, “Hey, can I talk to you for a second?” . . . I felt like that was an okay thing to do for the most part. I didn’t feel nervous approaching her, which I think is important. My first few days of school my principal would come in . . . afterwards she’d write a little note and be a little encouraging and give some pointers. And I like that. I like people to give me some positive feedback. (Riley, Interview 9)

By the end of her second year, Riley continued to attend professional development courses and hoped she would have more opportunities to see model lessons from her colleagues demonstrated in her own classroom. Riley viewed teaching as a process of continual learning:

I’m taking a class this summer about guided reading . . . but I’d love to have more experienced teachers come in and do model lessons. I think that would be great. Or having the opportunity to visit with other teachers and watch them. I think it’s even better if they come into your class and do it at your grade level. That’s sort of how I learn. . . . when you go to workshops and they do something with you or you watch something you kind of pick up what works for you and take it. (Riley, Interview 11)

Riley approached professional development just as she approached teacher education; she would take what she could from what was offered, knowing that not everything would be useful or relevant. Due to the support Riley received at her school, she had less need for contextual navigation than did Elizabeth.

*Moral Sensibility*

Unlike Elizabeth, who persevered through a very difficult context, Riley worked in an extremely supportive environment, which diminished her struggle with adversity.
Consequently, her moral sensibility focused on reflective practice and her commitment to social justice. As a teacher who focused a great deal on pupil learning, Riley demonstrated critical reflection:

I tried to be reflective about what I did and [ask] “Did this work? What could I have done better?” I think the disappointing thing was at times I sort of felt like, “Oh, that could’ve gone better,” and then it was after the fact. I remember sitting with you looking at some of their poetry anthologies and . . . I was like, “Wow . . . now really looking at this if I was able to go back I would’ve . . . been a little more demanding of her.” (Riley, Interview 9)

Riley also identified a connection between social justice and reflective practice, in particular, the importance of examining her practice to determine where to make future improvements. Doing so helped her to identify where pupils were not meeting her expectations and then work to improve their learning. Riley considered her high expectations to be one way in which she demonstrated her commitment to social justice. She noted, “Some teachers would probably be just okay teaching the middle of the road and saying ‘If they get it, they get it; if they don’t, I did my job.’ That’s not really a socially just teacher in my opinion” (Riley, Interview 9). Furthermore, Riley reflected on her experiences as an elementary school student, where she remembered some teachers addressing difficult issues and others ignoring them. Consequently, she made a point to address issues and give pupils an opportunity to talk about problems during the Morning Meeting:

And if something happened in my classroom, I tried to address it, and I think Responsive Classroom helps with that a little bit. The idea of Morning Meeting is a time when the kids can come right into school and it’s time for them to feel welcomed and have some fun before they start the day so everybody is kind of a community. (Riley, Interview 9).

Riley’s commitment to social justice was also noted in relation to meeting the needs of diverse learners. She mentioned how she modified homework during student teaching to
meet her pupils’ needs and then she commented on her plan to makes changes to her practice based on her experiences:

Meeting the needs of diverse learners . . . I think I’ve gotten better at that. Like, this year . . . I was able to take some of my lessons this year and tweak them a little . . . remembering what didn’t work and what worked from the previous year helped me.” (Riley, Interview 11)

Riley’s effort to meet her pupils’ learning needs was further support for her commitment to social justice.

Riley’s commitment to teaching for social justice and her emphasis on reflective practice were further served by her perseverance, a commitment shown through her determination to become a better teacher by seeking support and resources when necessary, spending time after school and on weekends planning lessons, and attending professional development. She shared, “I take stuff home and I always spend time on the computer at night [preparing my lessons]” (Riley, Interview 9). Riley demonstrated the same three dispositions and stances of self-reflection, perseverance, and commitment to social justice as Elizabeth, yet because her context was extremely supportive, she spent less time focused on overcoming obstacles. Consequently, when comparing the two cases, Elizabeth’s focus on pupil learning exceeded Riley’s, but this was mainly due to the fact that Elizabeth was forced to overcome so many obstacles that she was always providing better learning opportunities to compensate for a challenging context.

Riley Case Conclusions

Unlike Elizabeth, Riley represented a teacher who could take advantage of her strengths as well as a supportive context. For instance, during her first year, Riley relied on her colleagues and administrators for guidance. Furthermore, Riley’s school provided her with considerable support—mentors, administrative support, motivated pupils,
professional development, and resources. Unlike Elizabeth, Riley did not have to seek additional resources, motivate pupils, or negotiate relationships with an unresponsive administration. Of course, Riley still had to persevere through the difficulties of beginning teaching, such as planning long-term goals and developing challenging curriculum that could be differentiated for diverse learners. Whereas Elizabeth’s focus on pupil learning relied on perseverance in similar ways, as well as on overcoming challenges found at her school. However, even though Elizabeth’s case showed what was possible, Riley’s demonstrated a more ideal combination for success in focusing on pupil learning—a well-prepared, hard-working, intelligent teacher in a supportive environment.

Comparison of Elizabeth and Riley

There were various reasons why both Elizabeth and Riley could focus on pupil learning so extensively. First, both had a clear vision of the type of school they saw themselves working in after completing teacher education. Although they grew up in the same suburban community, only Riley saw herself working in that district. Elizabeth applied specifically to the Urban Scholars Program because of her interest in urban schooling. Entering the program with a clear sense of direction helped both teachers to take advantage of learning opportunities related to their future positions. For instance, Riley completed her student teaching in an affluent community, and Elizabeth was placed in and remained at an urban high school with a diverse population. After student teaching, Elizabeth was offered a position at the same school, which proved beneficial as she was familiar with the school context. She was not surprised by the lack of resources, poor leadership, and high pupil absentee rate during her first year. Although Riley had not student taught at the school that hired her, she had attended school in the district, and
her mother worked in the central office, both of which provided her with additional knowledge of the context. The final and perhaps most important similarity between Elizabeth and Riley was the fact that both worked diligently to develop comprehensive units and challenging assessments, differentiated their instruction for diverse learners, and held their pupils to high expectations. Moreover, both focused on pupil learning, even if it meant coming to school early, leaving late, working on weekends, and seeking professional development during the summer.

The primary difference between these two teachers was the perseverance that Elizabeth exhibited to meet the needs of her pupils. She faced far more obstacles than Riley and therefore focused on pupil learning to a greater extent. Riley could more easily meet the needs of her pupils due to her resources, collegial and administrative support, and consistent pupil effort and motivation. Therefore, Riley focused on pupil learning to a great extent, but she was not constantly obstructed in her attempts like Elizabeth. Riley’s goals were met with more ease, resulting in less need to focus on pupil learning.

Riley and Elizabeth presented two examples of beginning teachers whose focus on pupil learning challenges stage theory (Fuller & Brown, 1975). Neither struggled with classroom management, a rarity for beginning teachers (Kagan, 1992), and both were committed to social justice (Cochran-Smith et. al, 2009) and critical reflection of their practice (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Contrary to prevailing notions that new teachers operate only in a kind of “survival” mode wherein they focus on getting through the day (Veenman, 1984), Elizabeth and Riley had clear personal expectations for pupils, worked to build relationships with pupils as a means to establish trust that would support
pupil learning, and targeted classroom management as a way to influence pupil behavior and ensure learning opportunities.
CHAPTER FIVE: CASES OF SONIA, LOLA, & MARK

This chapter further explores the findings from Chapter 4 that beginning teachers can go beyond concerns of “self” and classroom management (Fuller, 1969) to focus on pupil learning (see Figure 4.1). This idea contrasts with stage theories of teacher development, which suggest that teachers move through a series of steps before becoming able to focus on pupil learning (Full & Brown, 1975). Chapter 4 presented Elizabeth and Riley, the two teachers furthest to the right on the continuum (See Figure 4.2), who demonstrated the greatest focus on pupil learning in their teaching. This chapter begins with Sonia and Lola, who focused on pupil learning as well, but not to the same degree as did Elizabeth and Riley. The chapter concludes with Mark, who most struggled with focusing on pupil learning. Although, Elizabeth and Riley have been described in Chapter 4 the comparisons between the teachers continue throughout this chapter. Each cases provides evidence for the teacher’s placement on the living continuum in comparison to the other teachers. Thus, the findings build on one another creating a “layered” analysis of the five teachers and their focus on pupil learning. As with Chapter 4, this chapter is organized by individual case, beginning with an overview of the teacher, a description of his or her classroom practices related to pupil learning, and concluding with a discussion of the interrelationship between contextual factors and moral sensibilities.

Overview of Sonia’s Case

Sonia, a Hispanic female, began Hillside College’s Urban Scholars Program at age 22, one year after graduating from a prestigious undergraduate institution. Growing up in a Texas border town, Sonia commuted daily to a Montessori school in Mexico. She
spoke highly of this experience and felt very prepared for her all-girls Catholic secondary school. As an elementary student, Sonia spoke Spanish both at home and at school. Her transition to an English speaking secondary school was seamless. Sonia excelled in the classroom and was even embarrassed by her academic success in middle school.

Since Sonia’s hometown was over 70% Hispanic, she did not experience life as a minority until entering college. She recalled her undergraduate experience as powerful and transformative. She would likely have majored in elementary education as an undergraduate, but it was not an option at the university. Instead, she majored in psychology and took some education coursework at her university and during a semester abroad in France. After graduation, Sonia spent one year as a research assistant on a math and science education initiative at a university in her home state of Texas. Her transition from the research position to graduate student at Hillside was somewhat difficult as she was accustomed to thinking about larger, macro-level issues, not the practical day-to-day lesson planning of a teacher. However, by the conclusion of the first semester, Sonia completed additional coursework that effectively married theory and practice and helped to shift her perspective.

For her pre-practicum, Sonia worked in a 4th grade urban classroom and stayed there for her full-practicum. As a first-year teacher, she accepted a 2nd grade bilingual position at an urban elementary school in the process of becoming a dual-language school. She remained in the same position through her 3rd year of teaching. As someone who valued her bilingual and bicultural identity, Sonia was committed to teaching bilingual pupils. Sonia’s reflective nature brought her success in both the Hillside Urban Scholars Program and in her teaching positions. She enjoyed teaching and intends to stay
in the field of education, but is interested in pursuing a Ph.D. or becoming an administrator in the future.

Practice

*Holding Pupils to High Expectations*

Holding pupils to high expectations was Sonia’s primary means of focusing on pupil learning. Unlike Elizabeth and Riley, both of whom utilized relationship building, classroom management, and high expectations to focus on pupil learning, Sonia’s expectations were the most influential aspect of her practice. Like Elizabeth and Riley, Sonia enacted her commitment to high expectations through helping pupils develop as independent learners. For instance, Sonia hoped that her second graders would gain independence when selecting math strategies to solve a problem, developing as learners who thought through multiple strategies before selecting the best one. She found that pupils relied on the methods they learned first and, therefore, practiced most often, rather than trying more efficient, newly learned strategies:

> I’m still struggling between when to push them to stop using a strategy and . . . when to let them progress on their own. . . . it’s a hard balance and you obviously want them to do well on the [district] test but . . . I was a little disappointed with some of them because they all reverted to counting by ones. (Sonia, Interview 11)

Sonia struggled to determine if she should require certain math strategies or permit pupils to choose. She hoped that leaving the choice to them would encourage independent thinking. Although Sonia’s pupils did not perform as she hoped with the math problems, she anticipated their future growth based on their progress with practice exercises aimed at selecting the most efficient strategy.
In holding pupils to high expectations, Sonia struggled with determining goals that would be appropriately challenging. In an interview, Sonia reflected on her use of the “high group” to set the bar for classroom expectations:

I think I have really high expectations. Sometime I don’t realize I have really high expectations . . . I feel like I just have expectations. . . . [For example] I’m thinking of an assessment quickly and then I’m like, “Oh, it definitely needs to be harder.” Sometimes I also don’t realize where the kids are coming from and what kind of knowledge they have or they don’t have. Or I don’t stop and think about, “What skills do you need to do this?” . . . I feel like I definitely always teach to the high group. (Sonia, Interview 8)

These struggles represent a beginning teacher’s attempt to challenge her pupils and promote improved learning outcomes without being unrealistic, a difficult feat for any teacher, especially those with less experience. Even though Sonia, like Riley, was unsure of her expectations at times, she emphasized the importance of challenging her pupils, which is key facet to improving pupil learning.

To a degree, Sonia viewed her high expectations for pupils as reflecting the high expectations she held for herself:

I have really high expectations in general for myself and I don’t realize they’re high. . . . I feel like I just have expectations. . . .and so I feel I expect a lot from others as well. . . . I just really try to do everything I do really well. (Sonia, Interview 8)

During student teaching, Sonia made her expectations for learning very clear when she held her pupils in for recess because they had not taken responsibility for meeting the learning objectives she set for a lesson, revealing a sense of ownership for pupil learning unique for student teachers (Mulholland, 2003):

We had to get through the readers’ theater, even if we [had] to [skip] recess. So having that expectation that they have to finish their learning. They have to, that’s their responsibility. If they’re not meeting the objectives, they’re not learning. And so . . . that’s why I think I liked having the objectives . . . for the lessons. It was like, “This is what we want you to learn today. This is what we
need to get done.” So throughout the lesson we can remind them, “Did we achieve the objectives?”... hopefully I stressed the objectives enough and their responsibilities. (Sonia, Interview 5)

Holding pupils to high expectations was the aspect of practice that Sonia focused on most during her beginning years in the classroom, a development likely reflecting the high expectations she held for herself and her sense of purpose as a teacher to improve the learning of her pupils.

*Building Pupil Relationships*

Although not a focal point to her teaching, on occasion Sonia incorporated relationship building, mainly during student teaching, when she incorporated dialogue journals as a means to communicate personally with her 4th grade pupils about their writing and provide a venue to reinforce the role behavior played in their learning:

I think the dialogue journals were a good way for me to get to know the students. And it was more like a social or friendly or personal level. I think that some of them really have real issues that they have to work through. . . . And at the end I wrote little things for all the students. . . . what I felt [they] did really well like “Make sure your behavior doesn’t get in the way of your learning. . . . everyone makes mistakes, but that [your] choices have consequences, and [you]can choose to make a good choice and that’ll be positive consequences.” (Interview 5)

Learning more about her pupils was a priority for Sonia. The dialogue journals became an effective means for her to communicate directly with pupils about their classroom behaviors and the consequences of their actions, both of which, she believed, affected learning opportunities. Consequently, Sonia viewed relationship building as a means to maintain effective classroom management; however, she struggled to implement these practices beyond student teaching. Her failure to extend practices like dialogue journals into her first two years of teaching may have been due to Sonia’s difficulties with the daily demands of planning and instruction.
Maintaining Classroom Management

Although Sonia did not consider classroom management a strength, by her second year, like Elizabeth and Riley, she was clear about her expectations for classroom management. Sonia, who taught 2nd grade during her first two-years in the classroom, described her process of inquiry into management practices during the first year. Like the other teachers, she understood that she had room for growth, and she continually reminded herself about the relationship between classroom management and pupil learning:

Sometimes it’s just hard because you question yourself. Am I being fair? Is this fair? . . . And then I realize: you’re the boss. They’re not going to learn if they keep acting like that. So I have to give myself pep talks. And that’s when I sort of get a reality check. . . . And it sort of clicks when I realize if [the pupils] are doing that, a) they’re not learning and b) other kids aren’t learning and that’s not fair. So I feel like now a little more confident in that. (Interview 8)

Sonia’s realization of the link between classroom management and creating successful learning opportunities left her with no alternative but to address her struggles:

I really want to hold kids accountable in everything they do. I really want to set the standard at the beginning of the year. . . . I really want to use a lot of accountable talk and teach it early on, like, “This is the way we talk to each other and you always have to support your thinking and this is the phrase you use—Yo pienso esto porque” [I think this because]. I really want to build a good classroom community and talk about [it] and really make it a collaborative effort. (Sonia, Interview 9)

Although a challenge for Sonia, holding pupils accountable for their learning was the primary way in which Sonia’s expectations for classroom management moved toward pupil ownership for learning.

Over the first two years, Sonia struggled to implement an accountability system that helped pupils monitor their own behavior:
When the kids are too loud I say, “It’s not fair for the kids who can’t think if there’s a lot of noise”. . . . So, we’ve been doing that a lot and some kids have been saying, “I can’t concentrate” so I’ll tell the class, “One of your classmates just told me they can’t concentrate; that’s not very fair.” (Sonia, Interview 10)

This accountability system was established during Sonia’s student teaching when she realized that misbehavior could interfere with academic progress. Sonia addressed the entire class about their behavior, even keeping them in for recess, to help them understand that their role in the learning process was as important as hers. Sonia’s classroom management strategies helped her to understand this strategy as a means to empower her pupils as independent learners who co-constructed their learning environment.

Negotiating the Context

Contextual Struggles and Supports

As might be expected during student teaching, Sonia felt constrained by her cooperating teacher. At times she modified her lesson ideas due to her cooperating teacher’s suggestion:

I already sometimes would have an idea of what I wanted to do. But then when [my cooperating teacher] would suggest something, then I was like, okay. So then I sort of have to modify my plans or my ideas. Or sometimes I had this idea of, I really want them to get to a higher order thinking thing. But then . . . [my cooperating teacher] was like, “Why don’t we do something like painting” . . . I just have to be flexible. (Sonia, Interview 5)

Since Sonia did not feel she had the freedom to make instructional decisions without consulting her cooperating teacher, she was limited in her teaching opportunities.

However, even during her first and second years of teaching, Sonia had difficulty focusing on pupil learning. Working in a bilingual elementary school with a new principal, significant teacher turnover, and a vague mission statement, Sonia considered
the general school climate a significant impediment to her teaching success. The school’s lack of support for teachers frustrated Sonia, who found her work challenging and sought encouragement as a beginning teacher:

If you work at a place where you know you’re valued, where people constantly remind you that what you do matters, that what you do is important and that what you do is really hard and that sometimes you’re going to get frustrated and sometimes it’s going to be really hard, but when you’re recognized for that . . . it’s going to motivate you. (Interview 11)

Sonia believed that the general atmosphere of the school was greatly influenced by the principal, who provided the school with little direction and failed to hold staff meetings, develop a teacher handbook, solidify a school mission, promote district guidelines, or provide a curriculum map. This lack of direction left Sonia with considerable autonomy for her teaching, which meant she struggled as a beginning teacher. She noted, “As a new teacher I felt almost like, you can do anything because I didn’t see a curriculum map. There wasn’t anybody telling me you should be doing this” (Sonia, Interview 10). Furthermore, Sonia explained that the principal organized so many “extras” like the puppet man and tutors that there were continuous interruptions to her lessons, all distracting her pupils from learning.

However, Sonia also had some strong supports in her school—most notably from her assigned, school-based mentor, a fifth grade teacher, whom Sonia found fit her teaching style and personality. The mentor helped Sonia focus on key ideas like keeping pupils accountable for their learning and reminding her of the daily goals that were necessary to reach larger learning objectives:

She really helps me plan. . . . We’ve been meeting on Fridays after school. And it helps because we plan. We talk about what happened this week and we plan for next week. . . . So it’s been really helpful because we bounce ideas off each other. . . . and then you know she gave me this idea. . . . to make kids accountable. . . .
She’s really helpful in thinking of the details and the practical things because . . . I’m good at thinking of all these great ideas . . . but she’s like, “Okay, how are you going to make it work?” Which is great because . . . I wouldn’t be able to do any of it . . . She helps me. I’m really indecisive and I think about things too much and she’s like, “What’s going to work for you, do it.” (Sonia, Interview 8)

Sonia’s strong feelings about her mentor continued through the first year, helping Sonia improve her instruction, including working with second language learners and empowering Sonia to modify her teaching when she saw an opportunity for improved learning:

She helped me with planning . . . units for the second language learners. She helped me to think fast and think what works in the classroom and just to do whatever I need to do to be a better teacher, which is excellent advice because sometimes I’d be really hesitant to do things . . . like switch from folders to notebooks because it’s not going to be consistent . . . but then she would [say] “Do whatever you need to do to be a better teacher. Kids are going to get used to whatever you tell them as long as there’s some level of consistency . . . if that’s going to help you teach better, do it.” And that helps me make a lot of decisions. (Sonia, Interview 9)

Sonia found that her mentor gave her exactly what she needed during her first year—help with planning and organization. Unfortunately, her mentor left the school, so Sonia no longer had her support during her second year.

Sonia also received valuable support from a literacy coach, math coach, and the district office. During the middle of her first year, Sonia spent a day observing a veteran second grade teacher in another district elementary school and found this opportunity rewarding: “I really like going to other people’s classrooms. . . . just walking around and seeing how things are organized, how these things work” (Sonia, Interview 8). Sonia also commented on the benefit of having the coordinator of student learning available to assist with pupil referrals, professional development, MCAS testing, and other necessary support for new teachers. During Sonia’s second year, there were nine new teachers at
her school. In addition, Sonia had no consistent support personnel; her mentor, literacy coach, and director of instruction all left the school. Thus, one notable challenge that Sonia faced was reduced support, to which she attributed her struggles that year:

Those three people were actually big supports for me. So it’s been interesting because at one point I felt like I was doing a better job last year than this year and I was like, ”What did I do last year?” There were some points where I’ve had to look back and I remember some things that I was doing last year that were great that I forgot about this year. (Sonia, Interview 10)

Later that year, Sonia expressed much the same disappointment in her lack of support:

I feel like I was a better teacher last year . . . I think this is my learning style; sometimes I need a lot of feedback, good or bad or constructive, or praise, because I just feel like sometimes you don’t know . . . what to measure yourself against. “Are you doing a good job? Is this the best way to teach?” I was like, “It’s only your second year.” Sometimes we have to stop and remind ourselves, it’s only our second year . . . but I feel like last year I had more support so it helped that I was getting constant feedback and I felt I was always improving. (Sonia, Interview 11)

Although Sonia lacked continuity in her support system, she benefitted from the assistance of a classroom aide during her second year, particularly with management issues:

One of the things that frustrated me last year was when kids need your help and there’s six kids yelling your name. And it’s very frustrating when you’re the only one who can help. So it’s been a tremendous help to have another adult in the room . . . to leave to take one of the kids who is out of control out of the room. Either she can do it or I can do it. And that was extremely helpful in the beginning of the year when we had major behavioral disruptions, just to have her in the room. I don’t know how I could’ve done it. It would’ve been a million times worse without her. I think it’s nice to have a different adult in the classroom. (Sonia, Interview 10)

For Sonia, her context consisted of both challenges and supports to her teaching. The general school context, especially the lack of communication from the principal and vague school mission, was difficult for her initially. However, Sonia’s strong support
from three individuals during her first year helped to compensate for these challenges. Interestingly, during her second year Sonia no longer had support from any of these individuals; however, due to her increased comfort in her position and the help of a classroom aide, she seemed to have better navigated her context to compensate for the missing support system.

Successful Navigation

For Sonia, classroom management was an element of practice she hoped to improve upon through professional development, expressing a desire for “practical” professional development focused on specific curricula and teaching strategies related to day-to-day teaching. For instance, Sonia sought and received professional development support centered on reading strategies in the early childhood classroom. She found this classroom support helpful as it enabled her to gauge appropriate expectations for her pupils and to see how positive reinforcement could be utilized to enhance classroom management:

The [school’s director of instruction] read with [my class] and she would praise the kids, but it was very specific too: “Victor, I love the way you are stopping to think.” Like, very specific praise about reading strategies they’re using and then very specific feedback. . . . Maybe he was making a lot of miscues towards the end of the word you have to tell him very specifically, “You need to make sure your eyes look at all of the letters, read through the word.” So, in terms of my guided reading groups that was very helpful, too. (Sonia, Interview 9)

Sonia found great benefit in observing professional development exercises in her own classroom, as it enabled her to see how she might improve her guided reading groups and her general approach to classroom management.

During her second year, Sonia made improving math instruction a priority, taking two professional development courses at a local college and inviting the math coach into
her classroom for additional support. By June of that year, she experienced more success with her math instruction and hoped to focus on reading and writing the following year through summer professional development courses. For Sonia, teaching had become a process of continual learning: “The first two years I feel like there’s a huge learning curve . . . I feel like I still learned a lot this year” (Sonia, Interview 11). Consequently, Sonia continued to make improvements to her instruction in hopes of identifying better strategies for pupil learning gains. In addition to professional development, Sonia developed positive personal relationships with many colleagues, creating a network of support both professionally and socially. She shared, “I feel pretty good about the professional relationships here. . . . we definitely support each other. . . . people are always very polite to each other and talkative and caring. I’m happy” (Sonia, Interview 11).

Professional development, much of it initiated by Sonia, was a key to navigating her struggles with management and content. In addition, creating supportive relationships with colleagues provided another way for Sonia to search for additional support during her first two years of teaching. Without such supports, Sonia may have struggled more with her management, planning, and instruction.

**Moral Sensibility**

Sonia’s moral sensibility also factored into her ability to navigate the challenges she encountered. Even as a beginning teacher, she felt strongly about taking a leadership role in her school. After taking an active, even outspoken, role on the school’s institutional learning team during her first year, Sonia learned that her principal had
removed her from the team during her second year. Although upset, Sonia did not let the action undermine her goal of seeking leadership roles at her school:

[I] want to make a difference . . . and I think it’s me personally, like, when I was getting frustrated with the school . . . not that I’m a control freak, but I want to have a voice in how things happen because I feel I can be effective . . . that’s my personality. I feel I really like being a leader, being in charge of something more than the classroom. (Sonia, Interview 8)

This experience and others caused Sonia to reflect on her challenges as a teacher. Like Elizabeth, she shared her understanding of why many teachers leave the profession in the first five years (Ingersoll, 2003):

It’s true, the best and the brightest leave the fastest. . . . Sometimes you get frustrated because I feel like I want to do more. I want to have more of a say, but sometimes . . . district policies, sometimes it’s school policy, sometimes it’s ineffective administration, sometimes it’s just school culture. (Sonia, Interview 11)

Given the mandates and restrictions at her school, Sonia understood why retention was a huge concern in the teaching profession. Partly as a result of these obstacles and partly due to her personal goals, Sonia mentioned her interest in pursuing a Ph.D. or administrative role in education in the future.

Sonia’s deeply reflective perspective was one of her strongest attributes as well as one of her greatest stumbling blocks in the classroom (Schon, 1983). As a reflective practitioner, Sonia set appropriate long-term goals for her pupils. However, as she readily admitted, at times Sonia was so caught up developing long-term goals that she struggled with day-to-day planning and instruction. This was one reason Sonia appreciated her mentor during her first year. Her reflective nature, however, also contributed to her effectiveness, as she regularly considered how her pupils learned and how she could better meet their learning needs:
I feel like I am always questioning whether I’m doing the right thing because I’m always struggling between my Montessori background and accepting each learner as they are and meeting them where they are as opposed to imposing, “This is how it’s going to be.” It’s simple things like on the rug. . . . Do I allow Gian to walk around? He has ADD. He wears a patch. He definitely needs different things. Do I force him to sit? Well, I look over and he’s sitting on the rug . . . in Natasha’s classroom. Am I being too lenient? Are they pushing my limits further than they need to. I think about these things all the time. (Sonia, Interview 8)

Such dilemmas pushed Sonia to continually reflect on her practice— asking questions, making changes, and seeking support (Shulman, 1987).

Coupled with self-reflection, Sonia was committed to social justice in her teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2004). During teacher education, she emphasized providing a range of opportunities and experiences for all pupils through support and differentiated instruction. She made a point of differentiating instruction based on the needs of her pupils, “I think . . . that it’s really important to assess students’ understanding and to act upon those assessments, to sort of gauge where they are and really work with those who aren’t really getting it and think about good ways to pair kids or good activities for the different levels of understanding, like, the differentiating piece of it” (Sonia, Interview 9).

On a broader level, Sonia’s integration of social justice into her teaching continued through her first two years. She commented, “I see teaching as sort of a way to help children . . . get access to the same opportunities through education” (Sonia, Interview 11). Providing these opportunities demonstrated Sonia’s focus on the ultimate objective— improved pupil learning. Furthermore, Sonia believed that a key aspect of teaching for social justice was integrating higher-order thinking into her teaching:

I feel questions . . . that have pupils thinking about social justice are definitely questions that are more analytical that take them beyond, “What’s your favorite part?” or “What was the story about?” . . . . I want to get them further into thinking. (Sonia, Interview 10)
Sonia’s perseverance was evident in her quest for leadership roles at the school and her search for pedagogical support. In addition, her commitment to teaching for social justice and becoming a reflective practitioner influenced how Sonia experienced teacher education and negotiated the school context. For instance, Sonia had a vision of what it meant to teach for social justice and tried to integrate practices like differentiated instruction in her teaching to match those beliefs (Michelli & Keiser, 2005). Furthermore, the time that Sonia devoted to critical reflection was evident in her practice as she continually questioned her decisions, her goals, and her pupils’ learning. Collectively, Sonia’s moral sensibility had a strong influence on her negotiation of obstacles in her context.

Sonia Case Conclusions

Analysis of Sonia’s practice, context, and moral sensibilities revealed her commitment to teaching and her pupils’ learning. She focused on setting high expectations for her pupils and constantly reflected on how she might improve her teaching in the long-term more so than in the short-term. Further, Sonia struggled with classroom management, implementation of day-to-day instruction, and various aspects of her school context that served as obstacles. Unlike Elizabeth and Riley, by her second year of teaching, Sonia had not gain full command over classroom management, but she continued to seek related professional development opportunities. In addition, Sonia wanted to differentiate instruction to better meet the learning needs of her pupils. However, she found developing comprehensive units—which included classroom activities, guided reading, and independent pupil work—very challenging, in part because of her lack of familiarity with the second grade curriculum and the reduced support she
received during her second year due to the loss of her mentor, director of instruction, and literacy coach. Consequently, Sonia anticipated that she would reach her long-term goals, meet the needs of her diverse pupil population, and successfully integrate the district’s curricula into her teaching. However, she struggled because her ideals did not fully align with the realities of her classroom, a common problem for beginning teachers (Freidchsen, Chval, & Teuschen, 2007). For instance, Sonia wanted to differentiate her instruction for individual pupils; however, she found full-class lesson planning to be all consuming, leaving her with little time to diversify her practice. Thus, Sonia constantly struggled with balancing her ideals with the realities of her classroom.

In addition to her individual challenges, for Sonia, like Elizabeth, many aspects of her school context proved challenging. In particular, the school principal’s lack of leadership and reduced support during Sonia’s second year were difficult for her to overcome and affected her focus on pupil learning. Consequently, she sought and found professional development to help navigate through her challenges like preparation for the mandated second grade math curriculum. In this way, Sonia focused her efforts on those things she could control. Although this proved beneficial for Sonia, it did not enable her to completely overcome all of the obstacles she faced. In comparison to Elizabeth and Riley, Sonia struggled to integrate three of the four aspects of practice—classroom management, building relationships with pupils, and instruction/assessment. Although Sonia’s struggles are a reality for many new teachers (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004), her willingness to work to overcome her challenges demonstrated a commitment to pupil learning and placed her toward the right on the continuum (see Figure 4.2), although not as far as Elizabeth or Riley.
Overview of Lola’s Case

Lola, a white, middle-class, female, was raised in northern New England by two career educators. Her call to the teaching profession was strong even as a child, when she ran a “school” in her parents’ backyard shed for neighborhood children. However, it was not until her mid-twenties that she formally pursued the profession. After graduating from a prestigious liberal arts college in the south with a B.S. in geology, Lola worked for a few years in environmental consulting before entering the Hillside College Urban Scholars Program to earn her master’s in elementary education. During her pre-practicum and full-practicum experiences, Lola worked in the same urban 5th grade classroom with an Urban Scholar graduate as her cooperating teacher. She worked primarily with two classes in math, science, and social studies, an ideal position for her, as she considered math and science her strong subjects.

Lola was very committed to promoting racial harmony. Her interest in issues surrounding race led her to college in the south and eventually to the Urban Scholars Program at Hillside. She began the program with anxiety about her future relationships with black pupils and their families. She feared they would not accept her due to her skin color. During her second year of teaching, Lola encountered experiences where she believed race was a factor in negative parent interactions. However, she saw this as a learning experience that furthered her commitment to urban youth.

Unlike the other teachers in this study, who remained at the same school for their first three years of teaching, Lola taught at three schools in three years. In her first year, she worked at a K-8 urban charter school in the Northeast as the 7th and 8th grade science teacher. Her second year, she moved to a Mid-Atlantic state and taught 7th and 8th grade
science at another urban charter school with an almost entirely African-American pupil population. In the fall of 2008, Lola moved to a new charter school in the same city and continued teaching middle school science. The new school was more racially diverse than her previous teaching environments—about 30% African American, 30% Latino, 30% White, and 10% other.

Practice

*Holding Pupils to High Expectations*

Although sometimes challenged by her various school contexts, Lola maintained high expectations for her pupils by creating a demanding science curricula, believing her pupils needed to be fully prepared for high school science at the end of 8th grade:

> In terms of science, I expect them to have a pretty solid foundation for high school science and what I'm teaching right now is much more than I ever got in middle school science. . . . It's so much easier, if you have a background that's solid, to then be able to make those leaps [to the next level]. (Interview 8)

Lola believed that pushing her pupils to learn more would provide them with the best possible outcomes in future schooling. In fact, Lola expressed her belief that the material she was teaching to her middle school pupils was not likely to be seen again until high school or even college:

> [As she told her pupils] “Well, to be honest with you, the science that you guys are getting . . . at least from my personal experience. . . . you might see this in high school and then you'll see some of it in college, too. It's a pretty sophisticated level of science that I'm asking you to accomplish.” (Lola, Interview 9)

Lola took personal responsibility for challenging her pupils academically. She believed that her pupils were capable of higher-level learning and took the initiative to prepare them for more advanced science courses.
In addition to her high expectations in science content, Lola believed that she should encourage her pupils to see the importance of learning, hoping her pupils would see a connection between school success and their future lives:

For me, seeing kids want to learn and seeing them understand the importance of learning . . . maybe that doesn't happen in middle school . . . maybe they're . . . not ready to understand that yet . . . But at least fostering in them a love of science so that they just want to learn. (Lola, Interview 9)

As she noted through her high expectations for learning, Lola hoped that her pupils would ask thought-provoking questions, become critical thinkers, and persevere through difficulties:

Really pushing the kids to be thinkers. . . . I will definitely make more of an effort [to get my pupils]. . . . to be able to ask good questions, to be able to be given a problem and not shut down immediately, to be able to critically think and give it your best shot. (Lola, Interview 11)

Lola found the lack of emphasis on critical thinking to be a disservice to pupils as this was an important skill to develop during schooling. She shared that “students need to learn to [critically think] and we don't value it enough or test it enough or teach it enough” (Lola, Interview 10). Lola hoped to find a school that valued high expectations for pupil learning, as she had yet to find a school that supported higher-order thinking (Shepard, 2001) and inquiry-based learning (Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2006).

