

Where Instructor's Intent Meets Students' Interpretations: The Challenge of Responsiveness for a Teacher Educator

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Abstract

This self-study explores what it means to be responsive to student feedback, how to balance student feedback with external expectations and other data sources, and the consequences of responsiveness for the instructor's identity and students' learning. Issues of the instructor's motivation for responsiveness and the tension between encouraging students to engage in transformative teaching versus supporting their understanding of the current context of public education are discussed. It interrogates data collected through online journaling with colleagues at other institutions, course discussions, and students' feedback over the first three years as a teacher educator. Continually collecting, critically reflecting on and discussing with students their perspectives of the instructor's teaching provides a means of narrowing the gap between the instructor's teaching ideals and enactment of practice. Additionally, the instructor provides a model for students of what it means to be a reflective practitioner as students construct their own identities as teachers.

Introduction and Context

As an undergraduate and graduate student I was keenly aware of my professors' varied styles of mentorship. Some could be labeled minimalists, providing little academic feedback and less emotional support. Others provided extensive feedback on academic efforts but were emotionally remote. Some provided little constructive feedback but seemed motivated with insuring my self-confidence. A small group seemed capable of reading both academic and emotional needs and tailored their responses to support me in a holistic manner. Now as a novice teacher educator I am endeavoring to be responsive to students in a manner modeled after this final group. Echoing Noddings (1992, 2006), I believe, if I wish to prepare teachers who are capable of caring for and teaching students to be critical thinkers and compassionate participants in our world society, I must begin by providing them with the authentic experience of being cared for as learners. Loughran and Berry (2005) asserted, "teacher educators should work in the very way they advocate for their students" (p.194), as much so we educators gain a more nuanced understanding of the enactment of our values and theories as to provide a model for students.

Over the first three years of my career in higher education, I have come to appreciate the multitude of internal and external influences and limitations that can mitigate my ideals as a teacher educator – what I realize, and what students experience in their interactions with me. As

Brookfield (1995) asserted, it is apparent to all who have taught and thoughtfully sought and considered students' interpretations of our efforts, the purity of our intentions does not translate unproblematically into students' perspectives of their experiences with us. The message we intend is not always the message received.

There is interplay among multiple factors that present both perceived and real obstacles for teacher educators and the preservice teachers with whom they work. Berry (2008) identified and interrogated these obstacles or dichotomies as *tensions*. She framed them as "competing concerns" (p. 32) that pull teacher educators in different directions in their thinking and enacting of their practices. She went on to categorize six tensions: *telling and growing*, *confidence and uncertainty*, *action and intent*, *safety and challenge*, *valuing and reconstructing experience*, and *planning and responsiveness*.

For this self-study exploring my thinking about and enactment of my practice as it relates to the concept of responsiveness, I conceptualized responsiveness as cutting across the categories of tensions Berry (2008) articulated and not residing simply in the arena of *planning and responsiveness*. To illustrate, my desire to be responsive to students is positioned within and influenced by students' expectations to be told how to teach versus my desire to have them construct their knowledge of teaching through active engagement and reflection on modeled learning experiences (*telling and growing*). Likewise, my desire to be responsive must reconcile or balance the tension between students' desire to collect fool-proof tools and strategies to use in their future classrooms with my desire for students to gain an appreciation that meaningful learning requires teachers who see the limitations of recipe teaching and are able to grapple with dilemmas of practice that may come to imperfect solutions (*confidence and uncertainty*).

One foci Berry (2008) did not discuss in depth is a tension I feel between preparing preservice teachers to be capable of transforming the status quo at the same time preparing them to be employable within the existing context of public schools. Perhaps because of the current social/political climate in the region of the United States in which I teach (the rural Northeast), this is a paramount concern for me. While I attempt to teach in a manner congruent with my commitment to democratic principles and social justice, I recognize that in the certification, hiring, and tenuring of new teachers what is often most valued is prospective teachers' familiarity with packaged programs of instruction and assessment, the corresponding vocabularies and acronyms, and images and discourses of teaching as technical not critical. This tension, as I perceive it, might be labeled *transform and assimilate*.

