

Urban Teacher Preparation and Retention: An Exploration of Experiences

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Abstract

Sara Beth Ewell: Urban Teacher Preparation and Retention: An Exploration of Experiences (Under the Direction of George Noblit)

This study reports findings from a longitudinal case study of a teacher through her teacher preparation program, first four years of teaching in an urban middle school and participation in a university school partnership. The participant taught in a district where over 95 percent of the students lived at or below the federal poverty level. The study included over twenty interviews and observations; each focused on gaining insight into the experiences that led to her retention in an urban district. The purpose of the research was to provide a grounded view of the participant's experiences to inform research on urban teacher preparation and retention. The results suggest that the university school partnership contributed to the participant's commitment and retention as an urban educator.

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For all of those who have faced the darkest of days, hope makes everything possible.

For my mom, who never stopped believing.

For William who made all of this possible. And for Will the greatest gift.

Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	vi
Chapter	
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Literature Review.....	7
Introduction.....	7
Urban context.....	8
Teacher preparation and urban teacher preparation.....	13
Teacher retention and urban teacher retention.....	26
University school partnerships.....	34
Conclusion.....	40
III. Methodology	43
Introduction.....	43
Research methods.....	43
Data Collection.....	45
Summary of data.....	48
Analyzing the data.....	49
IV. Data Analysis.....	57
Introduction.....	57
Description of Pacific College Partnership.....	57
Hilary’s origins and how she came to teaching.....	59

Hilary’s selection of Pacific College for graduate school.....	62
1 st year 2003-2004 academic year: courses, student teaching, & summer preparation.....	64
2 nd Year 2004-2005 academic year: 1 st Year Smith Junior High & continued work toward master’s degree.....	66
3 rd Year 2005-2006 academic year: 2 nd Year Smith Junior High & completion of master’s degree.....	76
4 th Year 2006-2007 academic year: 3 rd year Smith Junior High.....	77
5 th Year 2007-2008 academic year: reflection on the Partnership.....	81
Hilary’s ending beliefs & commitments.....	81
V. Conclusions and Implications.....	85
Introduction.....	85
What Hilary brought to teaching.....	85
What this study has taught me about my research questions.....	86
Connection to the Literature.....	95
Implications.....	97
Final Reflection.....	99
References.....	102

List of Tables

Table

1. Hilary's Course of Study and Teaching.....63
2. Description of the Partnership.....91
3. Benefits of the Partnership.....91

Chapter 1

Introduction

Educational scholarship all too frequently fails to have an impact on these features of day-to-day life in schools. Dismissed (often appropriately) as naively idealistic, irrelevant, or impractical, insights and recommendations from research are seen as dangerously radical ideas or as whims of an academic community that lacks a genuine commitment to language & culturally diverse, or low-income, minority children and to the teachers and schools serving them. Changes within the cultures of all our educational institutions are required. Any effort to transform teacher education and reform urban schools must also transform the relationship between the university and the schools and make fundamental changes in the culture of the university itself (Center X, 2008).

The research conducted for this dissertation served to bridge the chasm between educational scholarship and practical application and significance. The study examined the experiences of Hilary at the start of her teaching career through her teacher preparation program, the first three years of teaching in an urban school, participation in a university school partnership and ultimately as a retained teacher in an urban district. Hilary completed her Master's Degree in Middle School Education through an internship pathway (this pathway is described in detail in future chapters) while employed at a school that was creating a partnership with her school of education. The study provided an in-depth exploration of Hilary's experiences and reflections on her experiences, particularly as they pertain to her decision to remain teaching in an urban classroom.

The purpose of this study was to identify attributes of effective urban teacher preparation and retention programs. In other words, this study placed a face on one of our nation's education systems most significant shortcomings, teacher preparation and retention

in urban settings. The qualitative study took place over five academic years and included over 20 combined interviews and observations. The instrumental case study documented the preparation and teaching experiences of the participant in a major metropolitan area where more than 90 percent of students lived at or below the federally-designated poverty level.

This chapter briefly discusses prior research on urban teacher preparation and retention, why it is significant, how my research added depth to and expanded the current research and the specific research questions this dissertation intended to answer.

American urban public schools have long been “the shame of the nation” (Kozol, 2006) and fail to educate millions of the nation’s children each year. Despite the ailing state of urban schools and the political push for school reform there has been little comprehensive change nationally to improve the quality of schooling and level of student achievement for all children across districts. The National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future (1996) (NCTAF) identifies a possible explanation for the stagnancy of education reform, “On the whole, the school reform movement has ignored the obvious: What teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what children learn”(p.5).

Upon analysis of the Commission’s statement two critical elements of improving urban public schools emerges: teacher preparation and teacher retention. Many studies link teachers who complete a teacher preparation program and become certified with successful classroom practices, student achievement and higher rates of teacher retention (Ashton & Crocker, 1986; Darling-Hammond, Chung & Freelow, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Evertson, Hawley, & Zlotnick, 1985; Greenburg, 1983; Haberman, 1984; Olsen, 1985). Teacher retention has also been linked with higher rates of student achievement and saving

school districts' significant financial resources that can be channeled toward improving student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; NCTAF, 2007).

Despite the significant research on teacher preparation and its connection with student achievement and teacher retention many of the major studies fall short in acknowledging the radical differences in teaching contexts. Many studies fail to explain how their findings can be applied specifically to urban school. The literature also lacks a solid foundation of how teacher preparation programs can address the contextual differences among public schools.

The term “urban”, as it pertains to this dissertation, recognizes the geographic, socioeconomic, racial and cultural meanings that are attached to it. Urban generally refers to densely populated areas of low socioeconomic, racial minorities. The term urban also insinuates a failed system that lies within the deficit paradigm. The deficit paradigm is driven by the need to determine who or what within the system has failed and what can be done to fix it (Noguera, 2003; Weiner, 2003, 2006).

The literature also fails to construct a comprehensive plan for increasing teaching retention in urban schools where one half of teachers leave the profession every five years (Haberman, 1984). These districts often scramble to fill positions each year with teachers that are not well-prepared to meet the demands of teaching at the expense of the students most in need of consistent qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1994, 2000). The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future revealed that students in high-need minority schools had less than a fifty percent chance of having a math or science teacher who had a degree and teaching license in their field (NCTAF, 1996).

One aspect of teacher retention that shows promise is creating school environments with multiple avenues of support. The literature links supportive administration and overall

school climate as factors that increase teacher retention (NCTAF, 2006). One possibility, which is the focus of this dissertation, for creating these supportive school environments is through university school partnerships. University school partnerships are collaborative partnerships between public schools and schools of education that support both pre and in service teachers. Despite the excellent support the partnerships provide there is limited research on university school partnerships and their impact on teacher retention.

My study served to enrich and expand the research on how teacher preparation programs and university school partnerships are being advanced as a way to address the issue of urban education retention. To initiate this line of inquiry it was necessary to start with grounded small scale studies. These studies provide conceptual development and contextual definition that larger scale studies could be designed to build upon.

Research Questions:

What was the experience of this teacher in an urban teacher preparation and university school partnership program?

Hilary's experiences through her teacher preparation program, including the completion of the intern pathway (which will be discussed and defined in chapter four), and her first four years as an urban middle school teacher provided critical insight into the day to day realities of urban teacher preparation and retention. The continuous research that took place over four and a half years provided a longitudinal view of Hilary's growth and an ability to critically synthesize and analyze her experiences.

What ways did the intern pathway teacher preparation program contribute to the teacher's experience?

Hilary completed her master's degree in middle school education through the intern pathway. The central goal of the internship pathway was to place students as head classroom teachers in high need urban schools after completing 50 percent of their coursework. Hilary therefore was able to complete her master's degree while working as a credentialed head teacher. Although many teachers in the intern pathway accepted positions at partnership schools it was not a requirement.

What ways did the partnership program contribute to the teacher's experience?

During Hilary's first three years as a head teacher her teacher preparation college was creating a university partnership with her school. The research provided a lens through which to see how the partnership developed, created avenues of support and the overall successes and failures through the eyes of a teacher who it intended to support.

What other factors affected this teacher's experience?

Beyond the partnership program at her school, there were many other aspects of her teacher preparation and teaching context that supported Hilary's decision to continue as an urban middle school teacher. Examination of these experiences also provided insight into the factors that hindered and supported Hilary to continue her commitment to urban education.

In the four chapters that follow, Hilary's experiences and prior research are analyzed to provide insight into urban teacher preparation and retention. In particular the university school partnership is critically explored as an avenue for supporting and retaining urban teachers.

Chapter two provides a comprehensive review of the literature on crucial areas of prior research critical to my study. The areas reviewed include: urban education; teacher preparation and urban teacher preparation; teacher retention and urban teacher retention; and

university school partnerships. The review of each of these areas of literature frames this study in the context of the larger research arena.

Chapter three defines and defends the methodology used for this study. It defines the rationale and necessity of using a longitudinal case study to provide insight into urban teacher preparation. This chapter also discusses the limitations of the research, my own positionality and the selection of Hilary as the case study participant.

Chapter four illuminates Hilary's story through teacher preparation and her first four years as a teacher in an urban middle school. Hilary's voice leads the reader through her everyday experiences and allows insight into the aspects of preparation, university school partnerships and overall school climate that increase or diminish urban teacher retention. Conclusions are then drawn based on Hilary's story to further inform research and practice.

Chapter five provides final assertions on the implications of this research. It also answers the research questions laid out in this chapter, makes connections back to the literature review and provides final conclusions on how to further this line of inquiry.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The study of Hilary's experiences as a pre-service and novice teacher provide critical insight into urban teacher retention. Prior research has established the importance of teacher retention in making the difference for kids. However, one in every five new teachers leaves the classroom within the first three years (Henke, Chen, Geis & Kepper, 2000) while between one-third and one-half of all new teachers leave the classroom by the end of five years (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Keller, 2003).

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) (2007) found that over the past fifteen years teacher attrition has risen by over 50 percent nationwide. And while 2.25 million teachers have been hired in the past decade 2.7 million have been lost. NCTAF (2007) further reports, "During the 2003-2004 school year, 332,700 left teaching (245,429 for other pursuits, and 88,271 retired" (p. 2).

The issue of urban teacher retention will be addressed later in this literature review. This review examines four areas of literature relevant to this study: urban context; teacher preparation and urban teacher preparation; teacher retention and urban teacher retention; and university-school partnerships.

Urban Context

Introduction

American urban public schools have long been “the shame of the nation” (Kozol, 2006) failing to educate millions of the nation’s children each year. Seventy percent of students who enter urban high schools fail to graduate (Berghoff, 2006). Despite the dismal state of urban schools and the political push for school reform there has been little comprehensive change nationally to improve the quality of schooling and level of student achievement for all children across districts. Noguera (2003) argues,

The complex and seemingly intractable array of social and economic problems in urban areas must be addressed and school-based policies that respond to the problems must be devised; otherwise, pervasive school failure in cities across the United States will continue to be the norm (p. 6).

There is general agreement in the field about the defining characteristics of urban communities and schools. The work of a handful of specific scholars is used in this section to portray and define the urban context which is referred to throughout this literature review and dissertation.

Defining Urban

The term urban represents not only geographic location but also the “socioeconomic and racial connotations” (Noguera, 2003, p. 23) of the location. In general the term urban refers to non-white, poor, language minority individuals. “Urban” evolved out of much more explicitly negative terms such as “inner-city”, “ghetto”, “slum”, and “hood”. But despite the variation in names the literature is referring to the same population. “Urban” is also used to describe the largest school districts in the country which serve one third of students

nationwide. Among the issues urban schools face: low test scores, low grades, high drop out rates, poor attendance, unmotivated students, transient student populations, burned out teachers, and unsafe buildings (Noguera, 2003).

Many authors also identify poverty as a significant attribute of urban communities, with many children exposed to extreme social, psychological and physical deprivation that goes hand in hand with poverty (Burnstein & Sears, 1998; Howey, 1999; Sharpton, 2002). Studies found that ninety percent of the nation's increase in poverty has taken place in the nation's largest cities. These communities are also susceptible to high levels of child abuse, violence and drug use (Howey, 1999; Sharpton, 2002).

Defining Urban Schools

Urban schools are often described as “hopeless”, “failing”, or “in crisis”. However, Noguera (2003) argues none of these terms accurately depicts the condition of urban schooling. If something was to be deemed in “crisis” then one would expect expedient action to take place. On the other hand, if something is deemed in such disrepair that it is hopeless, than no action is taken at all. Neither of these descriptions fit the state of urban public schools. Noguera (2003) argues that while it is difficult to assign one word to describe the state of urban public schools it was important to keep in mind, “Public schools are the only institutions in this country charged with providing for the educational needs of poor children” (p.7).

The Urban Network to Improve Teacher Education (UNITE) analyzed characteristics of students living in urban cities and determined that many of them lived in unsupervised homes and experienced feelings of isolation due to minimal meaningful relationships and acceptance by differing social and racial groups. The research suggests these students find

acceptance in peer groups that often exert negative influences early in their lives and live in small, highly populated communities that form territorial boundaries and groups isolating them from their neighboring communities (Howey 1999).

Weiner (2006) argues that urban education is situated within a deficit paradigm, “...when students misbehave or achieve poorly, they must be ‘fixed’ because the problem inheres in the students or their families, not in the social ecology of the school, grade or classroom” (p. 42). The deficit paradigm is developed yet diverges in two separate branches—one that argues parents and students are the problem and the other that teachers are the problem. Either way, the paradigm is based on the notion that someone is “wrong” and student achievement in urban schools cannot be improved until this person or persons is “fixed” (Weiner, 2003, 2006).

Nogeura (2003) also asserts the claim that discussion of improving urban education quickly turns to, “Should we blame the lazy, unmotivated kids, or the irresponsible and neglectful parents? What about the ineffective and burned out teachers, or the mindless bureaucrats and unreliable administrators who run the school districts?” (p. xi). Nogeura and Weiner’s research compliments one another, creating a cohesive argument of the negative, deficit focused atmosphere of urban public schools.

Segregation among public schools, with minority students representing the population in urban schools is an increasing trend. Kozol (1992, 2005, 2007) details the segregation of urban schools. Kozol (2005) writes of one neighborhood:

...there were 11,000 children in the elementary schools and middle schools in 1997. Of these 11,000, only 26 were white, a segregation rate of 99.8 percent. Two tenths of a one percentage point now marked the difference between legally enforced apartheid in the South of 1954 and socially and economically enforced apartheid in this New York City neighborhood (p. 9).

A Shift in Focus

For many years the focus of all public schooling was on achieving equity. However, in the 1970s questions about student performance began to emerge and national organizations took an interest in defining adequate progress. In 1983, The Members of the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk* creating a new focus on excellence in public education.

Toward the end of the 1980s an ideological shift occurred and the issue of quality education became more clearly defined. Although most states had created more stringent graduation requirements, these reforms were not seen as adequate in improving the overall quality of American Education. This view coupled with the emerging opinion that American Education was not up to par with international education was the beginning of the push for standardized testing and a national curriculum. Seidel & Meyer (2006) state, “The focus was assessment, as their primary interest was to compare states with each other and with other nations in the context of a rapidly expanding ‘global economy’” (p. 63).

Seidel & Meyer (2006) argue that standards based reform fails urban students in three significant areas:

- 1) By defining what everyone must know, multicultural and pluralistic ways of knowing are rendered useless and invalid.
- 2) The desire for equity based standards is derived from a deficit view of urban youth and non-majority culture.
- 3) Content standards are premised on the belief that there is an “essential knowledge” for all students that is culturally and politically neutral therefore should be an uncontested part of all schools’ curriculum. (p. 66)

These implicit conclusions are hurting urban children (Kozol 1992, 2005, 2007; Siedel & Meyer).