During her second year, Lola mentioned how difficult it was to work in an environment that espoused high expectations but enacted few in practice:

I've realized how important it is for a school to be really thoughtful and critical of what they're choosing their expectations to be, because when you give all of these expectations and you don't plan on upholding half of them, then you as the adult just look like you don't really know what you're doing. (Lola, Interview 11)

Lola believed her school context undermined the integrity of the teachers, as expectations were unclear. She described her vision of an ideal school environment where the school’s
mission centered around learning and pupils had opportunities to explore topics in-depth. She hoped to find this at her third school:

[Finding] a place where the learning is really valued. Like not just getting an "A" but they really . . . want the kids to be doing hands-on stuff and really becoming experts on these topics and going deeper versus more shallow [learning]. (Lola, Interview 11)

Lola’s high expectations for learning centered on both science content and broader learning goals like higher-order thinking and synthesis of information (Shepard, 2001). Although Lola had not found success during her first two years, she was confident that she would eventually find a school with a mission centered on high expectations in both theory and practice.

Building Pupil Relationships

While student teaching, Lola found herself advocating for a pupil whom she believed her cooperating teacher failed to support academically due to his “history,” which included repeating the 5th grade and working far below grade level, especially in math. Lola, on the other hand, argued that building a strong relationship with this pupil was imperative, as the pupil would continue to fail without strong teacher support. Through individual tutoring and positive encouragement, Lola provided pupils with additional learning opportunities and increased confidence. It was clear from the pupil’s decision to join Lola’s math group each day that he benefited from the personal relationship Lola initiated:

My [cooperating teacher] has him signed up for trade school tomorrow in her mind and she said, “Maybe that is what he needs. Maybe he needs to learn to be a great mechanic or something.” But while he's in school I think he should learn. And so… [the students] could choose what teacher they would come to and he was always in my group and he grew so much. He grew more than any other kid in that class. (Interview 5)
Lola’s success with this pupil reinforced her beliefs about the power of building strong relationships to facilitate pupil learning.

Like Elizabeth, Lola also considered it sometimes necessary to have personal conversations with pupils to motivate them to persevere in their academic efforts:

But again there are some kids who[m] I really would love to push more, like Carl. . . . He has the potential to be so sharp in science and he never has been pushed before. (Lola, Interview 10)

However, unlike Elizabeth, who remained in the same school from student teaching through her second year of teaching, Lola found herself building new relationships with pupils each year, as she taught in three different schools. Thus, Lola never experienced the benefits of knowing pupils over an extended period of time. Nevertheless, Lola, like the other secondary teachers, made relationship-building a key aspect of her practice.

Although Lola believed that she established better personal boundaries with her pupils during her second year, she shared, “I still have really good relationships with a lot of the kids” (Lola, Interview 11).

In addition to using relationship building to motivate individual pupils, Lola attempted full class strategies. For example, she worked to get her pupils to see the connection between middle school success and their future lives, as she did not believe her pupils saw the relationship between middle school preparation, high school achievement, and college acceptance. After distributing mid-quarter grades toward the end of her first year, Lola described her speech to her pupils:

“Most of you are failing and I'm looking around right now . . . you all think that I don't care about your grades and that's so not true. I care so much.” I just went through this whole song and dance about how, unfortunately, middle school does matter for them and it didn't really matter that much for me but it does matter for them and if they want to, the choices they make now are going to affect where they go to high school and on to college and if they don't think they're going to
college then that's very unfortunate because they should be planning on college. (Lola, Interview 9)

Lola hoped her speech would motivate pupils to put more effort into their school work. It became clear by the conclusion of Lola’s first year that she had simultaneous goals of holding her pupils to high expectations and building strong relationships.

Maintaining Classroom Management

Like Sonia, Lola struggled with classroom management during her first two years. As Fuller (1975) and Johnson (2004) suggested, Lola could not focus on learning goals due to frequent management struggles. In her first year, Lola’s middle school pupils proved so challenging that she did not feel she could manage truly “authentic” performance assessments (Newmann et al., 1996):

I'm not at a place right now where I can do that [performance assessments]… because that's a lot of management and requires a lot of order and I just feel like it's not a good use of my time right now. (Lola, Interview 8)

Consequently, Lola's lack of classroom management undermined the quality of instruction and assessment.

During her second year, at a different charter school in a different city, Lola still struggled with management issues. However, one change she instituted was cancelling labs if pupils did not work together effectively or stay on task. Lola found minimizing instruction to having pupils sit and take notes was a more effective means of controlling pupil behavior which she believed needed to occur before she could integrate more hands-on learning opportunities that promoted higher-order thinking:

It was a management issue. So I just cut [the lab], I pulled it... the past month has been kind of tough to get their attention. Like, the more hands-on things have been, the worse they've gone. And so they've been doing much better with the sit there and take notes and write down stuff. So when I saw that happening, that they weren't being very responsible in their groups even though they had a
whole list of things that they needed to do, I pulled that lab. . . I think last year I
think I tried to plug through the lab anyway or I let it get too out of control. . . .
There was one time in particular I remember when they came in and they were off
the wall and I was trying to go over the procedure and they were not paying any
attention. Half of the kids had their heads on the desk, the other half were goofing
off. And so I just canceled the lab. . . . I think I've learned a lot along the way . . .
and I know what my expectations are very clearly. . . . I'm going to be a lot more
strict and give a lot more zeros in the beginning, hopefully not later. (Lola,
Interview 9)

Though she struggled, Lola believed she grew considerably over her first two
years:

I feel like this year my classes are a lot more controlled than they were last year
[referring to her first year]. And so next year I'm looking forward to getting a step
better and . . . I'm anticipating that it will be a little easier. (Lola, Interview 11)

Lola provided an excellent example of a teacher who knew what she wanted to do, but
felt constrained by her ineffective management strategies and lack of experience
(Huberman, 1989). Lola had moments of success in her teaching, but generally struggled
with her management through her second year. Lola hoped she would find more success
with her management as she gained more experience and found a more supportive school
culture.

Negotiating the Context

Contextual Struggles

At each of her three schools, Lola’s school environment presented many
challenges that undermined her focus on pupil learning. During her first year, as the only
middle school science teacher and with the exception of some initial observations from
the dean of students, Lola had no opportunities for professional collaboration and
received little more than a skeletal outline of the curriculum used by the previous teacher.
Lola felt she was “highly trusted to carry out the curriculum” (Lola, Interview 9). Lola
also had no formal mentor that year. To complicate matters, the school used an elaborate demerit system for pupil accountability. Lola believed the system was better understood by pupils than new teachers, which caused problems:

The problem again is that there were many new teachers . . . and the systems are so complex and intricate and . . . I think it's also dangerous when the kids know the system much better than the adults so they . . . quickly figure out what you don't know and then they work it as much as possible. (Lola, Interview 11)

In addition to limited support and a demerit system, Lola became frustrated by her pupils’ lack of effort because she had no doubt they were capable of completing their assignments and learning new ideas:

There are too many of my students who are failing . . . now I even more so believe, not because they couldn't do it but because they didn't do it. They didn't hand in assignments. They didn't study even though I didn't just say, “Study.” I gave them a review sheet with questions that they had to answer and sometimes they would make flash cards. Sometimes I would have them recopy a review sheet. (Lola, Interview 9)

During her first year, Lola faced many contextual challenges—few resources, minimal professional support, a complex behavior management system, and poor pupil effort—that limited her ability to focus on pupil learning.

Lola left her first school mainly because she wanted to live in a different city, accepting a similar position as a middle school science teacher at a charter school. Again, Lola faced significant contextual obstacles. Like her first school, this school failed to promote a culture of exploratory learning. Lola hoped to do an integrated assessment assignment that brought in learning from various units of study, but found that she had difficulty engaging pupils in learning opportunities that differed from the more teacher-centered pedagogical strategies promoted by the other teachers:

For example, here I know that the earth science teacher last year pretty much showed videos all year and [said] that we didn't really need any supplies. We
were good. And the only supplies that were bought were rocks, because that's what people think of when they think of earth science. (Lola, Interview 11)

Lola found her pupils were most comfortable when very little critical thinking was expected of them, as this was what they were accustomed to from their prior science courses in middle school.

Although Lola had a mentor during her second year, the relationship provided little support. The two met a couple of times during the beginning of the school year, but due to their “busy” days, the relationship did not develop. Unlike her first school, where the parents were largely supportive, at the second school parents were a much bigger issue. Lola attributed many of her challenges to the school’s racial composition of white teachers and a largely African American pupil population. During parent night, Lola had a line waiting to speak with her that extended out the door. One parent was particularly poignant in her assertion that, as a white teacher, Lola could not effectively work with African American pupils:

“Well, I know this is your first year of teaching.” . . . I was just like, “I did teach at Boston before here.” And she's like, “No, but you haven't taught our kids”. . . . So I don't know there's just this kind of this, “You don't know us. You don't know where we're from . . . like you're white and we don't learn that way. Like you're asking us to do things that . . . don't jive with our culture.” . . . I'm not eloquently saying that at all, but there's just this weird feeling that it was like an oppositional thing. But I think that there are a lot deeper negative race issues here. And that as a young, white teacher at a school where the teacher turnover is really high, I'm just suspect. . . . I think over time that would happen and so parents haven't really made much of an effort to figure out who I am. (Lola, Interview 11)

Lola was troubled at this parent’s assumptions that she did not know how to teach children of color. She believed her struggles with parents stemmed from deeper racial issues present at the school because the white teachers had high rates of turnover. Lola
had not experienced this difficulty during her first year, but it posed a major challenge during her second year.

Beyond struggles with limited resources, little support, and difficult parent relationships, a telling example of the difficulties found in Lola’s school context occurred at the end of the school year, when an anonymous threat was made to the head master and school community, forcing the school to move the headmaster to a remote location for his daily work, as it was deemed unsafe for him to return.

Successful Navigation

Although Lola faced many contextual struggles, she successfully sought resources in a number of ways. During her first year, Lola’s main source of content support came from the local science museum. She spent many weekends searching for lesson and lab materials, as her school lacked resources and there was no other science teacher to assist her. In her second year, she attended the National Science Teachers Association meeting, where she learned about curricular methods, like inquiry-based science and summer professional development opportunities. Lola also hoped that she would be selected to participate in a mentoring program offered through the Association that was designed to provide science content support to first- through third-year teachers. In addition, Lola anticipated assistance with classroom management at her third school as it remained a struggle:

I still want more help [learning] how to do things efficiently and how to set out expectations so that they're followed and behavior management kind of stuff still, and I don't think I've gotten really any advice on that this year. I've just been more like learning by doing. (Lola, Interview 11)
Although Lola had completed her second year of teaching, she realized that she still needed support and guidance, especially in developing management strategies and realistic expectations.

Lola’s lack of support limited her progress in classroom management. She focused her attention on gaining additional support through professional development opportunities, as she did not find her school contexts to be helpful. Consequently, she hoped professional development and mentoring support would assist her in setting appropriately high expectations and promoting strong management of classroom routines. As Lola entered her third school, she hoped she would find a more supportive environment that would assist rather than resist her efforts to support pupil learning. Lola’s desire and commitment to improving her teaching were evident in her search for support.

_Moral Sensibility_

Lola’s perseverance, commitment to social justice, and self-reflection all contributed to her search for a school that “fit” her professional ideals. Lola was committed to teaching minority pupils at an urban school, although she doubted her effectiveness after a challenging two years:

> It's really disheartening. . . I've probably . . . said this before because I thought it before . . . maybe African-American kids do need to be taught by people who are the same culture as them like when they're _en masse_ like that . . . I feel like I can't reach everybody now and I'm not doing a good enough job here and if I had more experience, maybe. But I feel like right now I'm not doing as well as I want to be and as I could be doing in a school where my demographics were different. (Lola, Interview 10)

Lola attributed some of her struggles to a lack of experience and some to demographic differences with her pupils. Her experiences were so overwhelming at times that she
considered leaving the profession or at least leaving urban teaching, as she believed she
could be successful in a suburban school like the one she attended:

[The] kind of . . . uncertain thing about doing urban teaching in an urban
environment where there's a lot of behavior issues, is that you don't even know if
you can teach. You have no experience of success as a teacher and so if you go
into a situation like I've been in and you're used to being good at things and now
you just fail . . . and you have no confidence that you're ever going to be able to
do it, then I can see why people leave. (Lola, Interview 11)

Lola commented on how difficult it was for her to experience failure due to her past
academic and professional success.

In light of her challenges, like Elizabeth and Sonia, the other two urban teachers,
Lola shared her understanding of why teachers leave urban schools at high rates
(Ingersoll, 2003). However, in all three cases, teacher perseverance fueled by
commitment to social justice helped them to overcome their obstacles. After two difficult
years, Lola felt confident that she could handle urban teaching; in fact, her passion for
teaching increased:

Now, I really, I do love teaching and I like seeing the students get it and I like
seeing them perform. . . . I like seeing them get engaged in things and have good
conversations or be interested or see a cool experiment and understanding why
that's happening. (Lola, Interview 11)

Furthermore, Lola was committed to meeting the needs of all pupils due to her
strong moral sensibility. She believed she could meet the needs of pupils but it would be
“really, really hard” because she wanted her “students to have gotten every bit of content
they were supposed to” (Lola, Interview 9). Like Riley, she believed this would become
easier as she gained more experience as a classroom teacher because “different kids will
get things in different ways. . . . [and] the longer that you teach the more you can figure
out how to get to more students” (Lola, Interview, 9). Without her strong commitment to
social justice and perseverance, Lola may have left the profession after enduring such difficult experiences.

_Lola Case Conclusions_

Despite challenging contexts, Lola’s commitment to pupil learning remained central in her practice. She consistently focused on those things she could control, such as accessing resources and seeking professional development for content and pedagogical support. Lola’s commitment was particularly evident in the high expectations she had for pupils and her desire to build relationships with them, as well as her consistent adherence to these ideals. However, like Sonia, Lola struggled when her ideas about how pupils learn best did not match the realities of her classroom instruction, mainly because of classroom management difficulties. For instance, she planned to incorporate hands-on learning and lab activities, yet she found implementing these activities too challenging due to classroom management issues. Therefore, Lola resorted to lecturing and note-taking because then, pupils remained quiet and seated for the majority of the class period. Furthermore, Lola’s move to a new school each year inhibited her ability to build relationships with colleagues, administrators, and pupils. Consequently, her constant shift in context undermined various aspects of her practice, like developing a comprehensive understanding of the content for courses and learning the nuances of school’s discipline policies.

After a particularly challenging second year, where Lola struggled with limited curricular support, parents, and a lack of pupil effort, she remained optimistic that her third urban school would support her goal of incorporating scientific inquiry. Lola’s willingness to continue to seek a school that fit her teaching philosophy and provide her
with the necessary support to realize her ambitious ideals demonstrated her commitment to pupil learning. For both Sonia and Lola, their struggles continued through their second year of teaching; driven by their moral principles, both continued to make changes to their practice, seek additional resources, and find necessary support.

Lola’s case was one of a new teacher remaining committed to her ideals, finding the right fit, and learning from experience. She was certain that she was meant to teach at an urban charter school, and this commitment launched her on a search for a school that fit her goals. She realized that without some support she would not be able to meet her own expectations for pupil learning. Furthermore, her experiences in various school contexts provided multiple learning opportunities and also a sense of comparison across context that was unusual for a beginning teacher. In the end, she hoped this would help her find a school where she could be successful.

Comparison of Sonia and Lola

Sonia and Lola shared many similarities in terms of their experiences learning to teach. Both were raised in families of educators and assumed they would become teachers at some point in their careers. Neither majored in education as undergraduates, and both waited to pursue an M.Ed. in education until they had “tried out” another job. Both were committed to teaching in urban schools, yet neither had attended an urban school. Neither felt prepared for her position in an urban school, and both struggled with minimal support, poor communication with administration, and limited resources. As a result, Lola and Sonia found their teaching positions much harder than they expected. This may also have been because neither had experienced much dissonance in their academic or professional lives until this point. Both Sonia and Lola had excelled
academically, and their transition to the working world after college had been seamless. One final similarity was their commitment to urban teaching. Neither saw “giving up” as an option despite their new understanding of why urban teachers leave the profession at high rates (Ingersoll, 2003).

However, there were also differences between Sonia and Lola that defined Lola as a “mover” and Sonia as a “stayer”\(^6\) (Ingersoll, 2001). Lola moved to a new school in each of her first three years of teaching. Her first move was mainly because she wanted to return to the city where she had worked prior to attending Hillside College; the second was in response to the unsupportive school environment where she found it challenging to implement scientific inquiry. At the conclusion of her second year, Lola said she would give urban teaching one more year, but if she failed again, she would move to a suburban school where she believed she could be successful. Lola was persistent in finding the right fit between her ideals and the culture of the school. Lola’s idea of finding the right “fit” began during teacher education, when she opted to pursue teaching positions as a middle school science teacher rather than an elementary generalist, her certification area. Lola realized that she was more passionate about teaching science and therefore decided to find a specialized position.

Along somewhat different lines, although Sonia was also interested in “fit,” she believed that continuity of school context would benefit her growth as a teacher. Thus, she selected an urban, bilingual school for her first teaching position, and remained there even though she considered the principal ineffective and found the school environment

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\(^6\) Ingersoll (2001) defined a “stayer” as a teacher who remained in the same school from one year to the next and a “mover” as a teacher who moved to a position at another school.
unsupportive of beginning teachers. One other critical difference between these two teachers was Sonia’s eventual goal of taking on more leadership responsibilities in education and perhaps leaving the classroom to pursue an administrative or university career. Lola, meanwhile, remained focused on classroom practices, especially developing instructional goals related to pupil learning.

Both Sonia and Lola wanted to promote critical thinking, but each approached this goal differently. Sonia talked about higher-order thinking, yet her struggles with short-term planning and lesson implementation, at times, undermined her efforts to realize this goal. Lola, on the other hand, during both student teaching and her first year, followed the culture of her school to push for high scores on the state standardized science exam. Consequently, she spent extra time on test-taking strategies and practice exams. However, during her second year, when her school had almost no emphasis on the standardized exam, Lola put all her effort into developing units with labs that incorporated as much critical thinking as possible, as she found this to be a huge weakness in her pupils. Unfortunately, her school context did not support her integration of inquiry-based science, and her pupils often rejected her attempts to integrate such learning. This was one of the main reasons Lola continued to search for a school that better “fit” her teaching philosophy for her third year.

Unlike Elizabeth and Riley, both Sonia and Lola struggled with classroom management. Thus, even though they set high expectations for their own teaching and their pupils’ learning, had strong commitments to social justice, reflected on their teaching, and persevered through difficult situations, they seemed unable to focus on pupil learning to the same extent as Elizabeth and Riley. In addition, each had more
difficulty navigating their school contexts. Sonia’s difficulty with daily planning, a reduced support network during her second year, and an unresponsive school principal affected her focus on pupil learning. Likewise, Lola’s struggles with standardized testing pressures, challenging parent relationships, minimal support, and limited resources all minimized her focus on pupil learning.

Overview of Mark’s Case

Mark, a white male, entered the Hillside College teacher education program at age 33, two years after completing a B.A. in environmental science from an evening degree program at a prestigious university. He selected Hillside because of its strong reputation, commitment to social justice, and convenient location. Although Mark had a limited history background, he enjoyed the subject and decided to pursue an M.Ed. in history. Before entering the program, Mark’s commitment to teaching urban youth was evident; he had volunteered for an organization that taught bicycle repair to urban youth. His own experience as a teenager, having been labeled “at-risk” due to poor attendance and lack of effort in each of the three high schools he attended, also influenced him. Although bright, Mark did not enjoy school or see its value at the time. His mother’s persistence in working with different administrators and forcing him to attend on a somewhat regular basis was only reason he graduated. He hoped that his unique first-hand struggles would help him work with similar pupils.

In the Hillside program, Mark was placed in a suburban school for his pre-practicum, which disappointed him because he wanted to teach in an urban school. He arranged for his full practicum to be at an urban high school, and this experience further confirmed his desire to teach at an urban school, in particular, the same school where he
did his student teaching. Unfortunately, Mark could not secure a teaching position in
history at this school, so he took a position as a year-long substitute for 9th grade physical
science and 11th grade chemistry. Although he felt he did an admirable job, considering
his lack of content knowledge or certification in science, Mark chose not to return to this
position for a second year. Instead, he waited until after the school year began for a
history position to become available at the same school. Interestingly, after teaching
history for one year, Mark realized he preferred teaching science, believing he could help
his pupils make better connections to the content using labs and activities. Furthermore,
his belief was that he would have an easier time finding a job over the course of his career in the
sciences as opposed to history. Due to his delay in taking the state teacher certification
exam for science, Mark was not certified by September 2008, and therefore, waited to
search for a position until his paperwork had been processed by the Department of
Education. During April of 2009, Mark secured a position teaching physical science at a
K-8 school in an affluent section of the same city.

Mark’s commitment to preparing pupils for their future was evident in the
relationships he developed. Often, Mark discussed working with pupils on job
applications, researching summer programs, and writing recommendations for
scholarships. He believed that his role as a teacher included building personal
relationships with pupils and helping them see the value of school. Mark was also
committed to bicycle racing, spending numerous hours each day training for weekend
races. While student teaching, Mark chose not to compete, but during both his first and
second years of teaching, he trained and competed extensively. As Mark noted, this
limited his time, but he did not feel that training affected his teaching.
Mark, the teacher furthest to the left on the “living continuum,” provides a contrasting picture in terms of his teaching practices and moral sensibilities. Unlike the other four teachers, Mark only occasionally shared his expectations for developing independent learners during student teaching. As a history teacher, he believed his pupils needed to be prepared to become active citizens who could identify bias and perspective:

I want them to be able to look at this material and look at history, interpret it for themselves, decide what they think happened and what people’s motivations were. But the real object here is to get them to . . . figure out what they think or what they want to be able to do, and to look at things like a newspaper article and interpret it and what’s really going on here. “Do I believe this is what really happened? Do I think there’s a bias?” . . . I’m not trying to indoctrinate them because I don’t tell them one way or another what they should think. But I am trying to get them to be aware, sort of active thinkers and maybe even active citizens. (Mark, Interview 5)

Mark shared these ideas during student teaching, but interestingly, during his first year, when he taught chemistry and physics, he did not discuss developing independent learners. This lack of focus may have been, partly, a result of the position he accepted as a first-year teacher. Certified in secondary history, Mark taught science. Due to his struggle with content knowledge, Mark relied heavily on the district’s scripted curricula, which limited his accountability for pupil learning as he routinely followed class activities, practice problems, and lab exercises directly from the curriculum. As his objectives and teaching strategies were provided to him, he may not have thought much about developing independent learners.

Mark was also the only teacher to never mention his learning expectations for pupils during interviews in the first two years of teaching. This, again, may have been
due to his reliance on the district science curriculum that he closely followed. However, it is possible that Mark did not have a full understanding of what constituted high expectations in a secondary science classroom, as there were instances in which he demonstrated low expectations for his pupils. For example, like Lola, Mark described how classroom management issues restricted his teaching in his 9th grade physics class:

One of the classes I have serious issues [with] because the students are just really low skilled and there are also classroom management issues with them. But it’s not necessarily what I’m doing. It’s just that these kids are terrible. . . I can help these kids as much as possible. I’ve altered the curriculum significantly and I’m not doing any of the cool little physics projects that are in the book. We’re not doing any of that. It’s like they sit, they write and that’s it. No group work. They have to work quietly. It’s terrible. (Mark, Interview 8)

When probed about the long-term learning impact that lower-order thinking might have on his pupils, Mark explained that his minimized curriculum was actually more successful because it was repetitive and continuously drilled. Mark noted that a class with such a limited curriculum might actually do better on the district-mandated exam.

Achievement on district exams was something Mark noted as both a history and science teacher. He felt pressure for his pupils to achieve on district-mandated exams and believed drill and practice would adequately prepare classes he viewed as “low level:”

Mark: I’m just being very explicit about what I want them to learn. So instead of saying, “Hey, we’re going to learn all this cool stuff and do all these cool experiments,” I’m like, “You need to know how to read a graph. I need you to be able to interpret this graph. Straight line means constant increase. If it’s curved it means it’s all of a sudden spiking and that’s how you read a graph.” Instead of having all the other stuff, I just cut all of that out and this is dry and it sucks and now you got to do it over and over again until you can repeat it in your sleep. And it works. I mean . . . I hate that it works, but it does.

Interviewer: Do you think it works better?

Mark: Well, yes. I actually do because they did pretty well . . . on a quiz . . . they were able to give me really concrete examples of convection and conduction and draw the examples and they were drawing where the heat’s going because that’s
all I had them do. I did demonstrations like I heat this nickel up on a heater until
it’s smoking hot and then I’m going to put it in water and it’ll sizzle and they’d be
like, “Oh.” Okay. Now where’s the heat moving from? And just kept drilling it
and kept drilling it so that they know it. And, yes, it works. . . . They’ll actually
probably do better on their city-wide exams than the other kids . . . Well the
reason why they’re going to is because they’re not getting all the other stuff.
They’re not getting the other stuff that would be cool to know and makes it fun
and makes it more interesting. They’re just getting the [bare bones]; you need to
be able to read the stupid graph. . . . Forget all the other stuff. Forget everything
else that’s involved . . . this is a graph, this is how you make one. This is what
goes in the x axis. This goes in the y and that’s it. Instead of having that be part
of a larger lesson, that is the lesson. So I’ve . . . broken it down that way that all
we did today was graphs. That’s all we did in class and tomorrow it’ll be some
other very concrete, very well-defined thing . . . the amount that I’m asking them
to do during the day is very, very distinct and small. And it’s very specific. . .
. But it’s pretty dry, really sucks. (Mark, Interview 8)

Because of his struggles with classroom management, Mark modified his curriculum to
include more direct instruction and low-level skills like memorization and recall.

Although he noted that he thought his pupils would learn more long-term as a result of
his revised pedagogy, he said he did not make these changes with his other classes where
he continued to do “cool projects.” This decision leads one to question the logic behind
Mark’s curricular decision-making.

Mark’s low expectations for pupil learning were also manifested when he
encountered problems with effort and motivation. Unlike Elizabeth, who emphasized her
responsibility for all pupils’ learning even when they arrived to class unprepared, Mark
didn’t embrace such a view:

I’ve really made it clear that I kind of need them to meet me halfway. If you’re
not going to come to class with a notebook, with a pencil, and try like a teeny,
teeny, little bit, I’m kind of just going to let it go. . . . As long as you’re not
disrupting my class, I’m going to let you sit there because I have a lot of
struggling students in that class and when I say struggling, I don’t mean kids who
are achieving poor grades, I mean kids who are trying to . . . understand things,
who are failing to understand it. That’s my definition of struggling. It’s not just
that they’re struggling with their issues but when I think struggling like they’re
trying. . . . I need to help those kids because those kids are actually trying. (Mark, Interview 9)

Mark emphasized that he could only help those pupils who were willing to meet him halfway because he had many pupils who were trying to learn and needed additional support. Consequently, he failed to reach the pupils who were most like him in high school. These examples of Mark’s low expectations for some pupils provide an unfolding picture of his placement at the weaker end of the living continuum in terms of focus on pupil learning.

Building Pupil Relationships

Mark’s strongest asset was probably building strong relationships with pupils. As a teacher with a history of struggling in school, Mark understood that making personal connections with some pupils about their lack of effort might be the difference in engaging them in the learning process. Mark began creating such personal relationships during his student teaching. “Students who weren’t doing work, like I made them very uncomfortable not doing it. I would say, ‘What is going on. Why are you doing this?’ . . . very personal, like, ‘What is going on here?’” (Mark, Interview 5). He continued to use the same tactics during his first year:

In this particular position, my strength is that I can sometimes get through to some of these kids, sometimes. I can’t do it all the time and I can’t do it with all of them, but with a lot of these I’m able to create an environment where it’s sort of uncomfortable for them to not do what they’re supposed to do. (Mark, Interview 8)

In addition, he built individual relationships to help some pupils apply to educational programs at local universities, hoping these programs would provide opportunities for them to see what post-secondary education could offer:

There are a few students [in] whom I’ve invested a whole lot of energy outside of the classroom . . . helping them get into programs outside of Burton High School
and also sort of guide them in that saying, “These are all of the things you need to get into a top tier college.” (Mark, Interview 10)

Mark believed he could influence the life choices of his pupils through his attention and support.

Like Elizabeth and Lola, Mark attempted to draw explicit connections between secondary school success and life opportunities. Through personal relationships, these secondary teachers encouraged their pupils to see the practical value of school. Mark also discussed the importance of maintaining these relationships with pupils over the course of their high school careers. He considered such sustained relationships with pupils, even during semesters when he did not teach them, critical to their academic, social, and emotional growth. After a conversation with a former pupil, Mark mentioned his dilemma with not returning to the same school the following year:

I’ve been trying to work on him and be like, “Listen, where do you see yourself in five years? What’s going to happen?” I’ll ask him, “Where do you live? What’s it like there? Are you going to stay there? What are you going to do when you get out of high school? Because this is going to come up in four years that you’re going to be all done with this and then you’re on your own.” I mean honestly, that’s one of the things . . . I’m probably not going to be at [this school] next year is that I lose him . . . I could be still working on him . . . I won’t be because I won’t be there. And there’s a bunch of kids in that same position, especially the freshmen, where if I was still here, I’d have four years with these kids. Not necessarily teaching them, but like being there and grabbing them every so often, and…trying to do whatever it is they need to be done. (Mark, Interview 9)

Each year, Mark had one pupil with whom he made an extra effort to try and build a strong relationship. During student teaching, this pupil was a young woman with frequent absences and resulting failing grades. Mark made it his objective to continuously build a relationship with this young woman and remind her each time he saw her in school that she was extremely gifted, but she needed to attend school every day to maximize her potential:
She had started coming to school. She came for a couple of days and then didn’t come for a week, come for a couple of days, didn’t come for two weeks. Then finally she comes in on one day and I say, “Will you come to school tomorrow, please?” and she’s like “Well, I have a doctor’s appointment.” I’m like, “Well just come to school.” . . . So everyday she came to school I’d say, “Please come to school tomorrow, please.” [emphasis on ‘please’ from speaker]. . . But I mean I don’t want to say that I made her come to class . . . but I mean I literally begged her every single day that she was in. . . . So she is coming to school now. (Mark, Interview 5)

When the young woman started attending school more regularly, regardless of Mark’s individual attention, he was pleased because her changed attendance pattern would afford her additional learning opportunities.

Similarly, Mark attempted to build a strong relationship during his first year of teaching with a young woman who, like Mark, chose an alternative style in her attire and interests during high school. He initiated one-on-one conversations with this pupil, who generally chose not to speak to teachers or fellow pupils during the school day. Mark attempted to connect with this pupil through his own personal experience as an “outsider” in high school:

My strength is that I can sometimes get through to some of these kids. . . . I have this girl who, literally, she can make it through a whole day at [high school] without saying one word to anyone, teachers, administrators, students, not a word. . . just is really sad looking and [she] has a journal going. She’s always writing in it and I’m taking it away and telling her she needs to write physics . . . she [asks], “Why are you a teacher?” I’m like, “I’m a teacher because it sucks to be a kid like you in this school and so all these other teachers are here because they loved high school. I thought it sucked.” So, and I mean this is true, this is dead true. I’m not lying to her. I said, “But, my job in this school is to teach physics. That’s what I’m hired to do. My real job, in my mind, is to get kids like you through this so that you can go on in life and go and be the great person you’re going to be. But, I need you to pass my class. You just [have] got to start working.” So finally I took her aside one day and I was like, “Listen, I know I’m a teacher and I know that I’m an older, white guy and in like goofy shoes, but what you should understand is that when I was in high school I was basically exactly like you.” So, she’s made some emotional progress. But it was a lot of work for me. . . . I beg her to work. I mean, literally, I’d be like, “Please will you do some work?” . . . I can get her to smile. I can get her to speak to me, in private. I mean I couldn’t
get her to speak in class, but I could one-on-one. She’ll speak to me. (Mark, Interview 8)

Mark’s attempts at developing a relationship with this young woman stemmed from his desire to improve her academic learning through increased involvement in class discussions. He hoped that through his personal interaction she would eventually reach out to him and ask for help when needed, or at the very least, participate in class. Although progress was slow, he believed that working with pupils on their terms would eventually prove beneficial to their learning.

In building strong relationships with pupils, Mark sought to improve not only academic learning, but also pupils’ social and emotional growth:

I don’t even look at … ownership of the material. I look at ownership of the students—they’re my job. My job is to get them to be wherever it is they’re supposed to be or wherever they want to be. So how do I make that happen? And obviously some of it is content. Some of it’s teaching them chemistry, but some of it’s just trying to help them figure out what they want to do or figuring out like why they aren’t getting their homework done. (Mark, Interview 9)

For Mark, engaging with pupils on a personal level and demonstrating his commitment to their learning was a key facet to improving his pupils’ learning outcomes and developing their social and emotional perspectives. However, unlike the other teachers, Mark’s commitment was not always practiced, as he did not focus on all pupils and he did not inconvenience himself when building relationships; they were constructed on his terms. The relationships he built did not require special planning or effort, since Mark generally left school shortly after the school day ended for cycling.

Maintaining Classroom Management

Lola and Mark were the two teachers who struggled the most with classroom management during their first two years of teaching. They were also most challenged by
their context. Each year Mark’s classroom management was a major issue for at least one class. Consequently, he attempted to make improvements in his practice each semester. However, contextual factors like switching content areas and taking over a teaching position after the start of the school year, which happened during his second year, presented Mark with unique challenges.

During his first year, Mark struggled the most with two 9th grade physics classes. Mark attributed this, in part, to his inability to replicate his cooperating teacher’s classroom management strategies. As he noted, her strategies were the only ones to which he had been exposed during teacher preparation:

It’s hard because my classroom management strategy doesn’t even resemble what I did in my practicum at all. It’s not even the same. I basically just took [my cooperating teacher’s] strategy [during student teaching] and used it and it was fine and it worked for her and it works for her classes. But it doesn’t work for me in the environment I’m in, especially with the freshmen. It just isn’t going to work. I don’t think it will work for her with the freshmen either because they’re just not the same population. I mean, they’re like children. You can’t expect them to act like adults, whereas [my CT’s] strategy is to expect them to act like adults and when they don’t to be shocked and ashamed of them and it works because . . . she’s able to make that emotional connection with kids very, very quickly and I’m not. So, that’s just it. . . . Whatever it is she’s doing, I’m not able to do it . . . I would much prefer to do things the way she does. It’s better, but I just can’t do it. It’s just not working for me. I try to do it. It doesn’t work. (Mark, Interview 8)

Interestingly, no other teacher in the study mentioned this problem with classroom management. Mark struggled the most with management during the first semester; he benefitted from his school’s semester-long courses, as the class rotation in January provided him with an opportunity to explore revised classroom management strategies that he believed were an improvement over the former:

Classroom management, I’m a lot more defined on what I’m doing. . . . I have a very clear policy now. . . . it’s in writing. I’ve stuck to it from day one. . . . For instance, just even the tardy policy. When the bell rings, door closes and locks,
they’re tardy. They get detention if they’re tardy. Almost no kids show up tardy to my class anymore. It works. (Mark, Interview 8)

Mark’s revised late policy encouraged more pupils to arrive to class on-time to avoid detention. Although his management routines did not ensure pupils learned, Mark noted that learning required regular attendance.