Research Questions

I was propelled in this study by a desire to come to a clearer understanding of the tensions within my practice as they are related to responsiveness, as well as by the need to interrogate my desire to be perceived as responsive by students. The following questions served to guide my query:

1. What does it mean to be responsive to students in the context of a preservice program that is designed to prepare them for employment in the current public education arena?
2. How might I balance my responsiveness to students' feedback with my responsibilities as a gatekeeper of credentialing and with my commitment to an agenda of transformation and social justice?
3. What are the consequences for my identity as a teacher educator and for students' learning when I am perceived as being responsive or not responsive?

Theoretic Framework

Social constructivism and critical social theory literature guided my inquiry. Social constructivists view knowledge as constructed through interactions with others. This construction takes place against a backdrop of context, including "historical and sociocultural dimensions" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 197). Knowledge is neither static nor neutral. It continually evolves and reflects the ideologies of those who participate in its constructions. Building on social constructivism's view of knowledge, critical social theory is concerned with uncovering hegemonic practices and ways of thinking that serve the dominant class in silencing and dehumanizing those identified as "other" (Blake & Masschelein, 2003; Brown, 2004).

Theorists have argued critical reflection is the hallmark of reflective practitioners and is at the heart of effective educational practices (e.g. Larrivee, 2000; Walkington, Christensen, & Kock, 2001). Critically reflective teachers strive to examine their beliefs, assumptions, values, biases, and experiences, and their students need not be silent partners in this ongoing process. Indeed, students may be able to make meaningful contributions to the reflection process of instructors who strive to understand and improve their practice (Hudson-Ross & Graham, 2000). However, as Berry (2008) posited teacher educators who strive to make transparent to students their thinking and uncertainties about their practice must balance a tension between preservice teachers feeling confident in themselves and their teacher educator and students developing appreciation of the "complexities and messiness of teaching" and their professor's "vulnerabilities" (p. 32).

Finally, layered with a social constructivist and critical social theory framework is Noddings' (1992; 2006) philosophy of caring.

[T]he first job of the schools is to care for our children. We should educate all our children not only for competence but also for caring. Our aim should be to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people. (p. xiv, 1992)

I assert one way I might demonstrate caring for my students as preservice teachers is through encouraging their voices in their educations and valuing their insights about my practices.

Ultimately, I cannot realistically hope for them to be more caring with their future students or to engage them more actively as participants in their learning than I am able to model for them.

Methods

Working with three colleagues, Laurie, Sandy and Susan, in different institutions in Canada and the United States, over the first two years of my career (2008 – 2010), I systematically collected data on my teaching and reflections as a beginning professor. Initially, the four of us came to collaborate with one another through a shared commitment to self-study, to developing a community in which we could support one another's teaching and research efforts, and to ideals of critical reflection and democratic teaching. While we did not realize so at the inception of our collegial community, our intent and efforts mirrored those of earlier pioneers in self-study (i.e., the Arizona Group 1991 as discussed in Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). During the first two years of our collaboration, we focused on the same set of research questions addressing critical reflection and democratic teaching principles. In the third year of our partnership, we explored and supported one another with separate but interdependent lines of inquiry.

Over the course of our joint and interdependent inquires we have each kept reflective journals that have included personal reflections, problems, and questions about our teaching. Using an online conferencing site we share journal entries. We read and respond to one another's journals creating a four-way dialogue about our ongoing experiences and learning. Additionally, we each periodically share selections from our own journals with our students. By sharing our personal reflections about our practices, we hope to model for and encourage students to think critically about their own fledgling practices and have them offer ideas and suggestions that might improve ours.

As final data sources we each have administered anonymous mid-semester Course Feedback Questionnaires and end-of-course Evaluation Forms (see Appendices) to our students. Instrument items have been adapted from Brookfield (1995) and are utilized with permission. Prior to soliciting students' feedback, informed consent forms are obtained. Over the five semesters of this study, 105 students in eight courses I have taught have completed two or more questionnaires. All the student participants have been junior or senior elementary education majors enrolled in my Literacy course and/or Methods course. Nearly all students have me for both courses, and so over time they become conditioned to me soliciting their input. In each instance of collecting students' feedback, I compile their responses and share them with my collaborators and with the students from whom the information was collected. In addition to my collaborators assistance in analyzing the data sets, I ask students to help me identify trends in their feedback and invite their suggestions for improving my courses and my practice through in-class discussions and, occasionally, through an online discussion board.