Siedel & Meyer (2006) further discuss the assumptions and problems of standards-based reform in the urban context,

If everyone would just comply with standards-based reform we can overcome the equity and achievement gaps that are currently so pronounced in urban/suburban school dichotomies...since we all know what is important to teach, and if we teach this to all children then we will all be equal...the differences between urban schools and students and more affluent schools and neighborhoods are simply the result of an unrefined curriculum... (p. 64)

Seidel & Meyer (2006) articulate the perspective within the field that standards based reform provides an avenue for affluent children to become competitive contenders in the global market while urban students are continually prepared for service industry positions. They argue, “The implementation of economically driven and externally created content standards will continue to alienate students who have historically been oppressed” (p. 70).

Kozol (1992, 2005) also writes in great length about the role that standardized testing and the push to increase test scores has played in urban schools. In particular he spent a great deal of time in the New York City Public Schools which are less than one percent White. He noted the rote memorization and military style classroom and school structures. Teachers are pressured to “drill” students with “rote” curriculum while creativity, play and elective courses are cut. Kozol provides a stark description of the realities of urban schools in the push for standardization and excellence,

New vocabularies of stentorian determination, new systems of incentive and new modes of castigation, which are termed “rewards and sanctions”, have emerged. Curriculum materials alleged to be aligned with governmentally established goals and standards and particularly suited to what are regarded as “the special needs and learning styles” of low-income urban children have been introduced. Relentless emphasis on raising test scores, rigid policies of nonpromotion and nongraduation, a new empiricism and the imposition of unusually detailed lists of name and numbered “outcomes” for each isolated parcel of instruction, an oftentimes fanatical insistence

upon uniformity of teachers in their management of time, an openly conceded emulation of the rigorous approaches of the military, and a frequent use of terminology that comes of the world of industry and commerce... (p. 64).

May (2006) argues high stake standardized assessments provide policy makers and politicians a “more comfortable” (p. 45) way to explain disparities in achievement between affluent and socioeconomically disadvantaged students rather than addressing the “deeper issues” (p. 45). She contends that high stakes testing tries to create a connection between pressure and achievement which has not been substantiated. Further, research has consistently shown that socioeconomic status and environmental conditions play an undisputable role in achievement (May, 2006; Taylor, 2005; Davison, Seo, Davenport, Butterbaugh & Davison, 2004).

Teacher Preparation and Urban Teacher Preparation

Introduction

Although there is clearly a need for teachers to recognize the unique attributes of urban youth, as discussed above, there is also a core base of knowledge needed for all teachers. For example, all teachers need to be experts in their content area and understand pedagogical strategies to meet the needs of varied learning styles in their classrooms. However, beyond this core knowledge teacher preparation programs also need to contextualize their programs to prepare students for the specific contexts in which they will teach. Therefore this section begins with a review of the general literature on teacher preparation. It then moves into a review of the literature of what is needed to contextualize the preparation experiences of pre-service urban teachers.

A Transformation of Teacher Preparation

There is continued debate and little consensus on the most effective approach to teacher education. Feiman-Nemser (1983) points out that there was little data, past or present, for teacher educators to structure their programs around. Twenty three years later Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2006) lament over the same lack of sound research and inability to create a definitive effective framework for teacher education.

The literature on teacher preparation is vast, covering an array of topics. However, the focus of this literature review is on defining an effective framework of teacher education. The literature identifies many differing options for achieving a new and more effective model of teacher education. Over 300 schools of education revised their programs to include more time for field based coursework as well as intensive study of their disciplines (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Other universities transformed their teacher training into five year programs which provide a year long field experience (Andrew & Schwab, 1995). At the same time these reforms were taking place, there also have been changes at the national and state level. Faced with a shortage of teachers, many states adopted alternative routes to certification to funnel in the maximum number of teachers, while other states lowered their standards to allow unprepared teachers to enter the classroom (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002).

These contradictory moves means there continues to be a need to define the best practices for preparing people to enter the teaching profession (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2006). The Education Commission of the States (ECS, 2003) analyzed 92 studies on teacher preparation and education policy. Their findings ultimately conclude that while there are some studies that offer insights into teacher preparation, the research on preparation programs is incomplete and therefore inconclusive in many areas. The Commission's overall

recommendations focus on defining a specific research agenda within teacher preparation aimed at linking teacher preparation practices with student achievement, as well as making the research more accessible and relevant to all education stakeholders (Allen, 2003).

Cochran-Smith & Zeichner (2006) further call for defining a research agenda and producing research on specific teacher education practices.

A majority of the literature relies on fulfillment of certification requirements and time in program as an indicator of the quality of preparation, rather than analyzing specific attributes of effective programs that improve student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Despite the need to define a definite framework of best practices, many studies link fully prepared and certified teachers with successful classroom practices and student achievement (Darling-Hammond et. al 2002; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Evertson, Hawley, & Zlotnick, 1985; Greenburg, 1983; Haberman, 1984; Olsen, 1985). The literature loosely defines fully prepared teachers as those that have completed a teacher preparation program with approximately 30 education course hours and 12 to 15 weeks of student teaching. Fully prepared teachers have also met the requirement for a standard state licensure (Darling-Hammond, 2000b).

Ferguson's (1991) study of 900 Texas School Districts reveal that teacher expertise--measured by license exam scores, master's degrees and experience--accounted for approximately 40 percent of the variation in students' math and reading achievement in grades 1 through 11.

Program Models

A variety of program models have been developed to prepare and certify teachers. Each of the programs have unique attributes ranging from programs that prepare teachers in a

traditional bachelor or master's degree program to alternative licensure programs that offer minimal training and temporary licensure. The studies that follow provide a general overview of the success of each type of program.

Wilson, Floden and Ferrini-Mundy's (2001) review of over 300 teacher preparation programs provides an in depth look at the success of different programs. The findings are based on 57 research studies that were deemed acceptable based on their timeliness, academic and scientific rigor and appropriate focus. A correlation is also identified between teacher performance and classroom preparation, specifically in pedagogical strategies. The findings also found a positive relationship between pedagogical preparation, teaching practice and student learning. Their final conclusion on alternative certification programs indicates a mixed record of success particularly among programs that did not have high entry standards or significant training and support.

Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2002) study of 3,000 New York City Public School teachers found teachers who completed a formal teacher education program at a single college or university felt most prepared to meet the demands of classroom teaching. Teachers who completed their preparation through a disconnected series of classes felt less prepared. However, these teachers felt more prepared than their counterparts who completed an alternative program with minimal training or teachers who had no training.

Five year teacher preparation models, which allow programs to offer an in-depth year of field work and pedagogical study, were found to be more effective than four year undergraduate programs. These students are more satisfied in the profession, respected by their colleagues and more likely to stay in the profession (Andrew, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 2000; NCTAF, 1996).

Conversely, alternate routes that prepare students over a short period of time produced teachers that were not adequately skilled to provide high quality instruction and positively impact student achievement (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, D.J., Gatlin, S.J., Heilig, S.J., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Lutz & Hutton, 1989).

What is Known about Effective Teacher Preparation

Despite the need for further comprehensive research to define an effective teacher preparation framework there have been a myriad of studies that identify best practices that could be a part of a larger framework. One of most extensive studies to identify characteristics of effective teacher preparation programs was conducted in 1996 by The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF). NCTAF conducted an in-depth review of seven teacher preparation programs which were identified as exemplars based on their teacher retention rates and effectiveness of their graduates in the classroom. The study identifies six common features they believe lead to the preparation of exemplary teachers. These attributes include: (a) a clear common vision of coursework across the program of studies; (b) significant knowledge of child and adolescent development and subject matter pedagogy grounded in educational theory and practice; (c) extensive clinical experiences (at least 30 hours per week) which complement and support coursework; (d) clear performance standards to assess work in courses and clinical experiences; (e) school and university based faculty with strong relationships and a common knowledge base; and (f) use of multiple sources of assessment including portfolio and performance assessments (NCTAF, 1996).

NCTAF's (1996) findings are supported by other studies that focus on individual aspects of teacher preparation such as the importance of intensive fieldwork. For example, Wilson et al. (2001) found clinical experiences played an important role in preparation and further assert that it must be interwoven with coursework to be most effective.

Oakes, Franke, Hunter Quartz & Rogers (2006) through their work at Center X, a successful urban teacher preparation program at the University of California-Los Angeles, find that pre-service teachers not only need to have on going fieldwork but also need to be involved in the communities in which they are prepared. Pre-service teachers need to be exposed to families and community partners and understand how to access any person or organization that is involved with their students. Oakes et al. state, "We have found that the idea of expert needs to be broadly construed to include not only guiding teachers, colleagues, and university faculty but also parents, community members and students themselves" (p. 229).

It is also important for field experiences to take place in various teaching contexts. Given the unique characteristics of urban, rural and suburban districts pre-service educators need training that exposes them to the communities they serve and allowed time for reflection on the communities in which they worked. Field experiences should not always take place in "comfortable and convenient" (Berghoff, 2006, p. 159) suburban schools. Oakes et al. (2006) determined through their experiences with Center X that pre-service teachers need, "...to understand local urban cultures, the urban political economy, the bureaucratic structure of urban schools and the community and social service support networks serving urban centers" (p. 229).

It is also argued that field experiences can be most beneficial if teacher preparation programs are intensive in nature (Oakes, et al, 2006). Tom (1997) advocated for “compressed teacher education” which he defines as, “A teacher education program, especially its pre-service component, that is compressed; that is, short in length and intense in involvement” (p. 131). He argues for pre-service education that places students in classrooms for the entire school year. Students are able to be a part of the classroom and school community and have the opportunity to see the opening days of school, how to set classroom routines, develop relationships, how to handle good days and bad, and how to end the school year. Teaching is rigorous and students should be teaching full time and attending class in the evening for a short period of time (a school year) to truly get the most from their teacher education programs.

Loughran (2006) identifies preparing teachers to be life long learners as an important component of teacher education. Pre-service teachers often enter their programs believing they must “master” the art of teaching by graduation day. As Loughran states,

Although it may well be recognized that teacher education is a beginning for teachers’ professional learning rather than an end unto itself, the reality is that this point is often overshadowed by an array of demands, that compete for time and space in the teacher education curriculum...teacher education needs to foster genuine ongoing professional learning (p. 163).

It was important that teacher education programs do not disregard this aspect of professional training so teachers continue to grow and reflect throughout their careers (Hoban, 2002; Northfield & Gunstone, 1997; Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000; Barth, 1990).

Critical conversations (Loughran, 2006) are one way to prepare teachers to be lifelong learners. These conversations allow pre-service students to develop the language

and skills to critique, commend and challenge teaching and were essential as they move on to become professional teachers. Critical conversations are not about

...teacher educators 'dishing out' more advice, or telling students of teaching how to act differently...Critical conversations depend on the manner in which students of teaching are brought to see these things for themselves; to ask their own questions of the situation and to be encouraged to frame and reframe episodes in ways that broaden their understandings so they might confront their own contradictions in practice (p. 168).

Teacher preparation programs should allow pre-service teachers to see the value of these conversations and their importance in the journey on which they are embarking. They will provide teachers with the skills to constant reflect upon and improve their practice without becoming dependent on outside feedback.

It is also important for teacher educators to explicitly explain the pedagogical practices they use in their own classroom. Pre-service teachers who moved through a program where they were exposed to an array of teaching styles by their professors were then able to emulate these practices in their classroom and have a large repertoire of pedagogical strategies to meet the demands of an ever changing classroom environment. By making the implicit explicit teachers are consciously exposed to a variety of teaching strategies that they can then use in their own classrooms. This practice has shown success in effectively training teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Loughran (2006) stated,

...modeling is one very real way of helping students of teaching to see and experience responsiveness and flexibility in action and of encouraging them to move beyond the technical is crucial to being a professional pedagogue; an educator, not a trainer (p. 95).

Students also need the opportunity to challenge assumptions they bring to their teacher education programs. Students come to teacher education with strong beliefs and values about teaching and learning; as they themselves have been students for the majority of

their lifetime (Darling-Hammond, 2006). These beliefs are unlikely to change unless students are offered experiences that “challenge their validity” (Duckworth, 1987; McDiarmid, 1992; Feiman-Nemser & Buchman, 1987). Marx (2004) argued this is important given that,

...the dominant face of the American teacher workforce is female, white and English-speaking...and one child in five was estimated to be the child of an immigrant and almost 47 million people over the age of five living the U.S. were considered non-native speakers of English (p. 36).

One specific activity that was particularly powerful in pushing students to be self-reflective on their own biases and beliefs was to interview students after their first day in their teaching placement. By asking students how they felt driving up to the school, meeting their students, and walking around the school pre-service students were able to voice their biases which are often masked as assumptions or concerns. The teacher educator would then allow the pre-service teacher to read their transcripts and reflect on what assumptions and biases were present (Marx, 2004).

Urban Teacher Preparation

All children need similar curricular preparation but the demographics of varied districts require prospective teachers to be prepared with various pedagogies to be employed as appropriate. Urban districts serve diverse communities with attributes far different from their rural and suburban counterparts. Nationwide, minority students make up approximately 70 percent of the population in urban schools (Johnson, 2002). However, numerous districts have percentages far above the national average. For example, both Region 9 in New York City and the Washington, D.C. public schools have student populations with over 98 percent of their students classified in non-majority groups (NCES, 2000). Research About Teacher

Education (Howey, 2002) found that a majority of graduating teachers did not feel prepared or want to teach in urban schools (Schultz , K., Jones-Walker, C. & Chikkatur, A., 2008; Donnell, K., 2007; Zumwalt, K. & Craig, E., 2005)

As previously established, the literature found substantial evidence supporting the link between student achievement and certified teachers who have completed a teacher preparation program (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Fetler, 1999; Ferguson, 1991; Fuller, 1999; Strauss & Sawyer, 1986). Given this strong link between teacher preparation and student achievement, teacher preparation was particularly critical in urban districts where student achievement lagged behind their suburban counterparts. The central argument of this literature review is for urban teacher preparation to build upon the effective principles of teacher education including contextualizing the preparation experience in urban communities. The literature reviewed provides a framework of how to effectively contextualize urban teacher preparation programs.

Effectively Contextualizing Urban Teacher Preparation Programs

Many studies found pre-service educators who were exposed to urban school culture in their teacher education programs and therefore felt comfortable in urban schools increased teacher retention rates (Sharpton, 2002). According to Zeichner et al. (1998), “If students had a better understanding of the, “complex culture, social and political factors that give schools their definition,” (p.20) they would be more likely to commit to urban education. It is also argued that in order for teacher education students to truly, and deeply understand the context of urban education on going field experiences in urban communities should be embedded throughout the curriculum not just in a single course or field experience (Sharpton 2002). These courses should be designed to specifically address the unique characteristics

of urban schools including: dialects, family supports, community resources, and cultural differences (Sharpton 2002).

In-depth field experiences in urban schools (Mason, 1997; Sharpton, 2002; Kyles & Olafson, 2008) also provide pre-service students the opportunity to build skills and gain exposure to urban communities with extensive support, as well as examine their own beliefs about urban schooling. The acknowledgement of these beliefs is an integral part of teacher development, “Examination of these beliefs cannot be decontextualized. Rather they need to be addressed by novice teachers in a continuing manner in a variety of school and community contexts...” (Howey, 2002, p. 5). These experiences allow teachers to further understand the students’ out of school experiences in order to effectively address them in their classrooms. The literature suggests that teachers often fail to connect with their students because of misunderstandings about their home lives. For example, teachers may believe their students are unmotivated and uninterested in learning because they put their heads down on their desks during class. The reality may be that the student does not have a stable home environment in which there is the opportunity to get consistent rest (Howey, 2002).

