Dimensions in Mentoring

A Continuum of Practice from Beginning Teachers to Teacher Leaders

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This book provides practitioners, researchers, and those involved in mentoring activities insight into varying types of mentoring. It covers aspects of mentoring with preservice teachers, K-12 practitioners, academia, and professionals in public and private sectors. Other areas not typically covered include service learning, faculty and graduate student writing and research groups, undergraduate and graduate student mentoring groups, online programs for alternatively certified teachers, formal mentoring programs for marginalized and underrepresented populations, academic mentoring for tenured faculty, and mentoring support for administrators at all levels!

A unique approach to mentoring, a variety of theoretical contexts and frameworks is presented and suggestions for discussions, assignments, and dialogue opportunities are offered at the end of each chapter. These suggestions are practical applications and implications for extending conversations among professionals and are easily transferable to a variety of professional development activities.

While primarily intended for teacher educators, it is a complete guide for those in public education who are interested in professional development activities. The topics addressed are useful to those who are new to the field of mentoring and to those who support mentoring projects at any level.
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*A Continuum of Practice from Beginning Teachers to Teacher Leaders*

Edited by

Susan D. Myers and Connie W. Anderson

*Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas USA*
DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all of our mentors; those past, present, and future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Connor Warner whose tireless assistance made this book possible. We would also like to thank all of those who contributed to this endeavor. Your stories of mentoring and continuing work as mentors are an inspiration.
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INTRODUCTION

Considering Mentoring from Different Perspectives

Mentoring has long been a topic of interest, research, and discussion in multiple arenas of practice; businesses, schools, military, churches, to name just a few. While the benefits of mentoring and mentoring relationships are typically agreed upon, there are various specific styles or formats in the way mentoring activities are implemented. The very synergistic nature of mentoring implies that perhaps there is neither one best practice nor one lens with which to examine all of our unique experiences.

The title of this book, *Dimensions in Mentoring: A Continuum of Practice*, reflects just a few of the types of mentoring one can find within the contexts of schools. *Dimensions* implies that while we may agree on what mentoring may look like or on some of the general characteristics of what makes an effective mentor, there are many layers and aspects of mentoring that are more nuanced. The book is divided into three sections, where we examine mentoring and induction from differing dimensions; pre-service teachers and other students, those who are practicing mentors in the field, and those who mentor in academia or beyond.

Our primary purpose in preparing this edited edition on mentoring was to include voices not typically included in published books on this topic. We encouraged collaborative writing among students and their colleagues in the academic world; we solicited works from authors who were students in teacher preparation programs, as well as those who are actively mentoring school administrators who are facing multiple challenges as they experience dramatic changes in their local contexts. Additionally, we encouraged authors who might not consider themselves as mentors to examine their practice as to how they perform mentoring activities in their daily activities. We also wanted to include a wide variety of topics as well as writing styles. Within the chapters contributed, there are narratives, reader’s theater pieces, as well as more structured studies. Our intent was to give voice to all who wished to share their ideas and promote an inclusive tone that connected all of their writings within the overarching theme of mentoring and being mentored.

The book is divided into three sections to illustrate the continuum of practice. Section 1 covers the experiences and concepts of mentoring pre-service teachers and other college-age students. You will read a narrative from a non-traditional teacher candidate as he shares his experiences in developing his identity as a beginning teacher. Other chapters in this section provide ideas on how service
learning can be integrated into teacher preparation coursework to instill a sense of context and community as beginners enter the profession. Other authors share their ideas about specialized programs, such as Mentor Tech, a university initiated program for first-time college students from underrepresented populations to a classroom teacher who provides us with insight and guidance with detailed activities for mentoring a student teacher.

The second section focuses more on different forms or dimensions of mentoring experienced from those in the field. We use the term “field” broadly, referring to classrooms, either traditional or online. The field can also reflect the experiences of a shared partnership between university faculty and classroom teachers or school administrators.

The final section provides examples of how mentoring is exemplified primarily in the academic world. While there are numerous books dedicated to this topic, most appear to represent those beginning their profession in academia. We wanted to broaden those experiences to include not only those new to the professoriate but also those more seasoned faculty members. Less is written concerning how we grow and how we are mentored as tenured faculty or the unique experiences we share as we develop into professional mentors with our colleagues. Of particular interest is the chapter on how we can utilize the precepts of emotional intelligence to develop our own communication skills, increasing not only our own resiliency but also the resilience of others we mentor.

As authors, between us we represent over thirty years of working as educators and hopefully as effective mentors. Our personal experiences vary widely and provide us with a rich source of information as we work collaboratively with teacher candidates and classroom teachers.

We hope you find this book useful either personally or as a tool to promote increased dialogue on mentoring. There is something to learn from the three varied sections and range of authors that can assist each of us as we become better mentors or participate in mentoring relationships. The dimensions of mentoring we experience are static and always in a state of flux. As you reflect on how specific mentoring experiences have impacted you throughout your life, perhaps you can also identify areas where you are a mentor to someone.
SECTION 1: MENTORING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS AND OTHER STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

We often think of mentoring in educational settings as a process that begins with new teachers in their first professional positions; however, mentoring actually begins earlier than that. In the chapters that comprise this first section, authors explore the mentoring process on the college level for college students before they complete their teacher education programs. By looking at the pre-service mentoring process from a variety of perspectives, the authors reveal elements that promote the success of the mentoring relationship.

The section begins with a chapter by Reagan Mason, a non-traditional teacher candidate. He describes the development of his identity as a teacher (Soreide, 2006) as a process that happened within his relationship with his mentor teacher. As a former salesman, Mason used his negotiating skills to interact with his mentor and other experienced teachers in his school. His personal experiences from the stance of a more mature candidate provide insights into the experiences of his younger colleagues.

