

Science and Mathematics Education Centre

**Becoming a Teacher: An Interpretive Inquiry into the Construction
of Pre-service Teachers' Teaching Identity**

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**This thesis is presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of
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Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published by any person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

Signature: 

Date:

Abstract

This study demonstrated that learning to teach is a complex endeavor involving more than learning content and methods. Learning to teach involves constructing a new identity and renegotiating previous identities and educational beliefs. Exploring teaching identity through critical reflective practice is at the heart of this research thesis. Research into teachers' professional identities is a relatively new line of inquiry in teacher development. This study was conducted as an interpretive inquiry into how pre-service teachers construct their teaching identities during a course called Developmental Reading at Lakeshore Lutheran University.

While conducting the study, the teacher-researcher awakened his own critical conscious voice by critically examining his own autobiographical stories. The data confirm a closely connected relationship among autobiographical stories, narrated experiences, and identity construction. The study suggests that intentional critical reflection by pre-service teachers—using autobiographical histories, Blackboard discussions, reflective journals, and narrative-based interviews, coupled with a practicum experience—can help to facilitate the process of identity construction and enable pre-service teachers to be critically aware of the shortcomings of the dominant pedagogy. The study found that pre-service teachers frequently thought about what happened to themselves as students, named the types of teachers they hoped to become, and talked about the kinds of teachers they were not.

The findings suggest that it is important to examine why we become teachers in order to understand what we do as teachers and how we might teach more authentically. The study suggests that teacher education programs need to empower pre-service teachers by allowing time and space for them to deconstruct their personal learning experiences and their pre-service practicum experiences through critical reflective writing and discussion. In this space, pre-service teachers might be led to take issue with the dominant pedagogy of standardized testing, which has created a culture of standardizing teachers, and come to understand that being a teacher is about impacting lives of children beyond the culture of schooling.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Martha, my wife

To my children:

Jacob, Rachel, Isaiah, Noah, and Hannah, my inspiration

To Mom, the best teacher ever

To Dad, my encourager

To my grandparents, my life-long examples of love

In thankfulness to God

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In loving memory and gratitude, I am thankful for my mom. She taught me how to be the person and teacher that I am today. She passed away before I realized this dream. But she left an eternal light behind that shines forth in me, my children, and my grandchildren. Mom, I miss you!

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I thank my Lord and Savior for blessing and transforming my life and guiding my plans.

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

Romans 12:2

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Preface

It is interesting to me to note that one of the first things you read in a book is the preface, while I have discovered it is often the last thing written. What you are about to read is a doctoral thesis. This preface is written partially as an introduction and mostly as a disclaimer. This thesis does not follow the standard Americanized format of a dissertation and may be hazardous to your understanding of educational research. This thesis might just offer an alternative perspective and give you moments of pause and reflection. This research story is written partially as my own autobiographical story and includes autobiographical stories of my pre-service teachers sprinkled with my own interpretive insights.

I have written this thesis from my perspective and attempted to write in an authentic manner that would be informative, organized, and enjoyable. I have many motives in writing this thesis in this non-traditional format. First, the use of storytelling is part of my teaching. Second, I enjoy reading and listening to stories. As the teacher and researcher, I believe that I am best suited to analyze my own stories. As teacher-researcher I attempted to accurately interpret the stories my students told me by allowing their voices to be heard in my writing. It is my hope that you might connect with this story, and maybe chuckle aloud, and possibly even shed a quiet tear as you read, just as I did as I both lived and wrote this story. My beliefs about writing are supported by the views of Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993):

Teacher-researchers are uniquely positioned to provide a truly emic perspective that makes visible the ways students and teachers together construct knowledge. When teachers do research they draw on interpretive frameworks built from their own histories and intellectual interests. Because their research process is practice...the necessity of “translating findings” is...obviated and moves teacher research towards praxis, or critical reflection on practice. (p. 448)

This teacher-researcher project started out as anything but organized and enjoyable and was in fact a messy, complex endeavor. I have discovered that the

process of storytelling is a tricky, complex, and difficult process. I have learned that so too is educational research. I have attempted to be intellectually honest in my writing as I reveal who I am as a teacher and share my teaching identity. This story has been written over time in many different formats. I wrote the beginning, middle, and end many different times. I revised, rewrote, and started again. Thoughts or insights about my research story would pop into my head while listening to music, watching a movie, driving my car, working out, listening to a sermon, or even during my sleep. When a new or connecting thought emerged I would quickly look for my computer, grab a pen, or make a mental note so I would not forget the connection I had made. Ideas emerged from the research literature I read, from rereading my own writing, from a slogan on a t-shirt, from words my own children spoke, and from every lived moment I experienced. I came to understand that I was not only part of this study, but I was living it. I relied on Max van Manen's (1990) powerful idea of "writing for pedagogical thoughtfulness" to move me to engage in my own thoughts about what it means to be a teacher. Most importantly, writing this text has helped me understand myself as a teacher and identify what I believe about teaching and our education system.

My interpretive inquiry is written as an academic text that demonstrates how I became a teacher, alongside attempting to understand how my students are becoming teachers. Inside the pages you are about to read, I have attempted to immerse you in my experiences and the experiences of my students.

My text begins with an event that occurred almost thirty years ago.

Chapter One: Recognizing the Problem

Legacy
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I know that I dream to be
Something more than every-day
And I understand "to be or not to be"
It's who I am and not, not what I say

Live how I live
But my life don't mean anything
Unless I can make it
Mean something to me
Say what I say
But my words don't mean anything
Unless I can say the
Words that I believe
Dream what I dream
But my dreams don't mean anything
Unless I can dream
Beyond what I can be

I know what life means to me
It's more than words may, may ever say
And I know we are free to be
Who we are on, on every day

Sing what I sing
But my songs don't mean anything
Unless I can sing the
Songs inside of me
Life flows in and out of me
Changing course from left to right
Yet I ride with sweet Persephone
Within her arms I spring to life
Live how I live
My life must mean everything

All that I am
Leads to who I'll be
Say what I say
My words are my legacy
Those who will live
May remember me
Sing what I sing
My songs show me everything
Filled with my life,
I sing these songs to be

I was thirteen years old when I first thought about becoming a teacher. It happened while I was playing an elementary school basketball game. My team was down by just two points with only a few minutes remaining in the game. My coach, who was also my classroom teacher, called a timeout to discuss offensive and defensive strategies. It was during that timeout that I prayed, “Dear God, if we win this game I will become a teacher.” Little did I realize the power of prayer or recognize that age-old proverb that reminds us to be careful what we wish for. Ask any thirteen-year-old boy what he wants to be and I doubt many, if any, will say, “I want to be a reading teacher.” Yet it seems I was destined to become a teacher, which makes me wonder, “Who is this teacher that I have become?” and, “What do I believe about teaching?”

I don’t think that I was much different than most suburban Caucasian American boys. To me, school was something that I had to endure as a rite of passage. What I was made to do during most of my school days had no connection with or meaning for life outside of the classroom walls. School was a time of sitting passively in a desk and listening to the teacher. I became very good at this. So after those numerous hours, days, weeks, and years of sitting passively as a student, I chose to become a teacher in this system. Interestingly, not long ago a student told me, “You are different than most teachers on campus.”

As I invite you into my story about becoming a teacher, it’s important to note that early in my school life I did struggle with school, especially reading. In spite of this, today I am not only a teacher but also the director of a graduate reading program at the largest Lutheran university in North America. I think that I might have reached a point in my life where I can have far-reaching impact, but then again I might be just a part of a system that is unchangeable. Nevertheless, I do know that I can change what I do in my own classroom.

In spite of school, and not because of it, I became a strong reader and grew to love reading stories. School implied to me that reading involved breaking the phonics code, completing reading workbooks, and answering comprehension questions. I became a strong reader because of the love and encouragement I received from my mother. Today I fear that if we do not have mothers and fathers sharing the love of reading with children, then no one will take up that role. Schools and teachers have

become good at testing, drilling sub-skills, and teaching strategies; yet lost amongst these details is allowing children time to read because they love to read.

As my years in school progressed I grew accustomed to the passive culture of school, and attaining “B’s” was not that difficult. I might have even been able to get mostly “A’s” if I had tried hard to memorize the curriculum. However, the work I was assigned to do in school had little relevancy or meaning for my life and what I wanted to be. I do not think I learned much in school. As a student I was kept busy filling in bubbles and completing workbook pages. When the school day was over, I spent most of my time outside playing sports. However, during quiet moments at home I discovered that writing was more than circling nouns and underlining verbs. I began to write letters to my sports heroes and other real people. I discovered that, outside of the culture of school reading, there was much more than answering comprehension questions. I turned to books to become part of dramatic adventures that would carry me to different parts of this world and beyond.

Throughout my days as a grade school student, I dreamt about becoming a professional athlete, not a teacher. Yet it was writing about that grade school basketball moment that enabled me to recognize my first connection to becoming a teacher. Standing in that huddle, for some reason I was moved to make a deal with God. We did win that game and I did become a teacher. Today I am positive God does not care much about youth basketball games. Today I realize that my reasons for becoming a teacher are numerous and diverse. To me, becoming a teacher is a spiritual undertaking that involves understanding myself and the hope I hold in transforming myself and other teachers for the sake of our future.

During my adolescent years, as I sought to find what I might become, I did not plan on becoming a teacher. I wanted to be a sports star like those I saw on television. However, it did not take long for me to realize that becoming a professional athlete was not going to happen, because of my average athletic skills. Still, I wanted to be a part of something I enjoyed, so I thought of becoming a sports announcer. After high school I did land a job in the radio business, but I always wondered about how I might change the world.

As I look back on the path that has brought me to this moment, I see many twists and turns, many valleys and hills. For a time, teaching was the last vocation I would want to pursue. Nonetheless, that prayer during the basketball game remained in the back of my mind. I do not recall anyone ever saying to me, “You would make a great teacher.” In fact, no one ever told me what I should become. After many turns and bumps in the road, I came to realize that by becoming a teacher I might impact the lives of children in a meaningful and empowering way that was opposite of the way I had been taught. I wanted to become a teacher who is not like others on campus. It was my hope to teach in a way that I was not taught. As a student I had many ineffective teachers who wasted a lot of my time with frivolous and meaningless work. I did have a few outstanding and inspiring teachers who continue to impact me today. I do not think people set out on this journey of becoming teachers by saying to themselves that they are going to become bad teachers. I do not think people say that they want to become a part of a system that stifles creativity, mandates rules, and teaches children how to be outstanding test takers and how to sit still for eight hours. I also do not think that people can will themselves to become effective and inspiring teachers. I believe that I have been both a bad and a good teacher. But most of all, I believe that I have become a better teacher by being a student of teaching.

During the eighteen years that I have been a teacher, it seems that when my teaching lost meaning and focus was when I had forgotten about why I had become a teacher and instead followed the dominant pedagogy of teaching in a standardized way. It was often through reading other teachers’ stories that I was able to regain focus and momentum in the classroom and in my life as a teacher. I would often read classroom stories by authors such as Nancy Atwell (1998), Lucy Calkins (1994) and Donald Graves (1994) to help me remember who I was as a teacher. By reading the inspirational writings of other teachers, I was moved to think about how I might become a better teacher and make learning authentic and meaningful. It seems that when I am teaching at my best, it is because what is happening in the classroom is important and significant for everyone involved. Today I am not only a teacher of students but also a teacher of future teachers. I aspire to make learning empowering and relevant so that when I walk out of the classroom my students might have experienced something very different than what I had experienced as a student.

As I think about that naive deal I struck with God about becoming a teacher, I am moved to reflect on how my past has influenced my life as a teacher. My desire is to understand why I became a teacher, to truly see who I am as a teacher today and how I have changed, and to understand how I might support my students as they become teachers. This is the frame that supports this research inquiry. Within this frame and from this perspective I am moved to look back on the landscape of my past, become more aware of the present moments of my life, and look ahead to the future. A long-time friend, Stephen Bishofsky, wrote the lyrics and music to “Legacy,” the song that opens this chapter. This song speaks to me and reminds me of the importance of the words I write. I write this story in the hope that it just might help another teacher regain focus and gain momentum in his or her classroom and teaching life. I hope this story might nudge my education colleagues to sense the urgent need to transform schools by supporting and empowering pre-service teachers as they construct their own unique teaching identity. I wonder if this story might make you think about the moment when and the reasons why you became a teacher and make you think about ways that you can empower your own students and do things differently.

These words you are reading are my legacy and part of my identity as a teacher. This text I have written means everything to me, as it represents who I am. You are reading a written reflection of my life. As a youngster I would often sneak off to the local city lake and drop a fishing line into the water. As the water quietly rippled, I would peer deeply into the shimmering reflections and smile back at the person in the water. Today, as I look into the waters of my life, I notice how I have changed from that young, skinny boy to an experienced teacher with streaks of gray in my hair. Looking backward at my life and writing about becoming a teacher has helped me understand the person I am today and the hope I have for the future. Talking with my pre-service teachers about who they are becoming and how they perceive me as a teacher helped us to see each other through one another’s eyes.