Kyles & Olafson (2008) further argue that field experiences need to be coupled with on going reflective writing and dialogue. Through reflective writing teachers are able to further understand their own identity while coming to meet the needs of diverse learners, often of backgrounds different from their own. The coupling of field experiences and reflective writing are particularly critical for students who do not have life experiences in multicultural settings.

It is important for pre-service educators to be trained within urban contexts in order for teachers to challenge the deficit paradigm. Weiner (2006) argues,

I have found that both experienced and new teachers already know enough—after learning to challenge their deficit frameworks, scrutinizing qualitative data about their own practice, and working with other teachers who provide support as critical friends—to significantly improve student achievement (p. 45).

Berghoff (2006) further contends that work in urban communities allows opportunities “to interrupt the cultural belief systems that perpetuate inequities” (p. 158).

Weiner (2006) argues it is critical to create an outlook on urban students that focuses on their strengths rather than their “deficits”. Teachers who are trained in multiple intelligences and varied learning styles are able to reframe their thinking and accommodate all children (Noguera, 2003). Weiner (2006) uses the example of “reframing hyperactivity”. Rather than viewing students who have difficulty sitting still as unmotivated, unfocused and unwilling to learn; thinking of them as students who learn best while they are moving and providing the space and resources they need to move about. Reframing is best achieved through a five step process developed by Molnar & Lindquist (1989):

1. Describe the problem behavior in neutral, observable terms.
 2. Identify positive characteristics or contributions the individual makes.
 3. Create a new, positive perspective on the individual—a frame that you can articulate in a short sentence.
 4. State the new frame to the person and act on it. Do not refer back to the previous frame.
- (p 60-61).

Experiences within the community and with families also allow pre-service teachers to come to an understanding of the external factors that affect student learning. Many students that attend urban schools have complex lives outside of school, facing such as issues as poverty and lack of parental support, it is an accomplishment that they simply show up

everyday. If teachers had the training and awareness to help students cope with many facets of their lives they would be much more successful in helping students academically achieve (Noguera, 2003).

Teachers' awareness of the context of students' lives is also critical in classroom management, a particularly challenging aspect of urban teaching. Urban schools may not be organized to promote safe, academic environments. When the entire school culture is not geared toward academic achievement, it is very difficult to create this environment within individual classrooms. Urban schools, particularly high schools, tend to be large, impersonal organizations. When students do not feel valued or cared about in their environment it creates further challenges with classroom management (Weiner, 2003).

Teacher Retention and Urban Teacher Retention

Introduction

Contextual attributes, which are important to teacher preparation as previously discussed, undoubtedly also play a role in teacher retention. However, unlike teacher preparation, the literature on teacher retention and urban teacher retention is the same. Although some research focuses on a specific context the majority of research recognizes the issue of retention is significantly more pressing in low poverty districts. Useem, Neild & Farley, (2005) argue, "...keeping new and veteran teachers in high-poverty, low performing schools is the toughest challenge of all" (p. 4).

The Numbers

Teacher retention is a constant issue for public school systems around the country. Prior research has established the importance of teacher retention in making the difference for kids. Earlier in this chapter it was noted that one in every five new teachers leaves the

classroom within the first three years (Henke, Chen, Geis & Kepper, 2000) and between one-third and one-half of all new teachers leave the classroom by the end of five years (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Keller, 2003).

Ingersoll (2001) indicated that teachers are fifty percent more likely to leave high poverty districts than low poverty districts. These districts often scramble to fill positions each year with teachers who are not well-prepared to meet the demands of teaching at the expense of the students most in need of consistent qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1994, 2000; Andrews, Gilbert & Martin, 2007). NCTAF (1996) revealed that students in high-need minority schools have less than a fifty percent chance of having a math or science teacher who has a degree and teaching license in their field.

Between 1999 and 2005 the School District of Philadelphia had a new teacher drop out rate of over 70 percent. This figure indicates that more teachers than students were dropping out the district during this six year time period (NCTAF, 2007).

According to Ellen Guiney, Executive Director at the Boston Plan for Excellence, Boston Public Schools lose half of their new teachers every three years (Varlas, 2003). Similarly, Ron Davis, New York City Public Schools Union Spokesman, reports that New York City lost 41 percent of its new teachers within the first five years (Delisio, 2001).

Why Does Teacher Retention Matter?

Financial Drain

The terms teacher “retention” and “recruitment” are often used interchangeably. NCTAF (2007) argues, “The problem is not finding enough teachers to do the job-the problem is keeping them in our schools” (p. 2). According to an eighteen month study completed by NCTAF (2007), teacher turnover cost school districts over \$7 billion dollars

each year in recruiting and training. The figures in low income, high minority and low performing schools, particularly in urban areas, are staggering. The Chicago Public Schools spends \$86 million each year to replace teachers. This money could be used for a myriad of other school needs including increasing teacher salaries, smaller class sizes and general school improvement (Andrews et al., 2007).

Student Achievement

Beyond the financial impact of teacher attrition it also significantly impacts student learning. Teaching is a profession that is mastered over time and with such high numbers of teachers leaving every year many urban students never have the opportunity to learn from experienced teachers. Year after year students, particularly those most in need, have novice teachers who have not yet become truly effective in the classroom (Borman & Maritza, 2008; Guarino, 2006; NCTAF, 2007; Hanusket, 1992).

Demographics of Teacher Attrition

Introduction

It is important to understand the demographics of who is leaving the teaching profession. A more detailed discussion of demographics follows in this section. However, Guarino et al. (2006) notes, more generally, on a most basic level those that leave teaching did not perceive that out of, "...all available alternate activities, teaching remains the most attractive in terms of compensation, working conditions and intrinsic rewards" (p. 184).

Experience

Research indicates that the majority of teacher attrition occurs either with those who are new to the profession or those approaching the end of their careers (Adams, 1996; Kirby, Berends & Naftel, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001; Hanusket, Kain & Rivkin, 2004). Once teachers

move beyond the first three to five years of teaching they are experienced and committed to the profession. Further, when retirement becomes an option teachers seem to feel little pull to stay in the classroom.

Demographics

In retention data from all school contexts, White females have higher attrition rates than minorities and males (Ingersoll, 2001; Kirby et. al., 1999). Specifically, Adams (1996) determined in a large scale study, “Whites are 85 percent more likely than African Americans and 57 percent more likely than Hispanics to leave the district” (p. 81). Kirby et al. (1999) found in their 16 year study that White males leave teaching at a five percent lower rate than White females.

Guarino et al. (2006) also suggests, “The preponderance of evidence suggests that teachers with higher measured ability have a higher probability of leaving and that retention rates varied by level of education and field...” (p. 186). Math and science teachers, particularly those at the secondary level, with high standardized test scores and attendance of elite universities are most likely to leave the profession (Kirby et al., 1999; Podgursky, Monroe & Watson, 2004). Teachers with higher scores on certification exams and attendance of a selective college have high levels of teacher attrition (Henke et al., 2000; Lankford, Loeb and Wyckoff, 2002). The current research is mixed on whether or not holding a Master’s Degree impacts teacher retention and attrition rates (Adams, 1996; Kirby et al, 1999).

Why are Teachers Leaving?

NCTAF (2007) documented that one of the central reasons teachers leave the profession is due to a lack of support. Montana principal Pat Hould stated, “With any new hire, the name of the game is support, support, support” (Education Digest, 2005).

NCTAF (1996) indicates that feelings of isolation and lack of community are one of the leading causes of high levels of teacher attrition. This study is a compilation of findings from years of study of new teachers that entered and left the profession within their first five years. The NCTAF (1996) study further stated, “The more contact there is between principal, staff and new teachers, educators agree, the more beneficial the professional relationship will be and the longer teachers will stay” (p.10).

Isolation within school buildings also stifles professional growth among all teachers. Barth (1990) stated, “How can a profession flourish, when its members are cut off from each other and from the rich knowledge base upon which success and excellence depend?” (p. 18). This notion holds true for new and veteran teachers alike, and ultimately created disconnect and apathy in the school community.

Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver & Yusko (1999) in their review of teacher induction literature found,

We have limited data to support claims about the relationship between the induction experiences and teacher’s long term development, but we do know that teachers often leave teaching because they feel overwhelmed and unsupported in their early years on the job (p. 9).

NCTAF (1996) also indicated that lack of principal support and general leadership is a significant contributor to teacher attrition. Teachers do not want to work in static organizations. They need visionary leadership in order to buy into their schools and commit to the daily demands of the profession.

Johnson & Birkeland (2003) determined that teachers who left within the first three years experience, “frustration or a sense of failure” (p. 592) Andrews et al. (2007) further found that two thirds of new teacher attrition is caused by job dissatisfaction and the pursuit of a “better” career.

Possibilities for Increasing Teacher Retention

Comprehensive Induction Programs & Building School Community

One of the most promising models of increasing teacher retention is the development of comprehensive induction programs. These programs include a comprehensive learning organization for all teachers, mentoring, administrative leadership, and opportunities for teacher leadership and professional influence (Hirsch & Emerick, 2006; Andrews et al., 2007; The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2007; NCTAF, 2007). Andrews et al. (2007) further describes the importance of comprehensive induction programs, “...beginning teachers are often given more challenging teaching assignments than their colleagues, multiple class preparations...and are not given professional support, feedback and demonstrations of what it takes to be an effective teacher” (p. 3).

Comprehensive induction programs would change this dynamic and provide teachers increased support and increased time to prepare for and handle the day to day demands of teaching and ultimately cut teacher attrition by more than 50 percent (Andrews et al. 2007; Ingersoll et al., 2004).

Comprehensive learning organizations create professional growth environments in which a teacher’s day is structured to connect with colleagues and improve their practice. Parts of comprehensive learning organization include: teachers having common planning time, ability to attend professional workshops, networking opportunities and having access to

support services needed for their students. In order for a comprehensive learning environment to flourish further school time must be dedicated to non-instructional teacher development (Borman & Maritza Dowling, 2008; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Guariano et al., 2005).

Mentoring relationships in particular stand out in their importance. These relationships often provide critical support when novice teachers are “drowning” in their first few months of teaching. It is argued that these relationships needed to be well structured professional interactions rather than a “buddy” type system that is often implemented in school districts (NCTAF, 2007). “Buddy” systems are relationships where a veteran teacher becomes friendly with a novice teacher and perhaps shares some “words of wisdom” but provides no structured, on going mentoring support.

Borman & Maritza Dowling (2008) define administrative leadership, “as the school’s effectiveness in assisting teachers with issues such as student discipline, instructional methods, curriculum, and adjusting to the school environment” (p. 380). In other words teachers feel supported by their administrators in meeting the demands of their classroom.

The last component of comprehensive induction programs is creating opportunities for teacher leadership and influence. Teachers need to feel they are important stakeholders with a voice in decisions that are made within their school. Teachers also need opportunities for leadership roles. One example of this could be part of a mentoring program where veteran teachers are offered training and support to mentor novice teachers (Hirsch et al., 2006).

Teacher Compensation

Teacher compensation continues to be debated in terms of its impact on teacher retention. However, Guarino et al. (2006) in their review of approximately a dozen studies conclude,

A difference of \$1,000 in salary was associated with a difference of 3 percent in the odds of voluntary teacher departure. The most important reason for turnover seemed to be job dissatisfaction, and most frequently reported causes of job dissatisfaction...were low salaries, lack of support from the school administration, and student discipline problems (p. 193).

Hirsh et al. (2006) further support these conclusions in their report on North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions. In their work they situate teacher compensation as a piece of the larger picture of teacher working conditions and argue that all needs must be met not just monetary. Their conclusions suggest that while compensation is important to teachers it alone would not solve the crisis of teacher attrition. Nor would small bumps in salary be viewed as motivation to stay in the profession.

Teacher preparation and teacher retention

Numerous studies have linked effective preparation with higher rates of teacher retention (Darling-Hammond, Chung & Frelow, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Andrews et al., 2007; NCTAF, 2007). NCTAF (2003) closely link teacher preparation programs and teacher retention. They believe universities and districts must revamp their teacher education programs and make them a priority by attracting high quality applicants and offering more in-depth experiences. NCTAF (2003) reported that providing students more opportunities to connect their coursework with real practice is a critical element of teacher education. Allen (2003) in his summary of findings on teacher retention concluded that on going field experiences, in communities where teachers would eventual teach, as well multicultural

education are two key components of teacher preparation which positively impacted retention. The multicultural education piece needs to be on going and consist of exposing students to various cultures and ideas and allowing them opportunities to reflect upon how they would impact their classrooms.

As was noted in an earlier section, five year teacher preparation models, which allow programs to offer an in-depth year of field work and pedagogical study, were found to be more effective than four year undergraduate programs. Five year programs allow students more time for field experiences and in depth training on the challenges they will face in their classrooms. These students are more satisfied in the profession, respected by their colleagues and more likely to stay in the profession (Andrew, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 2000; NCTAF, 1996). Conversely, alternate routes that prepare students over a short period produce teachers that are not adequately skilled to provide high quality instruction, left the profession at higher than average rates and were less satisfied with their preparation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Center for Teaching Quality, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Adams, 1996; Popkewitz, 1995; Collins, & Grady, 1991; Lutz & Hutton, 1989).

Knowledge for Change

It is also important to note that many districts do not keep accurate data informing of them of exactly how many teachers they are losing and the costs to their school and districts. NCTAF (2007) argues in order to increase teacher retention, “Education leaders need clear, current, accurate data on teacher turnover and its costs, in formats that make it possible to analyze, manage and control these cost” (p. 4).

University-School Partnerships

Introduction

Despite the identified crisis in teacher retention (Guarino, Lucrecia & Glenn, 2006) and the awareness that supportive school environments are beneficial, as discussed in the prior section, there is limited research on university school partnerships and their impact on teacher retention. There is also very little research specifically defining university school partnerships. On a superficial level the literature interchangeably uses professional development schools, communities of practice, and university school partnerships. While these terms are closely related, it is imperative to understand the differences and move toward distinct definitions for each (Catapano, Huisman & Song, 2007).

It is also important to note that the literature does not generally delineate the context in which university school partnerships are developed but analysis revealed that university partnerships are generally formed with “under performing”, “high risk”, minority majority schools; often located in urban areas.

Defining University-School Partnerships

The literature on university school partnerships offers a variety of definitions. Many articles loosely tie the characteristics of university school partnerships to professional development schools and communities of practice. Through a review of the literature it becomes apparent that the terms built on one another moving from professional development schools to university school partnerships to communities of practice. It is important to delineate the nuances between these three terms in order to determine their impact on teacher retention.

Professional Development Schools

In the 1990s the Holmes Group coined the term Professional Development Schools (PDS) and began creating schools using the designation (Teitel, 1997; Valli, Cooper &

Frankes, 1997). The Holmes Group defines PDS as, “A school for the development of the novice professionals, for continuing development of experienced professionals and for the research and development of the teaching profession” (Vallis et al., p. 2).

Out of the Holmes Group initial definition grew a large base of literature; some of which strictly used the Holmes definition while others made slight changes. Hooks & Randolph (2004) define the PDS they research as, “A venue through which pre-service teachers, classroom teachers, and university professors can stretch their understanding of education while providing exemplary educational opportunities for pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students” (p. 47). Ridley, Hurwitz, Hackett & Miller (2005) further this definition by adding the term “collaboration” and specifically included unions and professional associations.