In his second year, Mark struggled with classroom management, in part because he was hired in October to replace a teacher whose classroom lacked structure and discipline:

There were all sorts of issues. . . . What had happened was that I started at [high school] last October, taking over for [another teacher]. . . . I struggled with the law classes, discipline was out of hand—far worse than my first year—, and also I had trouble getting the students engaged. It ran hot and cold. I didn't get much support from the school on disciplinary issues, which was frustrating. (Mark, Interview 11)

Mark’s difficulties with management continued through the first semester, as he was not able to make effective changes:

I would say when I first started, for the first two or three months, it was very, very difficult because one of my classes was used . . . to just running wild and so they wanted to continue doing that. I wasn’t allowing it. There were a lot of kids getting thrown out. (Mark, Interview 10)

For Mark, who already struggled with classroom management, taking over part-way through the first semester brought additional challenges, as he worked to change the class culture. In addition, Mark found the lack of curriculum materials in history problematic. He was aware from student teaching that there was no curriculum for history courses; however, during student teaching he often relied on his cooperating teacher’s resources and lessons, developing few of his own. Consequently, Mark found it challenging to create engaging lessons, which may have compounded his management struggles.
Negotiating the Context

Contextual Struggles

In his first year, Mark’s school environment impeded his ability to focus on pupil learning in various ways. First, he was not provided with his own classroom; instead, he traveled to classrooms throughout the day. Some were not science classrooms, which meant there was no periodic table on the wall and no adjacent lab rooms:

I was given a really hard job this year. . . . On so many levels it was difficult. I didn’t have my own room. I didn’t have content knowledge—obviously not. I mean I had a bit of curriculum support. I had a bit of help with some things, but I was kind of left on my own. And it was good that I. . . was just sort of left to do what I needed to do. And also I mean I’ve never been formally . . . evaluated by [the high school]. They have no idea what’s going on in that room. (Mark, Interview 9)

Mark noted that he had significant autonomy during his year as a long-term science substitute, which was somewhat surprising, as the school administration knew that Mark lacked a science background. Furthermore, Mark was not formally evaluated during his first-year, but he was evaluated by the principal during his second year as a history teacher. Ironically, that was Mark’s only observation, and it occurred just hours after Mark learned that he would not have a position the following year. Mark submitted a written protest of this evaluation because he felt he had been “ambushed” earlier that day when the principal told him he would be let go. Mark believed that the school provided very little formal support in either his science or history positions. However, unlike the other four teachers, who sought additional support when it was lacking, Mark chose not to seek help either within or outside his school environment. This was partly due to his lengthy bicycle training, which consumed many of his afternoons, evenings, and weekends.
Mark also struggled with what he viewed as inconsistent discipline policies. He was part of two different small learning communities and found that one had a lenient approach to pupil discipline, which Mark believed undermined his learning goals:

If I have . . . two kids who do the same exact thing, one of them is referred to discipline in [team A] and the other one is referred to discipline in [team B] and different consequences come out of that. For instance, like, one kid gets spoken to and the other kid gets sent home. . . . So, for instance . . . I could have a kid try to put another kid’s eye out and [head of discipline] is going to talk to him. Nothing’s going to happen. It’s going to end with him talking to him. My point is by the time I call discipline, I have already spoken to this kid. I have already spoken to this kid twice if I’m bouncing him. So, what, you’re going to talk to him? Why is that going to help? Like, talk to him, give him a candy bar and send him back to class? (Mark, Interview 8)

Mark found the discipline team that lacked consequences for poor pupil behavior inhibited his ability to create successful learning opportunities, as pupils continued to create disruptions.

Successful Navigation

Unlike the other four teachers in the study, Mark did not maximize contextual factors within his control. This was the single biggest difference between Mark and the others. He did not seek support or resources even though he was weak in content knowledge, lacked management strategies, and did not spend time planning after school or on weekends. With the exception of two science teachers whom he occasionally asked for guidance and some minimal, required professional development, Mark sought no additional help. He believed his use of the prescribed science curriculum met the pupils’ learning needs.
Moral Sensibility

Mark was minimally reflective on his practice and committed to social justice in theory, but he struggled in practice. For instance, Mark believed that he was committed to building relationships with pupils, yet he was unable to broaden his focus beyond this limited role as mentor to at-risk pupils. Furthermore, Mark focused on what worked for him without significant difficulty:

I’d go back to teaching history but I found that I put in a great deal of time developing engaging lessons, gathering materials, and all that. I found that regardless of what I did, students did the work and were engaged, but they did not learn history. I’m not sure why. But that was it. I could get them to do the work. We did jigsaws, seminars. It was not a problem. But comparing my performance in history with that in chemistry I felt I did better in chemistry. I had more engaged students. Chemistry is hard and I struggled. But as I struggled through the work and [had] gone through the steps to learn chemistry, I transferred what I learned to my lessons. It worked out well. I think the struggles I went through probably made me good at teaching chemistry. I think I’m a better teacher than those who really ‘get it’ easily. Science teachers always seem to ask their class, “Why can’t you get this?” But it’s not easy. It’s hard. I’m more empathetic. (Mark, Interview 11)

Unlike the others, Mark also lacked perseverance in his teaching. He struggled with pupil learning in history so he decided to teach chemistry where he believed he was more successful and did not have to work as diligently at creating lessons and assessments:

I may just be sort of giving up and saying, “Maybe I can’t get kids fired up about this.” Maybe it’s my own fault . . . and I don’t know how to do it, so I’m not really willing to go to years of professional development to figure out how to get . . . sort of disinterested urban kids into history. It’s just not something I’m willing to do. Science seems like it’s a lot easier to get buy-in from the students because I mean, I’m not saying you get all of them to buy in, but it’s an easier sell, at least what I found. (Mark, Interview 10)

Lacking a prescribed curriculum in history, Mark struggled and ultimately chose to teach science, which had a mandated curriculum that required limited preparation. This
lack of commitment to teaching history to urban pupils contradicted his social justice mission to help disengaged pupils. In addition, Mark’s lack of commitment was evident in his attempts to build relationships with pupils who were disengaged from school. He was only willing to work with pupils who met him “half way.” This was interesting because as a high school student Mark did not meet his teachers half way, yet he wanted to help pupils who were like him. Mark was also the only teacher to describe himself as “lazy” during multiple interviews. As he shared, “What it is, is that I am an inherently lazy person so . . . what’s going to happen is I am going to find the most effective way of doing something with the least amount of work” (Mark, Interview 10). This self-proclaimed laziness was evident in Mark’s willingness to “give up” without exploring professional development or additional support, a major contrast to the other cases. Mark provided an example of a teacher who failed to see the disconnect between his beliefs and actions. Although he believed that he supported pupils through developing relationships, one might question how, as he did not see pupils before or after school.

Mark’s Case Conclusions

Unlike the others, Mark did not focus much on pupil learning during the beginning years of teaching documented in this study. His selection of schools, positions, personal interests, and minimal perseverance affected his ability to focus on aspects of practice directly related to pupil learning. For instance, his dedication to bicycle racing limited his time to seek support in content knowledge and classroom management. Mark chose to teach outside his certification area during his first year, which proved problematic due to his limited science content knowledge. During his second year, because Mark accepted a history position after the start of the school year, he struggled to
establish classroom routines that supported a positive learning environment. In addition, during both years, his lack of perseverance seemed problematic to his focus on pupil learning.

Mark was also unique, within this set of cases, in terms of the degree to which he assumed responsibility for addressing the difficulties he faced. The other teachers sought outside support and spent time reflecting on their challenges in order to improve, revealing the considerable degree to which they felt personally responsible for pupil learning. In contrast, Mark transferred much of the responsibility for his struggles onto his pupils. He did not believe, for example, that he could effectively teach one class because they were “out of control” and believed “these kids are terrible” (Mark, Interview 8). Although some aspects of school context proved challenging for Mark, like minimal administrative support, Mark’s moral sensibility seemed to undermine his focus on pupil learning. His limited critical reflection, minimal commitment to social justice, lack of perseverance, and self-proclaimed “laziness,” worked in concert, helping him to avoid taking responsibility for pupil learning. Consequently, Mark became the exception that proved the rule. Beginning teachers can focus on pupil learning when the conditions are right, that is, when their moral sensibilities enable them to overcome obstacles within their contexts, but as Mark demonstrated, without perseverance and commitment, beginning teachers will find it challenging to focus on pupil learning.

Cross-Case Analysis

As revealed in these five cases, contrary to claims posed by stage theory (Fuller, 1969), beginning teachers can focus on pupil learning. The teachers’ focus on pupil learning manifested itself in various aspects of practice, including holding pupils to high
expectations, building personal relationships with pupils, maintaining classroom
management, and implementing sound instruction and assessment. Each teacher reflected
on his or her individual strengths when identifying which teaching aspects would be
central to practice; some used multiple strategies, and others utilized just one.
Furthermore, when beginning teachers faced challenges related to pupil learning, the
process of negotiating obstacles within the school context and individual moral
sensibilities highlighted the extent to which each focused on pupil learning. In essence,
some beginning teachers were more successful navigating contextual factors—limited
support, lack of resources, and minimal pupil effort—due, in part, to their moral
sensibility, which pushed them to seek support from colleagues, find additional resources,
attend professional development, and engage pupils in the learning process.

In analyzing these five cases, I placed the teachers on a “living continuum” to
compare the extent to which each focused on pupil learning during the early years of
teaching. For Elizabeth, who exhibited the greatest focus on pupil learning, the
challenging school context forced her to find additional resources, emotional support, and
professional development in order to successfully meet her learning goals. She
exemplified a teacher who took full responsibility for her pupils’ learning despite a
difficult teaching context. Riley also exhibited a strong focus on pupil learning, yet her
context was very supportive in terms of resources, professional development, parental
involvement, and administrative support. Although both Elizabeth and Riley were placed
at the right end of the continuum, they actually had very different experiences. This
shows that focusing on pupil learning is a complex process wherein multiple factors
interrelate to promote or inhibit a teacher’s progress.
Furthermore, Sonia and Lola, the two teachers towards the middle of the continuum, wanted to focus on pupil learning, but struggled to overcome obstacles found in their school contexts, as well as individual struggles with the demands of teaching. For instance, Sonia, determined to improve her pupils’ learning, set long-term goals and reflected on the “big picture.” However, she struggled with day-to-day implementation of lessons and classroom management. Sonia’s context was not overly supportive of new teachers, as her school had an inexperienced principal, high teacher and administrative turnover, and an unclear mission with limited curricular guidance. Consequently, Sonia was not as successful as Elizabeth and Riley at focusing on pupil learning. However, Sonia continued to attend professional development opportunities and seek support both within and outside her school context in hopes of improving her focus on pupil learning.

On a similar note, Lola, the “mover” (Ingersoll, 201), unlike any of the other cases, struggled to navigate a new context each year, straining her ability to focus on pupil learning as she constantly grappled with new administrators, pupils, parents, school-wide management strategies, and curricula. However, Lola also demonstrated that “fit” matters for new teachers, as she hoped to integrate inquiry-based science in her teaching, yet she did not feel that she had enough support to effectively institute such changes to her practice. Thus, Lola searched for another school, hoping that both she and her pupils would benefit and she would move further to the right on the continuum.

As my analyses and case narrative made clear, Mark failed to seek support, resources, or professional development to overcome the problems he faced, resulting in placement furthest to the left on the continuum—a distant placement compared to the other four teachers in this study. His self-proclaimed “laziness,” reticence to assume
responsibility for pupil achievement, and compartmentalization of his “school” life versus his life “outside” school also undermined his teaching. It is worth noting that Mark faced considerable challenges in his school context, including minimal administrative support and teaching outside of his certification because he was so committed to working at one particular school. However, unlike the other teachers in this study who spent their afternoons, evenings, and weekends preparing for the demands of beginning teaching, Mark attempted to do it all within the confines of the six-hour school day. Consequently, he was often unprepared and lacked objectives for his lessons, both of which added to his management struggles. In addition, Mark spent no time developing long-term goals for his pupils, as he relied heavily on the district science curriculum, which enabled him to work day-by-day without having knowledge of the big picture. Mark argued that his strict adherence to the curriculum would ensure that he covered what was necessary for his pupils to pass the district exam. Unfortunately, this meant that Mark spent little time reviewing the curriculum materials or making possible modifications or enhancements. Thus, Mark’s focus on pupil learning was minimized to test scores on standardized, district-mandated exams. As noted earlier, Mark was the exception that proved the rule—beginning teachers can focus on pupil learning, but not without successful negotiation of obstacles, requiring both perseverance and commitment.

One noteworthy reason that Lola and Mark had a more limited focus on pupil learning was their decision to embrace teacher-centered instructional techniques to help control pupil behavior. Unfortunately, the subsequent improvement in pupil behavior reinforced both teachers’ beliefs that eliminating group work and labs offered an effective means of dealing with a difficult class. Though both teachers noted the benefits of using
labs and hands-on activities in terms of pupils’ learning, neither used such pedagogical
strategies with their challenging classes, as they did not believe they could do so
effectively. This meant that pupils in better behaved classes received a more authentic
learning experience (Newmann et al., 1996), while those in behaviorally challenging
classes received a limited curriculum.

Looking at the themes across the cases, it is apparent that holding pupils to high
expectations was essential to promoting pupil learning. For example, both Lola’s
commitment to inquiry-based science and Elizabeth’s commitment to content-related
homework each night demonstrated high expectations for pupils. In addition, across four
of the five cases, teacher commitment to setting high expectations increased from student
teaching through the second year of teaching, likely a result of the increased connection
they saw between planning, instruction, and pupil learning. This was likely a result of the
extended relationship that teachers developed with their pupils over the course of a
school year which enabled a deeper understanding of pupils’ strengths and weaknesses.
In addition, some teachers in this study gained more autonomy in developing lessons and
units when they were no longer constrained by their cooperating teacher.

For the most part, the teachers in this study highlighted their goal of building
strong relationships with pupils to improve learning. These attempts to connect
relationship-building efforts with academic learning were examples of developing social
support in hopes of promoting a sense of “trust, confidence, and psychological safety that
allows students to take risks, admit errors, ask for help, and experience failure along the
way to higher levels of learning” (Lee, Smith, Perry, & Smylie, 1999). Building strong
relationships with pupils was an important aspect of practice aimed at influencing pupil
learning through creating a collaborative learning environment (Shepard, 2001) where teachers and pupils worked together to improve learning outcomes through improved communication and personalized support.

Compared to the elementary teachers, the secondary teachers in this study were focused more on relationship building. Both of the high school teachers, Elizabeth and Mark, and middle school teacher, Lola, viewed relationship building as key to promoting pupil achievement and engagement and as a means to overcome attendance problems and a lack of motivation. The relationships that these teachers built with pupils varied according to their goals. In some cases, they built relationships to help make explicit connections between education and future life choices; in other cases, teachers wanted to make their personal expectations clear for a particular pupil. Relationship building was not as integral for the elementary teachers in this study; however, motivation and attendance problems did not present nearly the same struggles for elementary teachers as they did for the three secondary teachers. Furthermore, the elementary teachers worked with younger pupils, whose maturity level was probably a factor in the types of relationships established with pupils.

During the first two years of teaching, the five teachers in this study dealt with classroom management issues in varied ways, with a consistent focus on improving their teaching. Indeed, by their second year of teaching two of the teachers, Elizabeth and Riley viewed classroom management as an individual strength. With varied success, the other three teachers continuously worked to improve their management by focusing on pupil engagement and classroom routines that emphasized pupils’ control over their own learning, both of which had the potential to improve pupil learning. For all five teachers,
classroom management became an opportunity to improve aspects of practice related to learning. Classroom management was not a major issue for any of these teachers during the student teaching period, possibly because their cooperating teachers worked closely with them and they could depend on pre-established classroom routines.

In conclusion, cross-case analysis reveals that beginning teachers can undoubtedly focus on pupil learning. The framework developed in this study provides a means of understanding how beginning teachers learn to navigate obstacles and develop practices that support learning. For some, this required tremendous effort in the midst of school contexts filled with challenges. For others, the process was about individual commitment to overcoming weaknesses in areas such as content knowledge or management strategies. In either case, the objective of improving pupil learning leads teachers to enhance practice by holding high expectations for pupil learning, building personal relationships with pupils, maintaining classroom management, and utilizing formative assessment. These aspects of practice provide a foundation upon which teachers can build on their strengths and improve on their weaknesses. However, engaging in these practices is often the result of a complex process of negotiation between aspects of school context that functioned as obstacles and the teacher’s moral sensibility. Overall, contrary to claims made by stage theory, the beginning teachers in this study demonstrated that focusing on pupil learning was possible with perseverance, commitment to social justice, development of an inquiry stance and an understanding that learning to teach is a life-long process that involves continuous reflection and professional development.
CHAPTER SIX: USING ASSESSMENT TO FOCUS ON PUPIL LEARNING

Some researchers have argued that assessments are the most obvious way in which teachers focus on pupil learning (Broadfoot & Black, 2004; Black, 2001; Newmann et al., 1996). However, just as assessments can positively influence pupil learning, they can also become mere summative evaluations that provide little feedback. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how beginning teachers construct, understand, use, and revise assessments in their classroom instruction. As with the other aspects of practice—holding high expectations, building strong relationships, and maintaining classroom management—some teachers used assessments more effectively to focus on pupil learning.

This chapter is built on the notion that constructivist-oriented assessments, which emphasize deeper pupil learning through higher-order thinking and authentic problem solving, more effectively assess the learning outcomes of pupils (Shepard, 2001). Research has shown significant positive correlations between the quality of the assessment task and quality of pupils’ work (King et al., 2001; Newmann et al., 1998). Thus, pupils can produce work where they synthesize and apply in-depth knowledge when given the opportunities to do so (Gleeson, et al., 2008).

Shepard (2001) drew on constructivist learning theory to develop a framework for understanding a reformed view of assessment which contrasted with older assessment paradigms where measurement-driven instruction, used to enhance pupil performance, was de-contextualized and narrowly conceived to focus on test content (Graue, 1993). A narrowed and inauthentic curriculum often resulted from teachers changing instructional practices to match the content and structure of standardized exams (Broadfoot & Black,
As a result, Shepard called for changes in classroom assessment practices to more closely align with constructivist learning. These changes included developing a classroom culture that emphasizes pupil responsibility for learning (Boston, 2002; Black & Wiliam, 1998), utilizing assessments to inform instruction (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2003), and providing opportunities for pupils to self-assess learning using explicit criteria (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

The constructivist assessment paradigm highlights formative assessment as a key element due its emphasis on frequent assessment, which creates more opportunities to influence learning goals. In addition, formative assessment emphasizes feedback into instruction for continued pupil improvement and highlights the importance of teachers’ knowledge of pupils in the learning process. These ideas are consistent with constructivist assessment (Shepard et al., 2005; Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001). For this study, Black and Wiliam’s (1998) definition of formative assessment was applied: “All those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged” (p. 7-8). Thus, even assessments that would traditionally be described as summative, in that they are the culminating element of a unit with no opportunity for pupils to make further revisions, may still be considered formative in this study, if the teacher used information from the assessment to improve future instruction.

According to Sadler’s (1989) framework, three elements are necessary for formative assessment to promote learning: a clear view of learning goals, information about the present state of the learner, and action to close the gaps in learning (Brookhart, 2004; Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001). Collectively, these three elements
promote effective formative assessment that aligns with the constructivist assessment paradigm. Sadler’s (1989) conceptual frame guides the narratives provided for each teacher in the next section (see Figure 6.1). Although Sadler did not identify a cyclical relationship between his facets, I designed Figure 6.1 as a cycle due to the continuing relationship between Sadler’s three elements of formative assessment. Drawing on data from all 11 interviews for each teacher conducted over the 3-year period of this study, each narrative details how the teacher approached assessment, including general understandings and experiences, the teacher’s emphasis on learning goals, how the teacher understood pupils as learners, and feedback used to improve future instruction. The chapter concludes with cross-case analysis and connections back to the literature.

Figure 6.1: The Formative Assessment Process

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7 The development of the formative assessment process borrowed from ideas from Sadler’s (1989) work although he did not develop a cyclical diagram and his language varies.
Elizabeth’s use of Formative Assessment

As demonstrated in analyses of Elizabeth’s practice in Chapter 4, she consistently had a comparably high standard in her development and use of assessment. She viewed assessment as integral to her instructional practices in that she developed and implemented comprehensive units that included on-going formative assessments, a practice which began during student teaching and continued through her second year of teaching. She considered long-term planning crucial to her success as a teacher and scaffolded pupils’ learning in her lessons. Most often she used novels as the bases for her instruction and developed units that culminated with a literary essay. In her units, Elizabeth included graphic organizers designed to brainstorm themes, find evidence from the text, develop a thesis statement, organize the essay, self-edit, and peer review. In addition, she included rubrics to assist pupils in critiquing the strengths and weaknesses of their essays and make improvements on future drafts.

Remaining flexible and planning backward were two aspects of assessment that Elizabeth found particularly important. She remained flexible by providing pupils with options, including different projects, book choices, and essay questions, which enabled them to utilize their strengths. Furthermore, Elizabeth’s continued flexibility in planning was essential, as she noted, “The importance of being flexible and to not be too set in the way that you develop plans . . . things can change, and you just need to adapt to it” (Elizabeth, Interview 3). Another key aspect of Elizabeth’s assessment practices, planning backwards (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), enabled her to continually challenge her pupils, differentiate her instruction, and meet learning goals:
The best way to approach teaching any literature is start backwards and to ask what you want the students to learn, what do you want them to take away from what they’re reading, so it’s somewhat relevant to their whole life. (Elizabeth, Interview 4)

For Elizabeth, focusing on the “big picture” was essential to meeting her pupils’ learning needs, allowing her to connect pupils’ lives outside the classroom to their learning opportunities, an essential component of constructivist assessment (Shepard, 2001). For instance, Elizabeth selected novels like *Interpreter of Maladies*, which she believed would be of interest to pupils due to the characters’ experiences as immigrants living in the United States. Overall, Elizabeth provided well-developed, structured unit plans that used a series of formative assessments to build to a summative assessment. She made a point of linking the context to her pupils’ lives (Shepard, 2001), revising her instruction and assessment, and continuing to emphasize her pupils’ responsibility for their own learning (Boston, 2002; Black & Wiliam, 1998).

*Learning Goals*

The first element of the constructivist, formative assessment process is setting clear learning goals. One of Elizabeth’s main goals, developing independent learners, was described in Chapter 4. This commitment to “hav[ing] them do the thinking” (Elizabeth, Interview 2) was so strong that it manifested itself as a recurring learning goal that Elizabeth focused on throughout the student teaching period and her first two years in the classroom. She found, initially, that her teaching was more teacher-centered than she would have liked:
My goal really is for them to be more independent. . . . I find . . . they’re most engaged when they’re looking at their own work. . . . having them look at their own work and be critical of it. I really want them to be able to do that. As a teacher I see how I grade my students . . . I’ll type up comments for them with the rubric and it’s a lot of work on me and I find that I’m not putting a lot of emphasis on the students doing the revision process. It’s always one-on-one conferencing. . . so it’s my goal this year to make them a little bit more independent overall. That’s my goal. (Elizabeth, Interview 10)

Elizabeth hoped that transitioning to a more student-centered approach would prove to be a realistic expectation. As she explained, “I don’t know if I’ll see real, actual results of them appreciating our vision or becoming more independent . . . particularly when revising . . . when they just want to put [their assignments] away” (Elizabeth, Interview 10). Ultimately, Elizabeth envisioned her pupils taking an active role in “owning” the classroom environment, “It would be great if they were running the classroom. . . . put[ting] more responsibility on them” (Elizabeth, Interview 11). Although Elizabeth was not sure her pupils would take full control of the classroom culture, she hoped by establishing clear learning goals that she would provide an impetus for them to take more responsibility for their learning.

Beyond developing independent learners, Elizabeth incorporated many short-term learning goals into her unit planning. Through backward planning, she identified objectives and the resulting skills needed to accomplish her goals. For example, in her unit on the novel *A Lesson before Dying*, Elizabeth wanted pupils to become comfortable revisiting text in search of support for an argument, to complete multiple drafts, and to deepen their analytic skills:

The central question was to identify a question in the book that addresses a real life issue, and then how the author uses two literary devices to highlight that central question. . . . I wanted them to pull out a theme of the story . . . identify two . . . literary elements the author uses to explore that theme, and then show how the two devices come together to answer the question. So for example, if
they wanted to work with how the author uses tone of a character and a dialect . . .
and how they come together to address a main theme. . . . I wanted them to
incorporate at least one passage per literary device. So if they wanted to talk
about tone, they had to include some example . . . because they’re not used to
reading and then going back to what they’ve read. . . . I really want students to
become more comfortable with revisiting text. . . . Then they were to hand in both
the rough draft and then the final draft along with the worksheets that I gave them
to build up to writing the actual essay. . . . I was hoping they'd sharpen their
analytical skills a little more. I really wanted them to, again, be able to pull . . .
significant passages out of text and then analyze them. . . . I wanted . . . to make
sure that they understand what these literary tools are [and] how to use them.
(Elizabeth, Interview 5)

Such comprehensive planning created many learning opportunities for her pupils. She
even saved copies of essays throughout the year to show pupils their growth. Elizabeth
also used a variety of assessment strategies to provide “as many opportunities as I can to
show that [they understand] . . . because I think some people do better on tests and some
people . . . write better” (Elizabeth, Interview 8).

Finally, in a broader sense, Elizabeth set a goal that her pupils would develop as
intellectual citizens who understood the world from multiple perspectives. She noted,
“[My goal] is to develop very literate students and citizens [who] will hopefully become
critical thinkers and . . . [who] look at issues through different lenses” (Elizabeth,
Interview 6). It is important to note that Elizabeth’s success with establishing learning
goals was directly related to the high expectations she held for her pupils.

Understanding the Learners

Similar to her goal that her classroom be more student-centered, Elizabeth
believed pupils learned best by first-hand experiences and when listening to one another
rather than her lectures. She commented, “I think they learn by doing. I don’t think that
me explaining things to them is as effective as showing them. If I show them figures or if
I show them a story, and then have them think about it, and then I have them give me the
ideas. I think they learn more listening to each other” (Elizabeth, Interview 2). This belief influenced Elizabeth’s planning; she wanted to provide pupils with as much control over their learning as possible.

Elizabeth gained an understanding of her pupils’ learning mainly through homework, quizzes, and monitoring their progress through a guided writing process. During student teaching, Elizabeth focused on homework to learn about her pupils’ strengths and weaknesses: “The best way that I’m able to monitor right now is the homework and how well they do it” (Elizabeth, Interview 4). During her first two years of teaching, Elizabeth found that scaffolded unit plans provided her with ample opportunities to monitor pupil progress:

[I] gave them a step-by-step instruction of how to do everything so I could keep track of . . . what part are they having a really hard time with and sort of pinpoint it that way. And I didn’t really think about [how it] might help people of all different levels. But I think it was beneficial because I could see step-by-step whether or not they were getting it. . . . If they were struggling, then I could . . . quickly identify the ones that might not get it. (Elizabeth, Interview 5)

Due to the benefits of gathering feedback, Elizabeth hoped she would find time to take “meticulous” notes to “keep tabs on every student . . . to see if they’re growing” because she was unsure if she was “good at pinpointing those [weaknesses]” (Elizabeth, Interview 5).

Although Elizabeth sought to create a student-centered classroom and develop scaffolded units to enable her to identify pupil weaknesses, her pupils’ lack of effort created an obstacle in reaching her learning goals. When asking her pupils if the material was too difficult, some responded with, “I’m lazy” (Elizabeth, Interview 8). On a similar note, Elizabeth offered help after school, but “most did not come to see me for help”
Furthermore, lack of effort coupled with poor attendance created pedagogical challenges for Elizabeth when attempting group work:

I think pairing [weaker students] up with stronger students is a good idea, too. But again . . . I run into the wall of people not being there consistently, even the ones that are getting what I’m saying . . . but they’re not there everyday. . . . So pairing students together doesn’t work because [of] the attendance.

(Elizabeth, Interview 8)

Elizabeth had clear goals for gathering information about her pupils’ learning; however, obstacles, particularly lack of pupil effort, undermined her ability to reach the goals.

**Feedback to Improve Learning**

The final element of the constructivist, formative assessment process entails using feedback to improve learning. During her pre-practicum placement, Elizabeth found that she needed to spend more time explaining instructions, scaffolding learning opportunities, and modeling outcomes. As she noted, “The questions were too leading. . . . And my instructions weren’t very clear. . . . I think . . . if we had done more in class . . . I [could have] model[ed] a little better before they went into groups” (Elizabeth, Interview 2). Furthermore, Elizabeth did not believe she was probing her pupils effectively to connect learning to their lives outside of school, a key facet of constructivist assessment (Shepard, 2001). Elizabeth hoped that modifying these weaknesses would improve learning outcomes. Unlike notions of beginning teachers in stage theory (Fuller, 1969), Elizabeth demonstrated her reflective nature and clear focus on pupil learning despite substantial obstacles.

During student teaching and her early years in the classroom, Elizabeth realized that she still had improvements to make—condensing units, providing objectives at the start of the unit, assessing pupils more frequently, and giving more feedback. Elizabeth
commented, “I think my biggest mistake was not giving the rubric to them ahead of time.” (Elizabeth, Interview 5). Although Elizabeth wanted to use a rubric to assess her pupils’ essays, she did not have it available at the start of the unit, and therefore, believed her pupils lacked a clear understanding of her learning goals. Learning from this mistake, during her first year Elizabeth not only provided her pupils with a rubric at the start of each unit, but she also used the rubric as a basis for feedback on essay drafts:

   Interviewer: You actually type up the comments so it’s very clear exactly what you’re looking for in future [drafts]?

   Elizabeth: [Yes,] and I also give them a rubric and I highlight what they would get if they would submit it that day. (Elizabeth, Interview 7)

Elizabeth effectively used feedback from pupil work to modify her teaching practices in hopes of improving learning outcomes. Her success utilizing formative assessment encouraged her to continue to integrate such practices and reflect on pupil learning outcomes (Shepard, 2001).

Elizabeth’s Case Analysis

   As the teacher who focused on pupil learning to the greatest extent, Elizabeth’s assessment practices clearly modeled formative examples. She effectively established learning goals, took time to understand her pupils as learners, modeled her practice to better meet their needs, and used feedback from her assessments to modify her practice. However, what was most impressive was Elizabeth’s effectiveness with formative assessment, beginning during the student teaching period and continuing through her second year of teaching. Unlike some teachers in this study who demonstrated growth over time, Elizabeth was an exemplar, in terms of formative assessment, from her earliest teaching experiences.
Another important point to consider was Elizabeth’s considerable autonomy during both student teaching and her first two years of teaching. Her cooperating teacher encouraged her to develop her own literary unit so that she could learn from her mistakes. Thus, Elizabeth had the freedom to select novels, develop lessons, and include formative assessments beginning in her early teaching experiences. This autonomy was unique in this study and likely influenced Elizabeth’s perception of herself as an intellectual who was granted the flexibility of deciding what would benefit her pupils’ learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 1999). Although Elizabeth’s 10th graders were required to take the state high-stakes exam in English, she was not required to use a mandated curriculum or complete a prescribed test review. Some researchers and policy-makers argue that this freedom is dangerous for novice teachers, who do not have the knowledge of what and how to teach (Schomoker & Marzano, 1999). However, Elizabeth’s case demonstrates that when prepared well and supported in the classroom, beginning teachers are able to develop comprehensive units that meet the unique learning needs of individual pupils. Even more commendable was the fact that Elizabeth developed her own informal networks of support with colleagues and administrators and sought professional development opportunities to work through her weaknesses, as she did not find a support structure at her school. Thus, Elizabeth’s case makes a strong argument that when provided with flexibility and autonomy to meet the learning needs of pupils rather than being required to follow a mandated curriculum, both teacher and pupils benefit.

Riley’s use of Formative Assessment

Like Elizabeth, Riley’s attention to detail enabled her to attend to both short-term and long-term learning goals in her instruction. She developed comprehensive units that
included a variety of formative assessments to determine if her pupils were learning—pre-assessments, homework, class discussions, thumbs-up/thumbs-down, sharing responses on individual pupil white boards, and one-on-one meetings with pupils. Through these practices, Riley assessed her pupils’ understanding before, during, and after lessons. Consequently, she made revisions to her practice, differentiated instruction for diverse learners, and organized small group remediation with her classroom aide.

Moreover, Riley was a strong proponent of constructivist assessment practices. She noted how her understanding of learning differed from the popular “mentality that [pupils are] just an empty [mind ready] to fill” (Riley, Interview 2). As a result, Riley worked together with her pupils to co-construct knowledge, building on their prior learning. For example, during the student teaching experiences, Riley completed a poetry unit at her cooperating teacher’s recommendation. Although she did not have complete autonomy like Elizabeth, Riley developed an entire unit that worked through various forms of poetry and included a “published” anthology of critiqued pupil poems as a culminating project which included various pieces the pupils had created and been given feedback on to improve their understanding and the final product.

Recalling her hands-on learning experiences in teacher education, Riley hoped to emulate such practices. She commented, “I think the kids really do respond well to doing hands-on things and working in groups. They’re more engaged” (Riley, Interview 4). However, Riley believed that there was also a need to talk with pupils individually in order to assess their understanding:
But the interesting thing is . . . you can’t rely on [hands-on activities and working in groups] all the time . . . to keep them on-task or expect them to understand everything. You do need to just sit and talk to them sometimes because it’s interesting the things that they don’t understand. I’m always surprised at what they have questions about because sometimes I just assume they might know something and they don’t. (Riley, Interview 4)

Consequently, Riley believed “there needs to be a balance between different ways of teaching. . . . There might be one right way for one student, but the other way for another student” (Riley, Interview 1). Ultimately, she hoped to utilize diverse teaching strategies to achieve her goal of encouraging pupils to develop independent ideas and draw their own conclusions. As she noted, “[my goal is pupil] understanding . . . at a higher level rather than just right there in the text questions” (Riley, Interview 11).