The chapter by Reese Todd explores teacher candidates growing into the profession through service learning. Teacher candidates are asked to expand their experiences beyond their individual classrooms and engage in a school-wide project. Often the candidate will be working with a mentor teacher on a mutual project or task. The assignment enables pre-service teachers to attempt the role of engaged citizenship and develop an ethic of service.

The most traditional pre-service teacher mentoring situation is addressed by Deanna Bermudez who takes the reader through the year of a student teacher and mentor teacher. She shares the aspects of learning to teach that can only be learned “on the job,” such as school culture and climate, building relationships in the building, parental involvement, and classroom management. She emphasizes the role of the classroom mentor teacher in assuring that the student teacher is able to transition into the position of professional educator.

Connie Anderson and Cory Powell take on the challenge of ensuring success of first generation minority college students. They describe Mentor Tech as a model program that links protégés with mentors to provide personal, academic, and financial support. The program, located in a large public university, serves about
125 new students a year. The authors attribute the success of the program to the relationships that develop, and they illuminate those relationships through the voices of the protégés and the mentors.

Craig McCarron applies cognitive science to the mentoring relationship, calling on Vygotsky (1978) and others to develop a set of scaffolding activities to promote learning. Looking at mentoring as both a science and an art, McCarron argues against the notion of a “mismatch” as the culprit for mentoring failures. Instead, he describes activities (such as demonstrating professional skills and collaborative planning) to promote mentoring success.

The final chapter in this section is by Mellinee Lesley; the author describes the process of teacher education from course work to practice. Lesley studied the progress of one teacher candidate who was a strong and willing participant in a content area literacy class but then did not implement the practices she learned in class in her student teaching. Lesley concludes that course work is not enough, that candidates need to see the approaches they learn about in place to be able to do them themselves. Lesley advocates increasing the connections between the instructors providing candidates’ course work and the mentors in the schools, seeing the student teacher as an agent within the school setting.

All chapters in this section address the mentoring relationship and provide suggestions for making that relationship successful. The mentoring process in education is indeed on a continuum, and begins with college students still in the process of completing their certification and degree programs. The voices of multiple participants in the early stages of the continuum indicate the importance of attending to the mentoring of the pre-service teacher.
1. PRESERVICE TEACHER IDENTITY

Developing Teacher Identity at 45

YEEEE! “explodes out of my chest again, but through long practice the convulsive shiver throughout my upper body doesn’t reach the lightly tapped steering wheel of my old Jeep. “Dad, would you stop that!” I know my daughter genuinely tires of the way I cope with high excitement and anticipation but I don’t dare stop managing my emotions. Only student teaching and a capstone course lie between me and being a college graduate, and soon the anxious nervous waiting will end and student teaching will begin.” (Personal journal entry January, 2010)

INTRODUCTION

January 19th, 2010, my first day of student teaching, was roughly twenty-six years and nine months after the day I dropped out of high school in the spring of 1983. Later that fall, after getting a GED, I began college with antipathy towards K-12 education and no intention or desire to ever become a teacher. The series of personal transformations, setbacks, and achievements that led to my pursuit of a teaching career in middle age made me extraordinarily sensitive to self-reflections about my own preservice teacher identity; eventually I discovered, while pursuing my Master’s degree, that preservice teacher identity is an expanding and evolving field in educational research (Beauchamp & Davis, 2009). The student teaching practicum creates the opportunity for preservice teachers to begin to develop their identity as professional educators, most often within the context of their relationship with the mentor teacher to whom they are assigned (Rajuan, Beijaard & Verloop, 2010).

In accordance with the importance of the student teacher-mentor relationship implied by literature and theory, I vividly recall my initial meeting with my mentor. During my first day of student teaching, according to my journal and my memories, I spent the day observing ‘Ms. Taylor,’ grading papers, and learning how to use grade book and attendance software. By mid-morning, I felt comfortable asking questions and interacting with the students. Luckily, my mentor teacher was and is a laidback, confident person with a sense of humor and a
common sense approach to teaching. I enjoyed my first day as a student teacher and it set the tone for the entire experience. Although stressful, my student teaching experience evokes vivid memories, powerful feelings and images, and largely positive responses. It was a transformative and positive experience in my life. Many of my fellow student teachers reported largely negative experiences when we shared “war stories” at communal events and casual encounters, but whether positive or negative, we all shared stories about our students, our mentor teachers, and our failures and successes.

Exploring the formation of my personal teacher identity while sharing narratives and exploring emerging themes, this autoethnography compares and contrasts my experience with both theoretical constructs and composite characterizations of others in my student teaching cohort. My goal is to engage others in what was an important four months of my life and to provide a vehicle for the discussion of how these experiences can assist others who work with preservice teachers as they begin their professional careers.

This study attempts to explore the following questions: How important is the relationship between a student teacher and his/her mentor teacher during the practicum? What experiences helped me most during my student teaching that I feel might help others on both sides of the student—mentor relationship? What insight can I tentatively offer to foster the development of teacher identity within the student teacher-mentor teacher relationship?

This chapter begins with a brief literature review of research related to student teaching and teacher identity formation, followed by a narrative of relevant excerpts from multiple data sources collected during the student teaching semester that illustrate and illuminate these themes. I then offer some implications for practice from the perspectives as both a mentee and a mentor for those who work with student teachers in school settings. Finally, I conclude with some reflections on how my journey may impact my future as a teacher as well as providing an exercise for others to use within various contexts.

RELEVANT LITERATURE AND PERSONAL CONTEXT

As vast literature exists on student teaching experiences, mentoring preservice teachers, and teacher identity, this chapter will focus on only a small portion of research specifically relevant to my narrative. The very definition of identity within an educational setting may be a hotly debated term (Beauchamp & Davis, 2009). Many researchers bemoan the absence of a single working definition of the term teacher identity and then propose another one; for my purposes the term identity refers to the socially constructed and negotiated self-conception of the individual. Typically in relation and response to the problem of high rates of attrition among new teachers, pre-service teacher identity research seeks to analyze the transformation, and all too often the failure of transformation, of student teachers into teachers. Teacher identity is typically studied in three categories-identity formations, characteristics of identity, and identity narratives (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Of specific importance to my results, Gunn
Elizabeth Soreide states that the narratives of teachers’ lives provide the best opportunity to analyze teacher identity; more importantly, Soreide theorizes that the development of preservice teacher identity involves negotiating and positioning within the complex of relationships inherent in a school environment (Soreide, 2006).