As a human being, parent, son, and teacher, the words I say, write, and live define who I am. These words are written as a reflective story about who I was and who I have become as a teacher. For decades teachers have been encouraged to write reflections (Dewey, 1938). Reflections seem to have become part of every teacher education program. Reflections are written with the hope that pre-service teachers

and full-time teachers will think critically about their educational experiences and transform their practice and lives. Yet it seems too often that these reflections can become mundane, shallow, meaningless, and just a regurgitation of how things are, rather than how they might be. To teach with courage and transform our lives as teachers we need to examine everything we do (Palmer, 1998). We need to peer deeply into the shimmering water and take note of the ripples and understand the impact our past has on who we are today. This reflective interrogation helps us reveal who we are as teachers and understand our teaching identity. Our teaching identity captures our beliefs, attitudes, and teaching practice (Britzman, 1991). Critical reflective writing helped me examine my motives, attitudes, reactions, and perspective on life. This reflective story you are reading has helped me to transform myself and my practice as a teacher. This transformation occurred as I interrogated, articulated, and affirmed, my teaching identity.

This thesis reveals my teaching identity and the pedagogy of my life. The pedagogy of my life includes all I do as a teacher and as a person. It includes the choices I make, the words I say, the assignments I give, and—most importantly—the ways I try to honor and empower my students. Searching my past has helped me to notice the dominant pedagogy of our schools. To me, the dominant pedagogy of our time is focused on teaching isolated sub-skills that appear on standardized tests. It seems the best way to succeed at this is to make standardized teachers who all think and do the same thing.

I often think about those wasted hours I spent in school as a student and as a teacher. I now try to grab hold of each moment in the classroom and think about how schools might change and how this transformation can impact the lives of our children. I invite you to sit back, get comfortable, and join my transformative journey. I would like to share with you a story about becoming who I am: a teacher. This research story you are reading has emerged and evolved throughout my life, in school and outside of school, as I continue to be transformed in my understanding of teaching and learning, who I am as a teacher, and how I might honor the pedagogy of my life. This story is about what it means to me to be a teacher, to teach, and to learn.

I have come to realize that learning to teach is a complex endeavor involving more than learning content and methods. Learning to teach also involves constructing a new identity and negotiating previous identities and beliefs. Palmer (1998), in *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, explains, "Teaching holds a mirror to the soul...and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject" (p. 2). As I hold this mirror up and look at myself, I realize that I must first wipe away the dust to peer deeply into my being and see my spiritual soul and recognize who I am as a teacher.

Each year thousands of students enter teacher education programs in the United States with the desire to one day be an effective teacher. All of these soon-to-be teachers have their own stories to share on why they have chosen to embark on the journey of becoming a teacher. Often, however, the focus in teacher education programs is on the content and the methods and not the teacher. Pre-service teachers enter teacher education programs as learners who are a part of a system, but they also begin an identity transformation toward being teachers. To take hold of this transformation, teachers need to know who they are as a teacher (Britzman, 1991): "Learning to teach—like teaching itself—is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become" (p. 31). In order to address this subject of becoming, we need to excavate and contextualize the moral values that underpin one's professional identity and action (Taylor & Wallace, 2007). In this sense, learning to teach means adopting a teaching identity. Palmer (1998) declares that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p.10).

Research is beginning to look at who the teacher is and how pre-service teachers develop their identity in teacher education programs. Some researchers, politicians, administrators, and teacher educators are beginning to understand that we need to know more about teachers as learners and how we learn the craft of teaching, in order to clarify the role of teacher development for pre-service teachers and experienced teachers. Geijsel and Meijers (2005) challenge teacher education programs to help pre-service teachers develop a strong sense of identity.

This research project leans on much of what Deborah Britzman (1991) put forth in her outstanding book, *Practice Makes Practice*, in which she examined from multiple perspectives the process of becoming a teacher. Britzman stepped away from traditional educational research by allowing multiple voices to speak about becoming a teacher and about the cultural myths that affect and restrain pre-service teachers. Britzman's study (1991) described how individual student teachers developed, envisioned, and managed the role of teacher. She found pre-service teachers to be in great personal conflict. Personal values and concepts held by the pre-service teachers, as well as educational concepts learned during teacher education programs, conflicted with the realities and practical demands of the everyday classroom. Britzman was most dismayed by the fact that teacher education programs did not allow pre-service teachers to recognize and accept the world of teaching as inherently multi-variant in the ways in which theory and praxis were combined into "what we know" (Britzman, 1991, p. 215). Britzman argued that personal and professional identities of pre-service teachers were not integrated into teacher education programs.

Britzman (1991) points out that there are "at least four chronologies that constitute the process of becoming a teacher" (p.56). Each chronology presents varying demands and assumptions. The first chronology involves the student's cumulative classroom life. This chronology shapes the student's prior educational biography and embeds ideas about the nature of knowing and the roles students and teachers play in the classroom. The second chronology consists of student experiences in the university and the teacher education program. Britzman describes the third chronology as the student teacher experience, which she examined in her study. The fourth chronology begins once the student teacher becomes a newly arrived teacher in his or her own classroom.

My study examines the second chronology that Britzman (1991) identifies, as the student transitions into a teaching identity during a teacher education course. Missing from much of the recent literature on teaching identity is a narrative inquiry study that examines in depth how teaching identity emerges as students begin their teacher education program. Anders, Hoffman, and Duffy (2000) conclude:

While there has been an increase in teacher education research in the most recent decade we still struggle with conceptions of teacher knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and habits - how they are formed, how they are affected by programs and how they impact development over time (p. 725).

Teacher education programs frequently lack coherence or cohesiveness among courses, and they rarely provide an extended amount of time for students to negotiate their emerging teaching identity. Pre-service teachers are similar to all other college students, as they spend a large amount of time being a student, sitting passively in the classroom or library. In this way teacher education programs often conform to a traditional view of learning and teaching. The process of becoming a teacher is perceived as filling an empty vessel full of knowledge and skills and assimilating into the role of being a teacher. Britzman (1991) calls this mode “training not education” (p. 30).

It is my hope that this research project will add to the growing body of research and be critical to a fuller understanding of how students learn to become teachers. Although several decades of research have advanced our understanding of teacher development, much of this research focus has been on teaching techniques. However, learning to teach exceeds grasping content and understanding methods of instruction as often associated with teacher training models. Hoffman and Pearson (2000) note:

Training may get teachers through some of the basic routines and procedures they need for classroom survival, but it will not help teachers develop the personal and professional commitment to lifelong learning required by teachers who want to confront the complexities and contradictions of teaching (p. 36).

As Maxine Greene (1988) explains, “Learning to teach is a process of identity development... it is about choosing yourself, making deeply personal choices about who you will become as a teacher” (p. 12). Jersild (1955) addresses this important point in his writing on teachers:

The crucial test in the search for meaning in education is the *personal implication* of what we learn and teach.... We as educators...must make an effort to conduct education in depth....Such an endeavor means an effort to overcome the prevailing tendency in education to encourage the learner to understand everything except himself.” (p. 80)

McAdams (1993) says, “Through our personal myths, we help to create the world we live in, at the same time that it is creating us” (p. 37).

In the fall of 2008, I officially began this study in an attempt to understand how a teaching identity develops. The purpose of the study was to understand how pre-service teachers uncover and understand their emerging teaching identity as they construct and deconstruct curriculum myths through critical reflective thinking. Alongside this investigation into the lives of my students, I also reflect critically on how my own teaching identity has emerged, shifted, and affected my decisions and life as a teacher.

Initial Research Questions

During this research study I used the following initial questions to guide my interpretive inquiry:

1. How do pre-service teachers conceptualize themselves as teachers? In particular:
 - a. How do their prior knowledge and beliefs shape and constrain their emergent teaching identities?
 - b. How does reflective writing enable them to construct their emergent teaching identities?
 - c. How does critical reflective thinking enable them to deconstruct disempowering curriculum myths that constrain their emergent teaching identities?
2. How does my own teaching practice facilitate or constrain development of pre-service teachers' emergent identities?

Significance of This Study

The intent of this study is to inform myself and other teacher educators of the nature of pre-service teachers' identity development as revealed through a narrative inquiry. It is intended to be a contribution to the current knowledge base that explores the complexities of becoming a teacher and the multiple factors influencing this process, in the context of an undergraduate Developmental Reading course. This study speaks to me as the teacher in the classroom. My hope is that the study will ultimately help teachers evaluate their own identity and practice. I also hope that teacher education programs will honor individual ways of knowing that beginning teachers bring to and develop within their pre-service years.

This study provides insight into the ways teacher educators might provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to position and imagine themselves as they become teachers. This research inquiry was also an attempt to make sense of how the teacher-researcher of this study, me, made sense of my own teaching identity through autobiographical reflections, reflective writing during the research process, and the examination of tensions that arise in the process of becoming and being a teacher. As the teacher and researcher, I attempted to provide my students with opportunities for identity exploration by drawing upon cultural and social resources of language as used in collaborative discussions and written critical reflections.

Writing about the various aspects of pre-service teachers' lives, discussions, beliefs, practices, and autobiographical stories—alongside the teacher's own reflective writing—suggests that teacher researchers first must recognize the fluid, contextual nature of becoming a teacher and examine what was truly learned in the classrooms of our past. Britzman (1991) said that learning to teach “is a time when one's past, present, and future are set in dynamic tension. Learning to teach—like teaching itself—is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing and who one can become” (p. 8). Based on her study of pre-service teacher development, Britzman suggested that beliefs and practice are not simplistic or static, but are instead constantly in flux, that at all levels of the teaching profession the identity, beliefs, and practices of teachers are complex intersections of each teacher's history and present context. She further argued that too often “institutional biographies” are presented as a standardized story

when researchers examine the contexts in which teachers live and work. Instead of giving attention to the individual lives and experiences of teachers, teachers' lives and careers are often relegated to the stereotypical, institutionally confined stories that permeate popular thought. "Unlike autobiography which is very idiomatic," she said, "institutional biographies are made from defined roles and functions (such as teacher or student), have routines that occur regardless of the person, and offer definitional guides or coercions (measures of right and wrong that preclude situation and context) that one must confront or live" (p. 1). This study of pre-service teachers' shifting identity moved away from a static institutional biography that relies on the status quo of a system that has failed so many. Instead this inquiry followed a more complex and authentic research approach that made space for the process of becoming a teacher so that students might recognize the dominant pedagogy that constrains our current education system.

Cole (1991) echoed this claim, suggesting that teacher knowledge is a "multiplicity of personal, social, cultural, and political influences" (p.185). Cole suggested that educational research must work toward being more contextual. This indicates that teacher studies must include attention to the "texts" of the participants—personal, social, and professional. This study attempts to examine the emerging identities of pre-service teachers' alongside my own changing identity as teacher-educator-researcher and helps me to pay attention to the variety of influences impacting a teaching identity.

What seems to be missing in the literature that I investigated is careful attention to the unique link between the teacher-researcher's identity and pre-service teachers' shifting and emerging teaching identities as revealed through the retelling of life stories, informal face-to-face and online discussions, and online journal reflections. This unique inquiry demonstrates how pre-service teachers' stories and discussions might impact and shape their emerging teaching identities. The process of becoming a teacher is an invisible task. This research study attempted to make this invisible process visible to me, my students, and the reader through written narrative stories and my interpretations of these events. In my classroom, as the teacher, I hope to help each of my students to construct a teaching identity which honors the individual's sense of self, while also recognizing how they can take ownership of

their own practices, which might lead to a transformative experience. In this narrative inquiry I hope to tell you how this process occurred within me and my students.

Definition of Terms

Identity.

The concept of identity has several dimensions and is therefore not easy to define. In fact, identity has taken on many different and sometimes conflicting meanings in the research literature. Most educational researchers have borrowed definitions of identity from theorists such as Erikson, Vygotsky and Bruner. It is generally accepted that identity is a multidimensional entity that evolves through a continuous process of negotiating oneself in a variety of settings. In this study I use Geijsel and Meijer's (2005) definition of identity as "the ever-changing configuration of interpretations that individuals attach to themselves, as related to the activities that they participate in" (p. 423). Acknowledging fluidness of identity helps us recognize that identity is slippery and difficult to hold on to.

Pre-service teachers.

The term pre-service teachers is used interchangeably with prospective teachers, beginning teachers, student teachers, novice teachers, teacher candidates, future teachers, or university students, and refers to the individuals enrolled in a teacher education program.

Critical reflection.