**Learning Goals**

As she became more experienced, Riley identified a number of broader learning goals, including developing long-term objectives and meeting the needs of diverse learners. In addition, she intended to develop a more comprehensive writing program, an area in which she believed her pupils could improve, and the focus of a school-wide initiative. To help improve pupil writing, Riley used a focused correction method that she had learned in a professional development workshop. She noted, “For example, I might say ‘Include three details [and] make sure to capitalize,’ and I found that to be really helpful [in] giving them a focus” (Riley, Interview 10). Furthermore, Riley’s principal made a point of not only reading every pupil’s mid-year writing assessment, but also providing comments about teacher feedback to each pupil.

Likewise, during her second year, Riley set goals for differentiating her instruction. She believed that all pupils would benefit from “Breaking [learning] down a little more or showing them a different way” (Riley, Interview 10). Riley hoped that by
developing differentiated lessons she could assist her struggling pupils, as well as her high achievers who needed to be challenged:

I’m looking forward to maybe taking it a step further . . . to extend it for those kids that can go further than what’s at your grade level. And also . . . support[ing] kids that are going to be far below your level because next year I have a student who has a substantially separate curriculum. (Riley, Interview 11)

Although Riley thought about differentiating her instruction during her first year, it was not until her second year of teaching that she found she could implement her ideas. Even Riley, who demonstrated that she could focus on pupil learning in many aspects of her practice, still had room for improvement.

Setting up learning goals was an essential aspect of Riley’s success; however, she was not able to develop as many comprehensive goals as Elizabeth, as Riley was more limited by mandated curricula and exams, especially in math. Furthermore, as a fourth grade teacher, Riley spent time developing comprehensive goals across all subject areas, which she found challenging, especially during her first year, as she had not student taught at the same grade level. On the other hand, Elizabeth, although teaching English at three grade levels, benefitted from student teaching some of the same courses and from her freedom to design instructional practices that met her pupils’ learning needs.

**Understanding the Learners**

Riley mainly used formative assessments to gain insight into her pupils as learners. Providing continuous feedback on assignments to monitor progress was central to her practice, as she used the information to learn about her pupils’ strengths and weaknesses:
If I collect a rough draft . . . I’ll try and make comments on it. Sometimes all it requires is just that written feedback [then] they can go and make corrections. Sometimes if they’re really not getting it, I’ll sit down with them and talk about it and ask them to work on it some more. And then they bring it back to me, or sometimes I’ll do it there with them. (Riley, Interview 4)

When developing a poetry unit during student teaching, Riley provided comments on each poem that would become part of the pupils’ anthology. She noted, “I evaluated their poems along the way. I didn’t grade them, but I would go over them and made comments [to] help them to improve them” (Riley, Interview 5).

At other times, Riley would help get some pupils started on an assignment, knowing they needed a little personal guidance after full-class lessons. She commented, “Right after I set the class to do some independent work, I’d have to go to some kids right off the bat and get them started or give them pointers like, ‘make a bullet list,’ or ‘make a web,’ or ask certain kids to make sure they understood what was happening, what they were supposed to be doing” (Riley, Interview 5). This way, Riley could check-in with individual pupils and determine how she could better assist them in their learning.

**Feedback to Improve Learning**

Beginning during student teaching, Riley emphasized formative assessment as a way to identify pupils’ struggles. She noted, “I’ve been doing my own informal assessment, collecting math work and looking at something that I just taught them . . . I can tell who’s really getting it and who’s not and who needs to work more at it” (Riley, Interview 4). Using this feedback, Riley modified her instruction to better meet her pupils’ needs. Similarly, in math, Riley utilized individual white boards to receive feedback from each pupil during a lesson. She commented, “I really like . . . using the whiteboards. . . . You ask them a question, they write down the answer, and they hold it
up. And you get a quick idea of who’s getting it, who might not be understanding” (Riley, Interview 4). After receiving such feedback, Riley organized individual meetings with pupils or had her classroom aide hold small group instruction to work on pupil weaknesses:

Sometimes . . . when they’re working [on] other things I try to pull that student over just to my desk and go over a problem and I’ll go over a couple more [problems] with them and then I’ll show them and . . . then I’ll ask them to try it on their own in front of me. . . . [and] during morning work this year. . . . [my aide] would pull kids to help them with their weekly math homework so . . . they were getting both the help with the homework and also some small group instruction. (Riley, Interview 11)

In math, Riley also had pupils write out their thinking process while solving a math problem so that she could identify points of confusion:

I think that’s a really good way to assess because they have to really think about the process. And you get into their head [and see] the process that they’re going through as they solve the problem. So I think it helps because you can maybe pinpoint where they’re getting confused or see if they have all the steps. (Riley, Interview 5)

After identifying areas of confusion, Riley often addressed the problem with the entire class, “I’ll . . . go over a problem that I notice everybody is having a hard time with” (Riley, Interview 9). In this way, Riley used feedback to modify her instruction to better meet the learning needs of her pupils.

In addition, Riley took meticulous notes on pupil progress. In her daily practice, she noted, “It’s important to do ongoing assessment, like keeping a checklist or even having kids do things at the whiteboards and assess them [during] the lesson . . . I think you can easily forget” (Riley, Interview 6). Like Elizabeth, Riley organized pupil portfolios, primarily for parent conferences and for referencing when writing report cards. During parent conferences she explained, “I have one column for what they’re
doing well and one column for what they need to work on. . . . It helps the conversation” (Riley, Interview 10). Keeping track of pupils’ progress was one of Riley’s strongest assets as a teacher. Her willingness to spend time organizing samples of pupil work and keep running records enabled her to focus on her primary objective—helping pupils learn.

Riley also kept records of pupils’ progress on state- and district-mandated exams. In both cases, she explained her need to prepare pupils for the exam, as she had no control over the test objectives. For the mid-year district math assessment, Riley focused on her pupils who struggled. She noted, “I looked at the problems that they got wrong . . . so now I have an idea of what they need to work on and try to focus a little more with individual students” (Riley, Interview 10). On a similar note, Riley’s school provided release time for teachers to analyze pupils’ results on the state-mandated MCAS exam. She claimed the purpose was “to inform myself” (Riley, Interview 8), as she believed a little more guidance on specific questions would improve results. Riley made a point of reviewing standardized exam results to help plan for future instruction, but it was not a central tenet guiding her instruction. However, Riley’s pupils generally performed very well on the mandated exams, indicating that she, unlike Sonia, did not feel pressure to improve test scores.

Riley’s Case Analysis

Overall, Riley exemplified a teacher who understood the benefits of formative assessment from the beginning and continued to integrate feedback for improved pupil learning:
I think an important thing I learned is to use assessment more for myself. . . . If time permitted, I would try to give kids informal type tests . . . [so I could] look at their writing and ask myself, What do I need to teach them? What do they still not understand? What are they getting? (Riley, Interview 2)

The value that Riley placed on formative assessment was evident during teacher preparation. She continued to build upon and strengthen her practice across her early years in the classroom.

Riley, like Elizabeth, integrated formative assessment in her practice throughout the three years of this study. Her teaching exemplified each aspect of the formative assessment process—establishing learning goals, understanding pupils as learners, and using feedback to improve learning. Despite mandated use of the district math curriculum, Riley integrated her own formative assessment into her math instruction. Riley’s organization, attention to detail, and well-developed, long-term planning, assisted her integration of formative assessment. Riley also benefitted from having a full-time classroom aide and older elementary pupils, who could do more independent work and allow Riley to meet one-on-one with struggling pupils.

Unlike Elizabeth, who had no prescribed curriculum, Riley’s school used two math programs. However, due to Riley’s lack of confidence teaching math, she found the curricula to be beneficial to her practice, as she believed she was lacking strong pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1983) to develop appropriate objectives, lessons, and assessments. Thus, the curricula provided Riley with greater certainty about her content and pedagogy—a benefit some researchers and policy makers suggest in favor of scripted curricula (Schmoker & Marzano, 1999). Riley noted that there were times at the beginning of her first year that she felt like she was “learning along with [her pupils]” (Riley, Interview 9) in math and found the curricula’s definitions, explanations,
and problem sets useful. However, unlike Sonia, Riley did not have a strict pacing guide from her district; instead, she had the flexibility to use the curricula as she deemed appropriate for her pupils and her teaching style. As a result, Riley used aspects of both math programs and integrated her own formative assessments. Thus, Riley’s case demonstrated the value some teachers find in mandated curricula, especially in subjects where they lack content knowledge and when they are provided with professional autonomy in deciding how and when to best integrate the materials.

Sonia’s use of Formative Assessment

Sonia’s ideas about the benefits of formative assessment resembled those of Elizabeth and Riley. She believed that instruction and assessment were interconnected and thus, determining what pupils learned remained complex:

You teach a lesson, but you need to know who learned it, what was it that I was trying to teach, what do the students need to learn . . . how am I going to assess that? . . . So I think assessment is just tied to pupil learning because learning is sort of abstract. . . . Even my own learning, I can write a paper, but that’s not going to show the professor how much I’ve learned through the course. So . . . we need to learn to be able to take little samples [from] different tests and we’ve got to make sure we’re not just sampling the same type of knowledge. (Sonia, Interview 6)

Even though her own Montessori schooling and teacher education experiences influenced these ideas about learning and assessment, Sonia struggled with implementation of such practices. At times she found herself preparing at the last minute or failing to develop a comprehensive unit. She explained the result of her lack of preparation in teaching a math lesson from the district mandated curriculum:

[Preparing for the] lessons, it requires quite a bit of reading. . . . And . . . some of the kids were like, “Why do you have to look at that book?” And I’m like, “This is a teacher book to help me teach.” So sometimes I did find that . . . I should’ve reviewed it a little bit better because I would get lost on what to do. . . . Sometimes . . . I pay a lot of attention to the process and not the learning. . . .
Sometimes I struggle with them doing things properly and then afterwards I see if they’re learning. (Sonia, Interview 11)

This lack of preparation was a common problem for Sonia even during her second year of teaching:

I felt like I wasn’t . . . planned and I just felt like I was piecing together a lot of things and . . . so I think unit planning that would make teaching more effective . . . it would probably increase their learning. . . . It would make everything more connected. (Sonia, Interview 11)

Unfortunately, even though Sonia knew she needed to improve, she was not able to ensure she would learn from her mistakes the following year, as she had not developed a system of writing down issues she encountered, “I wish I had a better system for jotting down my notes on lessons so that next year I’d know . . . reword this lesson or do this lesson differently or the kids struggled with x, y, and z” (Sonia, Interview 11). Unlike Sonia, both Elizabeth and Riley were exemplars in this regard. They were incredibly organized and spent time preparing comprehensive units with scaffolded lessons and formative assessments. Unfortunately, Sonia had not mastered these skills by her second year of teaching; however, she realized her weakness, and made a point of setting goals:

I try to take more time for planning on Sunday, too. I try to be realistic . . . if I’m going to be successful this week I really need to think through my lessons and I’ll try to do it earlier on Sunday as opposed to later on at night. (Sonia, Interview 10)

Sonia realized the benefits of long-term planning and developing comprehensive units, yet she struggled to implement these ideas in practice.

Learning Goals

Just as Sonia set goals for herself, such as planning for the entire week on Sundays, she also had goals for her pupils. On the broadest level, Sonia established goals with the underlying belief that all pupils can learn. She noted, “It’s . . . not taking it for
granted . . . that your students . . . no matter who they are or where they come from, can learn” (Sonia, Interview 3). Moving from this larger goal, Sonia hoped to “set small goals for every different day” (Sonia, Interview 8) to “hold kids accountable” (Sonia, Interview 9). This way she could more regularly assess pupil progress and engage them in their own learning.

During student teaching, Sonia mentioned her goals for improving classroom culture, as she believed this was a key facet to a successful classroom. She noted, “They have to treat each other with respect and just by simple things. . . . like saying each other’s names and agreeing or disagreeing with each other politely” (Sonia, Interview 5). Sonia hoped by establishing a positive classroom environment during her first year, pupils would enjoy more learning opportunities and fewer management issues would arise.

Due to her position in a dual-language school, Sonia also had language specific goals for English and Spanish:

One of the main goals in this classroom is just to get them to develop their oral skills in Spanish . . . because a lot of their Spanish is social. . . . to help them gain . . . more academic Spanish. Just like in English, they need to gain academic English. (Sonia, Interview 10)

In combination with her language goals, Sonia hoped to get her pupils more interested in books by looking at the pictures and talking about the story before reading to reduce the anxiety many pupils felt about reading. She also hoped by “[including] a lot of literacy through content” (Sonia, Interview 9) she could further engage her pupils in reading and writing in both languages.

Although Sonia had success with some of her smaller learning goals, she struggled to implement her main goal—all pupils can learn—especially in math. She felt
pressure to keep pace with the district math curriculum in preparation for the MCAS exam. During student teaching, she gained experience with the intense MCAS preparation period just before the exam. However, she did not experience the intensity of the pacing guide as it drove instruction throughout the year. As a first-year teacher, she grappled with the constant push to stay on track with the curriculum’s daily lessons, as some of her pupils needed additional time to comprehend new ideas. Sonia noted, “I didn’t want to force the math strategies on them even though . . . I’m feeling the pressure” (Sonia, Interview 8). She continued to discuss this tension at the conclusion of her first year:

I think sometimes math is challenging. And you have to teach it in a way that kids understand and sometimes . . . it just takes some people longer to understand and sometimes with the pressure of being on a strict calendar and you’re giving assessments on certain dates it just becomes very stressful to me and I became very pressured and sometimes . . . I was forcing concepts on the kids. . . [and] kids are going to develop certain concepts at different times . . . so sometimes it’s unrealistic to be on this calendar schedule. (Sonia, Interview 9)

Although Sonia attempted to modify lessons to provide more time to work through areas of confusion, this caused additional problems, since pupils were unprepared for certain aspects of the curriculum’s assessments. Sonia was optimistic that as she gained more experience with the curriculum, she would be more successful making such modifications while still preparing her pupils for the exam.

Understanding the Learners

Sonia’s perspective on pupil learning was strongly influenced by her own schooling experiences and her cooperating teacher. As a graduate of Montessori schooling, Sonia believed her pupils learned through exploration of their interests:

It’s good when you take their natural curiosities and you foster them . . . [so they are] able to get big pictures and really understand why things are the way they are
as opposed to just doing them or going through [the motions of learning]. I think that children learn best when they’re taught in ways that they’re able to understand. . . . When they’re excited about learning and when they have an interest. (Sonia, Interview 2)

Building off this notion of exploration, Sonia explained that, at times, her pupils learned better from one another, as their classmates could explain some topics from a different perspective. In line with this thinking, Sonia’s cooperating teacher emphasized building off pupils’ strengths, including pairing a struggling pupil with one who had mastered the skill. Sonia noted, “one of the things that I learned . . . from [my cooperating teacher] is . . . to . . . acknowledge that all kids will have strengths and weaknesses and to use those strengths to help with their weakness” (Sonia, Interview 2).

Although Sonia realized the value of assessing her pupils’ strengths and weaknesses, she struggled to systematically collect such data. At the start of her first year, Sonia mentioned her goal of taking notes on individual pupil progress:

I have this plan for how I’m going to take notes. I think that’s going to work. . . . I saw it in a book. You . . . tape [the note cards] to the clipboard but you can see the names. You can flip to the person and just jot down some notes. . . . I’m not very good at writing down notes that are going to be useful for me in the future. (Sonia, Interview 7)

By the middle of her first year, Sonia had not yet been able to implement her note-taking strategy. She remarked, “It was so hard. . . . And I thought it would be manageable for me. . . . I haven’t really made that many notes. . . . I feel like I always make a mental note but . . . my mental notes always erase themselves” (Sonia, Interview 8). Sonia was particularly troubled by her inability to gather systematic notes on pupils’ learning when she experienced an unsuccessful learning opportunity:

In math I wasn’t doing a very good job of looking at their work. I mean I would look at their tests and once in a while I’d grade their homework. Only when it was around exam time would I take the time to look at if they were understanding.
We assume that they’re going to make the connections, but I don’t think they do all the time. (Sonia, Interview 8)

As a result, Sonia created additional ways in which to determine if pupils were learning—homework checks, thumbs-up/thumbs-down, pair share, and individual meetings. However, she commented on the inaccuracy of some of these practices, as pupils could easily nod and still not understand:

Checking for understanding . . . I do that . . . on the rug, but I’ve been getting better at doing it more . . . individually or looking at their work because sometimes it’s deceiving because the kids might nod “yes” because the person next to them nods “yes” and you get a sense . . . they all get it and then you get their work and none of them got it. (Sonia, Interview 11)

As a result of this dilemma, during her second year, Sonia made a conscious decision to try and use pupil work as feedback to improve learning.

Feedback to Improve Learning

During the student teaching period, Sonia realized that that she failed to focus on formative assessment in her lessons. Her supervising teacher from Hillside made a point of asking her, “How are you going to assess them? How are you going to make sure they learn?” (Sonia, Interview 7). This questioning made Sonia aware of her lack of attention to pupil learning. As a result, Sonia made an effort to focus on learning, especially during the end of her first year and throughout her second year, when she was more comfortable with the second-grade curriculum:

I think in general I’ve learned that it’s really important to assess students’ understanding and to act upon those assessments, to gauge where they are and really work with those who aren’t really getting it and think about good ways to pair kids or good activities for . . . differentiating. (Sonia, Interview 9)

By the conclusion of her second year, Sonia believed she had made significant progress in implementing formative assessment:
This year I worked really hard in assessment on taking the kids’ work and making three piles— the kids who got it, the kids who sort of got it, and the kids who didn’t get it—trying to follow up with the kids who didn’t get it. (Sonia, Interview 11)

Yet, she admitted that she struggled during the beginning of her second year, as she had during her first year, to plan and assess effectively:

It’s still hard but I feel like my focus . . . especially toward the second half of the year was . . . are my kids learning or not and how do I know. I think the first part of the year was still planning, organization [and questions] like, how do I set things up? I think the second half was definitely a lot more, what are they learning, how do I know they’re learning, who’s really getting it and who’s not. (Sonia, Interview 11)

As noted above, Sonia felt pressure to keep pace with the district’s math curriculum. However, by the conclusion of her second year, she felt that integrating formative assessment into her practice enabled her to be a better math teacher:

I think you need to be comfortable with teaching math. I think you need to be patient. . . . Not too long ago I just sat there and observed kids do their work because I feel like I’m always trying to teach them. [Instead] I just sat there a couple of days and just looked at how they solved a problem to figure out what they were thinking . . . because sometimes, in the interest of time or pressure . . . I used to . . . interrupt their thinking to impose [my] own. . . . So you need to be patient. I think you need to be able to listen and to know what they’re thinking and doing, so you can best help take them to the next level of understanding. (Sonia, Interview 11).

Looking across Sonia’s experiences with formative assessment, it is clear that she continually improved and will continue to do so.

*Sonia’s Case Analysis*

As with the other aspects of practice, Sonia struggled more than Elizabeth or Riley, but she was cognizant of these struggles and sought to improve her instruction and assessment as a means to enrich pupil learning. Sonia made huge strides in her assessment practices between student teaching and her second year of teaching. Her
struggle with planning and the managerial aspects of teaching was significant during her first year and even through the beginning of her second year, which greatly impeded her focus on pupil learning. However, her focus on pupil learning shifted during this time; as a result, her assessment practices also shifted to include more formative practices. This shift, however, was least visible in math, where Sonia was required to strictly follow the mandated curriculum and regularly administer district exams. This lack of ownership over the math curriculum is an example of the “deleterious effect” accountability can have as it “narrows[s] teacher discretion, discourage[s] effective instruction, and focus[es] on lower-order learning” (Darling-Hammond, 1997; McDonald, 1992; McNeil, 2000 as cited in Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006). In response to the mandates, Sonia acknowledged that the scripted curricula and high-stakes exams were de-professionalizing her role as a teacher:

I think that sometimes it’s just so constraining. . . . so prescriptive . . . they do everything in their power to give as little discretion to teachers to practice their craft. That to me is really depressing because . . . that’s just no faith in the teachers that you’re employing . . . no faith in their ability to teach well. (Sonia, Interview 2)

For Sonia, teaching was an intellectual activity where teachers, she believed, should have flexibility to meet the needs of pupils, rather than being forced to follow prescribed curricula. Sonia was fortunate that in other subjects she was provided autonomy to develop her practices and try various pedagogical and assessment strategies.

Beyond the accountability systems in place at her school, Sonia’s difficulties were compounded by the lack of support she received in her school context. As noted in Chapter 5, Sonia’s three main support personnel all left after her first year of teaching, and although some were replaced, Sonia was not able to build the same supportive
relationships during her second year. The benefits of a supportive context were noted in Anatheses and Achinstein’s (2003) study, which found that, if left unguided, beginning teachers often remain in “survival mode” due largely to a lack of support. However, the researchers concluded that with support, particularly from an experienced mentor, beginning teachers can focus on pupil learning. Fortunately, Sonia had these relationships during her first year when she was most overwhelmed; however, her second year might have looked quite different with continued support.

Lola’s use of Formative Assessment

Like Sonia, Lola’s school contexts, beginning during student teaching and continuing through her first year, were very focused on preparation for state-mandated exams. To some degree, this molded Lola’s assessment practices, as her instruction was often driven by test content; consequently, her assessments resembled the state exam. Lola believed the test was a fair assessment of the state curriculum standards, which she found to be an accurate guideline for middle school science. Thus, she did not perceive dissonance between the school’s expectation that pupils would perform well on the state exam and her own beliefs about the science curriculum.

In general, Lola’s assessment practices were traditional means such as tests and quizzes to assess pupil learning. Like Elizabeth, she used backwards planning to develop units (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), looking at the culminating, summative assessment and working backward to develop her lessons and formative assessments. She described how she developed quizzes to help prepare pupils for the district exam “by looking at the tests” (Lola, Interview 6).
One reason Lola may have been more dependent on the state exam to build her units was because she lacked a clear understanding of the curricula used in each of the three schools during the 3 years of this study. For example, during student teaching, Lola was unfamiliar with the reform-oriented math curriculum utilized by the district. However, once she understood its premise, she gladly integrated it into her practice, as it aligned with her more reform-oriented math methods course at Hillside (Jong, 2008). Yet her instruction and assessment still emphasized preparing for the state exam. This trend continued during her first year of teaching, when Lola, again, struggled with middle school science content and relied on the state exam as a framework:

I had so much to do I didn't have a clear picture in my head of what I was going to be covering every week and . . . I just did not have any kind of framework in my head of where I was going. I knew very broadly. And so now that the year is over, I can definitely see how I could plump up the curriculum and add additional little demonstrations to help students understand things better. And . . . I believe a lot in hands-on science, but I also learned that it's sometimes easier said than done to actually have learning come out of the hands-on stuff. [So I’ve] relied on the state exam for guidance in terms of objectives and assessment development. (Lola, Interview 9)

For the first time, during her second year of teaching, Lola did not rely on standardized exams to guide her instruction because her school placed little emphasis on the scores. However, since Lola was uncertain of the content in one course, she modeled her practice entirely from another teacher at the school. She hoped that during her third year in the classroom, she would finally have a handle on the content for middle school science and therefore, no longer need to rely on her colleagues or feel bound to the state exam to build a comprehensive curriculum.
Learning Goals

Lola’s experience with learning goals transitioned over the course of this 3 year study. Initially, she was guided by her cooperating teacher; then she focused on her lesson organization and instructional practices; finally, her attention transitioned to the relationship between learning goals and pupil learning. During student teaching, Lola’s cooperating teacher, who believed that transparent goals were essential if pupils are to buy into the learning process, encouraged her to write objectives on the board. Lola observed her cooperating teacher use “KWL” charts to specifically address: (1) what pupils thought they Knew about a topic, (2) what they Wanted to know, and (3) (then after completing the assignment) what they Learned.

By the start of her first year teaching, Lola had developed numerous learning goals. For instance, she hoped to hold her pupils to high learning standards and create a “culture of work” (Lola, Interview 6) in her classroom where learning would be enjoyable, but academic goals were a priority:

I'm going to try to really insist that the kids give me quality work. . . . [I want to] create a culture of work. And then the other piece that I really want to do is make them enjoy science. So we'll have weekly labs. . . . But I really want to try to make it fun to learn science at the same time. (Lola, Interview 6)

In line with this thinking, Lola hoped to use varied pedagogy in her practice to help meet the learning needs of her diverse pupil population, including kinesthetic activities and authentic assessments (Newmann et al., 1996). For example, Lola hoped to incorporate lessons where pupils assumed the role of an engineer and she evaluated their learning using a rubric designed to assess the work of such professionals.

Lola’s transition to a more authentic approach emphasized the beginning of her shift to goals focused on creating rather than reproducing knowledge, in-depth inquiry,
and developing important and relevant learning opportunities. Thus, by the conclusion of her first year in the classroom, Lola’s goals transitioned from a focus on her practice to her pupils’ learning. However, she did not ignore her pedagogy, as she realized the innate relationship between instruction and pupil learning. Nevertheless, this shift demonstrated a transition for Lola from a focus more on herself as the teacher to one that included both her practice and her pupils’ learning—exactly the type of thinking suggested by stage theory as uncommon for beginning teachers (Fuller, 1969). For instance, Lola believed that integrating lab work was essential to helping her pupils make connections between their classroom learning and the outside world. She explained, “People usually remember stuff that they physically did more than they remember notes that they took on something or a discussion that we had” (Lola, Interview 9).

Furthermore, some of Lola’s interest in developing learning goals stemmed from her attendance at the National Science Teachers’ Association conference. She hoped to establish a notebook system which would enable her to assess pupil understanding of “making predictions [and] doing critical thinking” (Lola, Interview 11) and organize class notes, homework, and lab work. Although she integrated notebooks during her first year, she realized that frequent review was imperative to determining how she might modify her instruction. Thus, during her third year, she hoped to integrate an inquiry-based notebook with more success.

After two difficult years of teaching, Lola hoped to get her pupils to advance their learning to a higher intellectual level:

[I want pupils] to be able to ask good questions, to be able to be given problem and not shut down immediately, to be able to critically think and give it your best shot. Be able to put out a good product like a good poster or a good project. (Lola, Interview 11)
To realize this goal of pupils engaging in higher-order thinking, Lola recognized that she would need to modify her instruction by integrating more inquiry-based learning during class instruction. Lola’s transition from working under the guidance of a cooperating teacher to developing her own learning goals, with pupil learning foremost in her thinking, demonstrated her growth over time.

**Understanding the Learners**

Initially, during student teaching, Lola relied on her own experiences as a learner to determine how she believed pupils learned best. For example, she hoped to incorporate hands-on activities instead of “regurgitation” of facts (Lola, Interview 3), as she found she had no long-term retention of information she memorized. However, through her incorporation of activity-based learning, Lola realized, early in student teaching, that she was attempting to teach too much in one lesson. She explained her awareness of how much time it took for her pupils to digest new material and draw connections to previously learned information, “One of my biggest problems is I try to do too much, and I think the kids can move faster than they can. It amazes me . . . how long it takes” (Lola, Interview 4).

Although Lola intended to integrate a more hands-on approach to science during her first two years of teaching, she found behavior management limited her ability to do so. Therefore, she relied on traditional assessments—homework, quizzes, and tests—to understand her pupils’ learning. She hoped to be able to make changes in the future, but did not feel it was a possibility during her first year:
Lola: The easiest way for me to tell if they're learning is by the quizzes and tests. And I know that's kind of old school, but performance assessment where you give them some problem and you go to see if they're applying their knowledge . . . I'm not at a place right now where I can do that.

Interviewer: Why do you think?

Lola: Because that's a lot of management and requires a lot of order and I just feel like it's not a good use of my time right now. (Lola, Interview 8)

As a result, Lola relied on test scores and pupil engagement to measure pupil learning.

Beyond traditional measures of pupil learning, Lola established a beneficial relationship with one pupil during her first year who she relied on to help her determine what was causing class confusion:

He would be raising his hand asking me questions . . . really good questions that have definitely made me a better teacher because I've had to really think. He would point out to me exactly where I'm not being clear in a good way. I mean not to challenge me or anything, but just because he's confused and so I got into the habit for awhile of being like “Randy, any questions?” And he would usually have something [I could clarify]. (Lola, Interview 11)

This relationship was particularly important because Lola was not always sure if some of her pupils understood the purpose of the labs. However, by her second year, she realized that breaking down the lab into smaller parts helped her pupils to learn more.

Feedback to Improve Learning

After witnessing her cooperating teacher collect homework from pupils and then fail to provide adequate or any feedback, Lola made a decision to review pupils’ homework each day. She hoped to continue this practice in her own classroom:

I think that in my classroom I'll get homework back in a good turn-around time and comment on it, make a note to myself if a lot of people aren't getting a concept. (Lola, Interview 5)

Lola found that immediate homework review provided important information about her pupils’ learning. And as a result of pupil confusion, Lola arranged to meet with pupils
one-on-one to address their misunderstandings. This also prompted Lola to review homework and implement assessments more frequently as a first-year teacher. Through this process of frequent assessment, Lola came to realize how important it was to make very few assumptions about what pupils already knew and could build upon in their learning:

[I realized I need] to start at the beginning, be very explicit. So every small little concept, even if I think that it should be obvious, and that if you really carry the kids along like that, then you're more likely to have them at the end. (Lola, Interview 6)

Furthermore, through using “do nows” as lesson starters, Lola realized that she could integrate immediate feedback into her instruction as she received information about pupil understanding of course material. Interestingly, at first, Lola used lesson starters because it was a mandate from her school, but she came to view the activity as an efficient means of assessing pupil understanding, another sign of Lola’s growth over time.

_Lola’s Case Analysis_

Due to Lola’s continuous struggles with classroom management, content knowledge, and personal adjustment to new schools, formative assessment was not a priority during her early teaching experiences. Lola was conflicted about how much to model her instruction and assessment on the high-stakes exams emphasized in two of her three schools. Some researchers argue that this pressure from the school culture to measure pupil learning using traditional assessments severely limits teachers’ ability to modify assessment practices (Lock & Munby, 2000; Boardman & Woodruff, 2004). Not surprisingly, Lola was far more engaged in developing inquiry-based practices and formative assessments during her second year, when her school no longer placed
emphasis on high-stakes testing results. Unfortunately, Lola’s lack of command of the content and her struggles with classroom management continued to affect her instruction and assessment practices.

Although Lola’s school during her second year gave her more flexibility with assessment, it provided much less support in terms of management. Thus, like Sonia, Lola continued to struggle during her second year. Both teachers understood their need for continued growth and hoped, after struggling through their first year, to find more success in their second year. However, faced with reduced support, Sonia and Lola were left to search independently for ways to improve their practices, often feeling like they were stuck in “survival mode” (Anatheses & Achinstein, 2003). Consequently as has been argued throughout this study, a number of factors are constantly at play as beginning teachers struggle to focus their efforts on pupil learning.

Mark’s use of Formative Assessment

Compared to the other five teachers, Mark struggled most with his focus on pupil learning—his assessment practices were no exception. Mark’s difficulty with assessment stemmed from two factors—his attempts to reduce his workload and his limited content knowledge in science. Beginning with teacher preparation, Mark was candid about his worries related to the balance between workload and his life outside the classroom:

I do worry about organization. The job’s a lot of work . . . like doing grades and getting all these things in. . . . How does someone deal with all that? A lot of that takes times and getting a system of organization and using it. . . . I also don’t think multiple choice tests are a good way of testing people. I’m more interested in short answer and essay questions. And then I look at it as that’s a lot of work. That creates a lot of work for me. I’m sort of worried about the rest of my life too. Am I going to have the rest of my life? (Mark, Interview 1)
Even before Mark began teaching, he realized that he might struggle because of his lack of organization. Furthermore, he hoped to use open-ended assessment practices, but knew doing so would require more time to provide feedback to pupils.

As Mark moved through student teaching, these worries became a reality. He elaborated on his decision to limit feedback on assessments due to the time required to do so:

I was going through all the homework and really writing stuff all over them, and if someone wasn’t clear on something, I was explaining it. . . . I’m not going in-depth on that as much anymore. . . . Just the time commitment was too much. It was taking me two hours to grade homework for one night. It was ridiculous. (Mark, Interview 4)

Although Mark initially provided feedback to pupils on areas of confusion, he decided it was too time consuming. Likewise, he limited his responses on pupil essays because it required too much time and his pupils were not taking advantage of the feedback:

I’ve been backing off on giving a lot of feedback just because it’s too time consuming to do. But if they’re writing an essay and they have a . . . good point [or] they use evidence well, I’m commenting on it. But . . . I used to write explanations. . . . And then . . . I began to realize that half of these kids read that [and] half of these kids . . . [did not] read the stuff I write on their homework anyway. So I’m wasting my time doing it. (Mark, Interview 4)

In these ways Mark removed the formative value of pupil work and unfortunately, these decisions to reduce feedback were carried throughout the three years of this study.

At the end of his first year, Mark decided to stop collecting homework and instead glanced over it during class. Changing his methods achieved Mark’s goal of limiting his after school workload:

I actually don’t collect a whole lot anymore. I go around every day with the grade book . . . and I grade . . . homework and their class work and there are . . . a couple of questions that actually demonstrate overall understanding and [I] just look at that one. . . . So it takes a lot of the clerical work out of grading in that I’m
not spending my whole Sunday afternoon grading anymore unless I have tests. (Mark, Interview 9)

Mark explained that he moved to a system of checking for “complete” versus “incomplete” homework during class, but spent more time grading summative tests. Interestingly, this decision meant that pupils likely received more feedback on the culminating unit assessment, where there was no opportunity for them to make improvements, versus the formative ones, which were most likely to improve pupil understanding. It seems Mark’s decisions to limit his feedback and stop collecting homework were examples of his self-proclaimed “laziness,” as his rationale for these decisions was grounded mainly in reducing his workload.