The importance of understanding preservice teacher identity informs the work of several researchers, including Catherine Beauchamp and Lynn Davis. Besides masterfully surveying the varieties of applications and the complexities of definitions of teacher identity, Beauchamp and Davis advocate for awareness and support of the development of preservice teacher identity for teacher education programs (Beauchamp & Davis, 2009). The possible-selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986), already commonly applied to second career transitions, suggests that considerations of possible future identity help to determine and motivate current behavior; the application of possible-selves theory to preservice and beginning teachers provides the possibility of further understanding how to support capable people interested in teaching through making the transition to secure socially and professionally constructed roles within the profession (Hamman, Gosselin, Romano & Bunuan, 2010).

Much of my personal context seems, in retrospect, to frame myself as an autoethnographer like journal literature frames a research question. My childhood included fairly comprehensive neglect, including a failure to teach social norms. As a result, by mid-adolescence I had learned to observe my peers on how to act and how to “fit in” with a group while being fundamentally different. Also, having been identified as a gifted student created a sense of isolation for me among my peers. Since I had been reading books written for adults since second grade, my vocabulary and interests left me more comfortable talking to the teachers as peers but my social circumstances and my participation in sports and school newspapers and forensics/debate required me to work cooperatively within my age group. When I returned to college in middle age and participated in a traditional undergraduate teacher preparation program, I was once again participating in classes and activities with fellow students who I often observed as an outsider while participating as an insider. In many ways much of my entire life has been an anthropological excursion.

METHODOLOGY

“Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience…as a method, autoethnography is both process and product” (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, Autoethnography: an overview, 2011). Largely informed by the methodology and work of Carolyn Ellis, I have distilled my extended engagement with student teaching into a narrative with themes derived from a close reading and rereading of my personal journal I kept during my practicum. Being a self-aware but enthusiastic neophyte autoethnographer with a background
in writing fiction, I have been careful to triangulate themes to avoid letting my desire for dramatic narrative trump accuracy. In addition to my journal from student teaching, engagement with a reflexive journal, artifacts from my student teaching including notes and student products, and an interview with my mentor teacher inform my narrative. All data sources have been examined for emergent themes in accordance with grounded theory as described by Kathy Charmaz (2006).

The following section begins my personal narrative highlighting some of the more salient experiences of my student teaching semester. My intention is to focus on several incidents that I feel directly impacted my journey in self-awareness and my emerging perceptions of teacher identity. Any names used in the telling of my story are pseudonyms, and several of the participants’ quotes are compilations gathered from my journal notes and other sources.

**My Personal Narrative...Capstone Dialogues and Musings**

“I’ve never taken a student teacher to the computer lab,” Maggie said.

“I think the students could use some practice on computers and I have an idea for a newsletter set during the Texas Republic...Is there a way I can convince you?” I replied. She explained that it wasn’t so much her as the technology teacher I would need to convince, and I quickly set off to close the deal. Twenty minutes later I had a computer lab scheduled for the following week. (Personal Journal Entry; January, 2010).

A few hours later I arrive at the downtown central office of the school district and head for the large room where almost eighty student teachers have been meeting in once a month since January. Most of the pre-class conversation centers on how welcome spring break will be and what plans are in the works, but the inevitable discussion about mentor teachers—what they allow, what they won’t consider, whether or not they stay in the room or leave, whether they give feedback—quickly follows the vacation small talk. Whenever two or more student teachers meet the conversation quickly turns to mentor teachers—how they are and whether they allow the student teacher to use their own lessons. Circulating among fellow student teachers the same age as my oldest son, I look for an empty table on the edge of the arranged work spaces near an exit but a good view of the action. I like to count the number of people texting while the instructors are talking.

Tonight we have a guest lecturer; a woman from Human Resources presents tips and discusses processes for applying for jobs after student teaching. I quickly notice the same people who raise their hands to answer the instructors’ prompts are the ones raising their hands like their arms are attached to jack in the boxes for the HR guru. More conversations swirl around me about mentor teachers not relinquishing the authority of their classrooms even slightly to their student teachers, but more people are excitedly talking about their lessons and whether they “clicked” with the students.
An extensive examination of my data sources in an effort to determine emergent themes, identified negotiation skills as one primary recurring theme for a successful student teaching experience. In light of Soreide’s (2006) research linking successful teacher identity development to negotiating and positioning in a school culture, the lack of knowledge of how to successfully negotiate with their mentor teachers created a stumbling block for many of the student teachers in my cohort. Since I spent many of the intervening years between high school and student teaching as a salesman, I was able to negotiate with my mentor and others in the school to politely but successfully implement many of the research based practices I learned in my university program while many of my fellow student teachers commented they were not allowed any personal expression of their own educational philosophies (Personal Journal Entry March, 2010). Current research suggests that matching expectations between the student teacher and the mentor teacher may be the key to successful student teaching practicum (Rajuan, Beijaard & Verloop, 2010). Interestingly, even after my prolonged engagement with student teaching, it was not until I began writing narratives and examining the entries written in my reflexive journal that I realized that negotiating skills (i.e. the skills of a professional salesman) were the essential life skill that led to what I perceived as my successful student teaching experience when so many in my cohort were consistently negative in their outlook (Personal Journal; Spring 2010).