These are just a few examples of the overwhelming number of nuanced definitions that have grown out the Holmes Group initial definition. It is important to note that overall PDS are intended to create partnerships between universities/colleges and schools. They are aimed at improving pre-service as well as in-service teacher development (Lemlech, 1997; Levine; 1997; Teitel, 1997).

Although some PDS are extremely successful (Sosin, A., & Parham, A.; Teitel, 1997; Levine 1997) the relationships between K-12 schools and universities are very difficult to establish and maintain. Because a PDS involve a number of organizations and individuals it proved challenging and in some cases impossible to maintain collaborative relationships between all stakeholders. Over time some PDS came under criticism because many universities were essentially “telling” school districts what to do. There was no real partnership because the university was seen as the expert and the school was just the receiver

of information. Over time PDS became seen as having an inequitable distribution of power and not achieving their goal of creating meaningful, lasting partnerships (Lorion, 2006; Lemlech, 1997; Larabee & Pallas, 1996).

University School Partnerships

Out of professional development schools grew the notion of university school partnerships. While on the surface the goals appear the same the distinct difference is that a true partnership is sought. Together the university and the school assess what they have to offer one another, their needs and became inclusive partners.

A coalition at Auburn University (Pace & Burton, 2003) used the PDS definition for the basis of their university school partnership but added six key components:

1. Each partnership will include one or more schools and a university.
2. Each partner will be considered an equal
3. Open communication and support will be cornerstones of the relationship.
4. The partnership will be a long-term commitment.
5. Partners will meet, share and support one another and the other partners.
6. Responsibility for success will be jointly assumed. (p. 295)

Bullogh, Draper, Smith & Birrell (2004) further assert the key difference between a professional development school and a university school partnership is, "...a question of identity formation and of relationship building" (p. 514). In other words, both PDS and university school partnerships are aimed at improving public education but a university school partnership understands the value and necessity of growing meaningful, equitable relationships between the two partners.

Weiner (1993) discusses partnerships from an "ecological" (p. 64) perspective. Through this lens all contributors to the school are seen as equals who have, "shared

responsibility for schooling's means and outcomes" (p. 64). Weiner believes that by creating an equitable structure of school reform partnerships are able to flourish.

Communities of Practice

Communities of practice were initially defined by Lave & Wenger (1991) in their seminal piece of work, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Although it was not initially intended for the education community their definition, "A community of practice involves much more than the technical knowledge or skill associated with undertaking some task. Members are involved in a set of relationships over time" (p. 98) became applicable in creating educational partnerships.

Oakes et al. (2002) created their own definition of a community of practice for the development of Center X. They define a community of practice as,

A site of learning and action in which people come together around a joint enterprise, in the process of developing a whole repertoire of activities, common stories, and ways of speaking and acting. Learning occurs constantly in these communities as people participate in activities that are more and more central to the core practice (p. 229).

While it is not noted in the research that the development of communities of practice grew out of university school partnerships; communities of practice embraced the same idea of working together to meet the needs of all stakeholders but most communities of practice expanded the definition to include the community rather than just the school.

Current Research

As stated earlier, there is very little research on the impact of university school partnerships on teacher retention. However, several studies, which are reviewed, have implications for university school partnerships and teacher retention despite the fact that they may use other defining terms.

Center X, an alternative model of urban teacher preparation at the University of California-Los Angeles, conducted and continues to conduct the seminal studies on communities of practice and urban teacher retention. Although, the program is a community of practice not a university partnership it provides meaningful insight for this literature.

The mission of Center X is to, “Provide high-quality pre-service education and radically improve urban schooling for California's racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse children”. Center X created partnerships with five school districts in order to prepare and retain teachers in California’s traditionally underserved schools. The program is committed to teaching participants how to connect with and take advantage of the resources and members of the communities within which they teach. The program also uses Weiner’s (2000) deficit framework to frame their program and allows pre-service students to see the strengths of the students and communities within which they work (Center X website, www.centerx.gseis.ucla.edu).

Center X’s Teacher Education Program (TEP) continually studies the work of Center X, their graduates and the potential implications for urban teacher preparation and retention. Quartz & TEP Research Group (2003) found,

According to measures used in most retention studies, our graduates are the ones most at risk for leaving the profession. They are young, represent “the best and the brightest,” and they work in the hardest to staff schools. Yet, we see just the opposite. Center X graduates stay in teaching at higher rates than national averages...even after five years, 70% of Center X graduates remain in the classroom compared to 61% of teachers nationally (p.11).

Olson & Anderson (2007) in their study of 15 Center X graduates found that students who left the classroom are not leaving the field of urban education. Many are pursuing careers in other aspects of urban education (i.e., administration) or taking time off from

classroom teaching to raise their own children. These findings are in contrast to earlier mentioned studies that found most teachers leaving the classroom because of dissatisfaction with the profession.

Other studies that research successful university school partnerships include, Hassanali, Washington & Watson-Thompson's (2006) comprehensive study which determined 94 percent of teachers who are trained in professional development schools and continue to teach in professional development schools are retained after three years.

Davis, Higdon, Resta & Latiolais (2001) conducted research on the impact of a university school partnership that provides support for certified first year teachers who are also in the process of earning their master's degrees. After three cohorts 83, 100 and 100 percent, respectively, of each cohort remain in the teaching profession suggesting a correlation between the university school partnership and teacher retention (Davis et. al, 2001).

Conclusion

A review of the literature illuminates the imperative nature of defining an effective framework for teacher preparation and retention. These issues are particularly critical in urban districts where children are most in need of consistent, qualified, supportive teachers. The literature establishes a base from which this study builds upon.

The current literature first defines urban school districts within a deficit focused paradigm. A majority of the literature is rhetorical rather than theoretically focused. The urban literature, such as those works by Kozol (1995, 2006, 2007) clearly define the problems in urban education but offered few suggestions for specific action to change the current situation.

The teacher preparation literature establishes the importance of teacher preparation and key components that could be part of an overall effective preparation framework. Throughout the literature the importance of connecting coursework with real practice in the field is noted. It is important that field experiences take place within communities that teachers will teach in and teachers have an opportunity to reflect upon these experiences with extensive support. Specifically, teachers need training in urban schools with opportunities to examine their beliefs about them. Teacher preparation cannot be decontextualized in order to make a difference in preparing teachers for specific contexts.

The literature on teacher retention establishes a positive correlation between teacher preparation, teaching certification and teacher retention. Teachers who complete a formal teacher preparation program and complete all the requirements for state licensure had higher rates of retention.

Comprehensive induction programs also played a critical role in teacher retention. As earlier stated, these programs can cut teacher attrition by 50 percent. Comprehensive induction programs offer the opportunity for learning communities, and teacher and administrative leadership. On the contrary, schools which lack principal support, foster a sense of isolation among teachers and lack a sense of community have higher rates of teacher retention.

Given the research on teacher preparation and retention, the development of university school partnerships is a specific action which could be used to improve urban teacher retention. The partnerships provide an opportunity for pre-service teachers to gain in depth field experience in urban districts under the guidance of university faculty. University school partnerships also contribute to the development of comprehensive induction plans.

Because faculty members are working with administrators and teachers a sense of overall community begins to form. University faculty members also bring teachers together for professional development which moves them out of isolation. Teachers also have a voice in their professional development and other issues they face in their classrooms and schools. The faculty member(s) also provide another source of mentorship.

Overall there is a gap in the literature on university school partnerships and their ability to successfully prepare and retain urban teachers. Close studies of individual teachers in partnership programs could set the stage for larger scale studies to be conducted.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This study provided an in-depth exploration of a novice teacher's experiences in a teacher preparation program and through her first three years of teaching in an urban school. The purpose of this study was to identify attributes of effective urban teacher preparation and retention programs. In other words, this study placed a face on one of our nation's education system's most significant shortcomings: teacher training and retention in urban settings. The qualitative study took place over three and a half years and included over 20 combined interviews and observations of one novice teacher. The instrumental case study documented the preparation and teaching experiences of the participant in a major metropolitan area with more than 90 percent of its students living at or below the federally-designated poverty level.

Research Methods

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

The data for this qualitative instrumental case study came from a larger study on university school partnerships in which I participated. According to Creswell (2005), the strength of this method was that it provided, "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection...An instrumental case serves the purpose of illuminating a particular issue" (p. 439). I conducted an in depth analysis of the case in order to provide detailed insight into the participant's experiences.

Population & Sample Size

The study looked at one teacher, Hilary, from Fall 2004 through Winter 2007. During the 2003-2004 academic year Hilary was a full time master's student in middle school education completing fifty percent of her 45 credit coursework including a full year of student teaching. In the following three academic years she was a certified teacher in an urban middle school completing her master's degree in the evening. In May of 2007 Hilary decided to continue teaching at another minority majority middle school in the same district with students of similar socioeconomic status but with a different racial mix. The final interview for this study took place in November of 2007 while she was teaching at the new school, however the interview served as a reflection on her first three years of teaching and why she chose to remain teaching in an urban district. It did not provide substantial data for a nuanced analysis of her new school. For this reason, the description of Hilary's teaching placement in this dissertation was limited to her first three years of teaching where multiple interviews and observations took place. In chapter four a description of her student teaching placements is provided.

Rationale for Choice of Participant/Sample Size

As previously noted the data came from a larger study on university school partnerships. There was a small group of students who were completing their teacher preparation through the intern pathway and held teaching positions at schools involved in the university school partnership. The students in this group initially narrowed my selection pool from the entire teacher preparation program to only those students participating in the university school partnership. I selected my participant because she had been involved in the study from the start, had supplemental institutional data collected on her experiences in teacher preparation, and her enthusiastic willingness to participate. Hilary was described as

an “exceptional pre-service teacher” by Pacific College faculty and administrators. However, it became clear through the study that Hilary’s exceptionality was her ability to set reasonable expectations of herself and use professional language to discuss the teaching curriculum and pedagogy, what she deemed her “teaching craft”. Although, she represented a best case scenario because the program worked for her, she was a retained teacher, she was not a teacher of rare exception.

I chose to focus my study on one participant because it allowed me to collect in-depth longitudinal data that portrayed the intricacies of the participant’s experiences that led to teacher retention that are often lost in larger scale studies. This case study portrayed the nuances of a teacher’s preparation and classroom experience that ultimately led to urban teacher retention.

Data Collection

Interviews

Over three and a half years eleven one-on-one interviews were conducted. The participant was asked open-ended questions which Creswell (2005) stated, “allows the participants to best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings” (p. 214). Each interview varied in length from 45 minutes to two hours and was taped and transcribed. The interviews took place in person, and on the phone. The rationale behind the dates selected for interviews was to maintain consistent contact throughout her teacher preparation program and first three years as an urban public school teacher. The specific dates for the interviews were based on the participant’s availability as well as the research team’s ability to travel to her school. The protocol for each interview was similar in style with the goal of collecting information about

Hilary's on going experiences her teacher preparation program and classroom. However, the protocols often included varied questions based on previous interviews. The following is a summary of interviews and dates:

Interview 1	February 6, 2004 In person
Interview 2	March 10, 2004 In person
Interview 3	March 17, 2004 In person
Interview 4	February 18, 2005 Phone
Interview 5	March 9, 2005 In person
Interview 6	May 5, 2005 Phone
Interview 7	May 24, 2005 In person
Interview 8	December 8, 2005 In person
Interview 9	November 8, 2006 In person
Interview 10	June 14, 2007

	In person
Interview 11	November 27, 2007
	In person

Observations

Classroom observations were completed during the participant’s year of student teaching as well as during her three years as a head classroom teacher. Notes were taken on the occurrences in her classroom regarding classroom management, pedagogy, curriculum, specific student behaviors and anything else of note. The observations also provided clarification on issues discussed during the interviews and introduced new information that could be followed up on. The observation dates were selected, as with the interviews, to maintain consistent contact and understanding of Hilary’s classroom experiences. The following is a summary of observations and dates:

Observation 1	February 9, 2004
Observation 2	March 10, 2004
Observation 3	March 17, 2004
Observation 4	March 9, 2005
Observation 5	May 24, 2005
Observation 6	December 8, 2005
Observation 7	November 8, 2006
Observation 8	November 27, 2007

Documents

A variety of documents were collected from the participant’s teacher education program, the school she taught at and the university school partnership. For example, the

data included teacher preparation handbook from Pacific College, Smith Junior High's school improvement plan, the university school partnership proposal and lesson plans from Hilary's observations. Hilary was also featured in a newspaper article about teachers and leadership which was obtained.

Summary of Data

Over the four academic years 12 interviews, seven observations and continuous document collection occurred. The following is a timeline and summary of the data collected:

Academic Year	Placement	Interviews	Observations
2003-2004	Academic Courses & Student Teaching at Pacific College	3	3
2004-2005	Smith Middle School-Credentialed Lead Teacher Academic Courses at Pacific College	4	2
2005-2006	Smith Middle School-Credentialed Lead Teacher Academic Courses at Pacific College—	1	1

	Earns Master's Degree in May 2006		
2006-2007	Smith Middle School-Credentialed Lead Teacher	2	1
2007-2008	Credentialed Lead Teacher urban middle school within the same district as Smith Middle School	1	1

Analyzing the Data

Analysis

Data analysis included an on going process of “cycling back and forth between data collection and analysis” (Creswell, p. 232). Over the three and half years in which data was collected it was organized, transcribed, coded, and finally findings were reported. Particular attention was paid to the context in all facets of the research. Creswell (2005) stated,

...in case studies the researcher provides a considerable description of the setting. Developing details is important, and the researcher analyzes data from all sources (e.g., interviews, observations, documents) to build a portrait of individuals or events (p. 240).

During each interview extensive notes were taken by hand on the major topics discussed. The interviews were all also recorded so a more detailed transcription could be produced after the interview.

Observation notes were taken by hand and included a visual layout of the classroom as well as pedagogical strategies, interactions with students, classroom management strategies and anything else that stood out. During each observation an effort was made to record several poignant quotes that captured the essence of the classroom climate (either from students and/or the teacher).

Coffey & Atkinson (1996) stated the initial step in analyzing qualitative data was coding the data. Coding in of itself should not be considered an analysis but rather the first step in organizing and reviewing the meaning of the data. Codes can either be created before working with the data or as a part of the research questions asked or can emerge from reading through the data (p. 34).

Coffey et al. (1996) identified several types of coding procedures. The most straightforward was coding and retrieving. During this process the researcher developed basic codes which to place the data into. Coding broke the data down into small chunks making it more manageable and conducive to further analyzing the data. Seidel and Kelle (1995), defined coding in three steps, “(a) noticing relevant phenomena, (b) collecting examples of those phenomena, and (c) analyzing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns and structures” (p. 55-56).

Coding allowed relationships to emerge from the data which allowed for the researcher to then categorize the data. Once data categories were established, and a link could be seen running throughout the data, it could be interpreted and concepts established. These links allowed for themes, “similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea” (Creswell, 2005, p. 239), and a description of the data to occur. Creswell (2005) noted that theme and description development, “Consists of answering the major research questions and

forming an in depth understanding of the central phenomenon” (p. 241). “Classroom Management” is an example of a code used in this study. As I read through the transcripts I would find any reference to or experience with classroom management under this code.

Data analysis took place by hand and computer program. The first year of data was loaded into Atlas.ti and coded in this program. None of the automated features were used to code the data; it was used as an organizational tool. However, after the first year a decision was made that the software was more cumbersome than hand coding data and the rest of the analysis proceeded as such. Coding and retrieving (Coffey et al., 1996) was used after each interview and observation and then at the end of the study with all data. A series of links were created between codes and themes that emerged from the data. As I coded, linked and found themes in the data I was careful to acknowledge my own biases (this process is laid out in detail later in this chapter).