This concept draws on the Latin root *reflectere*, meaning to bend back. John Dewey has been characterized as the originator of the use of reflection in education, in the English speaking world. Stephen Brookfield (1995) describes critical reflection as a process that "certainly does tend to lead to the uncovering of paradigmatic, structuring assumptions" (p.8). Brookfield informs us that critical reflection helps to make us alert to the oppressive dimensions of our practices, which often are accepted without question.

Organization of the Thesis

The study is presented in six chapters. You are reading Chapter One, which introduces you to my background, my perspective, and the research inquiry. I provide you with the following chapter overviews so that you might have a roadmap in mind as you read my story.

Chapter One: Recognizing the Problem.

This chapter starts with an inspiring song and travels back almost thirty years ago as I recall my first thoughts about becoming a teacher and doing things differently. I give you a brief glimpse of the narrative style of my autobiographical reflections. I mention the researchers who deeply influenced my thinking and how they have plowed the ground before me, as I sow my research questions and outline the significance of the study.

Chapter Two: Revealing a Teaching Identity.

In Chapter Two, I share with you my teaching perspective while also infusing current research on constructing a teaching identity and discuss how current research literature helped guide my thinking, language usage, and teaching practice. Within this chapter I explain my current teaching context, while also sharing five major areas of focus involving becoming a teacher: (1) the process of adopting a teaching identity, (2) the role of prior knowledge and how it influences our teaching identity, (3) the use of narrative inquiry through writing and telling to frame our teaching identity, (4) the use of critical reflection, and (5) the use of self for data generation in constructing an identity.

Chapter Three: Re-searching my Perspective.

In this chapter I share my research identity by describing and restating the research problem I faced. I explain my theoretical perspective that emerged during this study, including how this perspective guided my thinking as a narrative inquirer and addressed quality standards necessary for a study that makes use of qualitative methods. I explain how my data generation and analysis used my own autobiographical story, class activities, and interviews as data sources. Finally, I address ethical issues involved with a research project of this type.

Chapter Four: Reliving my Teaching Years - Echoes from the Past.

This autobiographical chapter is written to help build rich contextual detail about the main character—me—and my years as a teacher, thereby helping to situate me in the autobiographical novel. This story contains critical moments of my teaching life, written as my autobiographical teaching story.

Chapter Five: Reconstructing our Teaching Identity.

Chapter Five consist of an auto-ethnographic novel. This novel begins on the first day of class in September 2008, focusing on what happens during a two-hour class. As the teacher-researcher I write about my own past and how it affected my becoming a teacher, and the insights of my students' own stories about becoming teachers weave in and out of this first day of class. The chapter moves back and forth, from the present moment of that first day of class, to past moments of my life, to the future stories my students would tell me during this semester-long course. My interpretive analysis is woven amongst the data and throughout the unfolding novel as I try to make sense of what it means to become a teacher.

Chapter Six: Revolutions.

In this concluding chapter I reflect on what I have learned from this interpretive inquiry into my own teaching practice. I consider implications of my research project. I echo and confirm what other researchers have said, and I add my voice and the voices of my students to the educational arena with our educational insights. My findings address five important themes that emerged during the research process. I offer my suggestions for further research and invite you to add your voice to the discussion.

Chapter Two: Revealing My Teaching Identity

This research study is about becoming a teacher. Examining one's own teaching identity is a complex endeavor. To help orientate you I feel it is important to share with you my teaching identity. In this thesis I move back and forth between being a teacher and researcher. To explain my own teaching identity during the fall 2008 semester these dual roles as teacher and researcher were separate and did not interact during that time. Therefore, this research study is a retrospective interpretive study in which I redescribe events retrospectively (Freeman, 2007). In this chapter, I share with you my teaching perspective while also infusing current research on constructing a teaching identity. I discuss how current research literature helped guide my thinking, language usage, and teaching practice. In particular, I draw extensively on the perspectives of Parker Palmer, Deborah Britzman, F. M. Connelly, D. J. Clandinin, and Stephen Brookfield. Through the process of reading and writing about current research, I came to understand the complexity involved in attempting to understand and teach the notion of constructing a teaching identity. During this study my theoretical perspective deepened as I encountered new ideas, especially critical constructivism and curriculum myths. In Chapter Three, my research chapter, I will elaborate on this emergent perspective and how my views of teaching and research shifted during this study.

Within this chapter I explain my current teaching context while also sharing five major areas of focus involving becoming a teacher: (1) the process of adopting a teaching identity, (2) the role of prior knowledge and how it influences our teaching identity, (3) the use of narrative inquiry through writing and telling to frame our teaching identity, (4) the use of critical reflection, and (5) the use of self for data generation in constructing an identity. These five themes helped to organize my thinking as I taught my class, and they impacted what I did as a teacher of future teachers. I grew to a fuller understanding of the importance of bringing the concept of a teaching identity to the front of the class.

Teaching Context

The class I teach is Developmental Reading at Lakeshore Lutheran University (a pseudonym). Lakeshore Lutheran University is located in a suburban town in the Midwest and is the largest Lutheran university in North America, with over six thousand undergraduate and graduate students. Lakeshore Lutheran University is a private, co-ed Christian university. The majority of the student population can be described as Caucasian and middle class. The university is affiliated with a large Lutheran denomination and offers baccalaureate and master's degrees and post-baccalaureate teaching credentials. The statement of purpose of Lakeshore Lutheran University states that "Lakeshore provides a variety of educational opportunities for students who are preparing for vocations in several ministries of the church." One such vocational skill program offered by Lakeshore Lutheran University is the Teacher Education Program.

The Course

The course I teach, Developmental Reading (EDU 204), is a four-credit class that is required of pre-service teachers enrolled in the Elementary Education major at Lakeshore. These pre-service teachers are usually in their second year of study. This is the second class that teacher candidates (pre-service teachers) are required to take as part of their teacher education program. This fifteen-week course alternates between face-to-face interactions and hands-on work with elementary students (see Appendix D for syllabus).

In 2008, the class met twice a week. On Tuesday mornings we met on campus from 10:10 to 11:50 a.m. During the first class period the students and I met for face-to-face discussion. Throughout the semester the pre-service teachers reflected on the course readings, made journal entries, and engaged in class dialogue on an on-line discussion board. In becoming a teacher, particularly an elementary-level reading teacher, one assumes a responsibility toward effective reading instruction. This is a formidable task, as it involves an acute understanding of the reading process itself, including fluency, decoding, and comprehension. To understand this process the student reflects on how they learned to read and what current research says about the teaching of reading. On Thursdays we met at an

urban Lutheran elementary school from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. During this time the pre-service teachers engaged in tutoring elementary students one-on-one for forty-five minutes each. The students were able to put into practice the reading instruction practices that we had read and discussed. They also completed a weekly reflection journal entry and participated in three online discussions during the fifteen-week course.

The Instructor

At the time of writing, I was the only instructor of EDU 204, Developmental Reading, at Lakeshore Lutheran University. As an assistant professor of education, I was also the director of the graduate reading program. I also teach a graduate course on integrating learning skills across the curriculum here at Lakeshore Lutheran University.

I had received my master's degree in Advanced Literacy in 2004. I had eighteen years experience as a teacher and administrator in several Lutheran elementary schools. I had served as an adjunct professor at a private Lutheran university in Texas and as a full-time assistant professor of education at a private Lutheran university in California

At the moment of writing this thesis I am a forty-two-year-old, Caucasian, Christian, middle-class man. I am married to Martha, and we have five children: Jacob, 22; Rachel, 19; Isaiah, 16; Noah, 14; and Hannah, 10. My passions are my family, teaching, literacy, Christianity, and constructivism, and how these concepts are connected and interrelated.

My philosophy of teaching and learning is shared both explicitly and implicitly in my teaching and in this story you are reading. I believe that learning must be meaningful and relevant. I believe that for me to teach students well, I need to know them inside and outside of the classroom. It is my hope that the pre-service teachers will begin to evoke their teaching identity through this Developmental Reading course. But I also realize that students enter my classroom with hopes, desires, and expectations that are different from my hopes and desires for what we will do and learn in this course. I share with my students my own theories of reading

and how I view reading as an interactive process between the text and the reader. I tell them about my successes and failures as a teacher.

Adopting an Identity

From the very first day in my class, I spoke of the concept of adopting a teaching identity and insisted that the students discuss this process and make use of this language. I have come to understand that “becoming a teacher means that an individual must adopt an identity as such” (Danielewicz 2001, p. 9). During our face-to-face meetings on Tuesdays, we discussed our developing teaching identities, our philosophy of teaching, reading assessments, reading strategies, and how one constructs a reading lesson plan. We discussed the complex teaching issues that occurred during the Thursday practicum experiences. On Tuesdays the pre-service teachers were students of teaching. On Thursdays the students were positioned as teachers during the reading practicum portion of the course. In this way students had opportunity to put their developing theories, beliefs, and attitudes into action. Through this discursive process I utilized a curriculum that promotes space for the development of a teaching identity in theory and practice.

Before moving on I'd like to further explore the complex idea of adopting a teaching identity and examine what leading researchers have said about this concept. Erik Erikson is likely the most well-known theorist linked to identity and identity formation. Erikson adopted the term identity as representing who we are as a person, as a self, and as me. Erikson's work focused on individual development and chronicled the individual's successive evolvement of identity development (Kagan, 1992). Although Erikson felt the process of developing self was an unconscious and personal endeavor, he did not feel it was a solo endeavor (Erikson, 1968). Erikson viewed identity as a balance between self-understanding and an understanding of self within the context of society and culture. Lev Vygotsky placed a stronger emphasis on the social construction of personal identity than on the unconscious and personal focus (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky perceived identity as being socially constructed and defined the social setting or cultural context as consisting of numerous levels, including shared beliefs, relationships, customs, symbol system (language), knowledge, physical settings, and objects (Vygotsky, 1978).

Our identities are constructed through social interactions and the various contexts of our lives (Danielewicz, 2001). Each moment we live, and through experiences we share with others, we “become.” We make our “selves” through activities and practices. In different life contexts I take on different identities. With my children I am a parent and sometimes a friend. With my friends I am a friend. Yet as a teacher I’m also like a parent and a friend. This thesis is about the complex and multi-variant nature of a teaching identity. Our identity is always changing as our life changes. But we are continually engaged in becoming something or someone. Parker Palmer (1998) calls this identity an “evolving nexus, a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am” (p. 13).

Most contemporary theorists recognize identity as being multi-dimensional (Danielewicz, 2001). It exists inside and outside of the person, the teacher, the student, the administrator, as each is acting upon the other consciously and unconsciously. Our identity also shifts from being a parent, to being a student, to being a teacher. Identity is our understanding of who we are at this moment, who we are becoming, and who other people think we are.

Most researchers accept that individuals possess multiple identities and recognize that individuals can transform and adjust their identity to suit various social expectations and social contexts (Britzman, 1991). Therefore, a consistent definition of identity is not probable or possible in a post-structural world that views meaning as never fixed (Britzman, 1991). However, a review of the literature shows that most researchers look at identity as having three common dimensions: (1) a socially constructed process always in the making (Bruner, 1990); (2) multiple and dynamic, something that can only be understood by the various contexts influencing individuals (Sarup & Raja, 1996; Weedon, 1987); and (3) as carrying a particular yet dynamic set of interests, goals, values, beliefs, and knowledge-making practices that help shape how humans make sense of their world and their experiences (Ivanic, 1998).

This study inquired specifically into the emerging professional teaching identity of prospective teachers. To examine this developmental process the study relied on a narrative construction process. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) recognized

the problem inherent in defining teacher identity in their book *Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice*:

Identity is a term that tends to carry a burden of hard reality, something like a rock, a forest, an entity. Being true to this identity, being true to oneself is often thought to be a virtue. Yet, from the narrative point of view, identities have histories. They are narrative constructions that take shape as life unfolds and that continue to grow and change. They may even be, indeed, almost certainly are, multiple depending on the life situations in which we find ourselves. This is not less true for teachers in their professional knowledge landscape. (p. 95)

According to McAdams (2001), identity can “take the form of a story, complete with setting, scenes, character, plot, and theme” (p. 1010). In McAdams’s life story model of identity, identity emerges in adolescence and is formed through a narrative by the telling of past, present, and future experiences. Chapman (2008) defines this look into future experiences as imagination, arguing that “imagination can be a way to envision one’s teaching” (p. 85). This study will have prospective teachers look into their past, present, and future imagination as an important step in the development of their teaching identity.

A study conducted by Drake, Spillane, and Hufferd-Ackles (2001) focuses on the role of elementary teachers’ identities as teachers and learners in subject-specific contexts. Using observations and interviews, the researchers found that the subject matter of mathematics and of literacy acts as essential context for the construction of identity and that these different self-identities had important consequences for teachers’ efforts to reform their teaching practices.