Of course, mentor teacher and student teacher relationships vary tremendously; as noted, some current research indicates that how the expectations of both parties in the relationship mesh or fail to mesh is the most important indicator of a successful mentor/student teacher relationship (Rajuan, Beijaard & Verloop, 2010). All relationships within schools are created and maintained by a process of positioning and negotiating, including the negotiation of expectations and perceptions of capability (Soreide, 2006). It might be fruitful to specifically instruct student teachers in ways to courteously negotiate with their mentors.

Regardless, my prolonged engagement with fellow student teachers revealed that the student teacher—mentor relationship is viewed as absolutely the biggest factor of the success or failure of the practicum experience in the student teachers’ perspective. In the light of the importance of this relationship to the student teacher, the lack of experience and confidence in the techniques of persuasive negotiation that I took for granted during my practicum is a troubling void in the education of potential teachers.…

“My Story Part Two"

“Mrs. Carr wants to know if you are going to substitute teach after you’re done here,” Maggie announces one morning a few weeks before the end of my student teaching practicum. “I think they might want to hire you for the fall,” she adds. I’m a little taken aback; the school district is cutting teaching
positions at some schools and all the teachers on the surplus list have to get new jobs before new hiring is considered. Being a history teacher and not a coach is a major downside to most school principals, I’ve been told repeatedly by various sources.

All day I notice certain incidents. Teachers are initiating conversations with me who previously appeared unaware of my presence a few months earlier; the woman at the breakfast cart responds to me by name when I say thank you for the biscuit and sausage. Later that afternoon the woman who facilitates testing comes by to make sure when my final day of student teaching is scheduled to occur—she wants me to cover classes during testing to free up a few more teachers to administer the state exam. I begin to feel like I might want to be a regular part of this school. Several of my students have asked me if I might get a job at the high school the middle school feeds into—they want me to teach them again. It feels good.

Lately I notice my journal entries have been less about school culture and teaching and more about individual students. One particular student, a bright kid with a extreme lack of enthusiasm for being in school and even less intention of doing anything a teacher asks of him has been the focus of my attention. I like him, I want to connect with him and see if he can engage with school. Another student I used to experience behavior problems with has been much improved since we worked in the computer lab on a newspaper project weeks before—I had made a special attempt to praise her project while we were taping them to the wall. I wish I could find a creative way for her to show what she knows every unit; she doesn’t do well on the multiple choice tests the district insists we use.

“How’s everybody doing today,” I say as I always do on my way from my passing period post in the hall to the desk where I take attendance. Scanning the seating chart while the students quickly answer the bell work question on the overhead, I talk individually to a few students before I turn on the lights to begin the day’s lesson. Today the whole class is being disruptive and as I step solidly towards the door to close it I hear somebody say “Be quiet-he’s going to get mad.” One of the things I like best about children is that you can seldom hide your displeasure or other thoughts from them and they are usually honest; today is my second to last day to be their teacher.

Yesterday I taught about recognizing bias using civil war propaganda; today I’m going to teach about slavery. Not very comfortable for me—my own kids—who I generally refer to as my ‘monsters’—have made me very aware I have too much white liberal guilt to be color-blind. Hope this goes okay…

…A few weeks later…wow – no job. I feel kicked in the stomach; I really thought it was going to work out when Maggie told me the sixth grade social studies teacher was leaving. I guess the surplus list was pretty long…wish I didn’t feel like crying, must have been obvious to Mr. Douglass how disappointed I am…Theresa will be upset…damn damn damn…can’t believe they’re throwing me out of here and I have to come back and smile and substitute teach…I’m such an idiot…I need to catch my breath. (Journal entry, April 2011)
PRESERVICE TEACHER IDENTITY

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Even as a usually self-aware, often self-conscious, middle-aged, experienced adult, despite my realization of the importance and significance of the student teaching experience I confess I was consistently wrong in my basic assumptions about the reasons for the outcomes of many of my experiences. It seems undeniable in contrast that consciously promoting the negotiating skills I took for granted would benefit student teachers. Negotiating with my mentor about lesson plans and expectations of autonomy versus support, negotiating with students about behavior and expectations, negotiating with the school culture about my role and competence, I constantly utilized the vocational skills of a salesman to engage with the process of developing my identity as a teacher in harmony with Soreide’s theoretical construct of identity formation (Soreide, 2006). Mentor teachers and teacher educators may do well to consciously promote more self-awareness amongst student teachers as to their own expectations for their practicum and provide more tools to promote successful positioning and negotiation within school culture. As the generally older, more experienced partner in the student teacher—mentor relationship, mentor teachers should actively facilitate negotiations of basic expectations to improve outcomes (Rajuani, Bijiaard & Verloop, 2010).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The slavery lesson my second to last day of student teaching led to one of my best memories of student teaching. A student’s mom came in the next week and expressed to me that my telling her son that slavery once had nothing to do with the color of one’s skin had provoked some great dinner conversation for her family; I received a big hug and a warm fuzzy feeling that helped me cope with the principal telling me I was great but he didn’t have a job for me. I never realized how much I wanted to teach at that specific school until I didn’t get a job offer due to a local reduction of the teacher workforce. Slightly above 70 percent of the student body qualifies for free or reduced lunch, and partly in response to my childhood experiences I feel drawn to teaching students who need an adult who understands poverty and its effects. The following fall I took a long term substitute position in the school that quickly led to a full time position. As a former salesman/small business owner, I often run into old business acquaintances curious about my present circumstances. Currently in my second year in the classroom, sometime in the last couple months, without my consciously noting it at the time, my answer changed. It used to be “I’m teaching at…” Now I say “I am a teacher.”

EXERCISES

Successful negotiating relies on understanding the point of view and the needs of the person with whom you’re negotiating and presenting your own needs in the best possible light. Many student teachers may fail to realize that they are a guest in their mentors’ classroom and accidently cause alienation through what is
perceived as arrogance; many others may be too timid to express their needs and ask for some leeway to seek common ground.