After data analysis took place I wrote a “narrative discussion” (Creswell, 2005, p. 249) in order to gain a more robust understanding of how the themes came together to answer the research questions and new questions that emerged. The discussion included a detailed description of the context, the voice of the participant, analysis of the data and personal reflections of the researcher.

Role of Researcher

I was a non-participant researcher in an urban middle school. I was not a part of the school or school district and I had not established a prior relationship with the participant. Prior to each interview or observation the participant was contacted and specific dates were set for research collection.

I personally collected the data along with one other interviewer for the interviews that took place on: February 18, 2005; March 9, 2005; May 3, 2005; May 24, 2005; and December 8, 2005. I also collected observation data on: March 9, 2005; May 24, 2005, and December 8, 2005. The remaining interviews and observations were collected by other researchers at the beginning and end of Hilary's teacher preparation program. The interviews and observations in 2004 were collected by a team of faculty at Pacific College as part of a larger scale rigorous study on their teacher preparation programs. The two interviews and observations that took place in 2006 and 2007 were collected by a team of evaluators as part of the larger study of Pacific College's University School Partnership. Data was disclosed in full without any analysis.

Positionality

Views Stemming from Prior Experience

It was important to acknowledge one's personal point of view when conducting qualitative research because "you make personal assessment as to a description that fits the situation or themes" (Creswell, 2005, p. 232). The writing should also, "display honesty or authenticity about is own stance and about the position of the author" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 280).

When I enter an urban school I could not help but feel overwhelmed with hope. Students in urban schools represent hope for the future because of the seemingly insurmountable odds these students overcome to attend school everyday. Society had come to regard urban schools as problematic and so often the problem has been laid on the students. That they were not motivated, not capable, not interested—a myriad of arguments that take the focus off the societal problems of poverty and place them all on the students.

However, if one took the time to sit in an urban classroom, teach in an urban classroom and truly get to know these students they do not represent a deficiency but rather a surplus of talent and courage.

While every situation varies there was a great deal of poverty in urban districts. The students who attended these schools generally led lives without adequate food, parental supervision, health insurance, dental care or emotional support. As was discussed in chapter two, poverty presented a myriad of psychological challenges and stressors that urban children live with day to day. These districts were also generally minority majority. In many urban districts the student population was over 95 percent non-Caucasian. This seemed to be a convenient excuse for people to claim that minority students could not learn or did not have the same capacities as their White counterparts. I wondered if those that make these claims would continue to attend schools or jobs where they passed through metal detectors and were monitored by police officers as they entered the premises and were then herded from class to class making sure almost all freedom, including when they could use the bathroom, was monitored and sanctioned.

As an urban educator myself I reflected on many of my past students as I conducted this research. I knew that urban students were capable and talented, it was our society and schools that had failed to educate these students. It was this insight that was the catalyst for my research. I believed that if a solution could be found to attract, prepare and retain teachers in urban districts these students could have the opportunity to excel. I wanted to encourage, inspire and prepare our teachers to look beyond the stigmas that have been attached to urban schools and understand the realities these students faced and be ready upon entering the classroom to educate all students.

I was empathetic with my participant and needed to be cautious not to narrowly analyze my data because of this lens. As a former novice teacher in an urban district I was privy to the day to day struggles and successes one faces. I was telling her story but it was also mine. I tried to acknowledge and put aside my own experience, feelings and perspective in order to interpret her teaching experience. I had to acknowledge the strong beliefs and frustrations I possessed in my role as a qualitative researcher. It was very easy for me to be overly passionate about urban education and I had to continually examine my biases and experiences in my research. In order to step away from myself in my analysis of Hilary's experiences I journaled about my immediate emotional reaction to her experiences. These reactions did not become a part of this dissertation. After I acknowledged my feelings and personal perspective on her experiences I would then reread my notes or transcription to ensure I was hearing her voice, not my own. I would also relisten to taped interviews to hear Hilary's emotions and intonations before going forward and coding the data.

Views that Developed within the Study

Beyond the views I brought from my own teaching I also made assumptions about Hilary. Before I ever met Hilary she was discussed among her faculty as “a great teacher”, “innovative”, “a real gem”. When I met Hilary I had high expectations and they were met. I think what I liked most about Hilary was that she understood her students. She worked in a school that did not have ideal conditions but she never got overly caught up in it. She was focused on meeting the needs of her students and understanding their lives. In one of our first interviews she said, “I really don't appreciate when people say these kids can't learn. Anyone can learn. No one should be underestimated.” I wanted to reach across the table and hug her.

Hilary also professionalized teaching for herself. She constantly discussed “improving her craft” and her desire to be more involved with the school community and leadership. Over time she became a leader and was proud to teach her students.

Hilary had a lot of innovative ideas that transformed her classroom. Each time I observed Hilary I was always curious to see what new classroom management or curricular technique she had developed. She always started and ended class with students gathering around the meeting space in the front of the room. They sat on benches and a rug and it was a time for constructive conversation in a casual setting. She also recognized the difficult life circumstances her students came from and how they affected their behavior in her classroom. She commented, “I realized a lot of times my students talk all of the time because when they go home their parents are so afraid to let them outside they don’t get to socialize any other time.”

In general I admired Hilary as a teacher. She held many of the same values and beliefs that I did with regard to teaching in urban schools. Despite my own admiration for Hilary it was important for me, as discussed above, not to impose my own experiences onto her teaching.

Limitations

Despite the insights that the study provided it also had limitations. Although the study took place over four years it only focused on one participant. It is impossible to make broad generalizations from one participant. I defined her teaching context as urban however the district also had very unique characteristics even among other urban schools. Hilary’s school was part of a district that educates 1.1 million children in over 1,400 schools each year

(Smith Junior High District Website). These statistics made the district one of the largest in the country and created a dynamic teaching and learning environment.

The participant also completed her teacher preparation program and novice years of teaching in a university school partnership which was rare. Although Hilary was representative of the larger teacher population, as a White middle class, young woman, she was also unique in that she had prior classroom experience. Not all pre-service teachers have such experience to draw upon as they enter their preparation programs. No experience or situation can ever be deemed identical and therefore overall the findings have limited generalizability across all teachers and school districts. It did allow a more grounded view of the experiences that led to this teacher's retention. No other study has provided research specific to this study and therefore future research can build on this case to determine both variety and similarity of experience.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter details Hilary's experiences from the 2003-2004 academic year through the 2007-2008 academic year. During this time Hilary completed her Master's Degree in Middle School Education, earned her state license in 5-9 English and taught for four years as a head classroom teacher. Hilary's experiences in her teacher preparation program and as a novice teacher in an urban middle school that was creating a partnership with her school of education provided important insights into preparing and retaining teachers in urban contexts. Hilary's words lead the reader through her experiences in each section. The sections are defined by the year in which the data was collected and the quotations used span the five academic years of the study.

Description of Pacific College Partnership:

The Pacific College Partnership involved four partnership schools who were selected by Pacific College Faculty and Smith Junior High Regional Administration during the 2003-2004 academic year. Initially nine schools were considered for the Partnership and ultimately four were selected based on their openness to change, strength of the leadership and overall desire to create a university based partnership. Although there were differences in overall school culture and structure, all four schools were located in high need urban areas with minority majority populations and 95 percent of their student populations living at or below the federal poverty level. All of the schools also were under intense pressure to

improve their test scores, with less than 50% of the student population passing the English Language Arts or Math components.

The overall goal of the Partnership was to:

...create, enact, document and evaluate a pathway into teaching that combines the best of 'traditional' pre-service and 'traditional' alternate routes into the profession. In this way the project will create school environments that foster high quality teaching and learning so that all children have the caliber of instruction required to succeed (Pacific College Partnership Proposal, p. 15).

The Partnership further planned for:

our college faculty to serve as teachers and as on-site advisors for program participants and as resources for other teachers, helping to develop an infrastructure for success at each participating school as well as for each participant...participants are fully supported in their classrooms through a system of coaching and mentoring provided by more experienced teachers and school-based coaches from the Region and from Pacific (Pacific College Partnership Proposal, p. 17).

The configuration of the Partnership differed by school. The Pacific College interns are either co-teaching with an experienced teacher or have their own classroom. Although the configuration of their work differs all of the interns have continuous sources of school-based and Pacific College support. There is a Pacific College facilitator at each of the schools who provides professional development for the faculty as a whole but is also a source of individual support for the intern. Each intern also has a Pacific advisor who visits their classroom at least twice a semester and can attend monthly intern cohort meetings organized by the Partnership Director. In Hilary's case the Pacific College facilitator and her advisor were the same person (Barbara) so the support she received from the Partnership and as an intern was seamless.

The professional development initiatives at each school were developed by the Partnership director and the school administration. Each school had distinct professional

development goals and the Partnership worked carefully to create a program at each school that best matched their needs. At Hilary's school the professional development focused on creating interdisciplinary units that created connections for students throughout their coursework. For example, Hilary would teach a novel about the Civil War while the history teacher focused on the historical information about the War and the art teacher had students create artifacts related to the novel and the time period.

Hilary's Origins & How She Came to Teaching:

Hilary was a 24 year old White female. Hilary grew up in a family of educators; both her mother and grandmother were teachers. Her mother directed day care centers and Hilary always helped out as a child. She grew up in Massachusetts and attended a "cross-cultural" public school. These experiences

opened some new ideas in my head about cross-cultural...We had people from all over the world. Getting people who have privilege and those who don't to communicate across those differences is something that I'm interested in pursuing in the future...

Throughout Hilary's bachelor's degree program she was interested in working with children because she "enjoyed being around kids". Although she earned her degree in English, she sought out many opportunities to work with children in various environments. She credited her love of English and strong content knowledge to her undergraduate degree.

When she selected a career to pursue she felt,

It (teaching) was the only thing I felt that I really liked enough to commit the money for the education and then a career to and I always liked to be around kids...I am also in education because of the problems that I've seen in the world where I've traveled and right here and the inequality is shocking. I grew up in a sheltered suburb and when I left I was just shocked by the inequality...I work with children to give them more opportunities and self-confidence.

Prior Teacher Preparation

During her undergraduate work Hilary taught creative writing to small groups of students for an hour twice a week. She also taught art in an after-school program at a Boys and Girls Club, “This is where I started listening to kids. I felt like I was basically hanging out with them and not being a real teacher.” She also taught ESL classes to immigrant women in a welfare to work program, “It was a good experience because they wanted me to write the curriculum for the program, so I had to plan.” Hilary enjoyed this experience, “Women from all over were there, eager to learn.”

Hilary’s initial public school teaching experience was in an urban middle school after completing her bachelor’s degree. She received emergency certification and was hired as a permanent substitute in October for a classroom that already had three teachers quit.

I went in there thinking that I’m going to be the nice teacher and be really close with the kids. They were really excited about me at first. I was young. I knew a lot about their culture. I had been living in a ghetto area, their world. And I knew the music they listened to and food they eat. The thing was that I didn’t know how to set limits on their behavior and I didn’t know what I wanted to teach.

Hilary struggled with classroom management and the administration and other faculty did not respect her because her room was constantly “a mess” and she could not get the students to walk in a line around the building. “I would say that it was a horrible experience. It was so horrible between periods that I wouldn’t go out in to the halls.” She was also very young, and many of the other teachers thought that she was a student.

Hilary made academic progress with the students challenging them to question the world and write about it. She described an assignment,

I said to them, ‘Is there racism?’ Some said yeah and some said no. This was a school where there were no White students and 99 percent of the teachers are White. So I said, ‘If there is no racism, why do you think this school looks the way it does?’

She was able to engage students who had previously not done any writing. She also showed movies like “Girl Fight” and had her friends write dialogues “in street dialect” for the students to work with. “Those were things that I didn’t get any credit for at all.”

On the Monday morning after February vacation Hilary received a phone call that she was being transferred to another school. Hilary felt that her efforts and successes with the students went unrecognized. Instead the administration and other teachers had focused on her inability to maintain traditional structure and control in her classroom (i.e., her classroom being a mess). “I later ran into the kids on the street and they said, ‘You quit.’ The principal told them that I quit.” Hilary was very frustrated by her experience and felt great disappointment that no one saw the progress she was making and that her students felt “abandoned” by another teacher.

In reflecting on her experiences in this school Hilary recognized that teachers do need to exert their power to help students and not just be their friend. She also understood that teachers need to have teaching skills to be effective:

...when I was in the public school, there were too many kids and they hated being in school. I tried to make my class a place that they would like but I really didn’t have the skills. They liked me as a teacher. But me as teacher was not adept. Assignments and lesson planning that structure that I didn’t have and that I’m learning now. I’m learning how to construct the whole unit. I was doing this as I went along back then and some great things came out of it. We did a poetry unit. But I didn’t have the time or the know-how to put together a poetry unit.

In her past teaching experiences she felt as though students liked her as a teacher but she struggled with classroom management and unit development.

Hilary went to Guadalajara, Mexico immediately after leaving this urban teaching position. She taught English as a Foreign Language at an indigenous school in Chiappas in

the mountains and in Tulle. She completed a one month program called Thealingua which trained her to teach English as a Foreign Language,

It was good training; it was learner centered. You get your students to be talking as much as possible. You do a lot of repetition and dialogues. They encouraged us not to use textbooks but to write our own dialogues.

Hilary's Selection of Pacific College for Graduate School

Hilary knew she wanted to continue to pursue a career in education and decided to come to Pacific College when she returned from Mexico. She described what convinced her that this was the right college for her now:

The entry interview really made me think that was going to be a different kind of place. At other universities it was very bureaucratic. Here they waited. The whole time I was in Mexico, they just waited. I came back and interviewed in the Middle School Program and she just listened to my experiences. After that I decided on Pacific College over the other universities and I'm very glad of that.

Hilary was also committed to working in urban public schools and questioned whether the other potential programs would prepare her for this specific setting.

Hilary knew about the internship pathway when she decided to attend Pacific College. She was frustrated that she had to pay for her student teaching and was eager to get her own classroom as a paid teacher as soon as possible.

Program of Studies

Table 1

Hilary's Course of Study and Teaching
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2003-2004 academic year: courses, student teaching, & summer preparation• 2004-2005 academic year: 1st Year Smith Junior High & continued work toward master's degree, Partnership being created• 2005-2006 academic year: 2nd Year Smith Junior High & completion of master's degree, Partnership continues• 2006-2007 academic year: 3rd year Smith Junior High, Partnership unable to continue at the end of the year• 2007-2008 academic year: Reflects on the Partnership; Moves to middle school within the district

Hilary completed the 45 credit hour Master of Science in Middle School Education program through the internship pathway. Her certification area was 5-9 English Education. The program had four core components: coursework, supervised fieldwork and advisement, an integrative master's project and the internship. The course work all emphasized: human development and its variations; the historical, philosophical, and social foundations of education; and curriculum and inquiry. Through a variety of intellectual and experiential means, students acquired an understanding of the role of education in promoting the appreciation of human diversity. Examples of courses in the Middle School Program included: Introduction to the Middle School, Child Development with a focus on Middle Childhood and Developmental Variations (Pacific College Website).

The following was a sample of the most common course of study for students completing the intern pathway (including Hilary):

Year 1:

- Complete 50% of Master's coursework during evening courses
- Engage in mini-field experiences
- Complete three student teaching experiences over the course of the academic year

- Meet regularly with faculty advisor: fostering in the student the growth of the professional and personal competencies necessary to become a successful educator
- Meet with small advisement conference group once a week
- Obtain teaching position for year two (the College will assist with credentialing but student is responsible for securing a teaching position)

Years 2 & 3

- Teacher of record in classroom—credentialed through internship certification
- Advisor visits classroom for half day at least once a month
- Advisor meets with teacher candidate twice monthly for in-depth consultation
- School assigns city mentor to work with student once per week
- School assigns content area coach
- Complete Master’s coursework
- Complete a Master’s thesis, portfolio or directed essay

(Pacific College Website)

In Hilary’s second and third year in the program she was a credentialed teacher of record at one of the schools that was creating a partnership with Pacific College.