Several recent studies have examined the processes individuals go through as they learn to become teachers (Britzman, 1991; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000; Danielewicz, 2001). These notable studies, which addressed identity development of pre-service teachers, contributed considerably to the conceptualization of this research. These studies demonstrated that learning to teach is not just about mastering techniques and methods associated with simplistic views of learning to teach. Rather, learning to teach involves developing a teaching identity, which

constitutes a process of negotiating multiple meanings, personal life histories, and past beliefs while also negotiating their impact on development of a teaching identity.

Britzman's (1991) investigation into becoming a teacher examined six pre-service teachers' internship practices through a poststructuralist perspective of language and identity. Britzman concluded that a teaching identity development is a "struggle between negotiating authoritative and internally persuasive discourse with the discourse of education, grades, and teachers" (Britzman, 1994, p. 64). From this perspective, learning to teach must be viewed as a discursive practice, where pre-service teachers are given opportunities to share their experiences and negotiate their understandings with others.

Ritchie and Wilson (2000) investigated their own teacher preparation program focusing on the knowledge growth and identity development of twenty-five pre-service English teachers. Ritchie and Wilson spent three years studying their students' narrative writings and oral stories about becoming English teachers. They specifically looked at how pre-service teachers narrated their experiences and beliefs in reflective journals, autobiographies, and case studies and how these narratives shaped their identities as teachers. The research found that as prospective teachers constructed narratives about their educational experiences, past beliefs, and future commitments, they revised their selves as teachers. They became aware of contradictions in teaching and made connections to their experiences that shaped their learning as teachers. "Telling allowed student teachers to uncover unspoken assumptions" about their development as teachers (Ritchie & Wilson, 2002, p. 175). Ritchie and Wilson recommended that teacher preparation programs consider giving pre-service teachers opportunities to rename and negotiate their dynamic identities as teachers through narrative practices with others. They concluded that critical collaborative reflection enables pre-service teachers to share narratives with others and to critically deconstruct their assumptions about teaching, learning, and students.

Danielewicz (2001) conducted a three-year study on six undergraduate students enrolled in a secondary teacher education program. Danielewicz used interviews, observations, and her own teaching experiences to explain the process of

becoming a teacher. Danielewicz proposed a pedagogy for identity development that asks students to construct an identity as a teacher rather than just playing a role as a teacher. She uses narrative and theory extensively in her book, *Teaching Selves: Identity, Pedagogy, and Teacher Education*, to show that students in a teacher education program become teachers by seeing the self as a work in progress, ever-evolving and the byproduct of negotiation between the person who wants to be seen as a teacher and the supporting cast of people who are willing to accept him or her in that role. She presents identity negotiation as central in teacher education by illustrating that what makes a good teacher is not methodology, but engagement with identity through written reflections and discussions.

These studies used identity formation as a framework to demonstrate how individuals' past experiences and teacher education programs greatly influence what individuals believe about teaching and becoming a teacher. Becoming a teacher is discursive practice (Britzman, 1991) and a process in which individuals engage in dialogic language practices to author a teaching identity (Danielewicz, 2001) and begin to unearth the contradictions of being a teacher (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000).

The Pre-service Elementary Teachers

Next, I would like to share with you some information about the pre-service teachers I taught. The class and research study took place between September 2008 and March 2009. Participants included pre-service teacher candidates—males and females, English-speaking, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five years—attending Lakeshore Lutheran University. The class had twenty-two students, nineteen female and three male. The students were in their sophomore or junior year of study. All the students were elementary education majors. Twelve of the twenty-two students consented to participate in this research. The writings and stories of these pre-service teachers weave their way through my story. I conducted at least one face-to-face interview with each of the twelve students. In writing about my students here, I have changed their names to provide anonymity and confidentiality.

Introduction to the Focal Participants

As the semester moved forward and as the course and research project took shape, for a variety of reasons I became drawn deeply into the lives and stories of three of

my students in particular. I purposefully selected to dig deeply into the lives of Amy, Susan, and Hannah. Early in the semester I noticed in class discussions that these three students seemed to hold strongly to their convictions and desire to become a teacher. I sensed that these students were perceptively attuned and passionate about becoming teachers. During face-to-face interviews I became deeply interested in understanding the transformation these particular students were undertaking in becoming teachers. In the initial interviews I noticed that each shared different but passionate reasons for becoming a teacher. I interviewed all twelve of the participating students individually early in the semester. However, I met one-on-one outside of class multiple times with these three focal participants during the semester, as I was drawn into the life stories they shared with me. In our conversations we not only talked about becoming a teacher and teaching reading, but they also shared their learning histories, their hopes, and their fears about their lives. Their openness and candor provided a rich picture of who they were at that moment. These students' lives and stories weave in and out of my teaching story in Chapter Five. I describe each of them below so that you might have a deeper connection with their stories.

Amy

“When I am teaching at my best, I am like a gold medal figure skater,” is how Amy described herself as a teacher (11/06/08). When you first meet Amy you recognize that she was born to be a gold medal teacher. Amy even said, “I have always wanted to be a teacher; it’s what I’ve wanted to do.” Amy, a second year college student, lives in Wyoming but came to Lakeshore Lutheran University because her dad is from the area and she has family nearby. Amy is active in music and plays tennis. You can see in Amy a reflective and passionate teacher.

Throughout the semester Amy was very reflective in understanding the students she taught during the practicum. She was also able to use these experiences and her reflections in helping to construct and articulate her own unique teaching identity. At the end of the semester I asked her tell me about a negative experience that happened during the practicum. She was drawn to the classroom teacher’s “attitude toward my student. I didn’t feel she was very supportive of him” (11/03/08). The conclusion Amy is drawing about this teacher gives me a window into the teacher she is becoming. She went on to say, “Sometimes when I would say

something, he [my practicum student] would say, ‘Oh, the teacher wouldn’t like that.’” Amy even described the classroom teacher and her classroom environment this way, “She had a very structured classroom without a lot of breathing room.” In naming this negative experience Amy is drawing a distinction between the types of teacher she does and does not want to become.

During this interview I asked Amy about her beliefs about teaching: “Do you think that [your philosophy] goes against how this teacher chose to teach?” Amy responded with a nod of the head and an immediate “YES!” During our conversation Amy spoke with authority about the teacher she was not becoming.

She also passionately explained the teacher that she was becoming, “When I am teaching at my best, I am like a gold medal figure skater.” As I observed Amy during the practicum I was able to see the teacher that she is. The students she was teaching were always engaged and actively learning, and Amy was trying new and different teaching methods to meet the needs of her students. Watching Amy teach was like viewing a gold medal ice-skater in action. Amy concluded the semester by telling about her goal as a teacher: “As a future teacher my goal is to understand what it means to be a good reader and more importantly how do I teach my students and motivate my students to become good readers” (11/25/08).

Susan

Susan is a soft-spoken, reflective student. When you first meet Susan her warm smile and personality greet you. Susan is a very spiritual Catholic who told me, “I would like to go into a Christian setting, and maybe even a Catholic setting would be my ultimate goal.” However, because of her Catholic faith Susan has faced tension at this Lutheran university. “It’s hard here to work to that [goal] because it is a Lutheran school.” She told me how during one of the religion classes she spoke up to the professor and said, “I think you’re teaching some wrong things about them [Catholics].” She found out there were other students in the class that were of the Catholic faith and felt the same way, and she reported that “the rest of the year he didn’t say anything about Catholics and kind of spoke more positive about it which I was like: ‘Are you just saying that because we’re in this class and you aren’t going to change your ways later on when you’re teaching this class?’ That was hard to hear.”

Throughout the semester in my reading class, Susan continued to reveal the emotional, spiritual, and epistemological struggles she was facing in becoming a teacher.

Susan told me how her family is supportive of her education. Susan's father is a coach at Lakeshore. She considers her grandmother her biggest influence. "My grandmother and my mother worked tirelessly to help us to learn how to read and write." During the practicum portion of the class, Susan chose to work with young junior kindergarten students and drew on a desire to one day be remembered by these students. She wrote this thought in her own autobiography: "I can't emphasize enough how much I want to have an impact on these kids. I want them to one day be writing something like this and say, 'Ms. Susan was one of the teachers that have influenced me and her class taught me many things.'" Susan revealed herself as a delightful, reflective, and effective teacher. In a journal entry Susan described her teaching identity, "When I am teaching at my best, I am like the sun" (10/08/08).

Susan radiates the warmth of the sun with her wide smile and her passion and deep sense of care for children. It was interesting for me to get to know Susan during this journey in becoming a teacher. When I asked Susan why she decided to participate in my study on becoming a teacher, she said, "You don't hear many dissertations that are being written on why people are becoming teachers. And I think it is an interesting topic too" (9/10/08).

You will see Susan's honest doubts and fears about becoming a teacher. You might also reflect back to your own becoming as Susan shares emotional stories from the practicum experience.

I think that this practicum has made me really think about where I stand and becoming a teacher. It made me really reevaluate where I stand as a teacher. I hate to say this, but it made me question whether I really want to become a teacher. But, I feel that I have a call to become a teacher, but I was struggling. (9/10/08)

Hannah

Hannah chose a seat near the front of the room on the first day of class. During every face-to-face class meeting Hannah was actively engaged in class discussions, raising questions and offering her unique perspective on education. Hannah is an outgoing, brilliant student with a unique perspective. If you walk by Hannah in the hallway, she will greet you with a wide smile and pleasant “Hello.” She comes from a family of six children. Hannah entered the teacher education program after being home-schooled, like the rest of her siblings, for most of her educational life. “I was home-schooled and my mom was my teacher, and so I had a lot of experience with getting to see firsthand behind-the-scenes what happens.”

In getting to know Hannah she expressed a deep desire to help children whether as a missionary in “another country or with kids in the inner-city.” Hannah told me she had a difficult time deciding what vocation to follow. “I struggled a lot with what I was going to go to school for.” Hannah draws much of her strength and wisdom from her parents and hopes to have a lasting impact on the children she will teach. She shared:

Not only do I want to be my students’ teacher, I want to be the adult that children look to for guidance, the parental figure that they may not have present in their own household, the kind words that they so desperately cling to in times of difficulty, and my dream is to be the teacher they say “made a difference.” One of my future goals as a teacher is to have a student come to me years down the road, after they have made something out of their life, and tell me that I made an impact on their life. (9/10/08)

Hannah recognizes that a teacher can have an impact for an eternity. Hannah related her teaching identity to sailing, “When I am teaching at my best, I am like a sailboat on Lake Michigan” (10/29/08). You will read how this metaphor defines Hannah’s teaching identity. You will also hear Hannah’s dreams and aspirations for the future. “I wanted to go into ministry and in a sense be a mom to the kids that don’t have that experience.” Hannah’s interviews were engaging and deeply insightful. I believe that you will be impressed repeatedly when you hear Hannah’s

stories and her insights into the contradictions involved in teaching and how she negotiates these tensions as she constructs her teaching identity.

Prior Knowledge

If adopting a teaching identity means that we understand who we are becoming, I feel that it is important to examine and discuss the prior knowledge we have about becoming a teacher. Research shows that the prior knowledge students bring to their teacher education can have a profound impact on the construction of a teaching identity. The concept of a teaching identity refers to pre-service teachers' knowledge of themselves as teachers and raises the questions, "Who am I as a teacher?", "What kind of teacher do I want to be?", "Why do we teach what we teach?", "Why do we teach in this way?", and "Whose interests are being served?" Pre-service teachers are encouraged to ask themselves these questions regularly as a part of my Developmental Reading course by reflecting critically on their experiences in practice and theory.

Pre-service teachers do not enter teacher education programs as blank slates. They have had a career as a student being exposed to a variety of teaching influences, both good and bad. They have been in a variety of settings and have formulated ideas about teaching and being a teacher (Britzman, 1986). Based on theories of cultural psychology, Bruner used the notion of "conceptual Self" (1990, p. 99) to explain the social construction of identity. This identity changes as one changes and develops from young to old and from one social setting to another. For Bruner, one's identity develops initially in the family by the images and stories one tells about experiences:

In time the young entrant into the culture comes to define his own intentions and even his own history in terms of the characteristic cultural dramas in which he plays a part—at first family dramas—later ones that shape the expanding circle of activities outside the family. (p. 67)

Lortie (1975) suggested that teacher identity begins with the early formation of identity during childhood. He pointed out that children who grew up in homes where parents or relatives were teachers saw teaching as respectable and even estimable.

These children may also have noted that the teachers they knew from their schooling had authority, made their living in a caring profession, or both. Lortie writes that “teachers have been shaped in turn by their own teachers and by their personal responses to those teachers—such influences stretch over many years” (1975, p. xi). She concludes that many teachers who identify strongly with their former teachers do not even realize how strong the connection is between what they observed as students and what they do as teachers. Often times pre-service teachers do not realize that the prior knowledge and beliefs they have about becoming a teacher have been working inside of them since birth.