One possible solution: role-playing. Have education students pair up, with one student playing the part of the mentor and one the part of the student teacher. (Alternatively, a college of education instructor could play a role, or even a guest experienced mentor teacher.) Have students initiate and resolve negotiations of issues suggested by the instructor or by fellow students. Above all, follow these precepts and provide multiple opportunities to engage in mentoring conversations that emphasize, support, and encourage:

- Courtesy and respect and giving way graciously at all times!
- Humor!
- Reducing arrogance!
- Having fun!

REFERENCES


2. GROWING INTO THE TEACHING PROFESSION THROUGH SERVICE LEARNING

INTRODUCTION

Growing into the teaching profession requires more than passing certification exams and completing required university courses; it requires an understanding of the “big picture” of learning within the context of a community (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Buchanan, Baldwin & Rudisell, 2002). An environment where creativity is valued and where an ethic of service is nurtured establishes a place where pre-service teachers gain a sense of the whole rather than a piece-meal, test-driven picture of the profession. Research studies indicate that the big picture approach deepens understanding and allows students to integrate and use more of what they learn (Hammerness & Darling-Hammond, 2005; Wade, 1997). Service-learning pedagogy provides such a framework and encourages dialogue with experienced educators to establish a plan of action, to reflect on their experiences through an academically informed lens, and to celebrate solutions within the local or global community. The relationships that emerge through partnerships create a synergy that some describe as mentoring (Mullen, 1999; Tietel, 2001; Portner, 2005).

Service-learning offers new teachers a practical and academic means to glimpse the “vision of professional practice” that is at the heart of preparing teachers for a changing world (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 11). Research shows that students, who engage in service-learning during field experiences, share their experiences with enthusiasm and show a deeper understanding of the multiple dimensions of the role of a teacher (Buchanan Baldwin & Rudisell, 2002; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Furco, 2001). In that learning process, they are partners with experienced educators meeting very real needs of the learning community, and they learn the value of community partnerships in paying attention to the whole child within his/her world.

Learning about the role of engaged citizenship is embedded in the curriculum through the content of social studies. The National Council for the Social Studies ((NCSS, 1994; Parker, 2012) clearly identifies learning to participate as active citizens in the political, civic, and economic life of our society as the goal of social studies education. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005, p. 10) remind us that in addition to the professional expectation of knowledge and skills, “in the United
States, education must serve the purposes of a democracy” (p. 10). Thus, as a social studies teacher educator, I am concerned when social studies education is given a back-seat in the curriculum. The task of teaching and learning the values of citizenship in our democracy present a daunting challenge for professional educators, even in the best of times.

NEED FOR CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

As the program coordinator of an elementary teacher certification program at a large university, one of our primary goals is to graduate teacher candidates who can effectively educate young learners and engage in professional practices in the communities where they teach. From my perspective as chair of the social studies program and instructor of field-based methods courses, I became increasingly aware that our pre-service teachers often had limited opportunities to observe or teach social studies lessons. They frequently reported they could not teach a social studies lesson during their field-placements because “my teacher says she does not teach social studies.” How could they learn to teach children about being citizens in the world? Certainly, the university cannot demand that our school partners teach particular content; however, when I looked at the bigger picture, state and national standards did expect social studies instruction in elementary schools and accrediting entities expected social studies instruction in teacher preparation.

I began to reflect on what was essential within our teacher preparation program. Surely, it was more than another lesson on the Civil War or labeling rivers on a map. When I observed pre-service teachers at elementary schools, I saw mentor teachers actively engaged in the kind of social studies education I wanted my students to do. They were directing music programs for children to entertain their parents, serving doughnuts to encourage dads to have breakfast with their kids, collecting coats for children in the winter, or planning celebrations to recognize students’ academic success. My students, however, missed the big picture because they were too narrowly focused on completing an assignment to teach a social studies lesson.

In an effort to make field-based assignments more connected and explicit within the context of the methods course, I restructured social studies tasks according to service-learning principles with three cohorts of elementary pre-service teachers. The purpose of these assignments was intended to shift the perceptions of pre-service teachers who often approached the field-based placement with an attitude of “What can you do for me?” to a more thoughtful and critical, “What can I do for you?”

The following questions guided my inquiry:

- To what extent did service-learning pedagogy embody essential elements of teacher preparation with pre-service elementary teachers?
- How was service-learning articulated within the context of field activities?
In this chapter, I will present a descriptive case study focused on one cohort of elementary pre-service teachers who interacted with their mentor teachers through the lens of service-learning pedagogy. Through informal interviews, reflective journaling, and extensive field notes, I examined how teacher candidates developed a sense of an ethic of service and how that process impacted their mentoring relationships and the larger school community.

I begin with a brief overview of the contextual framework of service-learning pedagogy, and then provide a description of the case study and the themes that evolved from the cohort as they participated in specific service-learning activities. The discussion of the results of my inquiry provides a rich source of data for implications for practice for others who wish to include these types of activities into teacher preparation courses. I conclude with a brief activity of “thoughtful questions” that can be used for class discussions, online discourse, or professional development activities.

Understanding Service Learning

When I first introduced the service-learning assignment, students saw it as just another task to incorporate into their 4-week field experience. They asked me to tell them exactly what to do so they could check it off their list, a typical response among our 20-something students. Instead, I met with several former students who were becoming mentors for these future teachers. I explained the assignment to them in terms of the learning process—identifying a need, solving problems with school partners, and carrying out the project. Allison’s response was typical. She immediately thought of several projects but understood her new role guiding pre-service teachers to discover the need at the school on their own terms. She offered them encouragement as six of them decided to volunteer hours alongside some teachers in a project that eventually earned $800 in matching funds for the elementary school store. Subsequent teacher interviews and students’ reflective journals confirmed the project was far more than checking a task off a list. Service-learning, indeed, takes many forms within a community.