At the conclusion of the 2009 – 2010 academic year, Laurie, Sandy, Susan and I re-read our journals and collective feedback from students in order to look for additional themes and consider again our interpretations. As we entered our third year as a collaborative group, each of us determined to disaggregate our data in different ways as we moved forward, to take divergent paths to examine personal topics that have meaning for us and might best guide our continued efforts to improve our practice. For my inquiry I have conducted a more fine-toothed analysis of data addressing questions of responsiveness. I read and re-read responses on mid-semester and end-of-semester questionnaires and re-read my journal entries through the lenses of responsiveness and the questions articulated above. Laurie, Sandy and Susan have served as critical friends through the process, helping me in identifying my blind spots and pushing me to reframe my assumptions.

Results

Collecting student feedback is a relatively risk-free endeavor that does not, in and of itself, represent a threat to my esteem or the identity I am constructing as a new teacher educator. However, reading and sharing students' feedback with my online colleagues and with my students has been immensely frightening. In each instance I have to steel myself with the mantra I am conducting research and need to be dispassionate and open-minded. I believe I should not generally communicate to students there is some feedback with which I did not agree, did not see as justified and/or hurt my sense of self.

Complicating matters is the fact students' feedback is often divergent. Regularly within the same class the majority of students comment positively about my level of responsiveness while a few are critical.

- *I think that the instructor should be more open minded to students and their thoughts & ideas as well as what they might have going on outside of class. (April 2009)*
- *I feel like the instructor was very responsive to us & was interested in our concerns if we had any. (April 2009)*
- *If anyone ever had a problem or question the instructor explained further and helped in any way possible. (April 2010)*
- *Often appeared negative and often had negative responses to the class. (April 2010)*

Leaving the questions, am I being consistent in my efforts and/or are other factors responsible for the discrepancies? Are there students to whom I am communicating through my verbal and non-verbal messages that I do not value them or do not wish to have rapport? Are their responses to me and my teaching something I should feel responsible for, or is it a matter of taste or personality that I have no real capacity to influence? Moreover, why when the vast majority of students provide me with positive feedback about my responsiveness do I perseverate on a few

negative comments that represent few than 5% of my students? What does my reaction to their feedback indicate about my motivations and what I value in my teaching?

At an intellectual level I understand I need to reconcile myself to the reality that it is unlikely I will ever be able to be all things to all students. Differences in personalities and backgrounds inevitably contribute to instances in which I fail to communicate clearly, I fail to understand students' needs or desires, or they are not receptive to me. At the same time, because my broader sense of identity and esteem as a person are not independent of my identity as a teacher educator, I feel a sense of failing that is difficult to rationalize away.

I believe in those instances when I learn a student or students are not satisfied with my responsiveness, I should systematically reflect on my actions and my attitudes being honest with myself about my responsibility. If through the reflective process I come to recognize or suspect my culpability, I should admit this to myself and if appropriate to the student(s). I should openly acknowledge the relationship is not optimal, make transparent my decision making/actions as they relate to the particular student(s), and maintain an open and helpful stance. In some cases this has allowed for a new beginning with a student.

An Illustrative Case:

Early in my second semester as teacher educator my father died suddenly and traumatically. His death was particularly devastating to me because I had so recently experienced a number of other life altering transitions in my life, including moving across country after living all my adult life in one community and beginning a new career in a location where I had no personal or professional network. After returning from his funeral, I made every effort to soldier through the semester. Beyond telling students I needed to cancel a class in order to attend the funeral, I never provided them with additional insight or details about my grief. I thought I did an admirable job of focusing on my students and my teaching and setting my grief aside for the time being.