**Learning Goals**

During his preparation as a history teacher, Mark had clear learning goals that focused on developing critical thinking and identifying perspective and bias in primary sources. These goals could be partly attributed to his methods course, his experiences student teaching, and his content background in history:

I want them to be able to look at this material and look at history, interpret it for themselves, decide what they think happened and what people’s motivations were, but the real object here is to get them [to] figure out what they think . . . and to look at things like a newspaper article and interpret it and what’s really going on here. Do I believe this is what really happened? Do I think there a bias? (Mark, Interview 5)

Although Mark established learning goals, he struggled with discipline during student teaching, especially on Fridays, when his class met the last period of the day. Consequently, he designed lessons that enabled him to better control pupil behavior and incorporate learning goals. Since he felt strongly that pupils needed to be prepared for college and believed writing essays was a key skill to master before entering college,
Mark required his pupils complete a 25-minute essay each Friday. He selected controversial topics based on pupil interest and provided them with data describing the arguments for each side. For example, he used “intelligent design” as one topic. Pupils were expected to write a thesis and provide evidence for their argument using a document Mark found on the internet which described the major ideas for each side of the debate. Mark’s goal was for “them to come up with a thesis first and go through and find evidence for it in the text . . . [then] to synthesize the information and use it for their own purposes” (Mark, Interview 5). Unfortunately, Mark only allotted pupils 25 minutes to read and understand both sides of complex issues, as well as write the actual essay. Thus, there was no opportunity for pupils to work through a second draft or receive feedback on how to improve the essay. In fact, Mark only provided check plus, check, or check minus as feedback on the essays. Although Mark intended for the essay to have a two-fold purpose—classroom management and developing essay writing—in reality, pupils had little opportunity to develop skills beyond practice with free writing:

I’ve been making them do an essay every Friday. It’s partially a classroom management issue because . . . I had them last period on Friday afternoon. They were just wild; they wouldn’t sit in their seats, they wouldn’t stop talking, but I figured out just by like serendipity that if I have them do an assignment and said “This is graded you just need to do it,” they would actually do it. . . . And just say it needs to be done in 25 minutes . . . and surprisingly they would just do it, and it was amazing. The class was never so quiet. (Mark, Interview 5)

Although Mark intended for the essay writing to reflect his learning goals, in practice, he provided little scaffolding of his pupils’ writing development, no feedback, and no opportunities for self or peer assessment—all essential elements of constructivist assessment (Shepard, 2001).
During his first year of teaching, working out of his certification area as a science teacher, Mark openly admitted that his lack of content knowledge prevented him from developing learning goals—short- or long-term:

The problem . . . as far as content goes, I don’t know what the first year chemistry curriculum looks like; I don’t have a handle on the whole curriculum right now. So I don’t know where they should be at the end of the semester. I know what I’m supposed to be doing next week and I’m sort of taking my cue from the other chemistry teachers and following almost exactly what they do and staying on the exact same pace that they’re on and that’s just it. . . . I don’t have subject specific goals for them because I just don’t know what they would be. (Mark, Interview 7)

Although Mark claimed he was doing the best that he could given the difficulty of his position, he hinted at his minimal preparation due to the inquiry-based design of the curricula:

There’s a certain amount of uncertainty built into the curriculum so that sort of makes it easy for me to not exactly know things because the students are to discover the underlying principles involved in physics and chemistry. So I’m not using that as an excuse not to learn things . . . let’s say I sort of get it, but maybe didn’t study it as hard as I could have [because] I have a second chance in class because we’re going through it and we’re supposed to be discovering the underlying principles anyway. . . . The only reason I took the job is because the curriculum is suited to someone in my position where it is laid out for someone who absolutely knows nothing about [science to] teach these courses which is indeed what’s happening because I don’t really know anything about any of these subjects. (Mark, Interview 7)

Mark presents an interesting case in terms of assessment. As a history teacher he understood learning goals, yet in practice, he invested minimal effort in reaching those goals due to the extra time required to grade homework and provide feedback on essays. Then, as a science teacher, he removed all ownership for pupil learning due to his reliance on the curriculum. In fact, Mark even suggested that he could get by learning with his pupils due to the inquiry-based design of the curriculum.
Understanding the Learners

Mark’s understanding of pupils as learners developed over the course of teacher preparation, but failed to grow beyond this initial period. During his pre-practicum he was surprised by the depth of knowledge found in the lowest tracked class where many of the pupils spoke English as a second language: “I was surprised that . . . they had some more developed, higher-thinking skills than I originally would have thought” (Mark, Interview 2). Mark provided a detailed example of these pupils’ understanding of “no taxation without representation” once he provided comparisons to their own lives—a key facet of constructivist assessment practice (Shepard, 2001; Newmann et al., 1996).

Mark’s focus on building connections between history content and his pupils’ lives was also evident during student teaching:

For instance, if we’re talking about the Sacco and Vanzetti trial, which they’re not reading in the textbook because I don’t like the textbook’s version of it, but I have them doing a [different] reading for it. [I explained,] “One of the reasons why the judge didn’t really listen to the witnesses or sort of discounted the witnesses was because they had Italian accents. Does that make sense to you? Why would they do it?” This is something that my students often connect . . . with because . . . a lot of them are from immigrant families. So . . . this issue really hits home. And I’m trying to make connections between what they read in the textbook and [what they] understand on their own. (Mark, Interview 4)

Beyond connecting content to pupils’ lives, Mark valued gaining an understanding of how pupils learned in a more general sense. During student teaching, he realized how important it was to understand individual learning styles:

I’m learning . . . every student has a different [learning style]. There are some kids that I can be like, “We’re going to lecture all day up the street, and you’re going to sit there and take notes.” And they would for six or eight hours, they would do it. And then there [are] other students that check out after 20 minutes . . . . You have to sort of strike some balance and deal with all of them. (Mark, Interview 4)
Interestingly, Mark mainly discussed understanding his pupils as learners during student teaching. During his first year as a science teacher, he failed to focus on understanding the learning process from his pupils’ perspective. Again, this may be attributed, in part, to his lack of content knowledge and consequent reliance on the district curriculum. However, this would not account for his failure to focus on understanding his pupils’ learning styles during his second year as a history teacher. Perhaps Mark’s difficulties with classroom management and lesson planning factored into his lack of focus on learning, as these were struggles Mark faced throughout his first two years of classroom teaching.

*Feedback to Improve Learning*

Just as Mark struggled with other aspects of the formative assessment process, he rarely utilized feedback to improve learning. Even the one example of his use of feedback to develop a performance assessment was fraught with problems. After identifying that poor pupil performance on a district physics exam was not a result of a lack of understanding but the design of the exam, Mark developed his own assessment:

> Partially this was in response to them . . . performing very poorly on a test on this [when] my informal assessments of them and of their work made me believe that they actually knew this stuff. They were just having trouble with the testing situation so I decided they seem to have gotten this so why don’t I try something else. (Mark, Interview 9)

Mark believed the goal of the unit was for pupils to be able to interpret data and design charts and graphs representing the analyses of acceleration. Although his learning goals demonstrated higher-order thinking, the reality of the assessment was much more limited:

> A lot of it is showing them trends on a graph like if the line is curved, which way is it curving? What does that mean? You know is the object accelerating? Is it traveling at constant speed? Decelerating? (Mark, Interview 9)
After identifying complex objectives, Mark designed an assessment where pupils ran a timed, 25-meter dash and then charted their performance. Unfortunately, after completing the running, Mark provided a detailed example of his expectations which enabled pupils to replicate the chart with little critical thinking:

I set the rubric for [the assessment] pretty easy to meet. . . . I made it if you show me how to do this, you’ve got it made . . . provided that they labeled everything properly and most of it was just sort of keeping organized and following directions was really what it came down to. (Mark, Interview 9)

Even the series of short answer questions that Mark included on the assessment lacked the need for complex understandings of acceleration. The questions included: list your fastest interval speed, your average interval speed, and describe your speed as you kept on running. Further complicating this assessment, Mark allowed pupils to work together; consequently, some relied on classmates for answers, “In some cases, the kids who did well [may] have just . . . known who to ask for information” (Mark, Interview 9). Thus, Mark’s desire to develop an assessment that better represented the learning of pupils was, in reality, a regurgitation of information.

*Mark Case Analysis*

Mark’s experience with assessment provided additional evidence for his placement on the left of the continuum, as he did not focus on pupil learning like the others in the study. In fact, he struggled with each of the three aspects of formative assessment. His learning goals were well-developed in history, yet they failed to manifest in practice. In science, Mark made a conscious decision to rely on the goals provided in the curriculum, which took all responsibility off of him as the teacher.
Only during student teaching, when Mark was supported by both his cooperating teacher and Hillside supervisor, while teaching but one class each day, could he focus on understanding his pupils as learners.

During his first two years as a classroom teacher, Mark failed to mention developing understandings of pupil learning. This may have been a result of his increased workload, lack of preparation, and limited administrative support, among other factors. However, the other teachers in this study also faced obstacles, yet they navigated through such difficulties. Finally, Mark rarely utilized feedback to improve learning opportunities. This was mainly due to the limited feedback he provided on pupil assignments, as he found this too time consuming—a reflection of his self-proclaimed “laziness.” Unlike Sonia and Lola, who struggled initially with formative assessment but attempted to make progress over the three years of this study, Mark regressed from student teaching through his first two years as he went from some ownership for pupil learning to almost none.

Some might argue that Mark’s school context restricted his independence due to its mandated district exams (Boardman & Woodruff, 2004); however, even when developing independent assessments to supplement those required by the district, Mark failed to incorporate higher-order thinking or authentic elements (Newmann, et al., 1996) even though his learning goals included such foci. This was likely due to Mark’s goal of reducing his workload through minimal grading. The most telling example of Mark’s motives occurred at the conclusion of his second year of teaching, when after teaching history—his certification area—he decided that he preferred teaching science. He explained his decisions for leaving the field of history because of “onerous standards,
unrealistic pacing guides, lack of time to go into much depth, focus on memorization, feeling the need to teach to the poorly designed city test” (Mark, email correspondence 11-14-08). However, many would argue that these problems are not limited to the discipline of history, but are the result of accountability mechanisms in place in his school and district. What remains puzzling is that Mark did not mention one key difference between teaching science and history in the district—history teachers design their own lessons, and science teachers use a mandated curriculum. The reduced workload and limited ownership of learning outcomes resulting from teaching science using a prescribed curriculum was probably influential to his decision.

Cross-Case Analysis

Looking across the five cases at the extent to which beginning teachers focused on pupil learning through formative assessment practices, two, Elizabeth and Riley, were exemplars; two, Sonia and Lola, were models of improvement over time; and the final case, Mark, failed to integrate assessment for learning in any notable way. Collectively speaking, there were factors related to school context that supported successful integration of formative assessment—autonomy, resources, and assistance of a classroom aide, among others. There were also personal qualities, such as teacher content knowledge and classroom management strategies, which assisted in the use of formative assessment. Of course, these same factors also served as obstacles for some teachers.

Each aspect of the formative assessment process (see Figure 6.1)—establishing learning goals, understanding the learners, and feedback to improve learning—brought to the forefront an important facet of beginning teachers’ assessment practices. For all five teachers, their learning goals were inhibited in some way during student teaching. For
Elizabeth, it was simply the general requirement of completing a literary essay with her pupils as mandated by the district. However, no restrictions were imposed in terms of unit design, novel selection, or rubric development. In fact, Elizabeth’s cooperating teacher provided her with complete autonomy in all respects. Riley, who hoped to develop a social studies unit, was instead encouraged by her cooperating teacher to design a poetry unit. Although it might seem that the teachers would find far more autonomy during their first and second years of teaching, additional factors like district- and state-mandated exams were equally, if not more, powerful in restricting their development of learning goals. For example, Sonia was held accountable for following the district’s math curriculum each day, which left little freedom or time to design and implement formative assessments.

Furthermore, just as most of the teachers attempted to build relationships with their pupils, they also made it a priority to understand them as learners. For the two exemplars, Elizabeth and Riley, understanding their pupils was integrated into their daily practice as they developed scaffolded units that provided frequent opportunities to assess pupil understanding. In addition, both teachers gathered information on their pupils through homework, essays, exams, and one-on-one conversations. Although Sonia and Lola desired to understand their pupils in ways similar to Elizabeth and Riley, they were unable to do so to the same degree due to their struggles with content knowledge, long-term planning, and classroom management. However, they both hoped to improve on their weaknesses and understood the connection between understanding the pupils and improving learning opportunities. On a different note, Mark’s case brought to light the possible dangers of a teacher who lacks content knowledge. This deficit limited his
ability to develop learning goals; and thus, he had no basis for understanding pupil learning.

The final aspect of the formative assessment process, feedback to improve learning, is contingent upon successful implementation of the other two facets. Without learning goals and an understanding of the learners, it is difficult to provide feedback to improve learning. As would be expected, Elizabeth and Riley utilized their clearly established learning goals and knowledge of their pupils as learners to continually enhance their instruction. Sonia and Lola struggled to enact the feedback cycle, but both understood the process and hoped to use it more successfully in the future. The need for Mark to understand the importance of his role in his pupils’ learning was imperative to changing his practice to focus on pupil learning. Unfortunately, his attempts to minimize his workload and rely on prescribed curricula were not good indicators of a willingness to change.

Looking across the cases and the three aspects of the formative assessment process, this chapter makes a significant contribution to the field as it describes how five teachers understood and incorporated formative assessments into their practice, beginning with student teaching and continuing through their second year of teaching. As described in Chapter 2, formative assessment is still a relatively nascent field. The four existing syntheses on formative assessment practices mainly describe studies with little inclusion of teacher preparation programs (Natriello, 1987; Crooks, 1988; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Brookhart, 2004).

This trend in the literature might suggest that teachers often develop their ideas and practices related to formative assessment after transitioning into full-time teaching or
it might suggest that research has simply neglected to focus on preservice learning related to formative assessment. In either case, this chapter reveals that beginning teachers were more than capable of understanding and using formative assessment during the pre-service period. Perhaps this is because the teachers in this study were provided with opportunities suggested by Shepard and colleagues (2005):

Teacher candidates need experience identifying, constructing, and evaluating assessment tasks that tap conceptual understanding. They need opportunities to focus on assessment as a step in instruction, so that they can see how assessment insights lead to next steps for students and for themselves. (p. 326)

However, such opportunities are not the norm. In fact, both beginning and experienced teachers have detailed the lack of university preparation and professional development in classroom assessment practices (Stiggins, 1995). This lack of preparation for assessment, coupled with the demands of the accountability movement, often leave beginning teachers “lost at sea” (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002). As a result, novice teachers and veterans alike are driven to use standardized tests to measure more and more outcomes, thus abandoning the possibility of integrating formative assessment practices (Anatheses & Achinstein, 2003). Such abandonment provides evidence that the inquiry-oriented practices that teachers use to gain feedback into the complex learning needs of their pupils are lost to single test scores as society continues to move forward in an age of accountability (Darling-Hammond et al., 1999).

Thus, the fact that formative assessments played any role for the teachers in this study is noteworthy. Although the teachers varied in their ability to implement formative assessment, it is important to remember that, for some who struggled, their understanding of the formative assessment process was comprehensive; however, due to various circumstances and factors, they were unable to implement their ideas in practice. Thus,
the teachers in this study, even the struggling ones, rejected notions of stage theory as Fuller (1969) suggested. Unlike the teachers in Fuller’s study, who did not even think about pupil learning due to their concerns about self-adequacy, like class control and subject matter knowledge, the teachers in this study were able, in most cases, to implement practices focused on improving pupil learning. Furthermore, for cases in which they were unable to do so, they at least had ideas about how they would do so in the future.

In closing, it is important to remember that assessment was one of four aspects of practice that teachers used to focus on pupil learning. However, it was evident that the same teachers were most effective across all four facets of practice, and the same obstacles continued to prevent the less successful teachers from progressing in their quest to focus on pupil learning. Consequently, the process of understanding pupil learning must be examined holistically, across teacher’s practices, to effectively determine how teacher education, in combination with schools, can better promote attention to pupil learning with beginning teachers.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This dissertation explores the question: To what extent do beginning teachers focus on pupil learning from the preservice period through the first two years in the classroom? As argued throughout this study, learning to teach for pupil learning is a complex process in which beginning teachers engage in continuous negotiations, like seeking resources or professional development opportunities, collaborating with colleagues, and motivating pupils, in the hopes of overcoming various challenges. Often the teachers in this study relied on their moral sensibility to overcome these obstacles; however, in some cases, they were unable to do so. Chapter 4 presented the framework detailing this process. In this chapter, I further explore the cross-case analysis described in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. I then describe this study’s implications for research, policy, and practice. Below are the research questions guiding this study:

To what extent do beginning teachers focus on pupil learning from the preservice period through the first two years in the classroom?

In what ways do beginning teachers focus on pupil learning?
- How do various contextual factors influence the extent to which beginning teachers focus on pupil learning?
- How do teachers' moral sensibilities influence the extent to which they focus on pupil learning?
- How do contextual factors and teachers’ moral sensibilities mutually influence one another over time?

How do beginning teachers understand and use assessment in their teaching?
- What role does formative assessment play in beginning teachers’ focus on pupil learning?
- How do their notions of assessment change over time?

Setting the Stage for Pupil Learning

This study is grounded in the literature on learning to teach written during the past thirty years. During the 1960s and 70s, when the process-product research paradigm was
popular, teacher education research was constructed as a training problem where teaching was viewed as a technical activity related in a linear way to learning (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). During this period, stage theory, which built upon the understanding that teachers progress through phases of learning to teaching in a linear fashion, came to prominence as a means to understand teacher development. Fuller (1969) completed an empirical study that examined student teachers’ focus on concerns of self—control, subject matter adequacy, finding a place in the structure of the school, understanding expectations of supervisors, principal, and parents—versus concerns with pupils’ learning, the learning process, and how their role as a teacher affected this process. Fuller found that none of the student teachers addressed a single concern about pupils or the learning process. Six years later, drawing on additional research that studied beginning teachers, Fuller and Brown developed a synthesis (1975) which furthered the claim that even after moving into their own classroom, novice teachers continued to have concerns primarily about “self.” This study challenges these notions of stage theory, as it found that student teachers, and the beginning teachers they become, focus on pupil learning in various ways and to varying degrees.

This study also challenges the popular belief that teaching is a linear process where teachers transmit knowledge to pupils and remain the most important element in the learning process, ultimately obscuring the role of the pupil. Such emphasis provides support for the federal NCLB legislation defining “highly qualified teachers” by what legislators believed to be clear-cut indicators of quality—subject matter preparation or GRE scores (Zumwalt & Craig, 2008). This study demonstrates, however, that in fact, preparing effective teachers is not such a straightforward occurrence. As such, subject
matter knowledge and GRE scores are in no way sufficient to ensure effective classroom practice. Although they may be significant factors, they are not the only factors promoting beginning teachers’ success.

Focusing on Pupil Learning

This study adds to the current research on learning to teach and classroom assessment practices by providing a framework (see Figure 4.1) with which to explore the ways in which beginning teachers focus on pupil learning and the obstacles they face from their preservice experiences through their first 2 years in the classroom. This framework derives from 55 interviews with five teachers across a 3-year period and is informed by sociocultural theoretical perspectives, longitudinal research on learning to teach, and constructivist assessment theory. The framework presents four aspects of practice that the teachers relied upon to focus on pupil learning: high expectations, relationships with pupils, classroom management, and instruction/assessment practices. In addition, the framework highlights the process of negotiation between beginning teachers’ school contexts and their moral sensibilities. Multiple factors in teachers’ context serve as both supports and obstacles to teachers’ focus on pupil learning: mentors, administrative support, schedule/teaching load, pupil effort/motivation, professional development, and resources, to note but a few of the more prominent factors. In addition, for the teachers in this study, three aspects of moral sensibility were highlighted—perseverance, self-reflection, and commitment to social justice—as these three specific dispositions and stances provided insight into the teachers’ negotiation of their struggles.
This analysis indicates, contrary to claims posited by stage theory (Fuller, 1969), that beginning teachers can focus on pupil learning. The teachers’ focus on pupil learning manifested itself in various aspects of practice, including holding pupils to high expectations, building personal relationships with pupils, maintaining classroom management, and implementing sound instruction and assessment. Each teacher reflected on his or her individual strengths when identifying which teaching aspects would be central to practice; some used multiple strategies, and others utilized just one. Furthermore, when these beginning teachers faced challenges related to pupil learning, their process of negotiation highlighted the extent to which each focused on pupil learning. In essence, some beginning teachers were more successful navigating contextual obstacles—limited support, lack of resources, and minimal pupil effort—due, in part, to their moral sensibility, which pushed them to seek support from colleagues, find additional resources, seek professional development opportunities, and engage pupils in the learning process, among others.

Chapter 6 honed in on teachers’ assessment practices, as this was the way in which teachers most frequently focused on pupil learning. The formative assessment process (Sadler, 1989) provided a lens for understanding how assessment can be effectively used to focus on pupil learning. The three facets of Sadler’s (1989) formative assessment process—learning goals, understanding the learners, and feedback to improve learning—are graphically displayed in a cycle (see Figure 6.1). Highlighting these aspects of practice provided further evidence that the teachers varied in their ability to focus on pupil learning due to the degree to which they were able to negotiate their
obstacles. Again, contextual obstacles and moral sensibility played a role in each teacher’s success in implementing the formative assessment process.

After analyzing these five cases and developing the overall framework (see Figure 4.1), I placed the teachers on a “living continuum” to compare the extent to which each focused on pupil learning across all four aspects of practice during the early years of teaching. This allowed comparison of the extent to which each teacher focused on pupil learning during the 3-years of this study. The continuum is described as “living” because it is expected that the teachers will move along the continuum over the course of their careers. The fact that teachers are expected to grow and change over time is a key finding of this study. As suggested by relevant literature, the process of learning to teach must continue long after teacher education, just as the process began long before (Feiman-Nemser, 1983).

On the broadest level, this study uses sociocultural theoretical perspectives as the foundation for understanding how people learn to teach for pupil learning. A sociocultural perspective takes into account the interaction of multiple internal and external factors that influence how individuals negotiate new learning experiences (Gee, 2003). For the teachers in this study, the process of negotiating various obstacles demonstrated this interaction of external and internal factors as described by Gee. For example, Sonia was challenged by external factors like the district-mandated curricula, yet she also struggled due to internal factors such as her lack of organization and preparedness for daily lessons. However, she was supported by her critical self-reflection, another internal factor. In this study, Gee’s interaction of factors has been described as a process of negotiation between teachers’ moral sensibilities and obstacles in their context.
Theories about learning to teach provide another more explicit lens for understanding this study. Feiman-Nemser (2001) proposed a framework for thinking about teacher learning over time based on reform-oriented models, which runs contrary to the current push for outcomes based on test scores. Instead of teaching as telling and learning as listening, as conventional models suggest, more reform-oriented models of teaching and learning “call for teachers to do more listening as they elicit student thinking and assess their understanding and for students to do more asking and explaining as they investigate authentic problems and share their solutions” (p. 1015). This study models a similar understanding of teacher learning primarily through the focus on teacher use of formative assessment and the integration of the internal TAPL protocol, both of which are firmly grounded within this reform-oriented model. These ideas are detailed below under the discussion of constructivist assessment theory.

In response to the dearth of empirical literature on learning to teach over time, this study uses a longitudinal perspective to study learning to teach that began during teacher preparation and continued through the first 2 years of classroom teaching. As the literature review noted, only eight qualitative and quantitative studies conducted over the last 20 years have included data spanning both phases of the learning to teach process (Hollingsworth, Teel, & Minarik’s, 1992; Grossman et al., 2000; Grisham, 2000; Mayo, Kajs, & Tanguma, 2005; Mulholland, 2003; Donnell, 2007; So & Watkins, 2005; Trumbull, 2001). By embracing a longitudinal approach, this study assumes that learning to teach is a continuous process that occurs across a lifetime (Feiman-Nemser, 1983). The value of a longitudinal approach was apparent in the case of Lola, where change over time was evident as the teachers learned to better navigate their obstacles. For Lola, this
included moving to three schools in 3 years in search of the right “fit.” Lola’s case would be interesting to continue to follow, as many of her greatest challenges were the result of her difficult teaching context. Furthermore, she gained content knowledge and classroom management strategies during her first 2 years of teaching that will likely assist her navigation of subsequent challenges.

Research on constructivist assessment theories provides the final body of literature framing this study. As noted in Chapter 2, a clear disconnect has been shown between reformed-oriented views of instruction and more traditional views of assessment focused on testing. Unfortunately, this disconnect continues to gain force as the accountability context pushes for test scores as the primary means of determining learning outcomes. In response to this disconnect between instruction and assessment and drawing on constructivist learning theory, Shepard (2001) developed a reformed view of assessment more in line with reform-oriented instructional practices. Through her constructivist assessment theory, Shepard emphasized assessment as a means to extend pupils’ understanding to a new level of learning though assessments that “are congruent with important learning goals . . . mirror important thinking and learning processes . . . [provide] steps for improvement . . . [and engage] students actively . . . in evaluating their own work” (Shepard, p. 1077). Through this process of connecting instruction and assessment, research has concluded that teachers and pupils realize there is more to learning than simply measuring outcomes—a necessary first step in overcoming the pressures of accountability (Shepard et al., 2005).

Drawing on constructivist assessment theory, this study makes another contribution to the field of teacher education by uncovering a process of understanding...
how beginning teachers develop, implement, and revise assessment practices through guided questioning of pupil work. This study supports the use of the TAPL protocol (see figure 3.1), or other questioning strategy utilizing pupil work, as the dialogue highlights the complexities of assessment and struggles faced by beginning teachers as they develop learning goals, understand content knowledge, and navigate mandated curricula. The TAPL protocol specifically poses questions to engage teachers in discussions about the development of assessments, impact of mandates, expectations for pupil learning, and future modifications based on pupil learning outcomes, all of which provide a window into the complex process teachers employ when assessing their pupils.

Thus, this study supports the limited research on preparing teacher candidates for constructivist-oriented assessment practices, which suggests that analyzing assessments and pupil work “help[s] new teachers develop an understanding of how such evaluations of learning can inform their instructional choices . . . [and] develop an appreciation of how learning unfolds over time, how different students learn, and how these students respond to their instruction” (Shepard et al., 2005, p. 316-317). Thus, the benefits of data gathered from the TAPL protocol are two-fold—it provides researchers with rich data on the process of learning to teach for pupil learning, and it gives beginning teachers opportunities to explore their thinking about pupil learning in unique ways. Sonia noted the effect of her participation in the research process:

I think these interviews help, too, [they] help me reflect on what I’m learning or how I do things and how I can do them differently or, sometimes even the questions you ask me . . . I haven’t thought about that but it might be important [to] start thinking about pupil learning. (Sonia, Interview 9)

The final contribution that this study makes to the field includes an emphasis on formative assessment as a process teachers use to understand pupil learning. Although
still a relatively nascent field, formative assessment has played a more prominent role in research in the last ten years. This study was grounded in the idea that formative assessment is a continuous process that teachers employ to better understand pupil learning and enhance future instruction (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Building from the three studies (Cowie & Bell, 1999; Lee & Wiliam, 2003; Dekker & Feijs, 2005) that followed Black and Wiliam’s (1998) recommendation that formative assessment studies include a longitudinal perspective, this study provides a perspective on the process of formative assessment across a 3-year period. Two of the teachers, Elizabeth and Riley, supported the finding that even student teachers are capable of effectively utilizing formative assessment, contrary to claims made by stage theory and proponents of scripted curricula which are often mandated and used to keep teachers accountable. Furthermore, studying the process of formative assessment shed light on improvement over time for two other teachers in the study, Sonia and Lola. Without a longitudinal perspective, the teachers’ improvements in practice may not have been noticed, as student teaching provides a very limited view. Finally, a longitudinal perspective revealed that for some teachers, namely Mark, improvement seemed unlikely. (A more detailed discussion of Mark is included in the implications for practice section below.)

Implications

This study has several implications for research, policy, and practice. First, this study suggests that a longitudinal research perspective is necessary to capture teacher learning over time; each teacher engages in the process of learning in different ways with differing outcomes and at different rates. Furthermore, a system that accounts for pupil learning in a variety of ways, including formative, performance, and authentic
assessments (Newmann et al., 1996), as well as high-stakes tests, should be developed. Thus, teacher education and professional development for beginning teachers should focus on developing teachers who are intellectual consumers of assessment practices. As such, teacher candidates should be experienced in a variety of assessment practices that enable them to integrate the most appropriate assessment for various subjects and grade levels, and they should then be able to differentiate it as necessary for individual pupils. Furthermore, teacher candidates need to be exposed to a guided process of examining pupil work in preparation for doing so in their own classrooms as a means of assessing pupil learning. Finally, teachers need to be reminded that many aspects of practice beyond assessment—high expectations, building relationships with pupils, classroom management—affect pupil learning. Thus, continuing to grow across one’s career is imperative to improving practice and ultimately, improving pupils’ learning.

Implications for Research

Research on learning to teach most often limits its focus to just one aspect of teacher preparation, such as a single course or the student teaching experience (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). However, with the addition of similar studies focusing on a longitudinal perspective across teacher preparation and the early years of teaching, the power of creating a knowledge base for learning over time becomes more evident. By looking at learning to teach as a lifelong process, teacher preparation and, in particular, student teaching, should be understood as a “window” into the learning experiences, as it is not sufficient to show growth over time or draw larger implications for research or practice about learning to teach more broadly. As demonstrated by the teachers in this study, practice was often constrained during student teaching due to cooperating teachers’ input, limited time in the classroom, and pressure to prepare pupils for mandated exams.
For example, Riley was guided by her cooperating teacher to complete a poetry unit using particular criteria. Thus, Riley’s practices during her first 2 years were more representative of her personal assessment practices due to her increased autonomy, although she was still required to administer a district exam in math. Riley’s case reveals the differences that may be present between student teaching and full-time teaching and make longitudinal studies essential to understanding the larger scope of learning to teach.

Research on the role assessment plays in teacher education, as this is often the gateway for teacher learning about assessment more broadly, including accountability systems and high-stakes testing, is also necessary. On a general level, researching how assessment is defined and critiqued during preparation by university faculty, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers, including formative and summative assessment and accountability systems, are necessary investigations. Research on the integration of assessment practices throughout coursework and practicum experiences is also imperative. Through such investigations, researchers can focus on how teachers learn to integrate their personal assessment practices within the accountability climate. In this way, research can provide insight into the skills that teachers need to be successful in the current climate, while also challenging it. Overall, a strong research foundation for how teachers focus on pupil learning in a variety of ways, some formative and some summative, is necessary. Such a foundation provides support for claims that teachers must be valued as intellectuals who can problem-solve the best ways to assess individual pupils in their classrooms. This study reveals that the process of learning to teach is a non-linear, multi-dimensional experience requiring teachers to develop skills and inclinations that will allow them to be successful in this complex endeavor.
Implications for Policy

There has been research identifying the complexities of learning to teach for nearly two decades (Britzman, 1991). Unfortunately, educational policy has not acknowledged such complexity when mandating accountability practices in the hopes of bolstering pupil achievement under the NCLB legislature. This directive use of high-stakes exams undermines the development of teacher learning, as teachers are not provided with opportunities to develop and critique their own assessments. Therefore, it is necessary to reconceptualize policy to move beyond simple outcomes and instead look at the complexity of learning to teach for pupil learning using diverse assessment practices. Just as highly qualified teachers can not be determined based solely on content knowledge or GRE scores (Zumwalt & Craig, 2008), which fail to consider the multifaceted nature of the profession, pupil learning cannot be measured by a sole outcome that ignores the complexity of the learning process. Furthermore, policy-makers must be willing to draw on research that describes the effectiveness of more diverse assessment practices, such as formative assessment, even though they are more nuanced and difficult to measure. For instance, Black and Wiliam’s (1998) synthesis confirmed that focused efforts to improve formative assessment produced learning gains of one-half standard deviation, an unlikely gain using any method of assessment, thus providing more clout to formative assessment (Shepard et al., 2005). After drawing on the effectiveness of such practices, recommendations may be made at the district-level for professional development opportunities and the establishment of learning communities focused on formative assessment practices with the primary objective of analyzing assessment tasks and pupil work samples to inform future practice and ultimately improve pupil learning.
Although a complete shift in favor of formative practices is unlikely, a balanced system where classroom-based and large-scale assessment work together to support learning is possible (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001). Such an approach would highlight high-stakes testing as an outcome most effective when used in conjunction with other more frequently used assessments that include performance and authentic aspects to enable pupils to draw more connections between their learning in school and the outside world (Newmann, et al., 1996). Promoting the use of authentic assessment has proven effective. Pupils given authentic learning opportunities were more likely to produce more authentic work and scored higher on other standardized measures of pupil learning such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001). For example, developing science assessments where pupils work like scientists to develop and test hypotheses would likely yield outcomes that demonstrate pupils’ knowledge on a deeper level compared with multiple-choice questions, which provide little or no opportunity to show understanding. This positive correlation between authentic assessment and pupil learning suggests that diverse assessments are important to learning outcomes. In addition, providing teachers with opportunities to develop their own assessment is a key learning opportunity that enables teachers to better understand the complete learning process from developing objectives and designing lessons to understanding pupils’ learning and modifying future instruction.

Finally, critical examination of pupil learning also reveals that ethical and moral issues pervade the work of beginning teachers. If some pupils fail to learn, this undermines both their life chances and democracy. Thus, pupil learning is key to social justice and inheres in the everyday aspects of classroom life, in every lesson that is
taught. Beginning with teacher education, schools of education should therefore explicitly help teacher candidates consider how ethical issues routinely arise in the classroom and intertwine with issues of pedagogy and curriculum. If teacher candidates never explore the moral dimensions of their work, they can neither recognize nor resolve the inevitable struggles that arise in the course of everyday teaching. Furthermore, this exploration of the moral dimensions of teaching should continue to be a focus for professional development opportunities across teachers’ life spans, as the ethical aspects of teaching continue to pervade the work of teachers.

*Implications for Practice*

Teacher education and professional development courses are beginning to use analysis of pupil work (Shepard et al., 2005). One such tool is the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) project, where student teachers plan and teach a unit with an assessment and then analyze pupil learning in relation to their teaching. The project helps student teachers to understand how pupil learning occurs over time, how pupils learn in different ways, how pupils respond to instruction, how grading is just one aspect of assessment, and how planning should evolve over time in relation to pupils’ learning needs (Shepard et al., 2005). With a similar intent, this study uses the internal TAPL protocol, developed by the Qualitative Case Study Project, to guide discussions of pupil work with preservice and beginning teachers. Both of these protocols have clear implications for practice, whether utilized during teacher preparation or as professional development for classroom teachers. A guided analysis of pupil work has the potential to enhance the practical value of classroom assessment, as teachers are
encouraged to identify pupils’ strengths and weaknesses and then build opportunities for improvement into future instruction.

Two additional implications for practice are directly related to teacher education. First, faculty in schools of education should utilize a diverse array of assessment practices in their university courses to provide teacher candidates with a more solid foundation and examples to use in their own practice. This is particularly important because there is no guarantee that cooperating teachers will be adept at using formative assessment practices. However, providing professional development opportunities related to assessment would be beneficial for all teachers, including cooperating teachers, and would emphasize the importance of teachers as lifelong learners. Furthermore, teacher education must make assessment a priority, whether through a stand-alone assessment course or as a topic integrated into other courses (Cannady et al., 2009). Some teachers may spend as much as a third of their time with assessments and testing (Stiggins & Conklin, 1988); thus, teachers should be exposed to the benefits and drawbacks of various assessment practices. Without a strong knowledge base, beginning teachers are more likely to rely on assessment materials from packaged curricula, which may or may not accurately represent the learning goals developed by the teacher (Cizek, 2000). In addition, without exposure to a diverse range of assessments, teachers will likely use the same types of assessment repeatedly and therefore not be attentive to a wide range of learning styles in their classrooms (McPhail, 2008).