1st Year 2003-2004 Academic Year: Courses, Student teaching, & Summer Preparation

Overall Focus of Teacher Preparation

Pacific College prepares their students to take a “humanistic” approach to teaching and create “vital, active and creative” ways for children to learn. Pacific College graduates are prepared to facilitate inquiry based learning for students through an understanding of child development and the need for children to be social, creative learners. It is important to note that Hilary receives this training through her Pacific College coursework and student

teaching. The Partnership at Smith Middle School provides her with the on going support to implement curriculum using the philosophy she was trained in at Pacific. As is discussed later in this chapter, the Partnership provides a base of support for Hilary to implement the ideals that she learns through her Pacific training in a challenging classroom environment.

Student Teaching Experience

Hilary student taught in a private elementary school and a public urban middle school. She felt both experiences provided important exposure to different types of students and particularly highlighted the socioeconomic differences that exist within such close proximity. She did not talk at length about her first experience at the private school. She enjoyed it but did not feel it was a large growing experience.

Hilary's second student teaching placement was at a very "rough" large urban school where she faced significant classroom management issues. She received support from her Pacific College advisement group to effectively handle the demands of her classroom. At the end of Hilary's student teaching she took full responsibility for the classroom. She advocated for this because, "I wanted the responsibility and to be thrown into what it would really be like to be a head teacher...I student taught at a school that was difficult." Hilary had a different philosophy on teaching from her cooperating teacher. She was committed to the child centered developmental approach she was being trained in at Pacific, while he included a lot of rote memorization and drills into his teaching. They did not "butt heads" but she did not go to him for "a lot of guidance."

Summer Preparation

Through funding provided by the Pacific College Partnership Hilary had the opportunity to teach summer school at Smith Junior High (the school she would end up

teaching at in the fall) prior to the start of the year. Hilary felt that her summer school experience was beneficial in preparing for the year, “It was especially helpful in getting involved in the community.” She also had the opportunity to get to know, “the principal and her assistant.” She worked with ESL students who were mainstreamed into regular summer courses. She ended up having some of these students in her class during the year, “I got to know where some of the kids are coming from, because when they leave ESL they come to me.”

Hilary also worked extensively with her advisor over the summer to plan out her classroom and curriculum. Her advisor was paid by Pacific College to individually mentor Hilary over the summer and prepare her for the start of the school year. Although this support was provided by Hilary’s advisor at Pacific, her advisor would not have provided this summer guidance without the extra funding provided by the Partnership.

2nd Year 2004-2005 Academic Year: 1st Year Smith Junior High & Continued Work Toward Master’s Degree

Hilary found her teaching placement at Smith Junior High through a recruitment fair at Pacific. She was not initially interested in the school because they only had an ESL position open but after several months she contacted the principal and an English position had become available. She accepted the position because the principal was open to her ideas on curriculum and there was some flexibility on the mandated curriculum. The small class size was also, “a huge selling point” which was “really important” to her. The school was also in its first year of creating a partnership with Pacific College.

Smith Junior High served 989 students in the seventh and eighth grades. Ninety-two percent of its students received federally subsidized free lunch based on family incomes at or

near the official poverty level. Forty-four percent of its teachers had less than five years of teaching experience anywhere, and 51 percent had less than two years of experience at the school (Pacific College Partnership Proposal).

Hilary's school was comprised of three academies which were all led by one principal. Each academy had its own assistant principal. Most professional activities were done within each academy but there were certain professional development initiatives that were conducted school wide. For example, all the English teachers had ELA professional development together with the school's literacy coach. In contrast, the Pacific College interdisciplinary planning professional development (part of the Pacific College Partnership) targeted teachers in a specific academy. Hilary was the only teacher in her academy that was attending or had attended Pacific College.

Hilary's academy was designated as bilingual. Her classes were technically English transition classes so she needed to account for all of her students being English Language Learners in her teaching. During an observation, Hilary had her students look up the origin of words in a variety of books she provided for the students. The students were able to see how different languages all help make up the English language. Hilary planned this lesson because she believed it gave the students some context about where the English language comes from and provided a connection to students' native languages.

Hilary acknowledged the difficult circumstances her students were coming from and the impact it had on her classroom,

Either their lives are totally chaotic and they come into school and they just don't know how to be structured or some kids their parents are so rigid with them because they are so scared of letting them outside into neighborhood so they come into school and school is the only place they get to play because they are not encouraged to play at home...

Hilary also recognized the need to educate her students on the resources and opportunities available to them in their community,

(I'd like to) to teach them how to learn -- how to follow through on things they find interesting. To teach them to access resources that may be helpful like libraries and the justice system. I'm talking about kids who are growing up without privilege. A lot of the kids I've dealt with have blocked out many areas of society thinking they can't be helpful. They become isolated.

Hilary was trained at Pacific to develop activities that were "appropriate for kids" and she continued to work on, "...ways to facilitate that even better, figure out who should be working together or when it should be partners and when it should be bigger groups."

In this first year as a teacher of record, Hilary believed her classroom management was, "...certainly not as bad as it could be and sometimes it is good...I feel myself getting better." In terms of how she structured her classroom, "they feel a little too comfortable in my classroom at times. I want them to do what is natural. It's kind of a balance." Hilary acknowledged that she was still learning and would like to improve her skills. "I'm not trying to come in with I know everything and I know exactly how it has to be. I'm trying to figure it out...bluntly there are a lot of discipline problems."

During an observation, Hilary's classroom management struggles were apparent as well as her style of dealing with issues. The students were completing an independent writing assignment and over half of the class was talking and playing with one another. At one point a student slowly let air out of a balloon creating a loud squeaking noise. Hilary was direct in her expectations of the students to make the "right choices" and did not belittle any one student. She told students, "There is too much noise for writing. If you're not writing, you're not doing the right thing." When students challenged her to change her expectations she responded by reminding them, "I give the directions". A situation escalated

with one student who would not settle down and stop talking during the entire lesson. At one point he was pretending to be on the Jerry Springer show. Hilary reviewed the directions for the assignment and told him to make a choice, “either stay here and listen and work or go to the office. It is your choice”. Hilary ended up having to send the student to the office but she was clear to remind him on the way out that it was not a personal decision but rather that he made the decision to go to the office.

Hilary also struggled because she was much less structured than the other teachers. “They come into my classroom and they think it is time to play because I’m not going to impose all of that.” Hilary was respectful of her students and their needs. As described above she created opportunities for students to make responsible decisions. In contrast, many of the other teachers simply told the students what to do and imposed consequences if their exact directions were not followed.

During Hilary’s word study lesson two students were unable to productively work together after continued probing by Hilary. She ultimately had to split the students but neither of them would leave the table. In the end both students stayed at the table but agreed to work on their own projects. Hilary reflected on the incident, “I don’t know exactly always what to do...in the end I think it worked out.”

Hilary was willing to take risks in the classroom and use creative lessons to engage students in difficult material. She was committed to creating a classroom environment that, “...engages the kids in learning that is going to be exciting to them. That’s what keeps me going as a teacher.” She explicated a language study unit where students discussed the different dialects of English as an introduction to learning the parts of speech and the building blocks of language. Hilary worked to ensure that English language learners were

successful in her classroom by incorporating connections to students' native languages. In her word study lesson she recognized,

The Spanish speaking kids--they basically know the Latin roots but they don't know that connection and I wanted to give that to them. It is something they can connect to their lives as language learners and it provides a segway to looking at the root words which is something that I wanted to do for their spelling and decoding and I think that it makes more sense when they understand why there are root words rather than just showing it to them.

Hilary believed that the key to good teaching was for the teacher to truly be interested in the students. She would have liked for her classroom to be a place of interwoven routine and spontaneity, "I want them to be intellectuals, I want them to enjoy it." She believed that developing relationships and creating curriculum that is appropriate for her students was critical. She thought that the teacher needed to be in control of the agenda and take the time to understand their students and where they are coming from,

...make the curriculum really something that is appropriate for the children - to their culture and their everyday experiences. The teacher needs to understand where the kids are really coming from -- to address these questions and give them relevant information to help them learn more.

Her goal in educating students was to teach them how to be curious, know how to go after the things they want and to know what they want. She believed,

There's more that could be very interesting for them than candy, video games, and talking on the phone. I want them to follow other places in themselves. I don't want them to be thinking about adulthood, that's not the point.

The majority of Hilary's colleagues with whom she had significant interaction were in their first or second year of teaching. Many of the other new teachers at the school were also taking courses toward their Master's Degree. Hilary worked with two other English teachers on her floor to develop lessons who were both in their second year of teaching. Although Hilary interacted with her colleagues overall she did not feel particularly well

connected to them. She felt like she was the only one working toward a student focused, inquiry based curriculum,

...(what) I wasn't prepared for is how different I would feel...in some ways it has been isolating, even though I have the support of my team, in some ways I just know that I'm not seeing a lot of child centered, progressive teaching. In fact I don't think I'm seeing any with an exception of an activity here and there. That is what is isolating. I wasn't totally prepared for that and I'm going to have to figure that out on my own." She felt that her colleagues had extremely rigid classrooms and did not believe that the students could handle more a creative, participant oriented curriculum.

She felt frustrated that many teachers limited the range of teaching content and pedagogy because they did not believe the students had the skills, "Anybody has the skills to think, I really don't appreciate when people say that, you can't teach skills...constructivist teaching teaches skills...I really think that the needs of kids are not that different across cultures and in different environments." The other teachers at Hilary's school had been trained in various other teacher philosophies in their preparation programs. They were not trained in the same progressive teaching approach that Hilary received at Pacific.

The school was under tremendous pressure to increase student achievement scores. During the first year they were under advisement that the school could come under city and state scrutiny and control if the scores did not improve. The teachers and administrators were fearful of this possibility because they knew how strictly the school would be watched.

Initially Hilary was overwhelmed by the school's adopted mandated curriculum, "it really didn't mesh with what I was sort of prepared to do and what I believed in." Hilary worked with the workshop Coordinator during the first six weeks of the school year, "It was just a little game, I was brand new so I did it exactly and after six weeks she moved on." Even during this time Hilary was able to teach a whole class novel (which she purchased

with money from the Partnership with Pacific College) rather than having each student read their own selected book as prescribed in the curriculum. Hilary felt there was a lot of ambiguity surrounding the mandated curriculum and professional development initiatives, “There is a lot of contradictory talk really. They tell us we should be doing whatever we want and then they tell us we should be doing something very specific.”

Hilary’s principal was a veteran in the system and was recently recognized as an exemplary principal by the Commissioner of Education. Hilary worked most closely with the assistant principal on her floor but felt supported by both administrators. “Ms. Jones [the assistant principal] comes in sometimes and likes what she sees. She generally supports me, just in her demeanor; I feel validated in some ways...she has been really supportive and good.”

Every new teacher in Hilary’s school district was assigned a mentor teacher who came to observe each week. Hilary’s city mentor was a 25 year veteran teacher. Hilary believed her experiences were in schools where, “...a number of the kids were coming in with more academic experience than some kids at my school.” Hilary did not feel the mentor has been particularly helpful in her development but enjoyed her mentor watching her classes, “What I feel like is she is a witness to what happens in my classroom.” For the most part they hung out and chatted but Hilary wanted and expected more from her mentor. “I just recently told her she should be asking about my classroom because she wasn’t. Sometimes she would just start chatting about other things.” In response her mentor brought an assessment tool with 25 categories and a rubric for the different stages of teacher development. “She gave me some good feedback...there were certain categories I hadn’t really thought about and where were some of the areas that I really want to work on.”

Hilary was also assigned a content area coach by the district who worked with her and her English colleagues each week. Hilary did not view her work with her content area coach positively. She felt that, “She’s supposed to be a support for us but it’s more like she gets orders from the Board of Education and has to oversee what is going on.” She indicated that she did not feel that her content area coach was a strong source of support.

Hilary felt that her continued course work at Pacific was an important aspect of support. She reflected, “...it makes me really glad I’m an intern because I’m still taking classes while I’m teaching so I get that input every week. I learn new things I think are kind of going in the right direction.”

Hilary had the opportunity to take a linguistics course where she created a mini-unit on word study (that is described above). The class not only gave her the skills to create such a unit it also “forced me to take time out” to create the unit.

Pacific College Partnership

At the start of Hilary’s first year, the Pacific College Partnership was in its first year. There were on going organizational, personnel and content changes that took place. The focus of Pacific’s work in Hilary’s academy was on creating space for interdisciplinary planning and collaboration, as was described earlier in this chapter. However, at the start of the year Hilary did not feel particularly supported by the Partnership. Various faculty members would come from Pacific College to facilitate the interdisciplinary professional development but she did not view it as an important aspect of her teaching. In the middle of the year Hilary stated:

I would like for there to be other Pacific people here. I also think we need a Pacific faculty member here...No one from Pacific is going to come here if they don’t feel like there is some connection or support from Pacific. You need time and you need

support. Even a conference group would be great...I think even just the space to talk. We're not going to call each other up.

Despite the fact that Hilary did not feel exceptionally supported at first by the Partnership she had an excellent relationship with Barbara, her Pacific College advisor, "She has knowledge and she's not afraid to impart that and that is very nice. I know we can disagree. She's very good about sharing what she knows." She felt Barbara was extremely knowledgeable about developing content and assisting her in creating strategies to manage her students.

During Hilary's first year of teaching Barbara visited her classroom five times in the first semester. Hilary was also the teaching assistant in Barbara's literature class at Pacific College so she had the opportunity to have dinner with her and discuss issues in her classroom every week. Hilary felt empowered by this opportunity to teach first year students in her program at Pacific and create an on going personal relationship with her advisor. "I find that mentorship is extremely helpful." Her content area also matched Barbara's so they were able to plan specific lessons and units together. "We were in touch every week...so I had a lot of support that way." The frequency of contact between Hilary and Barbara was somewhat unique. Their level of interaction was not necessarily expected or typical of Pacific College practice of the Partnership.

In April of Hilary's first year Barbara became involved in the Pacific College Partnership and began holding meetings with all the faculty on Hilary's floor. During this time Hilary began to feel more connected to her colleagues as the facilitated meetings allowed her to see that she was not working in isolation toward creating meaningful learning experiences for her students. She also continued to consistently visit Hilary's classroom and

provide her curricular and pedagogical support. The support of the Partnership during this year, particularly in the Spring, likely contributed to Hilary's decision to continue teaching in her school,

I guess, I did look around at other schools because earlier in the year I wasn't so sure. Now I sense things are moving a little bit. Meetings with Barbara (Pacific College Partnership Faculty) and Ms. Jones (Assistant Principal on Hilary's floor) have been moving in a good direction...the whole staff got together and talked about kids and talked about us and how we feel and the conditions we work under. We're struggling in not ideal conditions. So, that's been really positive, allowed me to get to know some other teachers better...

She also admitted that she was not positive about her long term commitment to the school, "If I'm not progressing and if I feel like I'm picking up bad habits...then I'll be looking for a more progressive environment." She also thought it was overall "a good place" to teach and she is lucky "to be in a school where I think everybody in the school is really committed and trying to turn around the school. Different ideas of how to do it but it is all positive."