Service-learning is often misunderstood as synonymous with volunteerism, community service, field-experiences, or internships. However, for the current discussion, the distinctions are important (Furco, 2010 g), particularly in service-oriented professions such as teacher education. It does matter how the service relates to the overall academic preparation. I learned more about the importance of the words when I served as a member of the university council of service-learning and we adopted a definition of service-learning for our campus. The hyphen in the term service-learning communicates the relationship between service and learning that characterizes the pedagogy (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 2003; Furco, 2001). The punctuation represents the dependence of the words on one another in our thinking as well as in our practice. Other forms of volunteerism and community service do not necessarily rely on our learning to complete the service, but with service-learning participants apply the skills relevant to that field to address needs of community partners. As a mentor with the Service-Learning Faculty Fellows
program and a reviewer of manuscripts and conference proposals, I find people often struggle to articulate the relationship between the service and the academic goals.

Another aspect of service-learning that matters is that it is carried out as a partnership between the teaching institution and the community agency/school. The expertise of the community partners must be recognized. They have an inside perspective on the real needs of their clients and their agency that may not be evident to an external group who think they know the problem and volunteer time or money to achieve their own solutions. Although these volunteers feel good about their service, the agency and its clients may perceive it as charity (not always appreciated), or as addressing issues that do not concern them. Let me hasten to add that volunteerism is critical for many community agencies to exist and is valued as civic engagement, but it is not service-learning that enriches academic study. Neither is community service which is a term that many associate with the judicial system that assigns community service (i.e. picking up trash) in lieu of confinement.

A third aspect of service-learning that matters is an awareness of the considerable amount of time it will require in addition to regular class preparation. Instructors who spend time with community partners at their sites establish a common bond of respect and trust that undergird the success of projects they undertake together. They communicate similar expectations to students and value the knowledge and skills each brings to the project. Community partners are the experts describing their programs and needs, but we can only know the inside story when we invest time in learning from them. In the best service-learning projects, faculty join students at the site/school to observe the everyday activities, talk with partners/teachers, think about problems and potential solutions, and then engage in actions with community members that lead to mutually beneficial solutions. Ernest Stringer (2010) describes this approach as “Look, Think, and Act.” It is the plan he used in his successful community action research with Australian Outback communities and emphasized the importance of each partner’s knowledge and resources.

A fourth aspect of service-learning that matters is the recognition that it is a people-centered pedagogy. It is well-suited to academic fields of study such as education, sociology, nursing, or family sciences. However, on our campus, service-learning is more wide-spread. Engineering courses and the agricultural sciences also have strong service-learning classes that link scholarship of teaching and learning (Boyer, 1990).

Service-learning pedagogy addresses messy questions without simple answers, but brings lasting benefits when carefully designed and carried out. Academic benefits of students engaged in service-learning projects include gains in grades, retention, and positive attitudes toward others (Astin, 1998). In teacher education it fosters greater willingness to adapt curriculum and instruction to meet student needs, according to a survey by Boyle-Baise (2009).

For us, however, the benefits come with a note of caution. Service-learning, even within a class, must have an opt-out clause for individual cases. For example,
the student whose grandmother died with Alzheimer’s during a semester, needed to
opt out of the project of collecting oral histories from elderly Hospice patients. She
and her instructor negotiated an alternative assignment that allowed some
emotional space but still met the goals of the course. At other times, students ask
for alternatives because of their discomfort with an unfamiliar experience. I was
surprised to read of the resistance of students from affluent suburbs to participating
in a tutoring program in a low-income, high-risk urban area (Evans, Taylor,
Dunlap & Miller, 2009). Anglo and African American students were equally
uncomfortable in high poverty communities. However, part of the value of service-
learning for future teachers lies in extending personal experiences. They can see
the school environment through another lens and gain insight into community
wisdom. So when students want to opt-out of a program to tutor children in a low-
income after-school program, I encourage them to accept the opportunity to grow
as educators. Pettigrew (1998) notes that one of the ways we overcome
stereotyping of other groups of people is to have a personal connection to a person
in that group. We then can use that personal knowledge and experience to relate to
other individuals in the group rather than relying on uninformed perceptions of a
group as a whole to make decisions.

DESIGN OF STUDY

The descriptive case study approach provides a theoretical framework for
analyzing the data from the service-learning experiences of the cohorts of
elementary pre-service teachers during their field placements one semester. The
large number of pre-service teachers (n = 70) meant that we placed students in 8
different elementary schools within the region. However, the process of making
observations about the school needs and engaging in problem-solving with school
partners created a well-bounded body of data for analysis as a case study
(Merriam, 1998). The assignment was the same across all three groups of students
and the instructors shared a common understanding of the service-learning
projects’ goals and purposes. The results of the projects document the value of
students participating in professional work at a school while gaining classroom
experiences.

For the study, data sources included weekly observations and field notes by
university course instructors/supervisors, students’ reflective photo journals,
evaluations from mentor teachers, and informal interviews with students, teachers,
and principals. Instructors communicated regularly throughout the process to
maintain common expectations. At the conclusion of the semester, students shared
photo journals and the stories of their work in an informal celebration of all the
students. Their enthusiasm and the overwhelmingly positive responses from
teacher evaluations affirmed the place of service-learning projects within the social
studies course. The integration of service-learning projects engaged pre-service
teachers in schools and communities to better understand the many dimensions of a
career as a professional educator.
CASE STUDY: FIELD-BASED ASSIGNMENTS WITH SERVICE LEARNING

The service-learning project assignment is integrated into the third semester of the undergraduate teacher education program in the College of Education. During that semester, students enroll in four methods courses and have a 4–5 week field placement with a teacher in a K–5 classroom. The intent is for the pre-service teachers to gain practical skills in each of four content areas—mathematics, science, social studies, and English/language arts—prior to a full semester of student teaching. Service-learning offered a bridge between the university academic emphasis and the practical application emphasis during the placements. It belonged in social studies because of the common focus on preparing citizens for living in a global environment (Wade, 1997; NCSS, 2010). The projects encouraged students to take a proactive approach to their learning in ways that could benefit partner schools while enriching typical field-based experiences in classrooms. Students gained in-depth understandings of teachers as professionals who did more than present text materials and grade papers.