Based on their years as students, pre-service teachers bring a variety of beliefs and perceptions to their teacher preparation courses and begin to construct their teaching identity. What pre-service teachers believe about teaching has been recognized as significantly impacting how they teach (Pajares, 1992). Pajares believes that beliefs about an emerging teaching identity are well established by the time a student goes to college. Carter and Doyle (1996) found similar results, explaining how years of educational experiences are used as a lens to encounter new ideas about education. They found that when most pre-service teachers encounter something new in their professional development experiences, they think about it through the eyes of a student. That is, they consider how the practice would have worked for them in the given classroom context. Their beliefs about the new material are strongly shaped, therefore, by their own educational histories. What this means is that identities about teaching begin forming early, are difficult to change, and might not be based on sound educational research. Crow’s (1987) case study (as cited in Pankratius & Young, 1995) of pre-service teachers highlights important preexisting ideas pre-service teachers bring to their program: (1) well-established teacher role identities, and (2) strong convictions about teaching and how to teach. They also bring an extensive inventory of “personal practical knowledge composed of such experiential matters as images, rituals, habits, cycles, routines, and rhythms” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, pp. 194-195). In addition, Book, Byers, and Freeman argue that this prior knowledge is a key reason “many candidates come to formal teacher preparation believing that they have little to learn” (Lanier & Little, 1986, p. 542). Furthermore, Powell (1992) states that prospective teachers tend to construct primitive and underdeveloped knowledge bases that influence their teaching styles

and affect their responses to teacher education programs. So it is imperative that teacher education programs help pre-service teachers uncover their assumptions about teaching, their emerging teaching identities, and why we teach.

The prospective teachers that come to teacher education programs have spent at least twelve years attending schools under a cloud of high-stakes testing. Over the last decade, the classroom in the United States has been drastically affected by No Child Left Behind (2001) and the testing environment. Schools have been heavily influenced by standardized tests that have attempted to indoctrinate teachers to go for the right answer whenever possible (Duckworth, 1987). Schoonmaker (2002), in an extended case study, found that preconceptions and implicit theories held by pre-service teachers were based on long-ago events that profoundly influenced how teachers learn to teach. A teacher's life as a student impacts his or her teaching identity. Schoonmaker (2002) states that the histories and desires of individual teachers are real factors in their development as teaching professionals. Schoonmaker says that learning to teach is also, perhaps even primarily, learning about self. Prior knowledge about teaching and teachers has an impact on the teacher we become. The research studies describe the importance of drawing on one's past experiences, beliefs, and prior knowledge in identity development as a teacher. Exploring the role of prior knowledge and the emergence of the teaching identity in a narrative format should help illuminate the journey towards becoming a teacher and the potential challenges along the way.

Narrative Inquiry

In my classroom I attempt to adopt a narrative inquiry teaching perspective. I use this narrative inquiry stance as a way of excavating the inner self and constructing a beginning teacher's teaching identity. Paul Ricoer (1984) argues in his book, *Time and Narrative*, that we are the stories we tell and that we should look closely at what our stories say about our inherent and inherited identities as teachers. Using narrative inquiry to help students reflect and understand who they are is a method that may help them link their emerging teaching identity with their past attitudes and biases and understand how these will affect their future practice and choices.

What is a narrative? Max van Manen's (1990) book, *Researching Lived Experience*, states that "Narrative, to narrate," derives from the Latin *gnoscerere*, *noscere*, "to know," and that "to narrate is to tell something in narrative or story form" (p. 120). According to Dawson (as cited in P. Taylor & Wallace, 2007), a narrative aims to portray in a rich and compelling way the problematic nature of life (including research).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe the process of narrative inquiry as an ethical matter; that is, because narrative inquiry becomes a shared narrative unity between researcher and participant, it can be seen as benefiting not just the researcher but also the research participants, the research site and the community itself. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) said "teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own stories" (p. 2). The stories pre-service teachers tell about their own experiences as students within educational institutions can become what theorist Theresa De Lauretis (1988) calls a "critical instrument" by which teaching selves are constructed.

Specifically, personal narratives can serve as a means of naming and telling one's story as a teacher. Teacher educators have used narratives such as written autobiographies, reading responses, personal journals, and dialogue journals as a reflective tool to understand the ways in which individuals develop their identities (Danielewicz, 2001; J. G. Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 1994; Sluys, 2003). They claim that narratives about teaching and learning influence the way one constructs, creates, and grows between who one is and who one is becoming as a teacher (Danielewicz, 2001). Further, narratives encourage teachers to make sense of their lived worlds and to make connections into their teaching lives. The act of telling one's story can make personal knowledge known in order to understand one's professional knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Vinz (1996) implores teachers to do what an experienced teacher told a group of novices, "Remember your stories....They can save your life a little at a time" (p. 277). After a year of practicing this advice, a first-year teacher reflected:

I recognize how important it is for me to make sense of my past as a way of helping me cope with the present. One of the most important benefits is that I

see myself in the process of becoming. I see that my inquiry needs to be continuous. Because I'm constantly changing, and each day in a classroom leads to new understandings, I can see myself thinking about what *could be* rather than *what is*. (p. 20)

Bruner (1990) argues that narrative is linked to one's identity. According to Bruner (1995), stories are social constructions rooted in the languages, histories, and experiences unique to the author. He states, "Stories do not just happen in the real world, but rather, are constructed in people's heads" (p. 28). By writing or telling narratives, we become conscious of our knowledge and conscious about the values that have led us to our perspectives. As individuals tell stories they are able to construct and organize views of themselves, others, and the world in which they live. Bruner explains:

The ways of telling and the ways of conceptualizing that go with stories become so habitual that they finally become recipes for structuring experience itself, for laying down routes in memory, for not only guiding the life narrative up to the present, but for directing it into the future. (p. 36)

Bruner's concepts of narrative are central to understanding how pre-service teachers make sense of their experience of becoming teachers. One way a pre-service teacher's sense of self is understood is through stories in the content and context of a teacher education program that can help them comprehend who they are becoming as teachers and the instructional decisions they choose to make (Drake, Spillane, & Hufferd-Ackles, 2001).

When students arrive in my class they are not yet teachers. Yet they have expressed the desire to become teachers and to construct a teaching identity. It is my job to help them emerge as teachers through the learning experiences they have. Becoming a teacher involves the construction of a teaching identity. I used narrative inquiry to help my pre-service teachers construct their teaching identity. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define narrative inquiry in this way:

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both the individual and social. Simply stated...narrative inquiry is stories lived and told. (p.20)

Students were asked to write an ongoing autobiographical sketch of their learning history. I also asked them to write about why they are studying to become a teacher. I asked them what their goals and visions are as a teacher, and how their teaching identity is being formed. I asked them to explore what experiences have impacted them as a student. I prompted my students to dig deeply into their learning history and write about their positive and negative learning experiences and teachers. I invited them to explore how they think this will affect them as future teachers. Taylor and Settelmaier (Taylor & Wallace, 2007) state that through autobiographical inquiry we might start to question that which seems unquestionable to us. Online journal entries and Blackboard discussions centered on students' stories and beliefs about effective teaching and their teaching identity. In this way they might begin to critically reflect on their lives, think about current research, and develop their own theories of teaching. It is my hope that they might see the transformative role this type of reflective research can have on their teaching life. In the educational arena, as teachers gain new understandings and perspectives, we often share these with fellow educators. Hobson (1996) makes the connection between teacher stories and teacher research:

As teachers share their beliefs and approaches and as they reflect and act upon their reflections, they are engaging in a form of teacher action research. Their actions may influence and impact, not only students, but also on policy makers and others who study teaching praxis. (p.6)

An individual's beliefs about learning to teach are linked to the stories told. Pre-service teachers have preconceptions of what it means to be an effective teacher, how individuals should be treated, and how school institutions are run and organized

(Weinstein, 1989). Narratives have provided “one of the most compelling and persuasive forms to present ideas about becoming a teacher because stories, like teaching, are rich with context and people” (Neumann & Peterson, 1997, p. 20). Connelly and Clandinin (1988) summarize powerfully the basis for a teacher education that attends to identity formation: “We believe the most ‘critical’ question in anyone’s education is to determine the meaning of life’s experiences” (p.16).

Previous studies have shown that personal narratives can serve as a critical instrument for naming and telling one’s story as a teacher. Teacher educators have used narratives such as written autobiographies, reading responses, personal journals, and dialogue journals as a reflective tool to understand the ways in which individuals develop their identity as teachers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Danielewicz 2001; Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 1994; Sluys, 2003). Gary Knowles (1992) acknowledges, “The results [of his research] suggest that early childhood experiences, early teacher role models, and previous teaching experiences are most important in the formation of an ‘image of self as teacher” (p. 126).

Researchers have employed a variety of autobiographical and narrative methodologies to understand the development of teachers’ knowledge and identity. These include autobiography (Greene, Ayers, & Miller, 1998) and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative accounts are the first formal step in the interpretive process. It is hoped that this study into the construction of my students’ and my own teaching identity during an undergraduate course called Developmental Reading will make you, the reader, pause and reflect on who you are as a teacher or future teacher and invite you to narrate your story.

Critical Reflective Thinking

To facilitate the process of adopting a teaching identity during my Developmental Reading class, I draw on the use of critical reflective thinking. Scholar Donald Schön (1983, 1987) introduced the concepts of the “reflective practitioner” and “reflective practice.” Stephen Brookfield (1995, 2005) claims that critical reflection is a process that helps us to clarify and question assumptions. How do adults engage in critical reflection? Brookfield (2005) believes that this is done through a constructivist perspective, “which emphasizes the role people play in constructing, and

deconstructing, their own experiences and meanings” (p. 6). Brookfield (2005) goes on to say that “the adult educator’s task is that of helping people articulate their experience in dialogic circles and then encouraging them to review this through the multiple lenses provided by colleagues in the circle” (p. 7). Brookfield (2005) believes that this process will help to uncover assumptions about teaching practices that we believe are commonsense wisdom and that we take as being in our own best interest, “without realizing that these same assumptions actually work against us in the long term by serving the interests of those opposed to us” (pp. 9-10).

During their years in school as students, pre-service teachers have had their eyes fixed on the teacher in the classroom. As part of their teacher education program, I attempt to provide pre-service teachers the opportunity to construct their teaching identities through a transformation that involves critical reflection on those years as a student. This transformation involves constructing and deconstructing curriculum myths. The classroom teacher is at the center of this classroom curriculum. The American academic culture is driven by mandated curriculums and assessment policies. Grundy (1987) argues that when we talk about curriculum we include the educational practices of institutions; ”This means that it is not on the teacher’s shelf that one looks for curriculum, but in the actions of the people engaged in education” (Grundy, 1987, p. 2). She goes on to say that as one unearths these teaching and learning practices one finds core beliefs and values which encompass the term “curriculum,” a term that encompasses the teacher in the classroom.

In my class I try to make use of a critical constructivist perspective (fully explored in Chapter Three). In a critical constructivist classroom, teachers and students are thought to be co-constructors. As co-constructors I look to have my pre-service teachers deconstruct their path as they write about their learning history. As the pre-service teachers deconstruct their learning history they are also in the process of reconstructing their own identity. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recognize the importance of reconstruction, rather than injection.

We use this metaphor to express that, as teacher knowledge grows, it does so by composing and recomposing the knowledge that is already there. Education, in this view, is a process of rethinking the past with new external

knowledge, theory, and experience. In teacher education as reconstruction, which is based on the notion of teacher knowledge, a person can never escape their past. Our views on this owe much to Dewey (1938) who saw education as a reconstruction of experience. From a teacher knowledge point of view, teacher education progresses by reconstructing knowledge and not primarily by addition, accumulation or accretion of knowledge. (pp. 101-102)

Rather than relying on the objectivist myth in which purity of knowledge is highly desirable and flows from the experts down to the novices, Palmer (1998) proposes the “community of truth” model in which knowledge and observations are shared among the participants about the subject at hand. The content is accessible to all and exploration is encouraged as people engage with it. Palmer believes that the truth emerges from the dialogue, the passionate and disciplined conversation about things that matter, as old conclusions are tested and new ones emerge.

I attempt to maximize social interaction in my classroom between learners so that they can negotiate meaning from their prior knowledge and beliefs and begin to reflect critically on their teaching identity while building a community of hope. Major authors in the field of critical reflection support its use in gaining understanding of the context of an issue and its underlying assumptions to ensure accuracy (Mezirow, 1998; Schön, 1987).

In my Developmental Reading class, students construct their own learning history through writing and sharing their autobiographical stories. They also read and reflect critically on various learning theories as well as current research about effective teaching practices. It is my hope that the emerging teaching identity can bridge the gap between theory and practice. Knowles (1978) believes that the better one understands various learning theories the better decisions one will make regarding learning experiences.