The final implication for practice concerns Mark, as his case was a troubling one. As a “highly qualified teacher” under the NCLB legislature, Mark was fully credentialed and possessed an M.Ed, yet he was unable to overcome his obstacles and focus on pupil
learning during either of his first two years of teaching—one year out of his certification and one year within his certification. The question arises, what can be done for teachers like Mark? Generally speaking, Mark was successful during teacher education, yet he was very critical of the program. His two main struggles occurred during student teaching, when Mark failed to adequately prepare for his lessons, relying heavily on his cooperating teacher’s materials and revealing both his lack of effort in and understanding of the inquiry project. Those same struggles reappeared for Mark as a beginning teacher when he again failed to prepare for lessons and seldom reflected critically on his practice. Knowing these were Mark’s weaknesses as his grades were reflective of these struggles, teacher education could have played a more active role through additional guidance and monitoring of his experiences, perhaps either by his Hillside supervisor or cooperating teacher. Perhaps Mark’s university professors could have provided more opportunities for him to prepare lessons and engage in reflection. Mark’s school administration could have taken a more active role in supporting him, as they had knowledge of his weaknesses as a student teacher. Support could have been given in the form of a mentor who allotted time for Mark each day to support him in practice and planning. This would obviously be a costly way to support Mark, but the school made the decision to hire him out of his certification during his first year, knowing that he lacked content knowledge. Thus, the question remains: how could Mark’s experiences have been more successful, as his troubles ultimately affected the learning of his pupils? There are no easy answers for Mark’s case, although there were certainly opportunities where Mark could have been better supported and more closely monitored by both the university and the high school.
Conclusions

This study suggests that beginning teachers are capable of focusing on pupil learning, contrary to stage theory, which claims that novice teachers cannot focus on concerns beyond classroom control, subject matter adequacy, and working with colleagues—all concerns of self (Fuller, 1969). However, even this study, longitudinal by comparison to most studies, does not provide evidence of teacher’s practices as they move from beginning teachers to experienced professional educators. Continuing to follow teachers as they progress through their professional life spans offers an opportunity to observe changes in the complexity of their thinking, additional ways in which they may focus on pupil learning, and changes in how they negotiate obstacles in their school context or draw on their moral sensibilities to inform their teaching.

Beyond broadening the trajectory of learning to teach for pupil learning, this study suggests a need to reflect on how teacher candidates are prepared to use assessments. Without a strong knowledge base, beginning teachers may resort to using exams from scripted curricula and mandated district and state exams as their primary means of assessing pupil learning. Although these exams provide one perspective on pupil learning, when used alone, they restrict learning to the test-makers’ objectives and most often rely heavily on objective questioning strategies like multiple choice. Thus, pupils are provided with little opportunity to express their thinking beyond the test parameters. However, when standardized exams are used in conjunction with other more frequently used teacher-designed assessments to gather information about areas of confusion, the result is an assessment system that provides increased feedback to teachers
about pupil learning and promotes better results on high-stakes exams (Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001).

Looking across the claims, the most important suggestion this study makes, which is also the most fundamental, is to promote teaching as successful if and only if learning takes place. As written by Bain (2004) in his book *What the Best College Teachers Do*:

Most fundamentally, teaching in this conception is creating those conditions in which most—if not all—of our students will realize their potential to learn. . . . [And] when [these teachers] failed to reach students, they used those failures to gain additional insights. Most important, because they subscribed to the learning rather than the transmission model of teaching, they realized that they had to think about ways to understand students’ learning. That might include attention to how they explained something, but it always focused more broadly on a rich internal conversation: What do I mean by learning? How can I foster it? How can my students and I best understand and recognize its progress (and setbacks)? How can I know whether my efforts help or hurt? (p. 173-174)

Thus, teacher preparation must make a conscious effort to promote inquiry into the process of teaching and learning. Teacher candidates must have opportunities to explore their practice, including rich experiences with a variety of assessments during the supportive context of student teaching, so that they feel prepared as they begin their careers. Beginning teachers need to be encouraged to explore diverse assessment practices through interactions and discussions with other teachers and additional formal professional development opportunities. Without these experiences, beginning teachers too readily rely on mandated exams or scripted curricula, a practice which ultimately limits the learning opportunities of pupils. Thus, the goal is for beginning teachers to realize that there are many ways to focus on pupil learning, each having its own strengths and weaknesses; however, using a diverse set of practices provides richer learning opportunities for all pupils.
REFERENCES


(Eds.), *How students learn: Reforming schools through learner-centered education* (pp. 1-22): American Psychological Association.


Appendix A: BC TNE Evidence Team Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework for Assessing Teacher Education*

*M. Cochrane-Smith and the Boston College Evidence Team, February 2004
Appendix B: BC TNE Evidence Team Portfolio of Studies
Appendix C: QCS Interview Protocols 1-11

Interview 1 - Personal History and Education Experience

**Background: Educational experience**
Let’s begin our conversation by talking about what brings you here to BC.

1. Why did you choose BC for graduate school? What do you hope to learn about teaching while you are here?

   **Probe:** What are your expectations for the program and learning environment at BC? What do you think the program will offer?

   **Probe:** How long has it been since you graduated from undergraduate college? What have you been doing since graduating?

2. Describe your college education? Where did you go? Why? What was your major in college? Why?

   **Probe:** What incidents or experiences stand out during your college years? For example, were you active on student organizations or political activities on campus?

   **Probe:** Did you work through college and/or did you have financial aid?

3. Describe your past school experiences.
   A. Let’s start with your secondary school experience.

      **Probe** for context—was it a small or large school; an urban or suburban, parochial–single sex? Would you say it was diverse? If so, how?

      **Probe:** What was the school like at the time you were there? For example, some people were in school during times of major change, such as during school integration, the merging of two high schools, or witnessing a shift in population in community, leading to increased diversity in the school, OR there were also some local changes such as a new teacher or administrator, a different tracking or grouping system, or a change in courses.

   B. Now tell me about your elementary school experience.

      **Probe** for context—was it a small or large school; an urban or suburban, parochial–single sex? Would you say it was diverse? If so, how?
Probe: Again, what was the school like at the time you were there?

4. How did you experience school as a student?

Probe for their experiences as learners-- So if an individual responds about the social aspects of schooling, ask them how they experienced school as learners?

Probe: What was your most memorable experience? Were you involved in extracurricular activities? If so, what type of activities were you involved in?

5. Now, I want to switch topics a bit to talk about what brings you to teaching. When did you first start thinking you might want to teach? Why are you interested in teaching?

Probe: Did you consider becoming a teacher while you were an undergrad? Why or why not?

Probe: for their intellectual interests and the perspective they hold as a student. For instance, many of the elementary candidates mention their love of reading and children. Try also to discover what the person especially enjoys about school or about learning.

6. You're planning to teach ______________ (elementary or high school) is that right? When you think back to your own experience in __________ (elementary or high school), what stands out to you?

Probe: for specificity: What do you mean? Can you give me an example of that? Is there anything else you remember?

If the teacher candidate does not mention one of the following: You haven't mentioned (much about) _________. Do you remember anything in particular about that?

- what you learned
- your teachers
- how you felt about different subjects

Probe (Elementary folks): How do you think an individual best learns to read or to write?

Probe (Secondary folks): How do you think an individual best learns ________ (history, English, science, math)?

Probe: Do you think you received a good education? Why or why not?
**Background: Beliefs:**

7. A part of our research focuses on individuals’ ideas, beliefs and experience as they relate to teaching and learning. At BC, one of the stated purposes is to prepare individuals to teach for social justice. What does that mean to you?

**Probe A:** If teacher candidate says that he/she does not know what teaching for social justice is, move on to question 9.

**Probe B.** If teacher candidate gives an answer to the social justice question, ask: So, how do you think that plays out in __________ (reading or math: elementary folks) or (history, English, or science: high school folks)?

8. As you think about your future profession, what do you believe is/are the role(s) of the teacher?

**Probe:** Think of a teacher you have known. Are there things you admired about this teacher? Things you would like to have changed?

**Probe:** From your perspective, what are the top two or three challenges that teachers face today?

**Background: Knowledge**

9. Now, think about the content areas you will be teaching as an elementary or high school teacher. What do you think are your strengths and weaknesses in the content area(s) you might have to teach?

**Probe:** What are you hoping the BC program will provide in terms of your preparation? (Note: This can focus on fears and concerns if it hasn’t been covered OR it can be skipped if it was thoroughly discussed.)

**Probe:** Now think about the range of things a teacher does. What might be your strengths? What areas might you need support?

**Background: Practice (Future plans)**
10. What are you looking forward to in your Student Teaching Practicum? Is there anything you are concerned about? What challenges do you think you will face?

**Probe:** How will you prepare yourself for these challenges?

11. When you think about next year, where do you see yourself working? Where would you like to teach?

**Probe:** Talk to me about what you hope your classroom will be like? How will you teach? What will your relationships with students, faculty, and parents look like?

12. In conclusion, we’d like to get some information about your background, especially your demographics. (**Note:** Make references to prior responses to pull pieces together. Continue probing so we don’t receive a mere list.)

**Probe:** For example: your age, race, ethnicity, cultural background, language, religion and political orientation?

**Closing Remarks:**

Is there anything else you’d like to share that we didn’t cover?

(Thank the participant!)

**Interview 2: Pre-practicum Experience**
The focus of this interview is on your pre-practicum experience. We will meet again in January to talk more about your coursework at BC in the first semester. For this interview, I would like to learn about how your pre-practicum went, what you learned, what you struggled with, what impact the experience has had on your ideas about teaching, etc.

**Practicum Experiences**
1. Let’s talk about your practicum. Describe a typical day at your practicum.

**Probe:** How have you found the structure of the pre-practicum?

**Probe:** What is your role in the classroom?

**Probe:** What is the school environment and community like?
**Probe:** Is the environment different from other places where you’ve been a student or volunteer/aide?

**Probe:** Do you observe teachers teaching in all subject areas (for elementary)?

2. Tell me about your Cooperating Teacher? (Age, Race, Ethnicity, years teaching, teaching style, etc.) What is the role of the cooperating teacher in shaping your practice and philosophy?

**Probe:** Would you describe a particular lesson you observed that was noteworthy? Why?

**Probe:** How do you think your CT knows what to do next?

**Probe:** How do you think your CT knows if the kids are learning?

**Probe:** What types of classroom assessments does your CT use? Formative/summative? In what ways do assessments reflect the instruction?

**Probe:** Every teacher has strengths and weaknesses; can you tell me about those with regard to your Cooperating Teacher? Are there things you have observed and would do/wouldn’t do? (specific content areas)

**Probe:** Do you and your Cooperating Teacher have similar teaching philosophies? Explain. (N.B. You want to understand what the teacher candidate’s teaching philosophy is—skip if you have gotten at this in Question 2)

**Probe:** Do you think your Cooperating Teacher has the same ideas about teaching and learning as your BC Professors? Why or why not? Do you consider this a problem?

**Probe:** What advice have you gotten from your Cooperating Teacher? How has your Cooperating Teacher helped you in understanding teaching? How has he/she helped your understanding of pupil learning?

3. OK, let’s move from your CT to your Supervisor; tell me about your Supervisor? (Age, Race, Ethnicity, years teaching, teaching style, etc.) What is the role of the Supervisor in shaping your practice and philosophy?

**Probe:** What advice have you gotten from your Supervisor? How has he/she helped you in understanding teaching? How has he/she helped your understanding of pupil learning?
Probe: What would you say are your Supervisor’s strengths and weaknesses?

Probe: Do you and your Supervisor have similar teaching philosophies? Explain.

Probe: Do you think your Supervisor has similar ideas about teaching and learning as your BC Professors? Why or why not? Do you consider this a problem?

Probe: So, I understand that all of the pre-pracs in this school meet together with the supervisor at the school once a week? How’s that been?

4. So we’ve talked about all the grown-ups…the other important people here are the kids.

Tell me about the Students in the classroom?

Probe: What is their role in shaping your practice and philosophy? (Ask about the child study pupil if relevant)

Probe: Diversity (ELLs, SPED, SES, Ethnicity)? How would you describe their experience in school? Do they enjoy it? Why or why not?
If elementary: How is the weekly read aloud going with your ELL pupil?

Probe: Tell me about the lessons you taught. How did they go? What did you learn? (Insert here a question about something you observed in a classroom. For example, a unique method, approach, visual aide).

Probe: Some people say the most important thing about any lesson is whether the kids are learning. What do you think they learned? How do you know?

Probe: What are you learning about how children learn? How does this influence your perspective on the role of a teacher?
**Probes:** Can you describe a particular learning moment you observed that was noteworthy? Why?

**Probes:** What advice have you gotten from your pupils? How have the pupils helped you in understanding teaching? How have they helped your understanding of pupil learning?

**Overall Questions**
5. Have you observed examples of teaching for social justice in your pre-practicum experience? Please describe them.

6. Are you making connections between what you’re learning at BC and what you’re experiencing in your practicum?

7. Based on your pre-prac experience, what would you say are the most important skills and knowledge for teaching?

8. How have your practicum experiences thus far influenced your ideas about teaching?

**Probes:** Based on the practicum, have you changed your plans on where and how you’d like to teach? Explain.

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**Interview 3**
2005 Summer & Fall Courses

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Last time we met we focused on your pre-practicum experience. Today’s topic is your coursework so far at BC.
**General Course Experiences**

1. Generally, how have your courses gone so far?

   **Probe:** What have you enjoyed about these courses so far? Have there been any surprises?

   **Probe:** Can you give me some examples of anything that has been particularly interesting or helpful?

2. Foundations courses are generally used to give people the broad overviews of learning and schooling: broader contexts of children, schooling, and curriculum. Did you find the courses to be valuable in terms of providing that? In what ways? *(Specify what courses we are referring to)*

   **Probe:** Do you think the foundations courses helped you understand the realities of schools today?

3. Methods courses are intended to prepare you to gain strategies to teach specific subjects. What skills and knowledge did you acquire from your methods courses? (Examples?)

   **Probe:** Did they meet your expectations? If not, how might they have better met your expectations?

   **Probe:** Some people say the most important thing to learn is classroom management. Do you agree?

   **Probe:** How did the methods courses help your knowledge of the content?

   **Probe:** Often a lesson in a methods class will demonstrate a teaching strategy which also includes content material. Did these “model lessons” increase your understanding about the content (e.g., looked at content from new perspective, etc)? Were they equally helpful for both strategy and content?

   **Elementary**—How did the methods courses relate to each other? (e.g. math, science, literacy, and social studies)
Secondary—Have you taken any courses in Arts & Science? Was the course valuable to you in terms of pedagogy, broadening content knowledge, curriculum, and assessment?

**Probe:** What have you learned about bilingual students? Students with special needs?

4. Now let’s talk about the teaching in the methods course? How would you characterize your methods professors’ approaches to teaching?

**Probe** Do you think they modeled the kind of teaching they advocated (practiced what they preached)?

**Probe:** Do you think the faculty structured their courses around the realities of schools today?

**Probe:** Did the methods faculty explicitly address issues of social justice? If so, how?

**Probe:** What did you learn about pupil learning? (ways of learning, etc…)

**Probe:** What did you learn about assessment? (ongoing/formative & high-stakes; pupil learning)

5. You said you were hoping to learn about_______, has that been the case? Are there any gaps that remain in your coursework?

Overall Questions
6. Are you making connections between what you’re learning at BC (methods, & foundation courses) and what you experienced in your pre-practicum? How? Examples?

7. When we first talked in the summer, I asked you a question about your definition of teaching for social justice. How do you see it now?

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**Interview 4: Full-Practicum Experience**

1. Let’s talk about your practicum.

**Probe:** What’s the school environment and community like?
Probe: What pressures and issues do teachers face in the school? What pressures do students face? (e.g. test scores, safety, race issues, etc.)

Probe: How are student teachers viewed? What’s your relationship to other colleagues in the school?

Probe: How have things changed from your pre-practicum? (if relevant)

2. What’s your role in the classroom?

Probe: How much teaching have you done so far? What have you been teaching? What haven’t you been teaching?

Probe: Do you have any other responsibilities? How much freedom have you had in what and how you teach?

Probe: How are you approaching planning? Are you co-planning?

Only if the participant has a new CT:

3. Tell me about your cooperating teacher? (race, age, ethnicity, years teaching, teaching style, etc.)

Probe: What are you learning from her/him?

Probe: How do you think your cooperating teacher knows students are learning?

Probe: What types of assessments does your cooperating teacher use (formative, summative)?

Probe: In what ways do assessments reflect the instruction?

Probe: Do you and your CT have similar teaching philosophies?

Probe: Do you think your CT has the same ideas about teaching and learning as your BC professors? Why/why not? Do you consider this a problem?

Probe: Has your CT helped you improve social justice and/or equity in your teaching?

4. Tell me about your clinical faculty supervisor? Is s/he different from the person you had for your pre-practicum (race, age, ethnicity, years teaching, teaching style, etc.)?

Probe: What role is your supervisor playing in your practicum experience? (mediator, moral support, academic advice and content support)

Probe: What does your supervisor focus on in her observations and feedback? (if nothing, remember to ask about classroom management?)

Probe: Has s/he helped you provide strong academic content?

Probe: How has s/he helped you help pupils to learn?

Probe: Has your supervisor helped you improve social justice and/or equity in your teaching?

Probe: Do you and your supervisor have the same approach to teaching practices?

Probe: Do you think your supervisor has the same ideas about teaching and learning as your BC professors? Why/why not? Do you consider this a problem?

Probe: I understand that the BC full practicum students in this school meet as a group with the supervisor once a week. How has that gone? What kinds of issues have you discussed?
Probe: What are the other ways that you and your supervisor communicate about the classroom teaching experience? (ask this if it’s not touched on earlier in the interview)

5. We’ve talked about the adults; the other important people are the kids. Tell me about the students in your classroom(s).

Probe: What are you learning from the students about being a teacher?
Probe: What is the diversity in the classroom? (ELLs, SpEd, Ethnicity?) What’s that have to do with what and how you teach?
Probe: How do you think the kids in your classroom would describe their experience in the school?
Probe: How has your relationship changed with the kids over the course of the year?
Probe: In general, do you think the kids in the classroom are learning? What evidence do you have that they’re learning?

Probe: Now, let’s talk about your teaching in relation to the students. I noticed that you... (Insert something here that you noticed from their classroom: about a particular student, a group of students, a unique method, etc.)

6. In your own classroom and in the school, either in what you are doing or what the teachers are doing, do you see examples of teaching for social justice? In your own teaching, how are you addressing issues of equity and justice?

Interview 5: Pupil Learning

NOTE: Teacher Candidate needs to bring three sets of pupil work: a full class set of a cumulative assignment and two examples of tasks that led up to it. TCs also need to pick out one high, one medium, and one low example of pupil performance for the cumulative assignment. Finally, have the teacher candidate bring any rubrics she or he used to score these assignments, as well as any assignment description that the TC gave to the pupils.

The purpose of this interview is to see what you are thinking about pupil learning and how it relates to your own instruction. First, I will ask you a series of general questions about the assignments you brought, then we’ll get into the specific student examples you have selected as high, medium, and low. Finally, I’ll ask you talk about your inquiry project.
1. First, let’s take a look at the assignments you brought. As a way to walk me through this work, it might be helpful for you to start at the end with the cumulative project and work backwards. Or you might want to start with the first task and move chronologically to the end, the cumulative task.

Probe: How does it fit into a larger unit?

Probe: Was this something you devised yourself?

Probe: Was any part of this lesson from a preexisting lesson that you adapted?

Probe: Why did you decide this lesson/assignment/assessment would be appropriate? How much autonomy did you have in creating the lesson or assignment?

2. What did you want students to get out of this activity? How do you know whether or not students accomplished what you wanted them to get out of this activity/lesson/unit?

Probe: How did you evaluate these assignments (rubric, scoring, etc.)?

3. Is there anything you would change about this lesson or assignment or unit? What? Why?

4. Let’s now look at your examples of a high, a medium, and a low-level response? Why did you choose these three examples? Tell me about the students who did this work (ELL, Special Ed, anything else?).

Probe: How do these samples compare to the overall class? (Is this work representative of the class? Is this what you expected?)

**General Pupil Learning Ideas**

5. What do you do to address the range of abilities in your classroom?

6. How do you know if your pupils are learning? What counts as evidence for learning?

7. Of course, teachers are not just interested in their pupils’ academic learning; they are also very interested in their social and emotional development. Do you see your students making progress socially and emotionally? Like what?
Probe: How do you know if pupils are making this kind of progress?

8. Are you able maintain high expectations when the pupils have a variety of learning styles and needs? If so, how? If not, why?

The Inquiry Project

10. What was your Inquiry Question? What did you collect as data for your question?

11. What important insights did you get from your inquiry project concerning pupil learning?

Probe: While doing your inquiry project, what surprised you about students’ learning?

Probe: How will the results of your inquiry project influence your practice as a teacher?

12. What would you categorize as social justice insights? Why?

Probe: How will you incorporate these insights into your own teaching?

13. While it is unlikely you would jump right into an inquiry project as you start your first year of teaching, what inquiry skills do you imagine using in your classroom practice?

Probe: Do you see yourself doing a formal inquiry project again in the future?

Interview 6 – End of Teacher Education Program

This is our last interview for the year, so it will include an overview of what you have learned through the year and the influences that have been most significant. We will also talk about your future plans and then, at the end of the interview, give you an opportunity to provide us with some feedback about the program.

First, we’ll talk about the learning overview: Specifically, we’ll be looking for information about how you may have changed personally and professionally, your understanding of the role of a teacher, about teaching and learning, and social justice – and the most important influences that have shaped this experience.

I. Learning
I’d like to start with a set of questions about what you learned during this year in your teacher education program…

1. You’ve been in schools for almost a year and have finished your full-time student teaching. Some people say they ended up learning as much about themselves as they did about students or teaching methods teaching during this period. What would you say you have learned about yourself?
   - As a Teacher?
   - As a Learner?

2. What did you learn about teaching/the activity of teaching? What’s the hardest thing? What’s the easiest? What most surprised you?

3. What has had the greatest impact on this learning?
   (Probe: What about—depending on their answer—your practicum experience, teacher education courses, A&S courses, your peers?)

   We’re going to shift the focus a bit here and talk about some of the themes and concepts that pervade the program:

   Let’s start with the idea of pupil learning.

4. What’s the most important thing you’d say you’ve learned about teaching reading/mathematics (for elementary)? ________ (specific subject) for secondary)? ________ (be specific for secondary)?
   - How/Where/From whom did you learn that? What was the biggest influence on your learning? Who or what played the biggest role? What role did the courses play?
   - What have you learned about teaching about literacy in the elementary school? Math?
   - Which content areas do you feel the most/least prepared to teach?

   All through BC’s teacher education program, there’s been a lot of talk about social justice. We asked you about this in the first interview, as you might remember…

5. As you complete your teacher education experience, what do you make of this idea of Teaching for Social Justice?
   - Has your definition changed?
   - What impact did your practicum experiences have on your understanding of TSJ?
6. Did you have any strong models of teachers for social justice (either at BC or at your school site)?
   • What made them good models?

7. How do you see yourself teaching for social justice in your own classroom?

8. Can you talk a bit about what you understand is the purpose of schooling? Where has that been highlighted in your program?

II. Moving Forward/Your future:

Okay, let’s look ahead, now. In this section we’d like to talk about your future...
   • What are you planning on doing next year (for benefit of the interview transcript)?
   • Do you plan on teaching in the future?
   • How has your experience in the past year impacted your career choice?

9. First, how is your job search going?
   Will you be around this summer? Do I need to update contact information?
   Are you planning on taking part in BC’s mentoring program?

10. When you imagine yourself teaching next year, what do you see?
    • What will your classroom be like?
    • What will be the biggest challenges?
    • What do you expect to be most prepared for?
    • How do you think MCAS and NCLB will influence your teaching?
    • Professional goals as a teacher?

11. Do you think about teaching as a career? What do you see yourself doing in the next five years?
    • Ten years?

III. Program Feedback

Finally, we’ll give you the opportunity to tell us more specifically what you think about the BC program....

12. If you could change three things about the program, what would they be?
    Was there anything irrelevant in the program?

13. What three things would you keep, that you found especially valuable in the program?
Interview 7 – November of first-year of teaching

Introduction:
Now that you’ve been in the classroom for a few months we’re going to ask you some questions that brings us up to date on your school setting and students, how you’ve settled into teaching, return to a few familiar themes in our research, and then ask just a bit about the future.
We’ll start with some general questions about your school and schedule.

Let’s start with a look at the school itself, your students, and the people you work with:

1. Tell me about your school…how would you describe it?
   Probes:
   - What kind of resources do they have? Or lack?
   - What are the population demographics?
   - Are parents involved in the school?
   - What kind of goals does the school promote? Is there a mission statement? If so, do both faculty and students buy into it?
   - Is there anything major that has happened at the school (AYP problems, new principal, new curriculum they have to use, construction)
   - Is this a very different setting from your prac experience(s)?

2. Let’s shift to your students for a bit. I’d like you to describe them to me. Can you start with some general demographics that describe the pupils in your class(es)?
   Probes:
   - Age, ethnicity, language backgrounds, SES
   - SPEd
   - ELL
   - Range of abilities across the group(s)
   - Did you get some of this information from teachers who had these students previously? Did you have prior experience with any of these pupils?
   - How would you describe classroom dynamics? Do you have difficulty with certain students or a particular class?
   - What is the biggest challenge you have faced so far this year?

3. “At this point in the school year, are you able to identify goals for your students?”
   Probes:
   - What do you want them to learn? (consider academic, social, and emotional possibilities, here)

I’d like to return to a question that has been a theme throughout the interviews:
4. We talked about learning to teach for social justice many times last year. We are interested in the realities of how this plays out in practice.

Probes:
- Do you think about issues of social justice in your classroom?
- In your planning?
- Do feel that teaching for social justice is an explicit part of your classroom experience at the moment?
- How might this be particular to the context of your school? Classroom?
- How practical is the BC emphasis on social justice for a novice teacher?
- Has your view on teaching for social justice changed over the first few months of fulltime teaching? If so, how and why?

5. We’ve talked about this before, but now that you’re fully responsible for classes, I’d like to have you think about it again: How do you know your pupils are learning? Be specific about the way you get this kind of information …

Probe:
- Has this changed in anyway since your prac? If so, why?
- Has the inquiry played a role in how you look at your classes?

6. How about the other adults in the school. What kind of relationships have you been able to develop with school faculty & staff?

Probes:
- Principal, department head, fellow teachers
- Is there a lot of interaction among faculty?
- Do you have the opportunity to co-plan or co-teach?

7. Do you have an assigned mentor or participate in an induction program? If so, has this been a successful match?

Probes:
- Are there other people that might be seen as informal mentors or part of your network of support – including friends and family outside of school?
- Did you attend Summer Start? Why or Why not? Describe your experience. Was it valuable? How would you change the program?

Let’s spend a few minutes talking about your immersion into fulltime teaching.

8. In general, how do you feel things have gone in the past few months?

9. What is your workload like?

Probes:
- What is your schedule? When do you get in to school? What time do you leave?
- For secondary – number of preps?
- For elementary – breaks?
• Additional school duties (ex: study hall, cafeteria duty, extra-curricular activities?)

10. Tell me about planning…when do you get to do this? How do you decide what to use? What to teach?
   Probes:
   • What resources do you have? Use? Where are they from?
   • Are you focusing on day-to-day planning or do you have a long-term plan to work from?
   • What strategies/resources have you utilized from your master’s program?

11. How did you plan for this topic that you assessed here (look at the pupil work that the teacher brings to the interview)?
   • Why did you choose to assess your students using this assignment?
   • How would you change it if you were to do it again?

12. Do you see yourself as having a great deal of autonomy in your classroom?
   (If teacher asks what you mean by ‘autonomy’ can say ‘when some people talk about autonomy they refer to the role of standards, district mandated curriculum or exams, whether you feel you have a voice in deciding what is taught in your classroom)
   Probes:
   Why/why not?
   In what area do you have most/least autonomy?
   Who or what influences your decisions in the classroom?
   Is MCAS a driving force in what you do?

Let’s look at how well prepared you feel and what you attribute to the BC experience:

13. What did you feel prepared for? Not prepared for?
   Probes:
   • Is there anything that you feel BC did not prepare you for?
   • Is there any one thing that you feel especially well prepared for by the BC program?
   • Does your school provide support through PD for what you might not feel prepared for?
   • Where might you turn for additional support/knowledge?

14. Is teaching what you expected it to be? Have your aspirations for a career in teaching changed?
   • Do you think you’ll teach next year?
   • In this school? For how long?
15. Is there anything that we haven’t touched on that you feel is especially important to include in this conversation?

Interview 8 – February-March of first year of teaching

NOTE: Teacher needs to bring three sets of pupil work: a full class set of a cumulative assignment and two examples of tasks that led up to it, all from same student. Teacher also needs to pick out one high, one medium, and one low example of pupil performance for the cumulative assignment. Finally, have the teacher bring any rubrics she or he used to score these assignments, as well as any assignment description that the TC gave to the pupils.

The purpose of this interview is to see what you are thinking about pupil learning and how it relates to your own instruction. First, I will ask you a series of general questions about the assignments you brought, then we’ll get into the specific student examples you have selected as high, medium, and low. Finally, I’ll ask you talk about your inquiry project.

1. First, last time you were struggling with … (fill in here with something specific to your teacher; e.g. students not completing their homework; the discipline protocol at the school, etc.). How’s it going now?

2. OK, let’s take a look at the assignments you brought. As a way to walk me through this work, it might be helpful for you to start at the end with the cumulative project and work backwards. Or you might want to start with the first task and move chronologically to the end, the cumulative task.

   Probe: How does it fit into a larger unit?

   Probe: Was this something you devised yourself?

   Probe: Was any part of this lesson from a preexisting lesson that you adapted?

   Probe: Why did you decide this lesson/assignment/assessment would be appropriate? How much autonomy did you have in creating the lesson or assignment?

3. What did you want students to get out of this activity? How do you know whether or not students accomplished what you wanted them to get out of this activity/lesson/unit?
Probe: How did you evaluate these assignments (rubric, scoring, etc.)?

4. Is there anything you would change about this lesson or assignment or unit? What? Why?

5. Let’s now look at your examples of a high, a medium, and a low-level response? Why did you choose these three examples? Tell me about the students who did this work (ELL, Special Ed, anything else?).

Probe: How do these samples compare to the overall class? (Is this work representative of the class? Is this what you expected?)

**General Pupil Learning Ideas**

6. What do you do to address the range of abilities in your classroom?

7. You have already talked about how you looked for pupil learning in your cumulative assignment. How in general do you know if your pupils are learning? What counts as evidence for learning? (Connect to question two or it may sound repetitive)

Probe: Has this changed in anyway since your practicum? If so, why?

Probe: Has the inquiry project played a role in how you look at your classes/students?

8. What kind of grading or evaluating system do you use? Are you happy with it?

Probe: To what extent do you have autonomy in this? Are there school or department guidelines about grades?

9. What kind of pupil data does your school district use in developing curriculum & instruction that might impact your class?

Probe: This might include MCAS scores; other standardized test scores; testing coming from, or contributing to IEPs and 504s; Student Success Plans (these are required for students w/o IEP or 504 that don't meet standards on other tests); portfolio or exhibit projects, district benchmark/tests, other?

Probe: Do you have access to this data on an individual or aggregate level to make plans for your classes/pupils?

Probe: Would you be part of the data analysis?
Probe: Do you feel BC has prepared you to be able to use pupil data, both formal, informal, standardized and teacher-developed to make decisions in your classroom? Do you do this?

10. Of course, teachers are not just interested in their pupils’ academic learning, they are also very interested in their social and emotional development. Do you see your students making progress socially and emotionally? Like what? *(Note: levels of confidence, enjoyment of learning, engagement in learning, independence in learning, cooperative group work, classroom behavior, interpersonal interactions)*

Probe: How do you know if pupils are making this kind of progress? What evidence do you look for to determine social and emotional growth?

11. What kind of expectations do you have for students? Are you able maintain these expectations when the pupils have a variety of learning styles and needs? If so, how? If not, why?

12. How do you help students develop language abilities? (ELL, SpEd, Writing, Reading)

Probe: Would you call your classroom language-rich? Why or why not?

*Experience in Classroom/School*
*Now let’s touch base on how the year is going, now that you are about half-way through it.*

13. What kinds of changes, if any, have you made based on your experience in the first half of the year?

Probe: For example, grading, classroom management, differentiated instruction?

Probe: Are there disciplinary or management expectations school-wide? In your teaching team?

Probe: Do you find yourself using any techniques gained from BC? From your practicum?

14. How have you handled classroom management so far?

15. How is the larger school context/culture playing a role in your classroom?
Probe: What contact have you had with the Principal/Dean/Mentor/Coach/etc.? Are you satisfied with the amount and nature of your interactions?

Probe: Have you been observed and evaluated? By whom? What kind of feedback have you received?

Probe: What contact have you had with parents? What role do they play in the school?

16. Are you participating in mentoring/induction? If so, what kind? Is it helping you professionally or personally?

Probe: Are there other people who might be seen as informal mentors or part of your network of support – including friends and family outside of school?

Probe: Are you attending any programs sponsored by BC? Are they valuable? How would you change them?

17. Some people say the first year of teaching is the hardest and find it difficult to find balance. How has your “quality of life” as first year teacher been so far? (Do you have a life?)

18. Do you see yourself working at the same school/in the same job next year?

Probe: If not, ask why. What would it take for you to stay?

Probe: If yes, ask what it is that is keeping them in the position.

INTERVIEW 9 – End of first-year of teaching

This is our last interview, so it will include an overview of what you have learned, the influences that have been most significant, your thoughts on teaching, and your future plans. We will also talk about pupil work.

*Remember to print out various charts, etc. before conducting the interview.*

Pupil Learning
1. What’s the most important thing you’d say you’ve learned about teaching reading/mathematics (for elementary)? ________ (specific subject for secondary) over the last year?

Probe: How/Where/From whom did you learn that? What was the biggest influence on your learning? Who or what played the biggest role?

Probe: What have you learned about teaching about literacy in the elementary school? Math?

Probe: Which content areas do you feel the most/least prepared to teach? How does this affect your teaching?

2. OK, let’s take a look at the assignments you brought. As a way to walk me through this work, it might be helpful for you to start at the end with the cumulative project and work backwards. Or you might want to start with the first task and move chronologically to the end, the cumulative task.

Probe: How does it fit into a larger unit?

Probe: Was this something you devised yourself?

Probe: Was any part of this lesson from a preexisting lesson that you adapted?

Probe: Why did you decide this lesson/assignment/assessment would be appropriate? How much autonomy did you have in creating the lesson or assignment?

3. What did you want students to get out of this activity? How do you know whether or not students accomplished what you wanted them to get out of this activity/lesson/unit?

Probe: How did you evaluate these assignments (rubric, scoring, etc.)?

4. Is there anything you would change about this lesson or assignment or unit? What? Why?

5. Let’s now look at your examples of a high, a medium, and a low-level response? Why did you choose these three examples? Tell me about the students who did this work (ELL, Special Ed, anything else?).