In fact, I had not. Apparently, my grief had impaired my ability to see I was not being responsive to the needs of Terry¹, one of my students in my Literacy course. After a few weeks of class, I noticed Terry's attitude toward me and the class was negative, but I could not apprehend why. At the time, it appeared to me she had a personal conflict with another student in the class and that that circumstance was coloring her motivation to participate positively in class activities. In both the mid-course and end-of-course feedback forms, I had all but one form returned to me with responses that indicated general satisfaction with the course and my interactions with students. Because the forms were completed anonymously, I could not be certain as to the authorship of the negative forms and felt it would be unethical to speculate or act on my assumption of authorship. Still it was evident that one member of the class of 14 felt I had slighted her. I did not feel I had the means to rectify the situation nor did I feel I had the

¹ All students presented have been assigned pseudonyms.

emotional energy to do anything differently. Beyond feeling badly and resolving to keep my interaction with Terry positive, I was stymied.

As fate would have it, the next fall Terry was a member of my Methods course, and I was assigned to be her student teaching supervisor. I had a sense of foreboding. She made it clear through her participate in the first weeks of the Methods class that her attitude had not shifted over the summer. Again, I was at a loss as to how to go about bringing about a change in her attitude or our relationship. Based on the compiled mid-course and end-of-course feedback (In my Methods course, I administer the end-of-course questionnaire at the completion of students on-campus class time before they begin their practicum placements in mid-October), I could see that an overwhelming majority of students (27 of 30) in the cohort felt I had been responsive to them during their seven weeks in class. Three felt I was responsive some of the time. One of the completed end-of-semester forms was noticeably more critical than the others on all responses.

Because the class was no longer meeting as a cohort on campus for the remainder of the semester, I could not share the compiled feedback with them in person. Instead, I posted it on the online conferencing space the students utilized as a component of my course and I wrote out my analysis of the data set. In a last ditch effort to offer an olive branch to Terry who I suspected was the author of the most critical feedback, I included the third paragraph below in my open letter to students:

In an effort to make my practice as transparent as possible and to “model” being a reflective practitioner, I thought I would share with you my thoughts/analysis of the feedback. I invite you to look through the feedback and my analysis to see if there is a “goodness of fit” between the two. I also invite you to offer your interpretations through responses to this forum I have started . . .

The first thing I noticed, and was heartened by, was the trend in the responses to item #7: “responsiveness of instructor.” All but three felt that I was “regularly” responsive. The other three indicated I was “sometimes” responsive. I appreciated many of the comments that expressed appreciation for what was perceived to be my efforts to be caring and respectful to students. Of course, I feel badly that I didn’t get “perfect” marks in this regard, because I was not always able to respond to all of the recommendations that were made about the structure of learning experiences in the class. Part of this I attribute to my limitations to do multiple new things. I plan to continue to tweak the way in which I structure the course. For instance, as was suggested by some, it would be more helpful to have the analysis sheets for the Wade text prior to coming to class – I just couldn’t get it done this time around. I also did not always change course in response to the feedback because the feedback didn’t indicate a converging course, so it was not possible to please everyone . . .

There were a couple of questionnaires that were predominantly negative in evaluating me and the course. I feel badly that I did not meet these students' needs and/or have offended them through my actions. I extend an invitation to anyone I have offended to come to me individually so I can learn from them. (October 2009)

Within a few days, Terry wrote in her online journal (visible to me as the instructor but not her classmates) that she had felt uneasy having me as her student teaching supervisor. I posted a response in which I acknowledged I also felt our relationship was strained and offered to make amends if there had been an instance in which I had generated negative feelings. She did not take me up on my invitation or comment on my response to her journal entry, but our interactions were positive from that point forward. In the weeks and months that followed, as we developed our student teacher/supervisor relationship, Terry was able to share feelings of apprehension about her abilities as a student teacher and was receptive to my feedback. I no longer sensed she was eager for me to leave her classroom following observations. Instead, she issued invitations to observe lessons beyond those required, asked for my opinion, and expressed appreciation for my efforts.