Opportunities for critical reflection and transformation occur in my class through class discussion, written reflections, online discussions, and collaborative projects. As my students engage in these transformative learning opportunities

evaluating their own life and current learning theories through self-reflection and social interactions, I hope that this process will impact the formation of their teaching identity. Mezirow (1991) defines transformative learning as a process in which individuals uncover within themselves “distorted, inauthentic, or otherwise invalid assumptions,” resulting in new or transformed ways of constructing meaning from experience (p. 6).

Class Activities as Sources of Data

As the teacher of the class I make use of a variety of individual and collaborative activities to help the students reflect on becoming a teacher. Later on, as explained in Chapter Three, I view these activities as sources of data through a lens of a researcher to help me understand how my students’ identities merged into teachers’ identity.

Journals

As part of the course each student is required to write a weekly reflective electronic journal. This reflection could be based on the student’s learning history, beliefs, or attitudes about teaching, or whatever the student was thinking about, challenged by, agreed or disagreed with, but should not be a summary of course materials. I also asked the participants to tell stories about their learning journey through writing their autobiographical history in their journal. This telling and retelling of stories served also as an important aspect of data analysis and my research method. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) say that people live stories, and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them and create new ones. For these researchers reflection involves storying and restorying as a fundamental method of personal growth and thus as a fundamental quality of education. Mattingly (as cited in Schön, 1987) says that stories can extract meaning from experiences by offering one way of making sense of what has happened. She believes that in a story we may catch a level of meaning that we only partially grasped while living through the event.

Electronic Blackboard dialogue

Every other week students participated in an online discussion board activity. Students responded to open-ended questions regarding teaching and reflected and responded to other students’ comments. Discussion board prompts consisted of

questions such as these: Can you describe for me a time in school when your teacher was doing some really good teaching? What was going on? Can you describe the traits of a successful teacher? What parts of teaching are you looking most forward to? What parts of teaching are you nervous about?

Autobiographical learning history

The pre-service teachers wrote four- to six-page autobiographical learning sketches of their perceptions about teaching and learning, addressing the following criteria: (a) information about you personally, your emerging teacher identity, and your philosophy of teaching and learning (such as how students learn and how you will teach, paying particular attention to how you learned to read and write); (b) your memories of positive and negative learning experiences; (c) your view of what makes an effective teacher; (d) who has influenced you to embark on the journey of becoming a teacher?

My Own Teaching Identity

“When I do not know myself, I cannot know who others are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life—and when I cannot see them clearly, I cannot lead them well” (Palmer, 1998, p. 2). If I believe that it is important for my students to understand what is involved in becoming a teacher and adopting a teaching identity, then I have to understand how identities are formed so that I can help create an environment that nurtures this development. To deeply understand what a teaching identity is, I feel I must examine my own teaching identity. Parker Palmer (2000) speaks of the story that we each must tell. “The story of my journey is no more or less important than anyone else’s. It is simply the best source of data I have on a subject where generalizations often fail but truth may be found in the details” (p. 19). My own journey and becoming is possibly the best data source I can use. I am a teacher of teachers. Why did I become a teacher? Jersild (1955) in his book, *When Teachers Face Themselves*, describes how important it is that we see meaning in our work. He writes, “The search for meaning is essentially a search for self. Meaning constitutes, in many respects, the substance of the self” (p. 78). Jersild (1955) goes on to say that in order to teach and affect others we must look to understand our selves:

A teacher's understanding of others can be only as deep as the wisdom he possesses when he looks inward upon himself. The more genuinely he seeks to face the problems of his own life, the more he will be able to realize his kinship with others, whether they are younger or older, like him or unlike him in education, wealth, religion, or professional rank. (p. 83)

Therefore, it is the teacher's task to face his own fear, anxiety, loneliness, meaninglessness and hostility to transform himself thus, and that he may model how to do so for his students (Jersild, 1955). Palmer (1998) sees this conflict as the "moving intersection of the inner and outer forces," (p. 13) as the space where identity is born out of the cocoon. Palmer (1998) also writes that "when I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are" (p. 2).

As a teacher of future teachers I must look at my own life for data collection. Schubert and Ayers (1999) affirm this:

To say teachers are the ones who understand, who know, and can say seems so obvious that it is beneath reporting. But in the odd, sometimes upside-down world of social research, the obvious news must be reported and repeated: teachers can be the richest and most useful source of knowledge about teaching; those who hope to understand teaching must at some point turn to teachers themselves. (p. v)

So I turn to myself to understand what I am seeing and saying.

To understand myself I must undergo a self-study by writing and interpreting my own autobiographical stories. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) inform me that self-studies should be authentic in voice and demonstrate a deep personal connection between the author's stories and the insight derived and the interpretations presented. By studying myself I will be better equipped to understand who I am today. Palmer (1998), in *The Courage to Teach*, believes that in order to reach a harmonious inner life that is shown to the world through outer just actions, one must first come to know the *self*. Self, as defined by Palmer, relates to all the connected parts of one's being—intellectual, emotional, and spiritual, and how these parts are woven together

to create a whole living *oneness*. “The connections are held not in the methods but in the hearts—meaning heart in its ancient sense, as the place where intellect, emotion, spirit, and will converge in the human self” (Palmer, 1998, p. 11).

This blending of the inner and outer shapes how one views the world. My identity as a teacher is shaped by past experiences, individual strengths and weaknesses, talents and skills, fears and concerns, past traumas and lingering inner wounds, and the perception of who I am as revealed through my autobiographical stories. Palmer asserts that only by addressing the issue of *who is the self that leads openly and honestly, alone and together?* can humans truly learn how to “serve others more faithfully, enhance our own well-being, make common cause with colleagues, and help education bring more light and life to the world” (1998, p. 7). Through this process of self-revolution individuals learn about themselves and the world.

To find a more fulfilling and meaningful way of teaching I must start with my own existence. And only once the self is found can one make “substantial contribution to the wider communities in which we live” (Cashman, 2003, p. 1). Without this self-search there is disconnect between who we are and what we do. Palmer (2000) compares this disconnection with our self as a “glimpse of my own life, a life hidden beneath the ice”—a hint that the “life that I am living is not the same as the life that wants to live in me” (p. 2).

Through this self-examination, teachers must consider their true calling—do they really love being teachers, and is it “the place of their deep gladness?” (Buechner as cited in Palmer, 1998, p. 30).

Is this profession my vocation? Am I gifted and called to do it? Is this vocation a place of intersection between my inner self and the outer world, or is it someone else’s image of what my life should be? If this vocation is not mine, no matter how externally valued the profession is, it will do violence to the self—in the precise sense that it violates my identity and integrity. (Palmer, 1998, p. 30)

As the teacher I will tell my story because stories are “the best way to portray realities” (Palmer, 1998, p. 14). Stories are the inner voices which individuals use to write their lives. By acknowledging, naming, and dissecting the inconsistencies in my own life and stories I hope to find the inner strength and character to teach from the heart. Cashman (2003) adds that only by knowing one’s true self can one “respond to the challenges and grow as a person and as a leader, becoming more authentic, more purposeful, and more determined to add value to community” (p. 2). This is the foundation for stepping outside and looking at my inside self, my past experiences, and my beliefs; in order to understand my teaching identity and the spirit, passion, and authenticity to which I aspire as I teach.

As I am a teacher at a private Christian university, it becomes evident to my students that my Christian beliefs are part of my identity. Often I will begin class with a portion of Scripture or with a brief prayer. My thinking is informed by my Christian perspective. As a Christian teacher I look to the spiritual truths found in Scripture and view life through a Christian worldview. I draw upon the ancient faith tradition of Abraham, Moses, Isaiah and Elijah. The words of these teachers transcend the limits of the past and speak to me in the present and sustain me through the future. The wisdom of Solomon speaks to my soul as I reflect on how I became a teacher. "In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). I remind myself and my students that the New Testament Scriptures were written to transform our lives, just as the Apostle Paul wrote, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). The patterns of this world can be linked to the confusion that surrounds us and perpetuate the culture of schooling that does nothing to transform the minds of children. I did not plan on becoming a teacher. But as a Christian I chose this path as a way to transform myself and my students.

How the Literature Informed My Perspective

As I wrote about my teaching perspective that guided my Developmental Reading class, I also surveyed the landscape on what others have said about adopting a teaching identity. I noticed a gap in the current research literature—most research done on teaching identity revolves around the examination of a *teaching self* but is not necessarily connected to autobiographical reflective practice. Danielewicz (2001)

did explore the autobiographical stories of pre-service teachers, but she did not connect her own autobiography to the stories of her students. I seek to understand the process of critical reflection using autobiographical writing by the participants and also by examining my own (the researcher's) autobiographical story.

The research literature clearly shows that to examine the concept of teaching identity one must look at both the inner and outer self. As the pre-service teacher transforms into a teacher, the individual must take what he or she believes and adopt a teaching identity (Britzman, 1991; Danielewicz, 2001). Teaching identity is influenced and shaped by prior experiences with family, school, society, and religion. Existing research argues that narrative inquiry through writing and telling should be used to paint a rich picture of teaching identity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The act of telling and retelling moves us to use critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995 & 2005) and look at our self for data generation (Palmer, 1998 & 2000) to unearth our beliefs and assumptions and transform ourselves and our teaching identity. Through reading the literature, I have come to recognize that in order to share the process of becoming a teacher, I must tell a story. I must share both the inner and outer forces that have impacted my becoming. The only story I can truly share is my own.

Chapter Three: Research Identity

In this chapter I would like to share my research identity by describing and restating the research problem I faced. I explain my epistemological perspective that guided my thinking as a narrative inquirer and gave rise to the quality standards necessary for a study that makes use of qualitative methods. I explain how my data generation and analysis used my own autobiographical story, class activities, and interviews as data sources. Finally, I address ethical issues involved with a research project of this type.

Research Problem

Ever since I first became a teacher I have wrestled with who I am as teacher and why I teach what I teach. In faculty and curriculum meetings I was always the faculty member trying to bring the discussion back to our philosophy of teaching. There always seemed to be a rush to simply pick the right textbook series and purchase enough backline masters to keep the kids busy. More time was spent constructing a recess duty schedule than talking about what it means to be a teacher, what it is we teach, and how we can best engage students in meaningful and authentic learning opportunities. It seems to me that becoming a teacher means that we must wrestle with our perspectives on knowledge, understand our philosophy of learning, recognize our calling as teachers, understand power, and remember who we are. These concepts encompass my teaching identity.

In my current position as a teacher I am an assistant professor in a teacher education program that has over four hundred undergraduate education students. Each one of these students has consciously chosen the path to become a teacher. I believe that it is important that these students have time to wrestle with the important issues involved in becoming a teacher.

Over the past several decades there has been significant research on teacher education and the impact it does or does not have on prospective teachers. Research into teacher's professional identities is a relatively new line of inquiry. Pre-service teachers combine elements of both student and teacher; they begin teacher education

programs as learners but also begin their identity transformation toward teacher. Pre-service teachers spend much time behind the desk as students. However, the aim of teacher education programs is for students to emerge as teachers. As a teacher of future teachers, the problem I am looking to understand is how pre-service teachers begin to construct their teaching identity during a Developmental Reading course early in their teacher education program. In this class I inquired into their prior knowledge about teaching and then asked them to reflect critically on various learning theories. Because of the powerful role I play as the teacher in the classroom, I am also interested in understanding how my teaching identity was constructed and how my past as a student and teacher has shaped and changed me as a teacher. In order to undertake this task I must explain to you who I am as a researcher. At times, in the classroom and while writing, I was thinking only about teaching and supporting my students in their process of becoming teachers. At other moments, as a researcher, I was paying close attention to the words being said in the classroom.

The purpose of this study was to understand how pre-service teachers construct their teaching identity during my Developmental Reading course. During this research study I used the following initial questions to guide my interpretive inquiry:

1. How do pre-service teachers conceptualize themselves as teachers? In particular:
 - a. How do their prior knowledge and beliefs shape and constrain their emergent teaching identities?
 - b. How does reflective writing enable them to construct their emergent teaching identities?
 - c. How does critical reflective thinking enable them to deconstruct disempowering curriculum myths that constrain their emergent teaching identities?
2. How does my own teaching practice facilitate or constrain development of pre-service teachers' emergent identities?