Probe: How do these samples compare to the overall class? (Is this work representative of the class? Is this what you expected?)
6. How do you feel your pupils did overall? Do you feel like they gained skills over the year? What? Were you satisfied/disappointed?

7. Our research group looked carefully at responses from last year’s interviews that had to do with pupils’ work and your assessments of their learning. We came up with graphic to try to explain what we found. The first box is supposed to represent teacher candidates’ experiences during coursework, and the second what happened during student teaching. Overall we found that student teachers created great assessments that showed they had high expectations for pupils and focused on higher-order thinking. (refer to figure) We thought about this as “ownership” —student teachers actively changing strategies, questioning practices, and generally looking for better ways to improve learning in the classroom. Does that sound to you like what was going on for you during student teaching? How about now, during your first year of teaching?

8. Another thing we found during the interviews when we asked teachers to talk about high-, medium-, and low-, pupil performance on the assessments, was that sometimes there was a kind of distancing. For example, if a pupil performed poorly on a test or a project, sometimes the student teacher attribute this to the pupil’s lack of effort or his or her failure to pay attention and follow directions. This made us think a lot about how teachers make sense of it when pupils don’t meet their expectations. Can you talk about this a little bit?

9. Do you think teachers should expect to meet the learning needs of every pupil in the class?

**Social Justice**

10. All through BC’s teacher education program, there’s been a lot of talk about social justice. We asked you about this in the first interview, as you might remember…As you are now completing your first year of teaching, what do you make of this idea of Teaching for Social Justice? Is it important to you in your daily work? Do you consider yourself to be teaching for social justice?
11. Show them the 4 categories/28 codes for Social Justice (see end of interview for chart) and ask: We looked at all the responses of participants from the pre-service year and earlier this year about what it means to teach for social justice. Here is the way we grouped responses. What strikes you from this list? What’s missing, if anything?

12. Some of the people who define TSJ say it’s teaching that improves students’ learning and enhances their life chances. They say that part of this is teachers trying to work with others to actively address inequities in the system. We didn’t find much talk about activism or addressing inequities in our interviews. Any thoughts on this?

**School Context/Teacher Roles**

*Now we’re going to switch gears and talk about your school.*

13. What opportunities has the school provided you in terms of what and how you teach?

Probe: Have you experienced any constraints? Are there things you’ve felt you couldn’t do this year but wanted to?

Probe: In terms of what you brought with you from the BC program, are there things that were particularly helpful? Were there things that you didn’t have an opportunity to implement?

14. What personal factors have made a difference in your teaching (background, education, personal experiences)? (i.e. knowing a second language having an impact on teaching ELLs)?

15. How would you describe the role you played in the school this year (e.g. with pupils, clubs, committees, with other faculty)? Do you see that changing next year?

16. What role have others in the school (colleagues, mentors, etc.) played in your life this year?

**Inquiry**

17. One of the goals at BC is to develop inquiry as stance – a way of thinking about and questioning what happens in your classroom, collecting data – through pupil work – and making decisions about practice based on that information. Can you give me an example of how you see this
occurring in your classroom this year? Is this an important element of your practice?

18. Have you used the strategies you used in your BC inquiry project this year? Why? Why not?

**Future Plans**

*Dependent on their plans for next year:*

20. Why did you decide to stay at the school?

OR

Why did you decide to leave? What were you looking for in your new school?

AND

What aspects of this first year of teaching encouraged you to stay (or leave)?

21. Do you have any specific goals for next year? Have you thought about what you might keep the same and what you might change in your teaching, your classroom, and in your role in the school?

22. Do you think about teaching as your career? What do you see yourself doing in the next five years? Ten years?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Description [Emphasizes...]</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Learning</td>
<td>6 - Curriculum applicable</td>
<td>Teacher as making curriculum relevant and applicable to the pupils</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9 -</td>
<td>Idea of accommodating different learners and differentiating instruction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10 - Everybody learns</td>
<td>Teacher responsible for making sure pupils learn</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11 - Promote engagement</td>
<td>Importance of engaging pupils</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 - Multiple viewpoints</td>
<td>Importance of exposing pupils to multiple viewpoints; encouraging them to consider other perspectives, and expanding ideas and opportunities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14 - Critical thinking</td>
<td>Critical thinking and deep questioning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18 - Prepare future</td>
<td>Preparing pupils for a successful future</td>
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<td>19 - Basic skills</td>
<td>Importance of teaching basic skills</td>
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<td>22 - Social/cultural contexts</td>
<td>Knowing and understanding pupils’ social and cultural contexts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>23 - High expectations</td>
<td>Holding pupils to high expectations and pushing kids to meet those goals</td>
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<td>24 - Same expectations</td>
<td>Holding same expectations for all pupils</td>
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<td>Relationships and Respect</td>
<td>12 - Be Fair</td>
<td>Being fair to all pupils in the classroom; not showing favorites</td>
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<td>20 - Relationships pupils</td>
<td>Building relationships with the pupils</td>
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<td></td>
<td>21 - Parents</td>
<td>Respecting and working with parents</td>
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<td>25 - Culture of respect</td>
<td>Promoting a culture of respect among pupils and</td>
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<td>Topic</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>27 - Care</td>
<td>between pupil and teacher</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Knowing and caring for pupils</td>
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<td>1 -</td>
<td>Importance of participating in</td>
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<td>Collaborations/Coalitions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and improve schools</td>
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<td>2 - Advocate for pupils</td>
<td>Role of the teacher in serving as an advocate for</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>pupils</td>
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<td>3 - Activism</td>
<td>Idea that the teacher should participate in activism</td>
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<td>4 - Community work</td>
<td>Role of the teacher in doing community</td>
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<td>work/volunteering or</td>
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<td>getting pupils engaged in such activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 - Change agent</td>
<td>Teacher as a change agent, making a difference in</td>
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<td>society</td>
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<td>7 - Challenge canon</td>
<td>Challenging the canon or altering the standard</td>
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<td>curriculum</td>
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<td>8 - Gender</td>
<td>The role gender plays in the classroom</td>
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<td>15 - Class/race struggle in</td>
<td>How teachers might highlight class/race struggle</td>
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<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>and social inequities as part of the curriculum</td>
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<td>16 - Connections to</td>
<td>Ways to connect curriculum to real world</td>
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<td>oppression</td>
<td>examples of oppression and exploitation</td>
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<td>17 - Break down barriers</td>
<td>Breaking down racial or SES barriers for pupils</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 - Challenge stereotypes</td>
<td>Challenging pupils’ stereotypes or biases related to</td>
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INTERVIEW 10

Questions 1 and 2 only if it’s a new school context:

A. Tell me about your school...how would you describe it?
   Probes:
   • What kind of resources do they have? Or lack?
   • What are the population demographics?
   • Are parents involved in the school?
   • What kind of goals does the school promote? Is there a mission statement? If so, do both faculty and students buy into it?
   • Is there anything major that has happened at the school (AYP problems, new principal, new curriculum they have to use, construction)?
   • Is this a very different setting from your last teaching experience?

B. Let’s shift to your students for a bit. I’d like you to describe them to me. Can you start with some general demographics that describe the pupils in your class(es)?
   Probes:
   • Age, ethnicity, language backgrounds, SES (How does this compare to last year?)
   • SPEd
   • ELL
   • Range of abilities across the group(s)
   • Did you get some of this information from teachers who had these students previously? Did you have prior experience with any of these pupils?
   • How would you describe classroom dynamics? Do you have difficulty with certain students or a particular class?
   • What is the biggest challenge you have faced so far this year?

C. If the teacher is in the same school start with:
   • Is there anything major that has happened at the school (AYP problems, new principal, new curriculum they have to use, construction) since last June?
   • Is there any significant difference in your teaching assignment this year?

Then all interviews continue:
1. In general, how do you feel things have gone in the past few months? How are things in comparison to last year?

2. What kinds of changes, if any, have you made based on your experience in the first half of the year or from last year?
   Probe: For example, grading, classroom management, differentiated instruction?

3. At this point in the school year, are you able to identify goals for your students?
   Probes:
   What do you want them to learn? (consider academic, social, and emotional possibilities, here)

4. How do you know your pupils are learning?
   Probe:
   • Has this changed in anyway since last year? If so, why?
   • Has the inquiry played a role in how you look at your classes?

5. Of course, teachers are not just interested in their pupils’ academic learning, they are also very interested in their social and emotional development. Do you see your students making progress socially and emotionally? Like what? (Note: levels of confidence, enjoyment of learning, engagement in learning, independence in learning, cooperative group work, classroom behavior, interpersonal interactions)

6. What is your workload like?
   Probes:
   • What is your schedule? When do you get in to school? What time do you leave?
   • For secondary – number of preps?
   • For elementary – breaks?
   • Additional school duties (ex: study hall, cafeteria duty, extra-curricular activities?)

7. Tell me about planning…when do you get to do this? How do you decide what to use? What to teach? How is it different from last year?
   Probes:
   • What resources do you have? Use? Where are they from?
   • Are you focusing on day-to-day planning or do you have a long-term plan to work from?
   • What strategies/resources have you utilized from your master’s program?

8. Do you see yourself as having a great deal of autonomy in your classroom?
   (If teacher asks what you mean by ‘autonomy’ can say ‘when some people talk about autonomy they refer to the role of standards, district mandated curriculum or exams, whether you feel you have a voice in deciding what is taught in your classroom)
   Probes:
Why/why not?
In what area do you have most/least autonomy? Has this changed since last year?
Who or what influences your decisions in the classroom?
Is MCAS a driving force in what you do?

9. What kind of relationships have you been able to develop with school faculty & staff?
   Probes:
   • Principal, department head, fellow teachers?
   • Is there a lot of interaction among faculty?
   • Do you have the opportunity to co-plan or co-teach?

Let’s look at how well prepared you feel and what you attribute to the BC experience:

10. After over a year as a full-time teacher, what do you feel BC best prepared you for? In what ways do you feel least prepared?
   Probes:
   • Pedagogy? Content-knowledge?
   • Does your school provide support through PD for what you might not feel prepared for?
   • Where might you turn for additional support/knowledge?
   • Do you feel prepared to work with the population of students in your classroom? (ELL, SED, etc)

Now, I’d like to return to some questions that have been themes throughout the interviews, namely—pupil learning, social justice, and inquiry:

11. We’ve talked about learning to teach for social justice during other interviews. As you know, we’re interested in the realities of how teaching for social justice is playing out in practice.
   Probes:
   • Do you think about issues of social justice in your classroom?
   • In your planning?
   • Do feel that teaching for social justice is an explicit part of your classroom experience at the moment?
   • How might this be particular to the context of your school? Classroom?
   • How practical is the BC emphasis on social justice for a novice teacher?
   • Has your view on teaching for social justice changed over the last year?

Looking at Pupil Work
OK, let’s take a look at the assignments you brought. As a way to walk me through this work, it might be helpful for you to start at the end with the cumulative project and work backwards. Or you might want to start with the first task and move chronologically to the end, the cumulative task.
12. How do these assignments fit into a larger unit?
   Probe:
   • Was this something you devised yourself?
   • Was any part of this lesson from a preexisting lesson that you adapted?
   • Why did you decide this lesson/assignment/assessment would be appropriate?
   How much autonomy did you have in creating the lesson or assignment?

13. What did you want students to get out of this activity? How do you know whether or not students accomplished what you wanted them to get out of this activity/lesson/unit?
   Probe:
   • How did you evaluate these assignments (rubric, scoring, etc.)?

14. Is there anything you would change about this lesson or assignment or unit? What? Why?

15. Let’s now look at your examples of a high, a medium, and a low-level response? Why did you choose these three examples? Tell me about the students who did this work (ELL, Special Ed, anything else?).
   Probe:
   • How do these samples compare to the overall class?
   • Is this work representative of the class? Is this what you expected?

General Pupil Learning Ideas

16. Has your grading system changed from last year? If yes, describe how it has changed.

Ask this question if teachers is in new school context - What kind of grading or evaluating system do you use? Are you happy with it?
   Probe:
   • To what extent do you have autonomy in this? Are there school or department guidelines about grades?

17. Is your school doing anything differently with pupil data (MCAS, District exam scores) compared with last year?

Ask this question if teachers is in new school context - What kind of pupil data does your school district use in developing curriculum & instruction that might impact your class?
   Probe:
   • This might include MCAS scores; other standardized test scores; testing coming from, or contributing to IEPs and 504s; Student Success Plans (these are required for students w/o IEP or 504 that don't meet standards on other tests); portfolio or exhibit projects, district benchmark/tests, other?
18. Do you use data for classroom inquiry?
   Probe:
   • Has inquiry played a role in how you look at your classes/students or pupil data?
   • Have you used the strategies you used in your BC inquiry project this year?
     Why? Why not?

19. Some people say the first year of teaching is the hardest and find it difficult to find balance. Would you say your “quality of life” has changed since the first year? (Do you have a life?)

20. Is there anything that we haven’t touched on that you feel is especially important to include in this conversation?

INTRODUCTION 11 (End of second year of teaching)

Introduction - This interview has some familiar pieces, and one new section. There will be three parts: first questions about “big picture” issues in teaching; second, a look at student work; and third we’d like you to show us how you feel you’ve changed as a teacher over the past few years. So, let’s begin with the questions.

PART I. Big Picture Questions

1. Now that you’ve been teaching for two years, what would you say are the key characteristics of a very good teacher?

   Probe: In interview one you talked about teachers you admired and specifically mentioned…. (e.g. FOR LOLA, “YOU’RE A.P. BIO TEACHER WHO REALLY SHOWED HER PASSION FOR THE SUBJECT AND MADE THE STUDENTS IN HER CLASS REALLY LOVE IT TOO…)

   Probe: Are these still qualities that you would say are important after being in the classroom as a teacher? If not, how and why have your ideas changed?

2. Massachusetts requires that novice teachers in public schools are provided mentoring/induction, but the reality is that that is very different from school to school. In your case, you’ve had… (e.g. FOR LOLA, LOTS OF SUPPORT IN YOUR FIRST YEAR AND VERY LITTLE MENTORING AND SUPPORT IN YOUR SECOND YEAR) How important has this been to you?

   Probes: Was it an effective program of support?
   What elements were most helpful to you?
   Were outside factors (people/resources) more helpful?
   Any suggestions for change?
Probe: What ongoing support or professional development would be important to you in your third year in the classroom? At one time you talked about expanding your knowledge of… (e.g. FOR ELsie, KNOWLEDGE OF AMERICAN LITERATURE)

3. CONTEXT– The school you’re in, the student population you teach, the larger community in which you work (that this happens in) – are often mentioned as important to learning to teach. Can you talk about how these different elements (in your context) influence your learning in the profession, and your students’ learning? In the past, for example you’ve mentioned …

(Possible suggestions)
Impact of SES
Impact of nature of student population (bilingual pupils, SPED, etc.)
Impact of high-takes testing
Impact of administration
Impact of support
Impact of expectations
Impact of parents

Probe: What do you think is working in your school? Why?
Probe: What, in your opinion, is keeping the school from being a place that supports teacher and student growth?

4. Of course, as we’ve discussed, it is complex and sometimes challenging, but would you say at this point in your career you are teaching for social justice? If yes, in what ways? If not, in what ways not?

Probe: Early on you mentioned (e.g. FOR ELsie, EXPOSING PUPILS TO DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW)…and in later interviews you also mentioned… (CARING FOR STUDENTS AND SHOWING THEM THAT YOU WERE INTERESTED IN THEIR LIVES OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM), some people might add ideas like improving academic learning, focusing on critical thinking, developing social and emotional learning, or enhancing students’ life chances (only list ideas that the teacher did not already talk about in past interviews)- Do these ideas play a role in your teaching? If so, how? If not, why?

5. You’ve been in the classroom for two years now, and it’s clear that you know (the context of) your school. If you were in charge, what would you change?

Probes: Are there things you have already been working on? Are there things you think you might be able to work on in the future? What things do you think will be most difficult to change? Why?

(THESE ARE EXAMPLES OF THINGS THAT COULD BE ACTED ON IF THEY NEED A NUDGE – COULD SHOW THE LIST TO PROVIDE TOPICS CHOICES)
Expectations (for teachers and students)
Opportunities
6. As you begin to think about next year, what are your big picture goals for your students?

   **Probe:** What is it you want your students to know and be able to do in (math, ELA, history, science, etc.)

   **Probe:** Is this different from last year, or the year before? (this also relates to whether they’re teaching the same kids…)

   **Probe:** Will you adjust practice to achieve these goals? How? Why?

7. Some, but of course not all, of the big challenges of learning to teach include successful classroom management, planning curriculum, developing pedagogy for teaching, meeting the needs of diverse learners, and assessment. Where do you see your strengths after two years? Are there areas that still need attention?

   **Probes:**
   - How do you expect to grow as a teacher in the next few years?
   - How will you achieve these goals?
   - What, if any, of these factors have changed the most in the last few years?
   - How and Why?

8. In early interviews, a number of our participants talked about teaching as a career. There are great rewards in influencing lives, sharing content that you are passionate about…and there are real drawbacks – pay, relative lack of respect for the profession, limited or no opportunities for advancement. How do you feel about teaching as a career at this point? What do you see as your career trajectory at this point?

   **Probes:**
   - Has this changed?
   - Do you plan to stay in teaching?
   - Are you more or less enthusiastic about teaching as a career choice than when you started?

   **Probe:**
   - Do you plan to stay at this school next year? If not, where will you go? If yes, will it be the same position?

   **Probe:**
   - Considering that teacher retention is such a big problem, from your experience, what do you think drives teachers from the profession?
Part II- TAPL – Teacher Assessment / Pupil Learning
9. OK, let’s take a look at the assignment you brought. Although we only have one assignment, it would be helpful if you could walk me through the larger unit it draws from. You could work backwards and describe the larger unit or you might want to move chronologically through the unit and describe the pieces that led up to this final assessment.

Probe: How does it fit into a larger unit?
Probe: Was this something you devised yourself?
Probe: Was any part of this lesson from a preexisting lesson that you adapted?
Probe: Why did you decide this lesson/assignment/assessment would be appropriate?
How much autonomy did you have in creating the lesson or assignment?

10. What did you want students to get out of this activity? How do you know whether or not students accomplished what you wanted them to get out of this activity/lesson/unit?
Probe: How did you evaluate these assignments (rubric, scoring, etc.)?

11. Let’s now look at your examples of a high, a medium, and a low-level response. How do these samples compare to the overall class?
Probe: Is this work representative of the class? Is this what you expected?

12. Did the students who completed these examples meet your expectations? Why or why not?
Probe: What might you do differently in the future for each of these students?

13. Why did you choose these?
Probe: Tell me about these three students (SPED, ELL, Bilingual).

Part III. Teacher Development Chart
14. Now we are going to move to a different part of the interview that provides you with an opportunity to talk about how your view your development as a teacher. So if you look at this chart and the horizontal axis represents time from prior to being in a teacher education program through the end of the second year of teaching and the vertical axis represents development as a teacher, how would you chart your own development in a general way?

Probe – If teacher asks ‘What does development mean?’ respond by turning it back to the individual ‘We want to understand how you would interpret development.’

Probe – If the first probe is not needed, ask the teacher to explaining their understanding of development after they’ve completed their line.

15. Okay now imagine we take your development and think about it in terms of 3 aspects: ---
Content knowledge (Red)
Pedagogy & practice (Blue)
Understanding the role of the teacher (Green)
Would you have three different lines? If so, how would you draw them? (provide 3 different color markers (RED, BLUE, and GREEN) for drawing each line- be sure to reference the key on the blank development chart or the list above for the colors that correspond to the three aspects)

16. Describe your lines on each chart.
   Probe: Why does the line drop here?
   Probe: Why is there such a sharp increase in development at this point?

17. How would you project the continuation of your line in the future?
   Probe: 5 years into teaching, 10, 25?

18. Can you talk about your development toward becoming the best teacher you can be?
   Probe: What, or who, has helped you along the way? What circumstances might have has held you back?
   (Here we could specify based on knowing them, i.e. with Craig the going between two schools, with Lola the weak leadership at her latest school? Or, on the positive side, the strong support in the first school where she taught? I could ask her how much that support helped her in the first year and how she managed without it in the second year?)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Development as a Teacher</th>
<th>Teacher Development Chart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before BC Teacher Ed Program</td>
<td>Teacher Ed coursework / pre-prac</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Appendix D: QCS Code Dictionary

Codes, Definitions, and Examples for QCS Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-REASON T</td>
<td>Reasons the participant offers for choosing to teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>...a lot of people along the way would say oh you’d be a great teacher and what not and I didn’t really think much of it. And doing one on one tutoring in college and I decided I really liked high schoolers. I liked that age group; I liked working with them and I thought I’d give it a try. (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-SCH EXP</td>
<td>any description of the participant’s previous school experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-COLL</td>
<td>College experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think one of the most appealing things to me was BC really comes out and says they want to teach teachers ways to promote social justice and that’s very important to me having done my undergraduate work at a Jesuit school as well. (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note: Double-Coded—SJ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-H.S.</td>
<td>High School experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I went to [suburban] High School in [suburb, Massachusetts, fabulous, fabulous high school. In some ways, I thought it was more challenging than college. I think that’s a good sign that it really prepared me. (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-M.S.</td>
<td>Middle School or Junior High experiences (6th-8th grade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ELEM</td>
<td>Elementary School experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I mean I still remember some of the songs, it was Going Buggy, and I remember some of the songs and the costumes, they made the costumes all out of different trash bags</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
because we were all bugs and so we had to like decorate them in different ways, and there were dances and songs and the whole school would come and watch... (Lola, Int. I from Excerpts I, p. 3)

Note: Double-Coded—Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDENT</th>
<th>Participant’s identity; sense of self (e.g. quiet, religious); personal characteristics; ideas about one’s strengths and weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I'm a quiet, I'm generally a quieter person, especially in situations like that, and so to like call me out like that in front of the whole class when I'm new, and the only new person, I didn't think it was like a good judgment call... (Lola, Int. I from Excerpts I, p. 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES/Demo</th>
<th>any information regarding the participant’s SES/Demographics (e.g., financial aid, community in which s/he grew up)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question: And did you have financial aid to attend school or you already had financial situation... Response: No financial aid. (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It's pretty small. It's in the suburbs. Very white, upper middle class to wealthier families. (Elsie, Int. 1, from Excerpts II, p. 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORK</th>
<th>work experiences, including volunteering, part-time work, camp counselor, tutoring, etc.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I did work during the school year babysitting, but I really don’t consider that like a steady job and in the summers I usually came back to [town] and worked during the summer and one summer I spent at [town] doing research. (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* I actually worked as a tour guide for two</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of the summers at the House of the Seven Gables...And so that was, that was really enjoyable and it was somewhat career-oriented just because I was teaching about the house to people going through and we had school groups through once in a while and they were the most fun to take through the house and they were the most fun to take through the house. They were usually pretty inquisitive and good students. (Elsie, Int. 1, p. 4)

**-TRANS**

any information regarding the transition to Teacher Education (e.g., what they did prior to or while taking their first program courses, their feelings about moving from working or college to teacher education/graduate school, etc.)

Well, I started my classes here immediately, so. Actually, my first class here was a couple days before my graduation from [art school]. So I’ve kinda just kept going with my schooling. (Riley, Int. I, pg. 2)

OR

And so then, I think then it was, the transition was a little hard. And then I think I knew, I felt pressure from, expectations to just go into PhD instead of a Masters and teach kinda thing. So that’s why in the summer I was like, maybe it’s just me, and it’s something very personal that, but I know I do share some, some of the people that were with me kinda, at times sometimes felt the same way. (Sonia, Int. 1, p. 29)

Note: Double-coded—EC-WORK

**-PREV KNOW**

Previous Knowledge – what TC/T already knew about teaching, content, etc.

*Well, as I said, I have a very good background in the traditional canon. I’m weak on Multicultural Literature. I am a little weak on figuring out history–like when things were written in terms of, I’ve never taken a survey course so I’ve never really gone through different periods of literature since high school. I’ve gotten a little bit
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-REASONS BC</th>
<th>reasons for choosing/attending BC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think one of the most appealing things to me was BC really comes out and says they want to teach teachers ways to promote social justice and that’s very important to me having done my undergraduate work at a Jesuit school as well. I really like that mission and I like seeing social justice in action if you will, so that was an appeal, big draw for me. Also it was rated really high as terms of ranking and that’s not the end all be all of colleges but I felt that was important to me. Classes seemed interesting. The people that I spoke to in terms of questions about the program, the Dean, Director of the Donovan Program, they are all very receptive and willing to sit down with me and answer questions so I liked the kind of feeling that I got, very welcoming. Yah, I think those are the big things. (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-FAMILY</td>
<td>information about TC/T’s own family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It was really nice to have parents that were willing to make the effort to find someone, but I did struggle through high school... (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 5)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>OR</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Well my mom is more of a talker than my dad so she would always come home with tons of stories about her class. (Lola, Int. 1, p.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher Education Program (TE-)

316
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>-PROG CRIT</strong></th>
<th>Program Critique (PROG CRIT may stand alone or be followed by one of the following subcodes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RELE</strong></td>
<td>relevance of course requirements, activities, and their usefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I thought it was pretty good. I think there’s a lot required, but it’s good. I liked the focused observations. I tried not to let those limit me though. I, I generally, I didn’t really, I looked at them ahead of time, but I didn’t really try to go and fill them in. (Riley, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, pp. 4-5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note: double coded—TE-PPRAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Yeah, definitely the curriculum theory one I think helped ‘cause we talked, we started further back in history and then moved up to now with more recent writings that were more applicable. We also talked about what’s going on today and kinda tied it in with what we were reading at the time (Riley, Int. 3 from Excerpts II, p. 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RIGOR</strong></td>
<td>comments about the rigor of courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*at times I felt like we had to do very childish activities, and I was like ugh...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sonia, Int. 1 p. 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEQUENCE</strong></td>
<td>comments about the sequence of courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Whereas in the other classes [summer classes], it’s basically a, create a unit plan, a unit plan that you’re, I don’t, I just don’t think that that’s very helpful with the unit plan, that you’re not gonna be teaching, you don’t exactly know who it’s for, you’re just jumping into it with no background, context at all. (Kevin, Int. 3, pp. 3-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REDUND</strong></td>
<td>redundancy of course’s requirements or activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*I found a lot of them [the courses] unhelpful and repetitive. And I may have learned a lot of information but not</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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necessarily stuff that I would find applicable to a science class...I think, I think they, maybe each class goes into that a little bit too much, and you end up getting a lot of the same stuff. (Kevin, Int. 3 p. 1)

Note: double coded--SCIENCE

*I found a lot of the course work to be redundant in some ways. They are sort of drilling the same thing into... and I think some people need that." (Mark, Int. 1, pg. 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MENTOR- content mentoring references</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

-COURSE (M/F)  
Course (methods_FOUND) – comments about LSOE courses. When coding, be specific regarding the course, i.e. TE-COURSE (M)-Science

Methods Course Examples: Science, Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, Teaching Reading in Elem., Literacy and Assessment in Sec., Urban Ecology, among others.


I think, it’s [ED301 - Secondary History Methods] not specifically a content course. So there was no effort made to sort of help with content. But the, a lot of the lessons used content to sort of demonstrate things. Also some of the, some of the lessons also used different history methods things to, to sort of illustrate how to use, how to do different activities, like how to do a, so sometimes we would use, the professors used content to illustrate things. Sometimes they would use stuff from the readings and the theories, sort of reinforce what we had learned, but also show how to do something. So I think just almost by osmosis, yes, I did learn a little bit, a little content. But it wasn’t an organized thing where I would have, yeah, there were things that I learned about content, but not specifically. (Mark, Int. 3 from Excerpts I, p. 8)

Note: double coded--History

-COURSE (INQ)  
Any specific comments about the inquiry course (NOT inquiry
**project which is coded INQ PROJ and NOT general teacher inquiry which is INQ)**

*Culturally relevant, yeah, exactly. We talked about that stuff in the inquiry course a lot. I know that, that, stuff like that came up with our journals. And one of the big things that we would do in that class was coming up with the question that we wanna study in our full prac for the inquiry seminar when we do the whole research...* (Matt, Int. 3, p. 10)

**-FAC/STAFF**

Faculty/Staff – any comments about BC faculty and staff

*It’s just, it was just, we didn’t like the professor. We didn’t like the way she ran the class. She was, she was new. And we had a lot more complaints than positive things to say. So that was the only kinda surprise and sorta like, why did I, why did I have to take this class?* (Elizabeth, Int. 3, p. 1)

**-CLASS SIZE**

Any comment about class size.

Ex: “Class size, very clearly. And if I had a smaller, if I had smaller classes, I would moderate discussions and be able to monitor student progress and be able to learn more about my students and their needs. I think that’s a, I would like to know my students better than I do. I would like to understand what they feel they would need, and then I would like to be able to think about how I might help them get their needs met and also achieve what I think they need to be effective practitioners. But class size really interferes with that.” (Faculty Int.)

**-COURSE GOALS**

Comment(s) about any goals the TC/T or Faculty has for course that he or she teaches or in general for TC/Ts or Pupils.

**- FAC BKGRND**

Faculty interviews- background info about themselves
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTER TC</td>
<td>Faculty interviews- interactions with TCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSE DES</td>
<td>Faculty interviews- description of course, and it's design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| PPRAC | Pre-Practicum – comments about pre-practicum experience  
NOTE: PPRAC can be code for entire interview (e.g. Interview 2)  
At first, I kind of was a little less involved. I observed a lot more, and then I slowly tried to get more and more involved and help out when the teacher would do things and circulate and help the kids. And then as the weeks went on, I think I kind of think the kids got more used to me as another teacher type figure after I taught some lessons and helped out... (Riley, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, p. 5)  
Note: doubled coded—TC ROLE |
| FPRAC | Full-Practicum – any comments about the full practicum experience  
NOTE: FPRAC can be code for entire interview (e.g. Interview 4)  
*But then I look back, I’m like, but I’ve still done teaching for the last eight weeks every day, which I never thought I could do it with my first day as a pre prac. It’s like, so that’s pretty good that I could get up there every day and do something. (Elizabeth, Int. 4, p. 1) |
| INQ PROJ | Inquiry Project – comments about the inquiry project that candidates conduct (not the code for general comments about use of inquiry skills or general comments about the inquiry class)  
NOTE: INQ PROJ can be code for whole section of Interview 5  
*I um, I mean it was just not, the timing of the inquiry project itself was poor also because the day I had to turn in the inquiry project was also presumably the time during the classroom when I had the most classroom responsibility. (Mark, Int. 5, p. 49)  
Note: double coded—PROG CRIT-SEQUENCE |
| A&S | comments about Arts & Sciences courses  
I think, one, the U.S. History Since 1945 was very good as far as the content went, but it was a pretty standard, professor stands in the front of the room. He lectures. Every |

320
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEERS</th>
<th>comments about interactions with peers in and out of program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*This time I’m there full time, and there’s, there’s a bunch of people that I know there that are BC students. And I didn’t think it would be all that important, but it’s nice to just have people there that are in the same group as you. So that’s something that’s changed that I think is really good. (Kevin, Int. 4, p. 2)</td>
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<tr>
<th>SUP</th>
<th>Supervisor – comments about pre and Full Practicum supervisor</th>
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<tr>
<td>*Well, I have a, well, it’s, I guess that can’t be helped, but my supervisor’s gonna be different next semester ‘cause mine’s going on a sabbatical which kinda sucks ‘cause we got along real well. Now I have to, I hope this next woman or man is nice, but it’s sorta like we have to start off from scratch all over again. (Elizabeth, Int. 3, p. 22)</td>
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<tr>
<th>DONO</th>
<th>comments about Donovan students and program</th>
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<td>*I was just really excited about being in a different environment and learning about that environment that was the big draw for me that I would not get teaching in a suburban school if I just did a MAED program and not the Donovan program. (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 8)</td>
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<tr>
<th>TELL</th>
<th>comments about the TELL program at BC (NOT comments about working with ELL students in general)</th>
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<tr>
<td>“And I really liked the programs that I saw and really connected with the people that I talked with. And it seemed like there was really good scholarship opportunities and funding opportunities through different ways, like the TELL and the Donovan program.” (Sonia, Int. 1, p. 1)</td>
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### School Context (SC-)

**-CT**

comments about AND made by pre and full practicum cooperating teacher (CT)

He [CT] never says, you need to do Dante. He says, I did Dante last year. The kids loved it. Or this video is great. Or I could come to him, and I was like, the kids were really into Marco Polo when we were talking about it. Do you have a video? But he never says to me, this is what you have to do, which is awesome. (Mara, Int. 5, p. 2)

Note: doubled coded—SOC STUD/HIST

**-TC ROLE**

Teacher Candidate’s Assigned Role in PPrac or FPrac

At first, I kind of was a little less involved. I observed a lot more, and then I slowly tried to get more and more involved and help out when the teacher would do things and circulate and help the kids. And then as the weeks went on, I think I kind of think the kids got more used to me as another teacher type figure after I taught some lessons and helped out... (Riley, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, p. 5)

Note: double coded--PPRAC

**-SCH F/S**

Other Faculty/Staff; any information about other faculty and staff, i.e. educational background or other characteristics AND critiques about an individual teacher, including literacy or math coaches.

Note: Will rarely use because comments about F/S interaction/coop. teaching, etc. are coded SCH CULT and/or STAFF INTER

*Well, I’ve heard through the grapevine that some of the younger teachers don’t even, who are a lot of BC grads and that kind of thing, they’ve got a big chunk of that. (Lola, Int. 2, pg. 8)*

OR
*[I do] Astronaut board, the spinning board, and we do pickup group. Which I’m a little annoyed about because I kind of feel like, well, I kind of feel like the OT that we have doesn’t do her own job. I don’t see her, she’s got everybody doing her job. I see all this, all these other teachers filling in. She trained Cheryl and I to do the pickup group and, and the astronaut board. And then she’s got this other lady doing – the inclusion facilitator – doing this hearing program with, with one of our kids. And then she’s got some other kids doing, some other staff doing her work. (Sylvie, Int 4, p. ?)