2005-2006 Academic Year: 2nd Year Smith Junior High & Completion of Master's Degree

During Hilary's second year at Smith Junior High the Partnership brought other Pacific College teachers and faculty members to her school and Hilary's outlook about her school changed. Hilary had the opportunity to collaborate and co-teach with another Pacific College graduate: "It was a tremendous help and we collaborated. She was a support for me too, an ally, somebody to encourage me to do what I believe in, very committed to child centered pedagogy."

Hilary's advisor, Barbara, also became the Pacific College Partnership faculty member on Hilary's floor. Barbara worked closely with Ms. Jones, the assistant principal to

create an inclusive learning environment where teachers collaborated and worked toward common goals. Hilary believed, “our academy is changing” as a result of this work.

Hilary also implemented a framework for literature that she learned from Barbara:

I basically have been developing methodology that works. Kids have been reading the whole novel and I have method for them to write post-it notes. I give them a reading schedule, let them read in class, check post-it notes, when they finish we have discussions, which are key and so exciting because kids have finished the book and have so much to say.

Also with the support of the Partnership, including Barbara’s on going mentorship and the interdisciplinary planning, Hilary worked hard to create structured routines for each 90 minute block. The rituals helped her with management and how the class functions. She also believes, “the other thing is to allow students to have a voice in things, on one hand there has to be structure that teacher provides, and the other the kids have a voice and freedom.” She started talking with her students about what was particularly frustrating and they told her that they really wanted some time to socialize. Hilary came to an agreement with her students that if they immediately lined up and were ready for class then they could have five minutes to chat. She feels this negotiation has really helped her overall classroom management because the students knew she respected their needs and was willing to make accommodations if they were willing to engage and learn.

Hilary continued to feel frustrated by the rigid nature of the mandated curriculum. “The fact that I have to take a risk to do what I did today, to do this language study...I could get in trouble for that.” Hilary was particularly interested in teaching grammar in addition to reading and writing. She was forced to drop her study of grammar for most of the school year because of the pacing guide.

Hilary wrote her master's thesis on, "creating a constructivist grammar curriculum including things like history of English and word study" and completed her Master's Degree at Pacific College in May 2006.

2006-2007 Academic Year: 3rd Year Smith Junior High

Hilary's third year at Smith Junior High was filled with success and disappointment. On the one hand she experienced many successes, "loves the students" and continued her work with the Pacific College Partnership. On the other, the school became designated as underperforming. Due to this change in status the head principal took charge of all four academies. As discussed earlier, Hilary's academy was previously overseen by an assistant principal, Ms. Jones, who reported to the head principal but ultimately Hilary had very little interaction with the head principal. Ms. Jones was, "open to progressive education, giving the teachers some space, and having some faith in her teachers basically." Hilary found the head principal's leadership style problematic because she did not feel fully respected as a professional and the head principal imposed a stricter mandated curriculum. The interdisciplinary curriculum that Hilary and the Partnership had worked so hard to establish in the previous two years was no longer supported because of the low test scores and the decision that Smith Junior High would be a test site for a new mandated curriculum. Although the mandated curriculum had been an issue during Hilary's tenure the school had to become much stricter about teachers' adherence to it. This was particularly problematic because of the conflict in beliefs between the Pacific College Partnership and the mandated curriculum. Ultimately, over the course of the year it became clear that the Partnership was no longer going to be able to continue at Smith Junior High.

Hilary felt particularly frustrated that the interdisciplinary curriculum was not able to continue because the students in her academy showed significant growth on the standardized tests. Her students showed a 17 percent gain in scores while the rest of the school saw a 27 percent drop in scores. Hilary also had a strong sense of what engaged her students,

I notice that my students respond well when something in the curriculum is validating who they are culturally, where they're coming from. They know I'm not some White lady who's trying to bring in a bunch of White stuff that means nothing to them. It has to be, everything should have a context...the idea of what it takes to be, especially if you didn't go into a system like this, and if you're particularly from a White privileged background. You know what it takes to go into a school like this...That was really helpful to have gone through and being so different in a community where I was trying to teach something. That is an important experience for everyone to have... They [her students] do a lot of work in my class, and I don't get a lot of resistance from them about doing the work, which is something that is a problem in school.

Throughout the year Barbara “really extended her support” to Hilary by continuing to observe her class and provide consistent feedback. She also shared various resources and allowed Hilary not to feel like she was teaching “in a vacuum”. Hilary believed,

It is still extremely helpful just to be able to talk to someone who's so experienced and thoughtful about kids. And just comes from a different standpoint from a lot of the other people in the school because Barbara takes a very developmental approach and it helps me stay connected with that.

Hilary described a successful unit that Barbara supported her in creating and implementing:

They were fantastic [the stories they wrote] and with the 8th grade we looked at the journey story structure and I used picture books that [the Partnership faculty member at the school] used in her literature class, picture books that included journeys, like *Where the Wild Things Are*. They were kids' books that all the students, because I have some students with limited experience in English in the class, could read. So I had them read like 10 children's books in a row all with the journey structure. And by the end everyone was ready for writing journey stories. They understood what it was about. And we looked at Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces*. So that's literary theory, so the kids are being challenged, they are learning concepts. But I'm using picture books if that's what I have to do. Like, I don't believe that kids

need to be drilled on skills until they get to a certain point and then they're ready to do intellectually challenging stuff. I don't believe that. I believe that you can do it simultaneously and give the kids an occasion to want to learn the skills to read or the skills to write. And it worked--the stories are incredible. I had kids who started out writing like a paragraph at the beginning of the year, you know English Language Learners, writing like 12 page stories.

Barbara and the Partnership also placed a student teacher from Pacific College with Hilary. "She was fantastic" and offered a growth opportunity for Hilary to mentor a new teacher. The student teacher also brought new ideas into the classroom that Hilary "had never thought to do before". The student teacher was also able to use money from the Partnership "to create a unit around comic books" that the students really enjoyed. Had the Partnership not been leaving the school and if "it had been a different place she [the student teacher] probably would have stayed and been wonderful".

Because of the team building that took place through the Pacific College Partnership through the interdisciplinary planning Hilary had a new outlook on her relationship with her colleagues, "At this point, I feel a part of the community of teachers on my floor, and we all offer each other a lot of support".

Hilary's overall reflection on the Partnership was extremely positive:

What was successful about it for me was the support that I was given throughout my first couple of years. That's going to take me through my career of teaching. That definitely set me up to have a different kind of career than I would have had without it...I think Barbara is incredible...to have someone who is really available, she was there every week for two years now...I think having a really strong mentor for the first couple of years could be extremely valuable for new teachers.

When Hilary thought about other important aspects of her experience and what could help retain teachers in urban schools she believed,

Other teachers don't necessarily know about the kids they are coming to teach, and where they are coming from...to get out there before they get into it, so it's not a

grand notion of what it will be like. So they have an idea of the weight of the situation.

Ultimately, Hilary felt very frustrated about the Partnership not continuing and struggled with her decision to continue at another urban middle school. She concluded by saying, “I’m also ready to grow...and I’m not one of the people who gets consulted about making decision.” Ms. Jones told Hilary she “is one of the best in the school” but because she lost her position of leadership in the end Hilary felt “very isolated.” “It’s sad. I feel a little sad about leaving. It’s just sad. That’s the reality. It could have been different, I mean it could have.”

5th Year 2007-2008 Academic Year: Reflection on the Partnership

In the 2007-2008 academic year Hilary began teaching at a different urban school within the same district and with a similar student population. One interview was completed at the beginning of this academic year to gain her insights into her experience with the Partnership school:

In terms of what being a part of the Partnership has done, I think it just helped me to develop my professional identity as somebody who wants to take student-centered, developmentally appropriate teaching methods into high needs public schools. I knew that going into Pacific a little bit, but that helped to really cement that for me. The Partnership did, because there was a shared mission. I think when you’re the only one, it’s probably easy to lose your course a little bit. And definitely having contact with Pacific faculty was huge in that....for teachers to stay in the profession, we need more than just the classroom and even just our schools. It needs to be more connected to other groups of people that are working in education.

Hilary also realized how important the Partnership was to her teaching and how much she missed her work with the Partnership. “I wished the Partnership had worked out at Smith. I wish I could still be there, honestly...I think I did have some criticisms of the Partnership, but I think it’s a great concept”.

Hilary's Ending Beliefs & Commitments

Hilary felt that the Partnership made a significant contribution to who she is as a teacher. She experienced professional growth that spawned enthusiasm for the curriculum. The relationship she built with Barbara and the two years of interdisciplinary planning that were facilitated through the Partnership were critical. When the Partnership was not able to continue at her school because of the intense pressure to raise test scores, and adhere strictly to a mandated curriculum, which went hand in hand with the interdisciplinary planning not being able to continue, she made the decision to change schools. However, she expressed great disappointment with having to leave Smith Junior High and her continued commitment to teaching in an urban school. Without the Partnership, Hilary felt her work was not valued and her place in the school community slipped. Despite her ability to increase student test scores she was not able to continue with her teaching philosophy and curriculum because of the school's underperforming status, and bias toward a particular curriculum. Hilary explicitly stated that she would have stayed at Smith Junior High had the Partnership been able to continue and that the Partnership supported her to create a career in urban teaching. "Part of my goals in teaching is definitely to work with the urban public school population."

Hilary's ongoing connection with Pacific College through her coursework was also an important aspect of her early teaching career. The courses gave her an opportunity to reflect on her practice and take the time to create innovative lessons. Hilary's professors forced her to think about why a specific lesson had or had not been successful and how to carry that knowledge into her future planning. The coursework also provided an opportunity for Hilary to connect with other novice teachers who working to create progressive child centered lessons in public schools. Hilary's experiences suggest that the internship pathway

is an opportunity for teacher preparation programs to increase teacher retention in urban contexts.

The Partnership's work to bring in other Pacific College students and graduates was also another source of support and connection that was important for Hilary. In her first year at Smith Junior High she felt that having a space to talk with other novice Pacific College teachers would have been extremely helpful. When the Partnership brought the opportunity to her school over the following two years she was invigorated by the opportunity to continuing learning through conversations with others from Pacific College. Over time Hilary assumed a leadership role in the community by mentoring a student teacher.

The Partnership also opened a dialogue with other teachers in Hilary's school about interdisciplinary child centered teaching. Other teachers were receiving training in this approach and Hilary no longer felt like an outsider using this teaching philosophy. Other teachers came to see how to implement child centered lessons and units. Hilary also felt empowered by other teachers adopting some of her classroom strategies. For example, Hilary had a meeting rug in the front of her classroom which other teachers began using.

Hilary's experiences also exemplified the importance of being comfortable working with diverse populations and constantly learning and seeking to gain knowledge about students' life experiences. Hilary attributed much of the success of her units and lessons to the fact that she linked the academic material to things that were culturally relevant to the students' lives. Hilary attributed her knowledge of creating culturally relevant pedagogy and relationships to life experiences she had prior to Pacific College. She acknowledged early on that she was not always successful with her attempts to create curriculum that connects to students' lives but it was a continual goal. Hilary focused on this aspect of teaching

throughout her coursework at Pacific, in her student teaching and in her current teaching placement.

Hilary's experiences also highlighted the importance of school administration in urban teacher retention. Hilary's positive experiences with the Pacific Partnership were possible in part because of the support of the school administration. When the administration was no longer able to support the work of the Partnership Hilary was not able to teach in the way she felt was best for her students. Ms. Jones also professionalized Hilary's teaching by making her a leader and an important contributor to her faculty. When the lead principal took over this sense of leadership and importance in the greater school community was taken away from Hilary and she no longer felt valued. The need to be valued in a school community was critical for retaining Hilary.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

The final chapter concludes on Hilary's teacher preparation program, her involvement with the university school partnership and other aspects of her first years of teaching that impacted her decision to remain a teacher in an urban school, as well as the implications for practice and further research. The chapter begins by highlighting Hilary's individuality and the unique life experiences she brought to teaching. The research questions are then answered and assertions are made about how Hilary's case study can further inform research and practical efforts to improve urban teacher preparation and retention. I conclude by reflecting on how my positionality has changed and grown throughout this research.

What Hilary brought to teaching

Hilary's journey in teaching began as a child. Growing up in a household of educators she had insight into the life of a teacher from a very early age. She acknowledged the importance of the profession and her natural tendency to be able to "commit long term" to the profession. Her experiences growing up in a culturally diverse community also exposed her to the inequities of the world as a young adult. She came to teaching with an understanding that the world was not a "fair" place and a true desire to impact the racial, social and socioeconomic dynamics of the world.

Hilary gained experience in educational settings throughout her undergraduate education. She tutored and taught in one-on-one and small group settings. These

experiences furthered her exposure to diverse populations working with “inner-city” youth and immigrant women.

Hilary also brought prior experience teaching as a substitute teacher in an urban middle school. Her brief time at the school was “horrible” because she did not understand how to set boundaries, expectations and create curricular units. Although she loved working with the diverse student population she realized that she did not have the skills to be an adept teacher. She brought this perspective into her teacher preparation program; that teaching was not about creating friendships with students but creating structure, routine, expectations and limits. Because her experience was so demoralizing she also brought the understanding that teaching was not an easy profession and that she needed to focus on small achievements not creating “perfection” in her classroom.

After leaving her substitute teaching position Hilary traveled abroad to Mexico to teach English as a Second Language. She completed a training program to work with local residents and learned to create student centered, inquiry based lessons. Although she taught small groups of students, many of them adults, she gained skills in teaching ESL. This is particularly important since many of Hilary’s future students were ESL students. She also gained further perspective on the inequities that exist in the world and strengthened her commitment to change the current cultural climate.

What this study has taught me about my research questions:

What is the experience of this novice teacher in an urban teacher preparation and university school partnership program?

Hilary’s experiences from the 2003-2004 through the 2007-2008 academic year provided a myriad of opportunities and challenges. Hilary began her graduate level teacher

preparation program at Pacific College in Middle School Education in Fall 2003. She selected the intern pathway prior to enrolling at Pacific because she was eager to have her own classroom and the financial support of a teacher's salary while completing her degree. During the 2003-2004 academic year Hilary completed 50 percent of her coursework including student teaching. She student taught at one private school and one "difficult" high needs urban school. By the end of her student teaching she essentially took over all of the teaching responsibilities from her cooperating teacher. Her coursework and student teaching experiences gave Hilary a strong background in child centered teaching, child development and a stronger understanding of how to create lesson and unit plans.

During the 2004-2005 academic year Hilary accepted a position at Smith Junior High as a credentialed head teacher. She also continued taking Pacific College coursework in the evenings. Smith Junior High was in its first year of creating a partnership with Pacific College. Her first year as a head teacher presented many challenges including: classroom management, the pressures of the mandated curriculum, feelings of isolation and struggling to define her place within the greater school context. Throughout the year she was supported by her Pacific College advisor and by the end of the year her advisor became an integral piece of the Partnership and began to create meaningful professional development at Hilary's school.

The 2005-2006 academic year was a pivotal year in Hilary's development as the Partnership flourished at Smith Junior High and Hilary felt a great deal of commitment and positive energy evolved within her school. Her Pacific College advisor worked closely with Hilary and mentored all the faculty on her floor to create interdisciplinary units. The Partnership also brought other Pacific College graduates and students to the school, including

a student teacher whom Hilary mentored. Hilary felt extremely supported and positive about her experiences at the end of the year and looked forward to her continued work at Smith Junior High. Hilary completed her Master's Degree at Pacific College in May 2006.