Theoretical lens

Next, I need to explain to you how I designed the research project and my emergent theoretical perspective as I sought answers to my research questions. I attempted to

construct a research study that parallels my beliefs about being a teacher. I have come to believe that constructing an identity is an action that flows from our values, beliefs, and experiences. In his writings, Parker Palmer underscores the idea that epistemology directly affects our values, our beliefs, our experiences, and our actions. In other words, how and what we know influences who we are able to become:

My thesis is a very simple one: I do not believe that epistemology is a bloodless abstraction; the way we know has powerful implications for the way we live. I argue that every epistemology tends to become an ethic, and that every way of knowing tends to become a way of living. I argue that the relation established between the knower and the known, between the student and the subject, tends to become the relation of the living person to the world itself. I argue that every mode of knowing contains its own moral trajectory, its own ethical direction and outcomes. (1987, p. 22)

Critical constructivism is a key referent that shapes my teaching practice and research perspective today. A constructivist perspective views knowledge as being actively built up by the student from their own experiences. Constructivist research (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) requires that the researcher debate back and forth his or her own understandings with those of the students and the research literature to construct the most feasible position possible. This constructivist perspective differs from the prescribed way I was taught to be a teacher and the way that I read research. During my grade school days and during my college years I was implicitly taught that this is the way it is, the objectivist myth. This tension point between the critical constructivist perspective and the objectivist myth created a cognitive dissonance in my mind which led me to question and examine what I believe about life and teaching. Believing that there are multiple ways of knowing, I used a critical constructivist perspective to shape the research design of this interpretive inquiry, in which I employed qualitative methods. Guba (1990) points out that constructivism intends neither to predict nor control the real world nor to transform it, but to reconstruct the world at the only point at which it exists: in the minds of constructors. It is the mind that is to be transformed, not the real world itself (p.27). A constructivist perspective focuses on considerations of personal identity formation,

whereas an objectivist perspective portrays knowledge as a truth that is imparted to the individual. The theory of objectivism portrays knowledge as something that is disconnected from our selves (Palmer, 1998). By contrast, constructivist theory assumes that individuals construct knowledge as they attempt to make sense of their experiences. “Learners, therefore, are not empty vessels waiting to be filled, but rather active organisms seeking meaning” (Driscoll, 1994, p. 360).

Through my years of teaching, and most explicitly, through this research project, I realized that critical constructivism is a social epistemology that is concerned with the ethics of discursive practices: it addresses the socio-cultural context of knowledge construction and serves as a referent for cultural reform (Taylor, 1996). Adding the critical theory of Jurgen Habermas (Grundy, 1987) also helps us look at the sources of domination and authority in society and schools, which constrain the construction of our identity. Critical theory pays attention to the importance of communication and media in shaping culture and ideology (Taylor, 1996). By coupling constructivist theory to the critical theory of Habermas, there emerges a social epistemology—*critical constructivism*—which offers an ethical basis for regulating the discursive practices of knowledge construction (Taylor, 1996). The moral values associated with an emancipatory ethic emerge from the perspective that teacher and students are co-participants in the process of constructing and reconstructing actions, beliefs, and values. Habermas identifies language as the vehicle for attaining this goal (Taylor, 1996).

To allow my students’ language to be shared in purest form, I used a critical constructivist perspective to shape the research design, in which I employed qualitative methods. I chose to use qualitative methods because I wanted to make sense of the complex and sometimes contradictory world of becoming a teacher. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) argue that meaning-makers draw on their own experiences, knowledge, and theoretical outlooks to collect data and to present their understanding to the world. The perspective that I have adopted is a constructive approach which “assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities) and a naturalistic set of methodological procedures” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 21). Interpretive research refers to a set of approaches where the central research interest is the meaning that humans give to their experiences and social interactions.

Interpretive researchers try to understand the interpretations of individuals about the world around them. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) suggested that theory in an interpretive perspective is emergent and is grounded on data generated by the research act: “Theory should not precede research but follow it” (p.23). Interpretive research involves in-depth field research and careful recording and generation of data. This is followed by reflection and writing using rich descriptions, narrative pictures, and direct quotations (Erickson, 1968). Critical reflective inquiry makes the invisible visible and subject to critical examination. In this way this research study is largely retrospective, in that it is my reflection on the action my students and I undertook. Through the process of writing about my research I have come to deeply understand what took place.

The Narrative Inquirer

To capture the essence of what a teaching identity is, I needed to learn and write about this invisible concept. I approached my research study through the lens of a narrative inquirer. By conducting this research project in my class as a narrative inquirer, I was not implementing a special teaching intervention or trying out a brand new teaching method. During the Developmental Reading course I relied heavily on having students reveal their identity and beliefs about teaching through narrative inquiry expressed online, during class discussions, and during private oral interviews. As an education professor, I have always seemed to intuitively recognize the urgency of having students grasp their transformation into becoming a teacher. However, it was not until I had begun crafting this study, reading the research literature, and adopting a narrative inquirer stance that I came to realize that this transformation was a messy process of constructing a teaching identity.

As a narrative inquirer I hoped to open a window of understanding by putting a microscope to myself and my students to examine the tensions and struggles that arise in becoming a teacher through the stories we tell. The class discussion topics, assignments, and activities that I used for data generation were already in place in my class and continue to be a part of my teacher education class. However, while conducting this research study, I found myself paying more attention to making the process of becoming a teacher more focal in my teaching methods. The face-to-face interviews I conducted are not a normal part of my teaching semester; however, I

continue to have informal conversations with past and present students whether in my office or in the hallway. These conversations are important to me as a teacher educator, as I hope to continue to support their transformation into becoming teachers during their years at this university and beyond.

I believe that as a narrative inquirer I came to more fully appreciate the complex nature of both teaching and researching. Any teacher recognizes after day one that teaching is complex. Research has shown that our own manner of teaching is, to a great extent, a direct response to how we were taught (see Chapter Two). How we were taught was not necessarily effective or meaningful. The ways we were taught might not be visible to us until we engage in telling or writing about our experiences as students, especially as we view these moments through the lens of the teacher we are. I began to conduct this research study as a rather “naïve realist” researcher trying to simply tell it like it is. Although I attempted to adopt a constructivist approach to researching, I resisted the notion of having the authority to interpret what I was seeing and hearing. Adopting the stance of a narrative inquirer moved me to critically reflect and build an understanding of what was going on in my students.

As my teaching semester began to take shape, and through my narrative inquirer research lens, I begin to pay attention to the discussions, the assignments, and the stories my students told me as I started to write my narrative inquiry found in Chapters Four and Five. A narrative can be defined as a narrated account or story. An inquiry is an investigation. John Dewey’s (1938) analysis of experience lays the bedrock from which education literature on narrative inquiry is firmly grounded (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, pp. 1-2). Bruner (1991) claims that inevitably all experiences take narrative form. He argues that researchers have moved away from positivist methods because objective findings are developed by the *researcher as outsider* looking in rather than by a participant immersed in the experience (p. 17):

Unlike the constructions generated by logical and scientific procedures that can be weeded out by falsification, narrative constructions can only achieve “verisimilitude.” Narratives, then, are a version of reality whose acceptability

is governed by convention and “narrative necessity” rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness. (p. 4)

Diamond (1995) and Richardson (1994) describe the criteria by which a narrative may be judged as including verisimilitude (does it ring true? is it plausible?), coherence (does it hang together?), and interest (is it compelling?). These criteria needed to be satisfied not only for me but also for the participants who later commented on my writing and interpretations.

To address these questions I attempted to use an engaging style of narrative writing. My narrative inquiry and my writing style were guided by Connelly and Clandinin’s (2000) book, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. The voices of the authors I had read, especially Britzman, Palmer, Brookfield, and Connelly and Clandinin, helped me to unravel my own personal and professional stories and notice the emergence of teaching identities in my students’ stories. The subsequent chapters of this thesis show how I have used narrative inquiry to represent my stories and my personal ways of telling them and the stories of my pre-service teachers. As Connelly and Clandinin (2000) suggest, I used narrative inquiry to unpack lives, examine possible constraints, notice possibilities, and explain implications of these stories.

Narrative inquiry (C. Connelly, cited in Edmund C. Short, 1991) helps in organizing “events and human actions into a whole” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1). As a process of inquiry, narrative methods and writing helped me to question, to search for origins, and to retell my students’ stories. A narrative format helped me organize the data into a coherent whole, weaving in narrative elements of students’ learning autobiographies, discussion board responses, and written answers relating to learning theories. I referred to students’ written narratives when eliciting further insights during interviews of students. I asked them to clarify, expand on, and retell their stories and to recount changes they saw happening in their beliefs about being an effective teacher and their own identity as a teacher.

As a narrative inquirer I was both a researcher and a writer. As a researcher I retrospectively examined myself as a teacher and my students during the fall of 2008.

As a writer I had many decisions to make on how to present this story to you. By choosing a narrative style of writing I hoped to illustrate the complex, emotional nature of becoming a teacher. As the researcher I controlled the methodology. As a writer I selected the literary elements of the story. Coulter and Smith (2009) state that, “narrative research uses literary devices to allow readers to make sense of the study in their own ways. Multiple interpretations by multiple readers are expected and promoted” (p. 578). As a researcher I identified the focal participants. As a writer I determined when to begin and end my story and how to use the words of my focal participants. As an author I decided to present Chapter Five as a glimpse into a single two hour class session at the beginning of the semester. Inside of this session I transport you back in time as I revisit my own life and the stories from my students’ past experiences. I project forward and present stories from throughout the entire semester. I provide student dialogue from online interactions and interpret these interactions as a window into their emerging teaching identities. As you read you see and hear the stories from my point of view. I am walking you through my perspective and understanding. I weave my interpretations and understandings between my stories and the experiences of my students. In this way I present you the connected relationship between my students and me, the teacher. During my writing I make no attempt to provide the only interpretation or single answer. As the reader, you are seeing only my account and reading my interpretations. In this space between us it is my hope that my narrative inquirer stance will nudge you to ask your own questions and also keep you reading my account.

The stories that we tell and write shape our identity and our views; they create our notions, form our assumptions, and constrain our thinking and development as we move inward, outward, backward, and forward. If we consciously and continually reflect and re-examine the stories that create our identity, we may transform our storied life.

My narrative writing style connects the experiences of my students and myself and our daily life with others and gives voice to who we are and what we could become. Use of the first person as a writing tool shows uniqueness and heartfelt sincerity, thus the writing becomes more inviting and encouraging for readers. This research weaves an academic story that combines research, life, and

teaching experience to serve as a roadmap and guide. The narrative style of writing encourages others to take their own journey “with authenticity and purpose, consistent with your values, principles, and life experiences” (Cashman, 2003, p. 9).

My role as a narrative inquirer in this study and course was as an active participant as a researcher, teacher, and learner. Britzman (1991) points out that we cannot study the experience of learning to teach without returning and reflecting on our own experiences of education and particularly teacher education. All that I think about, all decisions, questions, and all that I write in this research text is mine but includes the voices of many. My writing voice makes use of the words and ideas of my mentors, my teachers, my students, the prominent authors I have read, and many other unnamed voices. This text is written from my perspective. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) comment that an interpretive study is incomplete without the researcher’s autobiography. This method of inquiry entails a keen understanding of self and the filters and varying lenses through which I perceive the world and the process of constructing a teaching identity. Taylor and Settelmaier (2003) explain it this way:

A good self-study is a good read, and attends to “nodal” moments (or specifically selected critical events) of our biographies, thereby enabling the reader to gain insight or understanding into the self. Good self-study writing reveals a lively conscience and balanced sense of self-importance, tells a recognizable story, portrays character development, gives place to the dynamic struggle of living life whole, and offers new perspectives. The plot of a good self-study story is a series of events deliberately arranged so as to reveal their dramatic, thematic, and emotional significance. Similar to fiction, a good autobiography tries to reproduce the emotional impact of the author’s experience in order to move the reader. (p. 4)

I must bring forth a potential problem with the creation through writing of my narrative space: that my readers and I are removed from the context of the experience—from the place, time, and people. Furthermore, readers of my stories rely on my descriptions and characterizations to formulate their own interpretations based on their own experiences (Bruner, 1991). The style and seduction of a

narrative inquiry stands in contrast to the myth of empirical objectives of some educational research. In my narrative I transport you through my experiences and share with you what happened. My role as a researcher and teacher is to investigate the narratives linked to teaching identity and to expose its pedagogical potentials, yet at the same time remain critical and self-conscious of the honesty and sincerity in my reflections.

Quality Standards

In my narrative inquiry approach there was no attempt to scientifically test a hypothesis or theory. Therefore, the criteria to judge validity used in quantitative research are not applicable to evaluating the legitimacy of this study (Merriam, 1988). As argued by Guba and Lincoln (1989), trustworthiness and authenticity better reflect the underlying constructivist perspective of this study. In order to establish credibility, which is a way of “establishing the match between the constructed realities of respondents (or stakeholders) and those realities as represented by the evaluator and attributed to various stakeholders” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p.237), I engaged in four steps. The first step was prolonged engagement with my participants (seven months duration). During that period, I attended to several different sources of data. This extended time period helped me develop a relationship as both teacher and researcher with the participants and also gave them time to reflect and respond to events that occurred during the semester.