Students were assigned placements in elementary schools across the three independent school districts adjacent to the university. In the study were 4 Title I schools with 48 pre-service students; 2 average (moderate income levels) schools with 11 students, 2 affluent schools (one well established, new (2nd year) with 11 students. Three of the Title I schools were new to the cohort placements although they had accepted student teachers in previous semesters. The school populations typically were 500–650 with an overall district distribution of 35% Anglo, 49% Hispanic, 14% African American, and 2% other. However, within the schools in the study, one of the affluent schools was more than 70% Anglo while two of the Title I schools were more than 85% Hispanic.

Each school had different needs. Thus each student, or group of students, had to create their own plan with the partners at their school. The social studies course included instruction on citizenship and the dimensions of citizenship in addition to readings on service-learning. To increase understanding of service-learning, we invited the University Service-Learning coordinator to discuss characteristics of a service-learning project, show examples from other academic fields, and answer questions before students submitted the projects.

Examples of Projects

After the students’ first two days in the schools, university instructors noticed a difference in the ways these students used their time. Quickly they had found ways to step into classroom routines and accompanied the children to music, art, and the library to learn more about the school. They asked how they could help with events to promote better communication with parents and found out about the challenges some families faced in supporting their children’s extra school activities. They weighed the importance of a fall festival for community support and as a fund raiser for essential supplies against going out with friends. They gave their time and energy to plan and carry out projects that ultimately benefitted the whole
school. The children they saw as struggling readers in the classroom, proudly brought their families to meet their “new teachers.”

Student groups of twos and threes shared ideas with their teachers and submitted plans to their instructors. Projects uniquely responsive to particular school needs emerged and university instructors provided feedback to avoid possible pitfalls. One group partnered with a librarian to plan a celebration for children who had reached benchmarks in reading library books. Two other groups served “muffins to moms” and “doughnuts to dads” before school to create a welcoming atmosphere for parents. Another team created scenery and costumes for the 4th grade musical. Others joined parent-teacher teams to staff booths at family night events and collected supplies from outside agencies for prizes and for a school store.

EMERGENT THEMES

Four themes emerged from the analysis of the data sources in the case study and show the impact of the service-learning projects in students’ knowledge and understanding of the multiple facets of teachers’ professional practices. Students engaged in service-learning projects gained a holistic vision of professional practice based on their photo journal reflections, mentor teacher evaluations and informal interviews, and field observations from instructors.

The most prevalent theme is students’ perceptions of themselves as teachers and of teachers’ work. Closely related is the second theme focusing on the network of collaborations required to maintain a positive, learning environment. The third theme describes the array of creative problem-solving tasks facing teachers each day; the fourth theme notes the engagement of teachers as active citizens in the community.

Perceptions of Students as Teachers

By the second day in the classroom, students noted the multiple aspects of the responsibilities within the lives of teachers that extended beyond teaching lessons in a single classroom. University instructors recorded observations about the students such as, “She (pre-service teacher) was away from the classroom with children in art class” and “She was busy reading with a child”. The observations were not new, but seldom had we seen students so actively engaged within the first 6 hours of their field placement. We believed the lens of seeking ways to contribute to the school was a major factor in the change. As they saw themselves as teachers, they acted more like responsible teachers than college students observing in an elementary school class. Mentor teachers and administrators noticed the change in our students who were visible around the building and responding to needs before they were asked. Their presence immediately impacted the positive learning climate.
Networks of Collaborations

As students worked side by side with mentor teachers in tutoring children after school, in chaperoning a field trip, and in setting up the book fair, they saw the efforts of faculty and staff combined to achieve school wide goals. They immersed themselves into that educational team within the 4-week field-placement experience as they took on service-learning projects. Several students at one school selected the school book fair as their project and described their process of setting up the materials in an inviting display. They explained how they collaborated with administrators, teachers, staff, and volunteers, and recorded observations about the collaboration in their final photo journal reflection. One said, “I did not realize all the work and extra volunteer hours it takes to successfully put on a book fair each year.” The engagement in a school-wide project provided an opportunity to see a bigger picture of their future as teachers.

Creative Problem Solving

Students frequently talked about the tasks of solving problems with limited resources and with little advance notice. Yet, they found solutions to needs they observed in the school and used their emerging skills as teachers to meet those needs. One group in a Title I school saw the nearly-bare school store shelves that greatly devalued the Buffalo Bucks (reward tickets for academic success). After discussions with administrators and a group of teachers, they reorganized the school store and acquired donations from area businesses to reward student achievements. This is the group that earned $800 in matching funds to spruce up the store. At another school, a couple of pre-service teachers went to music class with the children and saw a single teacher preparing 4th graders for a music program. They assessed the situation and offered to make costumes and scenery for a music program from materials they found at home or at school. On the night of the performance, they then stepped in as prompters for children with memorized lines.

Acting as the stage director, crew, and understudy for the armadillo for the 4th grade music program...really made me feel like a part of the school and its community. When we had problems, we solved them together. Students helped each other out whenever something was missing. The project showed me, and especially the students, just how important citizenship is. When we all work together, we can achieve our goals.

The principal also recognized the valuable contribution of these students and reported back to the associate dean of the College of Education, “Your students did so much for our children and teachers. I want them back, anytime. They are the kind of teachers our schools need.” That is a welcome comment for graduates entering the profession.
A few groups of pre-service teachers saw an even bigger picture of the profession as their projects reached out into the larger community. When children came to school in the winter without coats, they asked questions. They began to understand the connections between schools and the communities in which the children lived. They sponsored a coat drive through the Community-in-Schools director in one school and provided more than 150 coats to children during the winter. They hosted a movie night at another school to bring families in the neighborhood together and directed a games day at yet another school. They reached out to communities that were no longer just demographic statistics on a web page but faces of children in the classroom. From those who participated in the projects linking school and community came this understanding, “I now see that there are many other roles I will take on in the school other than a classroom teacher. Being a teacher means being an active member of the school. Our project made me very excited for my future job as a teacher.”