Gate Keeping:

Of course, there are instances when as a teacher educator I am faced with balancing support with my role as gatekeepers for students' eligibility for teaching credentials (Goodwin, 2009). In these cases it is unlikely students will thank me wholeheartedly for critical feedback. However, if our relationships are built on a foundation of caring, their responses will not be to discount/disregard feedback. Instead, it will be to consider with me ways to improve. I am hopeful they will see my commitment to their competence as teachers is a commitment to them. In the case of Debbie, who struggled for many weeks of her student teaching to develop consistent classroom management skills, I received the following unsolicited note of thanks at the conclusion of the semester:

- *Your input was always helpful and I also appreciate how you provided it – without being intimidating but still clear. (May 2010)*

Over the previous two semesters on campus we had developed a positive rapport with one another. I was impressed with Debbie's capacity to consider consequences of traditional practices for students from diverse backgrounds. Perhaps because she trusted that I cared about her as individual, she listened to my feedback about her practice and never shut down when we discussed deficits. Eventually, she did develop management strategies that were comfortable to her, supportive of her students, and prompted the wise use of instructional time.

Needing to be Liked:

Rios, Montecinos and van Oplen (2007) stated,

It is critical for [individuals] to recognize how much of their identity is both created and re/created in the context of interactions with others. This recreation of identities is often spurred by the reactions from others; in turn, it leads to feeling of insecurity and uncertainty. (p. 65)

My identity as a teacher educator is built on a commitment to being responsive to students. Consequently, at times I may weigh too heavily both students' positive and negative feedback, falling prey to wanting to be liked over wanting to be effective (Brookfield, 1995).

- *I thought she was responsive, maybe too much at times.* (October 2009)
- *I really appreciated her concern and she was very willing to adjust her plans to meet our needs/requests.* (December 2009)
- *Really awesome. I honestly have never felt so much support and responsiveness before. I feel as though I am more than just a number in her class and that she genuinely cares I do well.* (December 2010)

Having access to my online colleagues, I was able to check my own interpretations of students' critical feedback against the interpretations offered by knowledgeable peers, identify the criticism I should own and that for which I should not feel responsible.

- *I was impressed with the feedback. . . I read through the comments . . . my impression was that they feel actively engaged and they are learning a great deal. What more can you want? Why the mixed feelings?* (Sandy, 9/24/2009)

Too willingly adjusting due dates or too quickly answering students' requests for help may be obstacles for some in learning to be better time managers or more self-sufficient. On the other hand, being perceived as unyielding or uncaring can contribute to students being unmotivated or not receptive to feedback and can provide a negative model of student/teacher interactions (Noddings, 2006). As of yet, I have not found an ideal balance between my desire to be responsive and my appreciation that students need challenges and to seek their own answers in order to grow. I have come to the recognition that too readily jumping to students' rescue is a manifestation of my insecurities and need to be liked. As I continue to refine my practice I need to reflect more purposefully on how and why I respond to students' requests for assistance and more carefully tailor my responsiveness to ensure I am encouraging students to grow their own capacities to find their way and at the same time not abandoning them to their own devices.

Transform vs. Assimilate:

As outlined above, a conflict I wrestle with in my thinking about and my enactment of my practice with preservice teachers is how to balance a tension I feel between *transform and assimilate*. I was drawn to teacher education by my commitment to encouraging preservice teachers to critically reflect on the status quo in education and supporting them in exploring

alternative approaches to pedagogy and curriculum that are more empowering for learners, which strive to promote problem solving and the voices of all learners. I have come to see that my priorities are often not perfectly aligned with the goals my students have for themselves or with the priorities communicated to them by cooperating teachers, by building and district administrators, through Praxis and other exams utilized in the certification process, and by articulated professional standards used in evaluating teacher performance.