The 2006-2007 academic year was a year of great success and disappointment for Hilary. Her students gained 17 percentage points on their standardized exams and she saw great progress with their reading and writing abilities. However, Hilary's school as a whole did not show improvement on the state tests and therefore came under strict scrutiny by the district. A new mandated curriculum was "sold" to the principal who ultimately adopted it to raise test scores instead of the interdisciplinary approach that Hilary and the Partnership had worked so hard to create over the previous two years. Hilary's position of leadership and empowerment that was created through the Partnership also slipped and Hilary felt under appreciated and frustrated. She ultimately decided at the end of the year to work at a similar urban middle school in the same district. She felt great sadness and resentment that the Partnership was not able to continue to grow at Smith Junior High.

In the Fall of 2007 Hilary reflected on her experiences at Smith Junior High and with the Pacific College Partnership. She expressed how much her experiences shaped who she was as a teacher and solidified her commitment to a career in urban education. She had strong convictions that child centered, progressive education could work for all children and that this belief needed to be instilled in teachers prior to entering to the diverse world of urban public school teaching. She also believed that the support the Partnership provided was critical in her development as a teacher and should be given to all teachers.

What ways did the intern pathway teacher preparation program contribute to the teacher's experience?

Hilary's preparation provided her with an understanding of how to create structured lessons and units. Hilary did not possess the knowledge or skills to put together cohesive lesson or unit plans prior to her teacher preparation. She came to understand the importance of having larger goals and objectives and creating connections to prior knowledge rather than creating a group of unconnected lessons.

Hilary's status as a graduate student during her first two years of teaching was critical to her success. The internship pathway provided Hilary with an advisor who came to observe her teach and mentor her while she completed her Master's Degree. Her mentor was an important piece of support beyond what the school provided for new teachers.

Hilary also had the opportunity to complete a supervised, supported student teaching placement in a "difficult" urban school prior to becoming a head classroom teacher. Hilary's student teaching experience allowed her to grapple with the challenges and opportunities that working in an urban school offered under the guidance of her mentor teacher, Pacific College faculty and other Pacific College student teachers. It also opened her eyes to the great socioeconomic disparity that existed within such close geographic proximity.

Hilary's teacher preparation program focused on creating progressive child and learner centered lessons and units. Her training encouraged her to create lessons that engaged her students and did not focus on rote memorization. She found this training essential in creating an inclusive classroom where students gained important academic skills.

Hilary was trained in adolescent growth and development so she had a strong understanding of where her students were developmentally. When she planned her lessons or faced classroom management issues she used her knowledge of adolescent growth and development to appropriately address the issue. For example, she understood her students'

need for socialization and created opportunities for her students to collaborate both academically and socially.

Hilary's on going coursework while she was teaching supported her to create new units and take the time to explore new teaching strategies. Her coursework also forced her to reflect on her own teaching; something she felt was extremely valuable but did not think she would have taken the time to do on her own.

As discussed, Hilary felt isolated at Smith Junior High particularly her first year. Her coursework at Pacific created a network of likeminded professionals with whom she could discuss challenges, frustrations and successes at her school. The colleagues and faculty in her courses provided a sense of unity and helped her move out of a place of isolation.

Hilary was eager to have a classroom of her own to implement the knowledge and skills she had gained at Pacific College. However, it more importantly provided a route for Hilary to complete her Master's Degree at a significantly reduced cost. Although she was still paying tuition for her coursework she was also getting paid a full time teacher's salary so did not have to financially survive without any income.

What ways did the partnership program contribute to the teacher's experience?

Table 2

<p>Description of University-School Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnered with urban public schools• Partnership's goal was to improve the quality of urban public education• Partnership schools selected based on their openness to change, strength of the leadership and overall desire to create a university based partnership

Table 3

<p>Benefits of Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allowed Hilary to create relationships with other teachers through professional development• Supported the ideals of teacher preparation• Provided the opportunity for Hilary to receive constant feedback and support• Provided consistent opportunities for collaboration and development of classroom management skills

Pacific College’s continued presence in Hilary’s professional setting provided on going support for her to implement and create an “ideal” classroom as had been defined through her teacher preparation program. This encouragement allowed Hilary not to lose sight of the importance of her preparation work and the possibilities it brought to her classroom.

Beyond simply encouraging the ideals of teacher preparation the Partnership also helped Hilary implement lessons and units that reflected her ideals and philosophy of teaching in a high needs urban school. For example, she was able to create interdisciplinary student focused units with her colleagues because of the Partnership’s professional relationship with the school.

The Partnership brought Hilary’s advisor into the school on a regular basis. She received constant feedback and guidance on the challenges she was facing and was commended for her accomplishments. As noted several times the Partnership also brought the interdisciplinary curriculum initiative into Hilary’s school.

Prior to the development of the Partnership Hilary felt isolated from her colleagues. She did not have regular times to meet with other teachers and felt that she was teaching in a vacuum. The Partnership created time within the teachers’ schedules to meet and opened a

dialogue about all of their continued and common needs, frustrations and successes. These relationships ultimately created a professional community within the school rather than everyone working in isolation.

Over time Hilary felt that she has become a leader in her school. She felt her voice was heard by her colleagues and administrators and her ideas valued. For example, her colleagues adopted using the rug as a gathering area. She also had the opportunity to mentor a Pacific College student teacher.

The various opportunities the Partnership brought to the school; as discussed above; created a sense of empowerment for Hilary and the other teachers. They were able to create their own interdisciplinary units and created an outlet to have their voices heard throughout the school.

In the second and third year of the Partnership other teachers from Pacific College decided to join the faculty at Smith Junior High and a student completed her required hours in Hilary's classroom. This brought a group of like minded individuals together at the school which Hilary felt was very important in her professional growth and continued decision to stay in urban education.

The Partnership funded Hilary to teach summer school at Smith Junior High and spend extensive time planning for the coming school year with her Pacific College advisor. Her work at the school provided insight into the community and an opportunity to build relationships with students and school administrators. Her work with her advisor allowed her to begin the year with her classroom organization and curriculum well thought out.

The Partnership was able to provide financial support for extra curriculum materials that were not provided by the school. For example, Hilary was able to teach whole class novels using the money from the Partnership to purchase the books.

The administration and faculty came under further scrutiny when student test scores did not improve and the school was deemed “underperforming”. The administration was forced to “buy” into a specific district sponsored curriculum and were closely watched to ensure they were implementing it “by the book”.

It was Hilary’s perception that the Partnership’s inability to effectively navigate the district policy context and survive when the school came under state review ultimately led to her decision to pursue a position at another middle school. Hilary believed the Partnership did not “sell” their curriculum and pedagogical strategies to the administration despite the fact that student test scores improved for individual teachers implementing the interdisciplinary curriculum and receiving on going support. The Partnership was not prepared to defend their role at the school and ultimately “win” as the designated program to improve student test scores.

During Hilary’s three years at Smith Junior High the mandated curriculum was pushed on her to use in her classroom. Although the Partnership provided stability during its tenure, Hilary faced other times of having to decide to “risk” implementing pedagogical strategies she believed in.

Hilary’s ability to raise her student test scores using progressive, developmentally and culturally appropriate lessons rather than the district selected mandated curriculum was a source of great pride and solidified her belief that child centered constructivist teaching works to educate children. However, because the school decided not to support the

continued use of interdisciplinary planning with a child-centered focus when they came under review it was also a source of great frustration.

What other factors affected this teacher's experience?

Hilary's prior experience teaching in an urban environment as well as working with diverse populations affect her current teaching experience. She enters Pacific College and her classroom with a background in working with urban students who are racially, ethnically and socioeconomically different than Hilary. Her prior experiences allow her to have a realistic view of what teaching in an urban classroom looks like and the importance of forging relationships with students who may not initially feel they have a lot in common.

Hilary is bilingual in Spanish so she is able to communicate with many of her students in their native language. Although she does not present lessons in Spanish she is able to clarify terms and directions that students may not initially understand in English.

Hilary experiences many successes as a classroom teacher. Most notably, she is able to improve her students' standardized test scores by 17 percent during her first two years of teaching. She also is able to effectively manage her classroom and see great improvement in her students' academic work. As previously discussed, other teachers begin to see Hilary as a leader and an innovator and come to her for advice on creating engaging lessons for their students. Both her Pacific College mentor and the school's administrator tell Hilary she is one of the best teachers at the school.

Hilary is very reflective on her teaching practice and is continually working to move forward. She views teaching as something that one is continually improving on by bringing innovative ideas into the classroom. Hilary is able to recognize when lessons are successful

and when they are not and takes the time to reflect on how she can be the best possible educator for her students.

Hilary has a strong relationship with the administrator on her floor. She sees her as a source of support and is able to openly discuss the challenges and successes she is experiencing in her classroom. Hilary states that this is an important piece of support and validation of her teaching.

The mandated curriculum plays an on going role in Hilary's experiences at Smith Junior High. She feels frustrated by the pressure and threatening nature of the curriculum. Ultimately, Hilary is angry that the mandated curriculum adopted by her school is not the interdisciplinary planning that the Partnership brings to the school. She believes Pacific College should have negotiated with the school and district to make their curriculum a permanent part of the school.

Hilary is unwavering in her convictions to work with diverse populations using child centered, developmentally appropriate pedagogy. Despite all of the challenges she faces she is always willing to take risks and do what she believed was best for her students. Her work as an urban educator is not simply a job but rather her life's work.

Connection to the Literature

The study supported the current research on urban teacher preparation and retention. Hilary's first experiences in an urban public school took place without any preparation or certification. Under these conditions she failed to create appropriate lessons and units and ultimately failed in her position as a lead teacher. After completing the Pacific College teacher preparation program she experienced success in her classroom and school and had the knowledge to become an exemplary teacher. Hilary's experience is consistent with

Darling-Hammond (2000b) findings, “The amount of education coursework completed by teachers explained more than four times the variance in teacher & student performance (p. 9).

Hilary’s commitment to urban education and urban students allow her to move away from the deficit paradigm (Weiner, 2003, 2006) which urban education tends to be grounded in. She has strong beliefs that her students are capable, intellectual learners that need to be challenged. She does not get caught up in the rhetoric that he students are simply incapable of meeting expectations. Given Hilary’s success with her students, Weiner’s argument that it is essential for all teachers to move away from the deficit paradigm is supported.

Hilary states on many occasions that her ability to create culturally relevant lessons and relationships is critical to her success. Hilary’s ability to understand her students’ lives is based in part on her prior experiences but also from in depth field experiences in which she is supported by Pacific College faculty members to reflect upon and assess her own beliefs. The literature defines this component of teacher preparation as a crucial part in preparing and retaining urban teachers (Berghoff, 2006; Oakes, Franke, Hunter Quartz & Rogers, 2006; Wilson et al., 2001).

The literature on teacher retention finds that comprehensive induction programs can significantly cut teacher attrition (Andrews et al., 2007; Ingersoll et al., 2004). The Pacific College Partnership helped create and foster many of the relationships called for in the literature. For example, Barbara facilitates the creation of a strong cohort of teachers on Hilary’s floor who supported one another. However, prior to the Partnership facilitating these relationships Hilary felt isolated and “different” from her colleagues. She had not created relationships with them and ultimately could not find common ground because the

development of these relationships was not valued at her school. After the Partnership ended the relationships waned, contributing to her decision to teach elsewhere.

The Partnership also created connections with administration. Ms. Smith, the administrator on Hilary's floor, works with Barbara in supporting the work of the teachers. Barbara also allows teachers to have a voice in possible solutions to challenges they are facing in their classroom and school. Essentially, Barbary opens up an avenue of administrative leadership (Borman & Maritza Dowling, 2008) that is critical to retaining teachers.

Most critical to Hilary, is the consistent support that the Partnership brings to the school. Hilary is mentored by Barbara from the first year of her teaching and continually refers to this relationship as "critical to her development". The Partnership also facilitated other mentoring opportunities among faculty by bringing together novice and veteran teachers to work toward a common goal. NCTAF's (2007) research supports Hilary's experiences, noting the importance of having on going mentoring experience.

Implications for Further Research

Hilary's experiences called for continued small and large scale studies on the experience of pre and in service teachers in urban schools with university school partnerships. The study suggested a link between university school partnerships and urban teacher retention but given the limitations of the study definite conclusions could not be made.

Hilary was also perceived as an exceptional teacher by Pacific College Faculty and Smith Junior High Administration and has prior experience educating diverse populations. Hilary's status raises the question how much her teacher preparation and the Pacific

Partnership truly led to her retention. However, Hilary's status suggests the support of the Partnership (mentorship, professional development, faculty support, like minded colleagues, financial resources) offers the minimum amount of support that teachers need in urban districts in order to be retained. Other teachers who do not initially possess the same knowledge and skills as Hilary will presumably need at least this amount of support. Larger scale studies with a wider range of potential teachers will be able to fine tune the experiences needed to retain larger demographics of urban teachers.

Further research is also needed on the specific aspect of the intern pathway which fed into the Partnership. This alternative route to standard certification and a master's degree created a combination of traditional teacher preparation with aspects of alternative licensure programs. Hilary's reflection and experience suggested that the internship pathway not only provided excellent preparation but may also ease some of the financial burden of graduate school.

The study also raises many questions about the fundamental structuring of a university-school partnership. Ultimately the Partnership between Smith Junior High and Pacific College does not survive in the midst of standardized testing and mandated curriculums. Research needs to be conducted to understand how relationships can be built not only on the school level but also at the district level so partnerships are able to sustain when district mandates are imposed. This partnership also depended heavily on one faculty member from Pacific College to sustain the relationship. Research needs to be conducted as to whether or not this is a viable partnership model.

Given the promise of university school partnerships, research is needed on how to best structure, implement and support a partnership. As seen at Smith Junior High,

administrative support was critical for a partnership to flourish. Research needs to be conducted to determine what factors contribute to school administrators and college faculty sustaining on going partnerships.

Final Reflection

My own values, perspectives and convictions have been challenged and strengthened over the course of my research. My commitment to the improvement of public education for all children, particularly in urban schools, remains unwavering. Hilary, the other professionals I interacted with and my intensive review of the research pushed me to move beyond simply desiring and promoting equal education but beginning to analyze what the real possibilities are for improvement.

Throughout my study I respected Hilary and her work. I believed she was a thoughtful, creative, and committed teacher who made a difference for her students. In my eyes, these qualities exist in many teachers and remind me of other student teachers I have worked with throughout my doctoral program. However, the teachers I have worked with in the past have not had the support system that was created for Hilary through the Partnership. As is discussed throughout this dissertation, the Partnership opened up opportunities for Hilary to develop curriculum, take on leadership roles, receive on going mentorship and become an integral part of the school community. At the end of my study I believe that university school partnerships are an excellent opportunity for schools of education and urban public schools to improve teacher preparation and increase teacher retention.

My view of an effective university school partnership is one that provides on going support for teachers to bridge the ideals of teacher preparation with the realities of urban public schools. I believe it is important for teachers to have like minded, goal oriented

colleagues with whom to work and it is critical for these relationships and dialogues be fostered through university faculty. I believe it is also important for the faculty members who are involved in a partnership to be consistent throughout a teacher's preparation program. Hilary and Barbara were able to create an extremely supportive relationship because Barbara was her advisor from the start of the program as well as the facilitating faculty member at her school. Also of great importance is the need for university partnerships to gain the support of school and district administrators. Many urban schools are deemed (or become) underperforming and it is important the work of the partnership is seen as central to school improvement rather than something that is dispensable.

At this point I would like to focus my research on larger scale qualitative studies of teachers prepared and teaching through university school partnerships. I see value in researching a cohort of teachers working in the same university school partnership as well as across teachers in differing programs. In terms of my work as a teacher educator I would like to teach within a university school partnership or be an integral part of creating one in an urban district.

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