-SCH DEMO

School Demographics (incl. racial makeup, SES, surrounding community)

It is a city, but I think it’s a little more affluent type of a town. And you can sorta see that with the kids ‘cause they’re all, their parents are really involved... (Riley, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, pp. 5-6)

-PUP

any comments about pupils in general or specific pupils at pre practicum, full practicum, and full time teaching schools

*Absolutely. They have to, if they’re coming here, they have to wanna come here ‘cause it’s just, there’s just a lot, they’re passing a lot of schools to get here. (Mark, Int, 4, p. 1)

-CURRIC REQ

comments about curriculum that school or district or state requires, including frameworks, standards, mandated materials & texts

*And he’s like, he said there’s no real set that they, the school gave him a curriculum that they want him to cover, and it’s understood that he’s not going to cover it all. So he basically took that as his liberty to spend as much time on stuff as he wants to until the students get it. (Kevin, Int. 2, p. 19)

Note: Double-coded—CT
*And actually in the TERC book there is a whole page on that that I don’t think she’d read or like fully understood what was going on there, and so then she read it, and she’s like, oh, so that’s what you’re talking about. (Lola, Int. 2, p. 6)

Note: Double-coded—CT

ACCOUNT REQ

any comments about school, state or district required assessment and/or accountability

I think that I’m going to feel pressure to make sure that the students I have pass. It is probably going to be pretty intense for me and given the fact that I’m not a big fan of standardized tests just because I don’t think that they’re maybe the best indicator of what a student is capable of but on the same hand I understand that this state needs some means of measuring how well students are doing but, when all their doing is tests... (Elizabeth Int. 1, p. 5)

OR

They’re very sweet kids, very sweet kids. And they’ve, they’ve moved tremendously. We, when we, we have 21, 11 below benchmark, nine were at DRA four. They’re supposed to be at DRA 18 entering second grade. They were at DRA four. (Sylvie, Int. 4 from Excerpts I, p. 13)

Note: double coded--PUP

SCH CULT

School Culture/Climate (e.g., faculty or school meetings; collaboration/sharing/values among faculty; school spirit; expectations of pupils; school procedures and policies)

*In the morning when they drop the kids off, they come right into the classroom, and they’re interested in what’s going on. And I think, it was a nice school. I think there was a lot of teacher and parent involvement, which is good. It shows that the community is enthusiastic about the school.

C What about the school environment as far as the teachers and the principal? Was there
a sense of a strong community among the teachers, some collaboration or?  
R Actually, yeah, I did notice that my cooperating teacher and the other two second teachers did collaborate at times, and I think the other two teachers helped her out a lot because this is her first year in the second grade... And other times I felt really kind of, a little discouraged when I would have lunch in the teachers’ rooms, some of the conversations that went on I didn’t think were appropriate in front of potential teachers... (Riley, Int. 2, p. 2)  
Note: double coded—PARENT/COMM

OR

*And I’m such a, the school doesn’t help matters because of the fact that they don’t print out a list every day of those students who are absent, the official list (Elizabeth, Int. 4 from Excerpts II, p. 13).

-CLASS CULT  Classroom Culture

I felt like it was a lot different. I don’t ever remember having lessons on a carpeted area with a teacher at an easel. It was always we were at our desks, or we were at the big table to do round robin reading. It was also different just set up wise. I thought it was really nice how the hallways kept all their coats and bags out there. And everything’s carpeted. It’s a little more homier, I think. (Riley, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, pp. 6-7).

-STAFF INTER  Collegial Interactions (DOES NOT include TC/T’s specific interactions with CT/Mentor; only concerns interactions AMONG the faculty and staff; and can include TC/CT’s interactions with OTHER staff)

*After speaking to more teachers, I just got very frustrated last week ‘cause I’m like, this isn’t, I don’t know if they’re taking away the big ideas of this book that, and the woman that I was speaking to, she goes,
don’t, you don’t have to teach them something every day. You just need to set up the tone of the classroom. That is, you come in. You teach them how to work in groups and whatnot. And then you, you let them on their own. (Elizabeth, Int. 4, p. 6)

OR

*And there are a couple of people who have befriended me, people closer to my age. I went and met them at the school play. It’s been, no, everybody’s really great here to me. (Elsie, Int. 4, p. 5)

-PRIN

comments about AND made by the school’s principal, assistant principal, or other administrator

* Yeah, I think her heart is in the right place, but she’s very dogmatic. And I don’t know, intimidating, I think... Well, I’ve heard through the grapevine that some of the younger teachers don’t even, who are a lot of BC grads and that kind of thing, they’ve got a big chunk of that. And they feel like they won’t be able to go somewhere else until she has retired because they don’t think she would pass along a good recommendation to her, or for them. And I don’t know if that’s true or what. (Lola, Int. 2, p. 6)

OR

*Yeah, yeah. He, I don’t know. He, he likes to be in charge on some things and then doesn’t do enough on others and just the general, and just the idea that he’s not very, he, he schedules things that don’t need to happen, and that take up teachers’ time from doing student, and from students’ time from doing the work they need to get done. And other times something really needs to be addressed, and it doesn’t get addressed. (Elsie, Int. 4, pg. 2)

-INTER W/ PUP

TC/T’s Interactions with Pupil/s

I think it was sort of like I, I felt
concerned that I could be a distraction because some of the little girls got really attached, and I was more like, who is this older person? But I think that just sorta takes time. (Riley, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, p. 5)

Parents/Neighborhood & Community (comments about, or stories of interactions with, parents, neighborhood, and community)

In the morning when they drop the kids off, they come right into the classroom, and they’re interested in what’s going on. (Riley, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, p. 6)

Daily Classroom Routines; what the day entails, schedules, descriptions of what happens in class.

I’d usually get there around 8:00 and set up. And sometimes kids would start coming in around 8:30, but it really began around 8:40. And then usually they’d have free time until around 9:00. The principal would come on and do his message. We’d salute the flag. And then they’d clean up and get ready and go back to their desks. And they did phonics every day. So the phonics lesson last usually about a half hour. And then she’d give them a recess, and they’d go outside and play maybe about 15 minutes. And then depending which days, sometimes I went on Tuesdays and sometimes went on Thursdays. And they have a set schedule for the week. So it’s not followed strictly ’cause sometimes things would happen to throw the schedule off. But then they’d generally have readers workshop or writers workshop and then lunch, or another recess and lunch. And then they’d have either social studies or science, and then math later on. And then later in the afternoons they’d have another short recess. (Riley, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, p. 4)

Presence or Absence of School Resources (including cafeteria, soccer field, library, etc.)

There was no cafeteria. I found that
interesting. The kids eat their lunch in the classroom. So that was different for me.
(Riley, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, p. 7)

- SUB

Any references to either the TC subbing in the PPRAC or FPRAC, or references to substitutes working in their classrooms (as TC/T)

* And then another day, I just showed up, and CT never came. And it turned out that she wasn’t gonna be there, but the school either got a sub and the sub didn’t show, or they didn’t get a sub. And, so I was in that room all day. The lesson plan book was empty, and I hadn’t been there the day before, so I didn’t know what they were on, and they didn’t know what they were on. And it was a miserable, miserable day (Lola, Int. 2 from Excerpts II, p. 6).

OR

*Right. This is the end of – which I have been doing all along – “I have this meeting. Will you do this class?” Or “I’m sick today, please.” So, I’m like his personal substitute. But he had, it just so happened he had two field trips back to back, and then he had some, we were just finishing the unit, and you can’t come back from being away for two weeks and then take over. So we agreed that for a three week period, I would do everything, lesson planning and whatnot.
(Mara, Int. 4, page 4)

Teaching as a Profession (PRO-)

- RETENT

Retention (stay/leave; why; where)

* Right, and I, I’m just, I am very anal. And I don’t know if I’m gonna last in teaching because of that, because I have high expectations for myself, for everybody else, I want everyone getting hundreds on the test.
(Lola, Int. 4, pg. 28)

- THEORIES

Theories of teaching and curriculum; conceptions of the nature and activity of teaching, learning and curriculum (transmission, critical
thinking, social change, etc.) and notions of curriculum.

* You know that’s a really difficult...because...I mean, specifically, there is methodology that can be used to effectively transmit information to people who do not already understand that information and since I don’t know that, that is what I am trying to get out of this. And what I am hoping too... (Mark, Int. 1, pg. 1)

OR

I think I came into the program having the idea that I think they wanted us to get out of that class...To be more child centered and less strictly academic. But I think I also learned in that class that all, it was interesting ’cause I learned about all these people that have had theories about education, and they aren’t even educators a lot of the time. And I remember thinking, why doesn’t, I think all of them sort of make sense. There should be some balance, and I think I came out of that class, that was kinda the conclusion we all came to, we need that balance (Riley, Int. 3 from Excerpts II, p. 8).

Note: Double-Coded as PRO-KNOW

<table>
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<tr>
<th>-T MODEL</th>
<th>Models of good and bad teaching; examples and descriptions of good and bad teaching.</th>
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<td>It [a readings quiz] was to just show me you read it, and that’s it. And one of the reasons why I think that was such a good strategy is there was so much reading in that class that if you did sort of not do the reading for the week, you’d be buried. You’d never catch up. So I think it was a really good strategy of keeping people on task. Then after that...she had a discussion, and basically what she was doing was asking questions that would elicit answers that she wanted in order, in, in order to, instead of lecturing, she was getting the students to give the answers, to say what they wanted to</td>
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say. And she was asking very pointed and specific questions to get these answers. And ...the class was also set up in a circle which I thought facilitated discussion. (Mark, Int. 3 from Excerpts I, p. 11)

OR

* And so, and my brother was placed in his class, my youngest brother, Jimmy, and that was a horrible, horrible match for him. So they--, so, teachers and where they don't really do anything, you know, he taught his class to play chess and they did that for hours, probably 2 hours a day, and that, that's not gonna work for all kids. (Lola, Int. 1, p. 24)

Note: double-coded—FAMILY

-CURRIC MODEL

Models of good and bad curricula; examples and descriptions of good and bad curriculum.

*So it was kind of a waste of a class, and also he didn’t, he didn’t talk about how it applied to physics at all or anything. But I think that if he had given them a small primer on what might work and what might not work or, and some problems that students were having, I think they easily could have got it and to go all the way across the room. And I think afterwards, I think he needed to do something to connect it to physics and why their, why their designs weren’t working ‘cause there was some obvious flaws. So I thought that was kinda silly that he just decided to, well, it was probably fun for the students, but I think it was still just a waste of a class. (Kevin, Int. 2, p.18)

-LEARN

HOW teachers learn to teach, across the professional lifespan, in all kinds of contexts (mentoring, professional development, courses, etc.)

We tried to come up with an example where this code would “stand alone,” but we did not find one. It seems more appropriate to add a code for Professional Development and code
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<tr>
<td>-KNOW</td>
<td>What knowledge is required to teach?</td>
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<td>I think the biggest challenge for me or what I forsee as being the biggest challenge is how to challenge all the students and keep them engaged but also be wary that some students might be at different levels than others so I really hope that BC will give me a good sense of how to balance the diversity within the classroom. (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 1)</td>
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<td>OR</td>
<td>I learned about all these people that have had theories about education, and they aren’t even educators a lot of the time. And I remember thinking, why doesn’t, I think all of them sort of make sense. There should be some balance, and I think I came out of that class, that was kinda the conclusion we all came to, we need that balance (Riley, Int. 3 from Excerpts II, p. 8)</td>
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<td>Note: Double-Coded—THEORIES</td>
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<td>-SCH PURP</td>
<td>Purpose of Schooling/Education</td>
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<td>*I think a lot of it is asking those questions and getting students to question their own beliefs, and their own assumptions about people and teaching them, you know, maybe showing them surprising things about other cultures or about other points of view and showing them that stereotypes aren’t, you know, they’re not reality in most cases. So, I don’t know, I think mostly teaching them to have questioning minds, which has always been, I think, a goal of education--teaching people how to think. (Elsie, Int. 1, p. 20)</td>
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<td>Note: Double-Coded—SJ (answer to question about SJ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-CURRIC UND</td>
<td>Curricular Understanding (notions of curriculum, ideas about good and bad curriculum, etc.)</td>
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So this project, even though it was about an artist and it focused on art, we still did the spiral thing, and I wanted them to touch on all those aspects of what was going on during the Renaissance. And even though there’s not literature in here, some of the kids still made references to Dante. (Mara, Int. 5, p. 1)

**-EFFIC**

Efficacy (Self-perceptions, reflections of self as teacher, sense of confidence in making a difference)

I think for some people it [classroom management] may be [more of a issue], but I think the people that is the most important for are probably not doing the other stuff they should be doing. (Riley, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, p. 8)

*Note: double-coded—CM*

OR

*So the one thing I guess that came out of that is I understand now maybe that you need to be more strict, like I understand the value of being strict in the beginning of the year, more so than before. And I also know that I’m capable of it now (Lola, Int. 2 from Excerpts II, p. 7).*

**-AUTO**

references to the TC/T’s autonomy in the classroom (e.g., were they able to create their own lesson or are they only allowed to use CT’s lesson plans?)

Question: Now, did he [CT] have kids make PowerPoints, for example?
Response: Yes. But his [CT] PowerPoints were only on, they didn’t have the spiral aspect of it. His part was just, find an artist, research their biography, and show me some of their pictures. Whereas I took it a step further, and I was like, why did they paint that? Where was it painted? What does that mean? Just that whole --- (Mara, Int. 5, p. 2)
what participants believe is the role and job of a teacher in the classroom, school, and community. (Note: This may often be double-coded with THEORIES)

* Obviously there’s the academic, is kind of where you have to start because that’s the reason for being there. But it, even in order to, to progress academically, I think all the other aspects of the students have to be addressed. And I kind of found this in, even in coaching, although it’s much, I’ll admit right now. Coaching twice a week and having a game once a week or something like that is, is a much smaller aspect, a slice of life of the kids than teaching is going to be. But even within that, I can recognize the different, different athletes for coaching, different students for education, have different needs about how, how they approach the tasks at hand and that some of them need certain directions and some of them work well in the groups, and some of them work well on other aspects. And so I think understanding the students is, is a big part of it. And helping them progress, not just within the either athletics or academic realm, but also as a person and all that, all that that entails. Craig, Int 1, p. 31)
### Themes/Floaters

Note 6/27 – For all the codes listed below (floaters) we decided to no longer use the “-TE,” etc. following the code. Rather, these codes will be double-coded wherever/however it makes sense.

| ASSESS | Assessment related to K-12 pupils (that is NOT imposed from district, state, etc.) OR related to TC/T’s class experience and any ways their professors demonstrate they know that students are learning  
It’s just like, if some kid’s falling asleep in class, I go and I do what I would do. It’s not that someone told me, when some kid falls asleep in class, you should go and do this, this, and this. It’s just, I just do what I think should be done about it, also having sort of observed the student in other situations knowing how he’s gonna, thinking about how he’s gonna react to different things. (Matt, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, p. 8) |
| EXP PUP | TC/T’s expectations of pupils (i.e., are there high expectations for all students or are there some students “who just won’t get it?”)  
*We set benchmarks when we want things due, but we don’t have them submit it. So we, I go around to see where they are, and many of them are behind. But that was difficult too because not only do you have to teach them how to do research but you have to teach them how to develop the research in their paper without losing their own voice. (Elizabeth, Int. 4, p. 6)  
* I think they are. I think they could be learning, I think this class has a lot of potential to learn, to be, to do things, that if they were in a school like Kipp or Academy of Pacific Rim, I think they would be doing a lot more than they are now. (Lola, Int. 4, p. 26) |
| NOTE | Note code is used 1) to identify a section that doesn't fit with one of the codes, 2) to make a note to oneself, 3) to highlight a part that you have questions about |
### PEOP LEARN

Comments about the conditions and contexts under which people learn (K-12 learning and general learning); these CAN include any comments about TC/T observations of K-12 (and beyond) learning from their own K-12 experience as well as from experiences in practicums, program, college, etc.

*I modeled how I wanted them to respond to passages, and they really did a very nice job connecting personal, a lot of them connected personal experiences to a quote they picked out. And I hadn’t seen that in their other types of journal responses and whatnot ‘cause I don’t think I was formulating the questions very well about getting them to think about how you can connect the book to your own life. So I was impressed. So I, in that sense I think they’re learning to be kinda critical in making those connections between what they read and, and applying it to their own life. (Elizabeth, Int. 4, p. 21)

### PEOP-LEARN-CT-SUP-MENT-PRIN

References about TC/T or Pupil learning made by the CT, Supervisors, Mentors, or Principals

Ex: “I think the kids responded from the very first time she spoke, the kids responded very positively to her. So yes, absolutely, I think she had an impact on their learning.” (Riley’s CT)

### TC/T LEARN

Conditions and Contexts under which TC/Ts learn, either in the program or in other learning experiences (NOTE: this is not the code for references to what the specifically learned in a particular class, but instead more general comments about the TC/T’s learning)

I mean, math was one thing that I struggled with all throughout school and now when I got to the college level and had to take calculus it was a cinch and I really attributed it to the teachers. (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 1)

Note: double coded—MATH

OR

The first thing that comes to mind is that I
| **TC/T EMOTION** | When the interviewee uses words like “angry”, “frustrated”, “thrilled”, “distraught”, and any references to their own “crying”  
* The lesson plan book was empty, and I hadn’t been there the day before, so I didn’t know what they were on, and they didn’t know what they were on. And it was a miserable, miserable day. (Lola, Int. 2 from Excerpts 2, p. 6)  
Note: double coded--SUB |
| **K12 CONTENT** | any comments about the K-12 content (subject matter, materials, texts) the TC/T is teaching OR experienced during own K-12 career  
*Well, the larger unit was the Renaissance. So the entire time we were talking about so much more than just the art. We read “The Divine Comedy.” And basically it was, how was this different than the Middle Ages? What’s going on now that wasn’t going on then? So they figured out that it’s all about new ways of thinking, individualism, stepping out of the box, and really wanting to better the situation. So when we looked at all this art, it was like, well, why are they doing it? To beautify Rome, the Vatican. And then it got into, all right, what is the art about? Religion. (Mara, Int. 5, p. 1)  
Note: double coded--SOC STUD/HIST |
| **ELL** | comments regarding English Language Learners  
Response: Two. Two identified ELL’s.  
Question: Two identified. But other children that potentially have a second, or their primary language isn’t English at home?  
Response: Yeah, there was somebody else who we thought may be. I forgot who though. One other person who we thought may be.  
Question: And what languages are, are those – |
Response: Cantonese, and one was Albanian. (Sylvie, Int. 4 from Excerpts I, p. 13)

**SPED**

Comments regarding Special Education programs and/or students

*I think that some could be learning more, some of the lower kids. But I don’t that’s necessarily her fault. And they get, the, one of the things, they get pulled out for a lot. They get pulled out for social, extra social studies, and then the, the kids with IEP’s get pulled out for language help, math help. And, so they’ll miss half the periods or whole periods, and so then that just gets them farther behind. There’s this one kid who he’s already stayed back a year. So he’s a little bit older. And he’s a sweetheart, but he can’t even add double digit numbers sometimes. (Lola, Int. 2, pg. 14)

**MENTOR-INDUCT**

Any reference made to mentors, mentoring, or induction, including summer start

EX:

C “What do you think is the hardest thing about teaching?”

R “Still, actually I was reflecting about that today, Summer Start brought fears about starting teaching pretty soon. I think probably what a lot of first year teachers are, classroom management, dealing with the discipline issue with a student, and then also with parents.”

EX:

“He [My mentor] and I talk about a bunch of different things and, you know, he helps me with grading. He gave me an Excel spreadsheet that is phenomenal.” (Matt, Int. 6).

**-SUMMER SCHOOL**

References made to teaching during the summer (prior to their official first year of teaching and post- their full-practicum)

Ex:

C “Can you tell me a little bit about the course you taught this summer, ‘cause I don’t really
| **SJ** | comments where Social Justice is explicitly mentioned, may include references to teaching for social justice in terms of content, approach to pupil learning, pedagogy, role of teacher, etc. both in BC and K-12 context
I think one of the most appealing things to me was BC really comes out and says they want to teach teachers ways to promote social justice and that’s very important to me having done my undergraduate work at a Jesuit school as well. I really like that mission and I like seeing social justice in action if you will, so that was appeal, big draw for me. (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 1)
Note: Double-Code—REASONS BC
*She’s a Teach for America graduate. And everything about that program is social justice as well. That’s their philosophy. But she gives everyone a fair shake. She’s really hard on kids. She picked this one boy, T-, to be in her class who teachers can’t stand because she thinks he’s brilliant and that he will either be a doctor or a gang leader. So she wanted him in her class. So she picked the harder road because she thought that she could help this kid. (Lola, Int. 2, p. 34) |

| **CM** | Classroom (defined broadly) Management - comments regarding the management and discipline of students (NOT a description of daily routines), including beliefs about discipline and management (may often be double-coded with PEDAG)
I think classroom management is a necessary, but I almost feel like, I don’t, I don’t know |
how, yeah, it’s, it’s necessary, but I feel like people that run into classroom management issues run into them for other reasons. Maybe they’re not, yeah, it is important. I don’t think it’s the most important thing. (Riley, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, p. 8)

| PEDAG | Pedagogy – the teaching methods, strategies, actions taken in class (broadly defined) setting; which may include general judgments about pedagogy.  

So I think that, one of the things I did learn in that class was that you can’t just sort of throw an open ended question out and expect the kids to answer it because these are, I just figured that college freshman, sophomore, and juniors are pretty close to high school kids in the way they act in class a lot of times. So he didn’t really establish a dialogue with the class about things. It wasn’t a dialogue class. It was like, you do the readings, and then I’m gonna give you some notes. And then maybe I’ll ask you a question. And most of the questions were based on the reading, and it’s sort of hard, it’s a hard recall activity to sort of, after you’ve read 500 pages of something to scroll through and sort of come up with interesting insights on something. It wasn’t, it wasn’t set up very well for classroom discussions. (Mark, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, p. 9)  
Note: Double-Coded—A&S and T MODEL |

| INQ | Teacher Inquiry (NOT as inquiry project; but IS using evidence/data collection, raising questions)  

* So...but I think there’s value in looking at your practice and trying to improve it, but obviously if you’re implementing. I feel like a lot of, a lot of this is, I mean a lot of what you’re learning in your classroom is like a blunt object type thing. Like this is working but I don’t necessarily have like quantifiable pieces of data to back this up. But, at the same time, the—there’s so much |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TECH</td>
<td>Any mention of use of digital, or high, technology (NOT “low” technology such as whiteboards, which go under Resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So let me preface this with, the PowerPoint was a three tiered project. One was you’re making a PowerPoint presentation. Make it colorful. Change the font. Use the effects. (Mara, Int. 5, p. 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| SOC ST/HIST | Social Studies/History content in practicum, TC/T’s own K-12 experience, or BC courses  
* Well, some of them were some of them weren’t. I mean, um yeah one of them was like, isolationism and interventionism in like the early part of the 19-20th century. So that was, y’know, why should the United States be involved in Europe or why shouldn’t they or and then, one of them was on imperialism, why’s imperialism good for, or imperialism from the perspective of the big country vs. that of the small country that’s being controlled. (Mark, Int. 5, p. 19) |
| MATH     | Mathematics content in practicum, TC/T’s own K-12 experience, or BC courses  
I mean, math was one thing that I struggled with all throughout school and now when I got to the college level and had to take calculus it was a cinch and I really attributed it to the teachers. (Elizabeth, Int. 1, p. 3)  
Note: double coded—SCH EXP |
| SCIENCE  | Science content in practicum, TC/T’s own K-12 experience, or BC courses  
* He uses homework that they turn in, particularly physics problems, labs that they have to turn in, write ups, not write ups, but they kinda fill in short answer type of things. And then he has a unit test at the end of a unit. (Kevin, Int. 2, p. 15) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENG</th>
<th>English content in practicum, TC/T’s own K-12 experience, or BC courses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*The twelfth grade class, I’ve been teaching them how to write a research paper ‘cause many of them have never written a research paper. They had a lot of skill exercises, and then now they’re really writing it. They should be almost done with it in theory. (Elizabeth, Int. 4, p. 4)</td>
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<td>OR</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* ...It started with the beginning of the Ro--, well, it started with Poe. So it started with the Romantics, the Romantic period of eastern America. And I did some of the fireside poets and Poe and a couple other people. And then, then it went on to the transcendentalists and on through Dickinson and women. (Elsie, Int. 4, pp. 5-6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LANG ART</td>
<td>Language Arts content in practicum, TC/T’s own K-12 experience, or BC courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* And they have a set schedule for the week. So it’s not followed strictly ‘cause sometimes things would happen to throw the schedule off. But then they’d generally have readers workshop or writers workshop... (Riley, Int. 2 from Excerpts I, p. 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIT</td>
<td>Literacy (general skills and abilities and content related specifically to literacy development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* No, I think she’s done a lot, we’ve done a lot of work with them in class, how do you do this, done a lot of scaffolding for the learning, gone through the prewriting process with them, gone over what a thesis is several times. And I, I went through the papers with them and helped them a little bit. So I think we worked with them in the lab when they were writing. I think all that, I think we’ve just given them a lot of help with it. (Elsie, Int. 4, p. 21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.E.</strong></td>
<td>Physical education</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DIV</strong></td>
<td>Any specific use of the term “diversity” or “multicultural”, or explicit description of a range of people/cultures/groups together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* I have the basics and the things that have always been taught but from what I've been learning and hearing about, I wish I had a better background in multicultural education and just a better understanding of society as it is right now and where it's mixed up and messed up in some cases—(Elsie, Int. 1, pg. 16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RACE</strong></td>
<td>Race, ethnicity, any mention of METCO</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>If you look at the other, the other two second graders, I don’t know about Donna’s class. Megan has all the Metco kids, I think. (Sylvie, Int. 4 from Excerpts I, p. 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SES/Demo</strong></td>
<td>Any reference to social class, finances, poverty, etc. that do not relate to TC/T’s entering characteristics</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>*But now that I’m starting to look at the dialogue journals for my inquiry and I’m really paying attention to their English and the way they write, these are not necessarily mistakes that I would see in a fourth grade classroom with different students from different backgrounds. And for some students, they definitely have it harder than others. We have students who probably have very supportive homes, whose parents are literate but still have very low paying jobs. That’s another wake up call that I got. (Sonia, Int. 4, p. 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GENDER</strong></td>
<td>References to gender relations or dynamics, or recognition of the role gender may play for individual or groups of pupils in classroom or school interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They’re strong girls in the class. There are two, I like to refer to them as my alpha males in the class. And they, I, I know I’ve talked about them before. They run the class. These girls will definitely hold their own with them. (Mara, Int. 5, p. 4)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
OR

*I guess I don’t really have an answer, I guess I need to make sure that females are often not as interested in physics a lot so... I guess I will not really know until I get into the classroom and see how the different students are interacting with the material so that I can, but once I see that I am going to adjust so that all the students are effectively learning and taking part in roles and interested in not only necessarily physics, but also math and science so that certain fields are not filled with a homogenous set of people. (Kevin, Int. 1, p. 10)

Note: double coded—SJ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGN</th>
<th>nature of an assignment, the practice of teaching regarding creating assignments, understanding or rationale for assignment, criteria for judging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So let me preface this with, the PowerPoint was a three tiered project. One was you’re making a PowerPoint presentation. Make it colorful. Change the font. Use the effects. Two was content. They needed to talk about the biography of the artist, a little bit about their career, where it was, and what was going on in Italy or northern Europe that affected it, and number three was the whole elements of art stuff, wanted them to pull that in and then take it a step further, what does it say about that person as an artist? What were they trying to do? How was their art looked at at the time? How is it looked at now? (Mara, Int. 5, p. 1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Note: double coded—SOC STUD/HIST</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST-YEAR JOB</th>
<th>Specific references made to their first year of teaching (descriptions of their position)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex: “So I’m gonna be the Spanish second grade teacher. They’ve started doing content specialization. So that’s why I’m teaching math, and the teacher next door to me is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>Planning, lesson plans, short-term, long-term plans, planning for lessons</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOURCE</td>
<td>Resources - materials used in lessons, as well as throughout the school including a theater space, gym equipment, etc. NOTE: This can include people as resources! *And another teacher who’s next door, she had a grant for some textbooks, and she said, I’ll request that book if you’d like. So she was able to get me the majority of the texts I needed. So I only had to buy two on my own. So that’s how I was able to teach it. Otherwise I would have just taught something that the school had. (Elizabeth, Int. 4, p. 3) OR * We also had running club that morning. So that took a little bit of time off of me. They have a grant from New Balance where kids go run (Lola, Int. 2 from Excerpts II, p. 6). Note: Double-Coded—EX CURRIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROLE-RESEARCHER</td>
<td>Comments/references about Researcher, interactions w/researcher, being a participant, interviews or observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRADES</td>
<td>grades or marks given to pupils as form of evaluation; also refers to ranking of pupils *The ones that did. I was pretty liberal with the grading on it but I made it clear that if like, they weren’t, like that, it’s gonna be yeah like that would probably would be a zero (points to pupil’s essay that only has a couple of sentences written in response to the prompt). (Mark, Int. 5, p. 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOT</td>
<td>Levels of Thinking like higher order, literal, inferential, critical; the level of cognitive complexity They [high school pupils] did excellent research ‘cause this is, this was a research project. They found out information that you</td>
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(Sonia, Int. 6, p. 14)
can’t just Google and it’s the number one thing. The artwork that they, visually it’s an excellent PowerPoint. During their presentation they spoke well. They said the right things. It was interesting. They were funny, and they were able to do those higher order historical thinking skills that I so wanted them to do. (Mara, Int. 5, p. 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTS</th>
<th>Performing, Visual Arts (e.g., theater), Music, Drama, etc.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Well we all had roles, we all had like parts, individual parts that were gonna be highlighted in some way, and I mean, I still remember some of the songs, it was Going Buggy, and I remember some of the songs and the costumes, they were all--, they made the costumes all out of different trash bags because we were all bugs and so we had to like decorate the trash bags in different ways, but there were dances and songs and the whole school would come and watch, it was like a big deal. And it was only these two teachers who would do it, together, so we just got lucky. (Lola, Int. 1, pg. 14)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Note: double coded—EC-SCH EXP-ELEM</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EX CURRIC</th>
<th>Extra Curricular Activities (e.g., sports, drama, etc.) related to any activities outside the curriculum, including, but not limited to, after school activities</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*My father didn't care so much at first but my, I always considered that my duties to God came first and not my academic duties and I did fine in school, I did really well in school. But whenever he thought that I wasn't spending enough time on homework and things it could become a problem that I was going to the youth group for something, even though I was doing pretty well in school and that was sometimes really difficult because I love my parents and they've been great parents but in some cases I just had to stand by what I thought. (Elsie, Int. 1, pg. 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note: double coded—IDENT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OR
* But we did that for one period. We also running club that morning. So that took a little bit of time off of me. They have a grant from New Balance where kids go run (Lola, Int. 2 from Excerpts II, p. 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIELD T-ASSEMBLY</th>
<th>Field trip or Assembly</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOC INT</td>
<td>Social interactions with peers, activities and hobbies, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*But I ended up going there and I found that while kids at school were really, really mean--I was a little overweight and I wasn't very pretty, and you know, that can be really difficult, and I went to the youth group and everybody just accepted everybody else. There was no taunting, there was no meanness and people talked to you and included you in everything and so that was really an important thing for me. (Elsie, Int. 1, pg. 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRACK</td>
<td>Tracking of Pupils, including references to their own K-12 experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I mean anybody could take algebra 2 I guess it would've been but it was too hard for certain students so, and then certain parents I guess would push their kids into those classes even if they weren't may be able to do the work but because they wanted them there... (Lola, Int. 1 from Excerpts I, p. 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Participant Informed Consent

Informed Consent Form for Qualitative Case Studies Research Participants

You are being invited to continue to participate in a research project that is part of the Teachers for a New Era Project and directed by Dr. Marilyn Cochran-Smith & Dr. Patrick McQuillan of the Lynch School of Education (LSOE) at Boston College. The study intends to broadly document our teacher candidates’ experiences and perceptions of learning to teach and how they are carried out in practice during the first years of teaching. Hopefully this research will create a clearer sense of the relationship between learning to teach and the practice of teaching in a way that will lead to positive, professional opportunities for both university faculty and beginning teachers. Since our overall goal for this project is to improve our teacher education program, no individual teacher, faculty member, or school personnel will be the focus of this study.

Your participation this year will entail no more than two interviews of about 45-60 minutes and a collection of artifacts, including teaching resources and pupil work samples. The interviews will be tape-recorded, with your permission. The recordings and transcripts of the interviews will be archived in the Teachers for a New Era Evidence Team office. They will be part of a collection of materials that researchers are gathering related to teacher education and teaching. We also plan to use these same data sources for teaching purposes in Boston College classrooms. The aspiring researchers who enroll in BC research courses could benefit greatly from having access to interview and assessment data created as part of this study. It is possible that statements you make or ideas you present will be attributable to you. However, as explained below, we will take a number of precautions to protect your identity. Furthermore, our research seeks to highlight strategies that can benefit new teachers, and that may improve BC’s program in ways that might impact you positively in the future. In addition, many participants in similar studies have found the opportunity to reflect on their teaching and their personal development as an added benefit for them.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time. You are also welcome to ask questions at any time. Further, if in the course of an interview we should we pose a question you would rather not answer; you have no obligation to do so.

We have designed this project to protect your privacy in all published reports or papers resulting from this study as well as when we use any of these materials for teaching purposes in Boston College classrooms. That is, no one will be identified specifically in anything we write or when using any interview or assessment data in Boston College classrooms. For example, you will be referred to as “a male/female university teacher.
education student” or given a pseudonym. We will assign all participants a code number that will be attached to all data that we collect from you. Your name will not appear on any interview transcripts or course assignments or class materials so that even if someone were to gain access to research or teaching data, they would be unable to identify anyone by name. The list of code numbers and the research files will be kept locked in an office at Boston College. Moreover, in publishing any of this research or using it for teaching purposes, all contributors will be identified by a pseudonym and a general description that includes grade level, general information about the school, and race, gender and age of participant. The public schools involved will also be assigned pseudonyms and will only be identified in a cursory way (e.g. an urban high school in Boston that enrolls so many students, most of whom are from such-and-such racial/ethnic group).

As the reports generated through this study will be shared with administrators, teachers, and faculty, and some interview or observational data may be used in Boston College classrooms, it is possible that statements you make or ideas you present about the program will be attributable to you, and this might engender some measure of professional concern to you. However, we will take a number of precautions to protect your identity, as described above. Furthermore, keep in mind that our research seeks to highlight strategies that can benefit new teachers, not highlight personal disagreements or tensions people may have. If you wish, transcribed interviews and descriptive observational data are available for review. In addition, all papers and articles will be made available. Please speak with your researcher regarding access to these materials. In addition, with your permission, we would like to save a copy of your interviews, observations, and other data we collect for future work we hope to do in the areas of both research and teaching.

We appreciate your willingness to give your time to this project. If you have any questions about this study you may ask one of the co-investigators of the study: Dr. Marilyn Cochran-Smith at XXX-XXX-XXXX or by email at XXXXX or Dr. Patrick McQuillan, at XXX-XXX-XXXX, or at XXXXX. You may also contact Dr Brinton Lykes, acting Associate Dean of the Lynch School of Education. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, please call the Office for Human Research Participant Protection at 617-552-4778.

I understand the information above and voluntarily consent to participate in this research.

Signature of Participant___________________________________________________

Date______________________________

Please initial here if we may tape record our interview__________________