What I have noted in my work with students as they transition from their on-campus courses to their student teaching experiences are their responses to a disconnect they experience between their preparation for teaching and their practice. As described as the “wash out” effect by Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981), many students seem to readily discard stances that position them in opposition to the priorities of their cooperating teachers and the culture of their buildings. They put aside practices and ways of thinking about their practices that are markedly different than those present in the student teaching site. In many cases while they might have articulated a commitment to innovate and empower students during their on-campus courses, what they enact in the field mirrors their cooperating teacher’s practice, focuses on teaching to end-of-level tests, and promotes students being passive consumers of packaged curriculums. In some cases, student teachers note the disconnect and express a desire, through their course feedback forms, reflective journals, or in post-observation conferences, to have learned more while on campus about programs they encounter in the field

- *I would like to be using books that we would use to teach to experience them and help develop more ideas about teaching literacy . . . (October 2008)*

Students seem to accept the packaged programs as unalterable givens and perceive my inattention to training them to use them as a weakness in their preparation for student teaching. I speculate that they may never have felt a commitment to transform the status quo, and instead, they parroted in their on-campus course what they believed their instructors wanted to hear.

Alternatively, some student teachers acknowledge the disconnect between how they have been prepared to teach and the expectations present in their student teaching sites. These students seem to persist in articulating their ideals but act otherwise as illustrated in Chris’s journal reflection about compromises she was faced with in teaching science:

- *. . . As the students get barely anytime for science because they spend most of the day preparing in math and reading for the pssas I try to do as many interactive and hands on pieces I can with science. I am slowly starting to realize that this just isn't going to be the case for EVERY single lesson. For the most part though the hands on and experiments have worked very well. The next two lessons though unfortunately, I am not going to be able to do an hands on experiment with them . . . Also, with only 30 minute blocks it is VERY hard to teach the lesson and then have the chance for*

students to do a hands on activity and experiment with the proper amount of time needed! . . . (March 2011)

They express the desire to do things differently when they have their own classrooms. In their journals and in conferences they suggest that their on-campus experiences could have prepared them better for the student teaching if more time were devoted to frank discussions about aspects of student teaching that would impact them in developing practices that aligned with their ideals.

In a few cases, students find the reality of their student teaching experience to be so contrary to their expectations that they come to the conclusion there is no way to reconcile the two. Student teaching is a painful experience that leaves them disheartened about their prospects of finding a teaching position and being happy in it and disenfranchised from their preservice program. In a mid-term conference with Janet (March 2011), a student teacher who entered her field placement with high expectations for herself of engaging students in creative activities that promoted problem solving, she expressed dissatisfaction with her inability to teach in the way she would like to because of the demands of standardized assessments. She was frustrated with her on-campus teacher preparation which she characterized as presenting a utopian image of teaching. Though she will successfully complete her student teaching requirements this spring, she has already determined that teaching in a public school setting is not something she will pursue. In some regards I feel culpable in “selling her a bill of good.” I should have done more to keep her expectations for student teaching grounded.

I don't have the answers for how to bridge the disconnect for students between on-campus and student teaching experiences. Nor do I know how to steel students to hold onto their desire to transform practice in the face of so many obstacles. The uneasy balance I have struck is to be honest with student teachers as they enter their student teaching about what they will experience, to encourage them to think about whether or not what they are required to do is in the best interest of their students or has been implemented to meet some other goal, and to imagine what they would do differently if they could change circumstances. Prior to their student teaching I have attempted to give students access to the programs they may be required to utilize in the field. I encourage them to become familiar with them, but also evaluate them critically.

Ideally, as many other teacher preparation programs have in place, student teachers would only be placed in sites and with cooperating teachers who support innovation and strive to empower learners. Those cooperating teachers could, thereby, provide positive examples for student teachers. Unfortunately, my reality is that I am often in the position of having little influence on the placement of student teachers. The climates in the districts nearest my campus, locations where student teachers can most readily be placed, favor top-down management, the adherence to programmed curriculums and assessment tools, and the image of learners as passive, quiet recipients of teaching. The primary focus is on insuring learners demonstrate proficiency on end-of-level assessments through fidelity to packaged curriculum aligned to the tests.

Significance and Implications for Practice

I have struggled with the tension I feel between what feels like competing agendas of preparing students to be employed in the existing public school climate and my commitment to educational transformation. Within the United States teacher, educators have many masters and are required to respond to external expectations (Clift, 2009; Goodwin, 2009) including state offices of education, Praxis or other forms of certification exams, and the priorities of hiring administrators. These conditions mitigate the actions I take in my practice and my responsiveness to students. I want my students to have the capacity and propensity to alter the status quo – to teach for empowerment, creativity, and a more just society, but this is something that will not happen if they do not first pass successfully through layers of gate keeping that communicate very different priorities for public education teachers. This self-study has encouraged me to peel the first layers of this onion, but I have much more work to do in reconciling the tension of *transform and assimilate*.