Another student described her experience of growing into the teaching profession in this way,

In my service-learning project, I engaged in professional relationships with parents and learned the importance of developing relationships with the school community. I actually got to see that in action and be involved in it. If I had not been asked to do anything outside the normal school day, I would have missed a valuable learning [experience]. I saw that even [by doing] a small thing for the school outside regular school hours, I can help make my school community stronger.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

Reflecting on the themes, I saw that the new assignment showed students the relevance of social studies in a practical manner as they scrutinized their classroom knowledge and skills in light of the classroom teacher’s expertise to solve real educational problems. They observed more carefully the mentor teachers’ procedures that characterized a positive learning environment and began to identify areas where their participation could augment particular practices. Their proactive approach from the beginning of their field based learning broadened the scope of their observations throughout the day. They saw teachers adapting materials for ESL students during their conference time or arranging for a child to be picked up after tutoring during lunchtime. They began to understand that professional educators invest immeasurably in their schools and that their own commitment of time extended the impact of teachers’ efforts. When pre-service teachers worked with their mentor teachers, they could tutor 6 children instead of 3; they served muffins to 50 parents in 20 minutes instead of 30; they reduced setup time for a fall festival by one hour while adding two additional stations; they managed fund raisers and distributed school supplies without interrupting learning.
An ethic of service was becoming part of the teacher preparation program among teacher candidates. The term ethic/ethics suggests “doing the right thing,” a common slogan on our campus. However, the understanding of ethics extends beyond the sign in the student union. Ethics are the standards of a profession that define what is expected of those in the field. Professional standards of behavior (www.nea.org) may define expectations associated with professional credentials and may even have legal implications. In teacher education, service is rooted in a strong tradition with John Dewey, the progressive era, Paulo Friere, the Carnegie Foundation, and others that inform today’s service-learning (Buchanan et al., 2002; Todd, 2010). The ethic of service links schools with local communities that benefit from pre-service teachers’ activities and provide them with richer understanding of being a teacher and the impact of their work beyond the typical field-based requirements.

Jim Clopton (2010) suggests that prior generations of students who received public funds for their college education (i.e., GI Bill) held stronger views about giving service back to the community. Today’s students increasingly fund their education through private sources and see its value as a private gain rather than balancing education with a focus on the common good (Engsberg, 2004; Clopton, 2010). Service-learning bridges the spaces between the university and the community, between public and private concerns for the teaching profession.

In study of characteristics of generations, Rickes (2009) notes that millennials (born 1982–2001) have a strong sense of their special place in the world and feeling of entitlement from their parents and society. They also have a sense of civic-mindedness and the belief in their own abilities to solve problems facing society. In that respect, a structured pedagogy of service-learning appeals to millennials’ life views. The opportunity to work in teams and participate in activities as a group also aligns with service-learning values on partnerships, collaboration, and solving problems together. Millennials enjoy working with others their age, but will expand their professional experiences by interacting with school partners to improve education for today’s children, and extend to other children the sense of being sheltered and special.

Paired with the ethic of service, McWilliam and Dawson (2008) suggest that the task of the academic community is “orchestrating a ‘creativity-enhancing’ learning pedagogy” (p. 634). Communities of learners have a synergy that both connects and separates individuals in the movement through learning. We expect learners to make some mistakes in their choices of direction, but those mistakes allow them to take creative risks and explore the unexpected. Such an environment in a school community lends itself to solving problems that exist and gives students an opportunity to use fresh eyes to identify what has become the norm in the school. The synergy between mentors and future teachers is enhanced.
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Service-learning offers pre-service teachers socially relevant experiences that support academic learning in teacher preparation programs. It provides a framework for meaningful dialogue with experienced, professional educators who demonstrate the multiple dimensions of a successful teaching career. It not only meets needs of the community, but also develops relationships with people who have a different lens on the lives of young learners. Service-learning pedagogy builds bridges through better communication and shared visions. In the case study, we see how service-learning pedagogy can foster creativity and nurture an ethic of service in mentoring new professional educators.

Questions for Discussion

• To what extent can partnerships within the community enrich the teacher preparation program at the university to be relevant for a changing world?
• What are some ways you could incorporate service-learning activities within current courses?
• Identify some of the benefits for all of the partners participating in a service-learning based curriculum in a teacher preparation program.

STEPS TO TAKE

• Select a particular site with leadership/partner
• Observe this community and listen to people
• Learn about the partner organization through their eyes
• Assess what you have to offer and how that meets goals of the partner
• Talk together to narrow the focus of the need and the skills you can offer
• Propose ways to contribute to solutions
• Act, review, modify, (That’s good teaching)
• Report results from perspectives of all the partners
• Bridge generational gaps with collaborative partnership

REFLECTION AND CELEBRATION ACTIVITY

Reflection and celebration are the jewels in the process of mentoring pre-service teachers into the profession through service-learning. The significance of a service-learning project often is understood only after the actual work is completed. Partners often only realize the impact of the project as they step away from the hands-on aspect and consider the whole picture of the experience for all of the participants. Some projects that seemed inconsequential from our own viewpoint carried a larger overall impact as the whole picture emerged. Make time for individual reflection and celebration with those who shared the experience of service and learning in a creativity-enhancing environment.
Using the following questions as a guide can further extend this exercise through class discussion or as a journaling activity:

1. How does your course experience apply an important concept from course?
2. Describe the service-learning project. How did you identify the project?
3. How did you confirm with the school/community the need?
4. What was one benefit for your service-learning partner?
5. What was of benefit to you in preparing for your role as a professional educator?
6. What was one surprising insight you gained from participating in a service-learning project?

REFERENCES