The power of this self-study is the realizations I have made along the journey of conducting it. Through asking myself tough questions, looking at students' feedback more critically, and re-visiting episodes from my interactions with students over the last two and a half years, I have confronted my deeply-seeded desire to be perceived as responsive and, thereby, liked by students. As I move forward I am considering more carefully how to tailor my responsiveness so that I move my students over time toward greater independence.

Finally, it is imperative I serve as a model of caring if it is an ideal I hope my students carry forward into their own teaching. Simply valuing caring does not guarantee I will effortlessly demonstrate genuine care or my intentions will translate into students' experiencing my efforts as supportive. Only through a continual process of self-reflection, inviting and thoughtfully considering students' perspectives and dialoguing with knowledgeable peers might I narrow the gap between intentions and enactment. In doing so I also provide a model for students of what I believe it means to be a reflective practitioner. Involving students and making my goals/struggles transparent, I have demonstrated a different teaching approach, one that confounds the notion of teachers as all-knowing and above question. Additionally, my colleagues and I have demonstrated "teaching as research" can be conducted by novice professors alongside preservice teachers with the goal of modeling and inspiring collaborative relationships and reflective practice.

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Appendix A

Course Feedback Questionnaire

Please take a few minutes to respond to the questions below. They have been adapted from Brookfield's (1995, p.115) text *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* and are designed to help me understand your perceptions of the course to this point in the semester in an effort to refine my practice. This activity is strictly voluntary and anonymous. Please do not put your names on your papers.

1. At what moment in the class meetings to this point in the semester have you felt most engaged with what was happening?
2. At what moment in the class meetings to this point in the semester have you felt most distanced from what was happening?
3. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class have you found most affirming and helpful?
4. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class have you found most puzzling or confusing?
5. What about the class has surprised you the most? (This could be something about your own reactions to an experience in the class, or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you.)

Appendix B

Course Title & Number: _____

Instructor: _____

Semester: _____

This Evaluation Form is intended to help the instructor gain a clearer understanding of how to assist future students' learning and how her actions as a teacher have been perceived by students this semester. Please answer the items candidly. The evaluation is anonymous and your participation is voluntary.

Please complete the following statements:

1. What most helped my learning in this class was:

2. What most hindered my learning in this class was:

3. What most helped me take responsibility for my own learning in this class was:

4. What most prevented me from taking responsibility for my own learning in this class was:

5. I believe the instructor's goals or objectives for this course were:

Please respond to the following statements by checking one of the boxes and answering the question that follows:

6. In this course, I found that:
 - many different teaching approaches were used.
 - some different teaching approaches were used.
 - very few teaching approaches were used.What are your feelings about the teaching approaches used?

7. In this course, I found the instructor to be:

- always responsive to students' concerns.
 - sometimes responsive to students' concerns.
 - rarely responsive to students' concerns.
- What are your feelings about this level of responsiveness?

8. In this course, I found the instructor:

- consistently tried to get students to participate.
- sometimes tried to get students to participate.
- rarely tried to get students to participate.

What are your feelings about the amount of participation by students in this course?

9. In this course, I found that:

- I regularly received information about my learning.
- I occasionally received information about my learning.
- I rarely received information about my learning.

What are your feeling about the frequency with which you received information about your learning and the quality of that information?

10. In this course, I found that the instructor enacted democratic principles in her teaching and work with students, modeled being a reflective practitioner, and strove to make her practice transparent:

- regularly.
- occasionally.
- infrequently.

What do you believe to be indicators/markers of educational practices that are built on democratic principles?

What does it mean to you to be a reflective practitioner as an educator?

What should an instructor do to make his/her practice transparent to students?

*Items 1-4 and 6-9 have been taken directly from an evaluation form created by Brookfield (1995, pp.268-269) *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. The form and purpose of the instrument are modeled largely on Brookfield's.