The second way I established credibility during my inquiry was through *progressive subjectivity* and a view of the *researcher as learner* role which began before and continued during and after the fieldwork component of the study. The researcher records what he expects to find and then revisits these notes with the understanding that “the inquirer’s construction cannot be given privilege over that of anyone else” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 238). Exploration and an honest rendition of the subjectivity of the researcher’s own personal focus, particularly since the researcher was also a participant in this study, enables the reader to connect on an empathetic level, especially if the reader has had similar experiences. By writing narratives for a professional audience the researcher will aim to stimulate readers to engage in a process of pedagogical thoughtfulness (Van

Manen, 1990) in relation to their own present or future professional practices. To evoke pedagogical thoughtfulness is to write in a reflective way that moves the reader into reflecting critically on his/her beliefs about being a teacher. (Taylor & Settelmaier, in Taylor & Wallace, 2007,). Autobiographical research that induces critical self-reflection can assist others in personal and professional growth:

What experiences, issues, stories from my life can be a benefit to others?

What is it in what I say that others might recognize in themselves?

How can this affect my research and attitude?

What can I learn from getting to know myself better?

(Taylor & Settelmaier, 2003, p.3)

The third strategy used employed triangulation, which, according to Patton (2002), can “mean using several kinds of methods or data” (p. 247). The data sources included interviews, autobiographies, written documents, and online interactions. These different data sources and theories are seen as a way to “*test for* such consistency” in the hopes of “understanding inconsistencies in findings” for the purposes of being “illuminative and important” (p. 556).

The fourth way I established credibility was through periodic “member checks,” which Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider to be “the single most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 239). I performed member checks several times during the study through oral interviews. I asked my students to discuss or clarify comments they made in their writings for the course, including their autobiographies and discussion board comments. This way I was able to ask them about specific events they had written about and refer to the language they had used. I also sent the participants drafts of what I had written and asked them for feedback. In this way I hoped also to optimize authenticity by ensuring fair representation of all stakeholders’ perspectives. Thus, prolonged immersion, progressive subjectivity, and use of multiple techniques give a high degree of interpretive credibility to my study (Appendix A).

Data Generation and Analysis

“To live inside a theory or to live inside an ideology is to live inside a story of oneself” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1997, p. 672). Data came from numerous qualitative sources during my Developmental Reading course—interviews, autobiographies, written documents, and online interactions. I documented the nature of online responses posted to an online bulletin board, online journal reflections, and interviews, as pre-service teachers deconstructed and constructed their perceptions of effective pedagogical practices. Students discussed and responded to open-ended questions regarding teaching, and they reflected upon and responded to other students’ comments. “Human beings are complex, and their lives are ever changing; the more methods we use to study, the better our chances to gain some understanding of how they construct their lives and the stories they tell us about them” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 668).

My data sources also were obtained from student journals and interviews. Students kept a reflective journal on their emerging teaching identity, what has impacted it, and how it is changing. Comments in journals were used as starting points for interviews.

I also observed students’ interactions during class discussions and tutoring sessions. I took field notes about these observations. I also kept my own journal writing about this research project. Clandinin and Connelly (1990, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) describe journals as powerful ways for individuals to give an account of their experiences.

By describing and interpreting personal narratives I gained an in-depth understanding of the process one goes through in learning to become a teacher. The intent of this study is to inform, not predict. It is meant to be a contribution to our understanding of the nature of critical reflective inquiry in the life of pre-service teachers. As the teacher and researcher I also reflected in my journal upon the teaching and research process. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a reflexive journal is a diary in which the investigator of a study records information about himself or herself that provides information about the researcher’s insights, methodological decisions, and questions related to the study. As the teacher and

researcher involved in this project, my proximity to the action needed to be considered. Hatch (2002) writes that the more involved a researcher is as a participant in the setting, the closer he or she is to the action. “Not only does acting as a participant allow access to the places where the action happens, but it places the researcher in a position to experience feelings similar to those they are studying” (Hatch, 2002, p. 75). I knew that as I was carrying out this study I would be sharing my past and my lived learning and teaching experiences with the reader. My desire to allow you to know me inside and out is so that through this narrative you will be able to know yourself in a deeper manner.

Sources of Research Data

I used the following class activities as described in Chapter Two as sources of data: journals, electronic Blackboard discussions, and autobiographical learning histories. Additionally I conducted interviews, and maintained a research journal.

Interviews

Face-to-face interviews were not an assigned learning activity but were used to become deeply acquainted with my research participants. Video-taped interviews with selected students occurred about three or four times throughout the study. I interviewed each of twelve participants at least once. I also interviewed several participants multiple times. The first set of interviews occurred close to the onset of the course, the second set in the middle of the course, and the final set after the course had ended. Each interview lasted about thirty minutes. Along with the interview questions listed above, I tried to probe deeply by using the following prompts: “I wonder...” and “Help me understand....” I also asked questions about stories that they had reflected upon in their reflective journals.

As my relationship and connectedness with the participants grew, the interviews turned more naturally into an authentic conversation. Throughout the study I refer to my discussions with the participants as both interviews and conversations. Connelly and Clandinin (2000) explain the difference as they understand it and as I experienced it:

Research interviews normally have an inequality about them. The direction of the interview, along with its specific questions, is governed by the interviewer. However, researchers who establish participatory relationships with participants find it difficult if not impossible, to conduct such interviews with participants. Even when they begin with intention of conducting an interview, the interview often turns into a form of a conversation. (p. 110)

Each interview was videotaped and transcribed and was reviewed prior to the next scheduled participant interview to see if there was any information that needed clarification and to help interpret the narratives. The use of videotaping allowed me the opportunity to consider facial expressions, nonverbal communication, and the expression of emotions that otherwise might be missed.

Through these interviews it was not my intent to magnify my students' words and dissect each utterance; instead it was my hope that through their own words I be drawn to a closer connection and understanding of the research participants and their identities. I conducted unstructured and semi-structured participant interviews and interview recordings. Approximately three to four unstructured and semi-structured interviews took place with selected participants. Each interview lasted about thirty to forty minutes.

Researcher reflective journal

Throughout the Developmental Reading course I also kept a reflective research journal that documented my thinking and wondering about the interviews, discussion board dialogue, and reflection journals. This research journal has become the thesis you are reading. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe the research journal as an important "field text" (p.102). The journal documented my thoughts and feelings about the study itself; the journal was a place to work through the different experiences and questions that occurred during the study. Additionally, I was nudged to take an ongoing look at patterns and themes that recurred through my own journal writing. I documented my thoughts, experiences, and reactions throughout the study (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The research journal helped me to better examine and analyze the relationship between my own memories, my conscious choices in writing, and representing the participants that I was studying. The research journal

served the dual purpose of reflecting on how my experiences and perceptions were shaping the data and how my own view of researching and teaching was changing. For example, an ongoing theme across my journal was overcoming my fear to question the established position that tells teachers what to teach and how to be a teacher. The students talked about their own teachers and their methods and why they are taught mostly from a lecture format. The established position included the objectivist myth that determines what scientifically valid research is, the predetermined curriculum that teachers are assigned to teach, and the dogma of the one right way. I also noticed in my own autobiographical story that when I seemed to be most effective as an instructor I was resisting the established position of objectivism and allowing my students the opportunity to take control of their learning experiences. My teacher-researcher journal helped to bring to my consciousness many of my hidden beliefs, assumptions, and biases about being a teacher.

Through the course of the semester, I collected data through other means such as e-mail correspondence, phone conversations, and informal conversations. My doctoral advisor, Peter Taylor, always provided valuable insight.

Putting Myself, My Students, and My Teaching Under the Microscope

All of the class activities, topics, and discussion described above were used as data sources in my interpretive analysis as I put the construct of becoming a teacher under my own microscope. During my analysis I looked through the qualitative microscope attempting to make use of the multiple lenses of bricolage (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define this as multiple perspectives that pay particular attention to four kinds of bricoleur—interpretative, narrative, theoretical, and political:

The product of interpretative bricoleur is bricolage—an [emergent] construction that changes and takes new forms as different tools, methods, and techniques of representation and interpretation are added to the puzzle. Bricolage is a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation. The quilter stitches, edits and puts slices of reality together. This process creates and brings psychological and emotional

unity to an interpretative experience. The interpretative bricoleur understands research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity. A methodological bricoleur is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks, ranging from interview to intensive self-reflection and introspection. The theoretical bricoleur reads widely and is knowledgeable about the many interpretative paradigms (feminism, Marxism, cultural studies, constructivism) that can be brought to the problem. A political bricoleur knows that science is power, for all research findings have political implications. A narrative bricoleur knows that researchers all tell stories about the worlds they have studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, pp. 4-6).

During my inquiry I excavated my own identity (Palmer, 1998) through critical reflective practice (Brookfield, 1995). This intense self-reflection lens not only led to an enhanced awareness of who I am as a teacher and a researcher (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988), but it was also a transformative process (Mezirow, 1991) and has strengthened and sustained my personal development. During this transformative process of critical reflection I began to view my own assumptions about teaching and life through different lenses. I began to recognize and validate the voices and authority others have carried in my own development as a teacher.

The most powerful force in this process was the writing of my own autobiographical story quilted together in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis. I agree with Brookfield (1995) when he says, “Our autobiographies as learners in childhood and young adulthood frame our teaching at the start of our career, and they frequently exert an influence that lasts a lifetime” (p. 50). Denzin (1989) defines autobiography as a person’s life written by oneself or as inscribing and creating a life. As I wrote my own life story the stories and voices of students began to make their way into my writing. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) talk about the moment when self-study becomes research by describing the intersecting process between me, my research, my teaching, and my students. They explain that history and biography need to be joined: “When the issue confronted by the self is shown to have relationship to and bearing on the context and ethos of a time, the self-study moves to research” (p. 15). The stories I told and heard began to bring forth insight and

interpretation of the complex nature involved in becoming a teacher. By writing my teaching autobiography in Chapter Four and constructing my teaching and life narrative and interpretations in Chapter Five, I began to draw connections and construct my own theories of teaching, brought to light and summarized in Chapter Six of this thesis. This intersection of stories and lives became the research narrative you are about to read.

My analysis was also driven by the insights of Parker Palmer (1990, 1998, 2000, and 2007) who helped me more clearly understand and accept life's contradictions. He helped me realize that I do not need to separate my life as a teacher, researcher, and Christian. Palmer's writings encouraged me in my own writing. He helped me to understand that I can accept the paradox of being a teacher and a spiritual person with something important to say. His writing helped me understand that I must wrestle with the tension these intersections create. My PhD advisor, Dr. Peter Taylor, also nudged me forward in my growth. He allowed me the opportunity to look deeper into my being as a teacher. Dr. Taylor gave me the affirmation I needed to explore my inner being. He allowed me the space to wrestle with the important issues in my life and in education and provided insightful wisdom when I was afraid to step forward. As a teacher I become very excited and emotional about transforming schools; often this emotional perspective found its way into my writings. Dr. Taylor suggested I adopt a *radical humility* about the empirical scope of my study. He reminded me about the difference between (interpretive) description and (valued) prescription. Alongside of my passion for teaching, I attempted to retain a radical humility perspective, as I understand that I have much to learn, and my way of becoming a teacher is not the only way. My interpretive analysis was guided very much by the writing of Parker Palmer and the guidance of Peter Taylor. They both helped me appreciate that my analysis started from the moment my research inquiry began by engaging with the complex topic of becoming a teacher and constructing and sharing my interpretations of what this means to me and my life.

After the generation of my classroom data I began to write informal summaries and questions. I asked what it was that I have learned at each moment through this emerging research process. Through this process I began to make assumptions about what I was coming to understand and how these assumptions

might transform me and our schools. When I found data to corroborate each assumption or question, I then went back to my pre-service teachers to validate the findings (Hawley 2007, as cited in Taylor & Wallace, 2007).

Data interpretation is a messy, complex, recursive, ethical process (Britzman, 1991). My story of interpretation cannot be told in a sequential linear fashion, as it did not occur that way. Data from the fall semester Developmental Reading course were interpreted throughout the course and during the following year in which I wove this research study together. The data collected included journal responses, discussion board conversations, video interview conversations, and auto-biographical stories. The data were read and viewed multiple times to help my interpretation. During my videotaped interviews I relied on the student journal responses to help facilitate deeper insights. My goal of interpretation, just like my teaching perspective, was not objectivity. “Objectivity is a chimera: a mythological creature that never existed, save in the imagination of those who believe that knowing can be separated from the knower” (Lincoln & Guba, 2002, p. 279).

I also examined the autobiographical stories of my students alongside my own written autobiographical story. Through this process I was continually immersed in the data and reliving my own experiences of becoming a teacher. In this way I was able to draw connections between my students and myself. I wrote summaries and my interpretations of these connected experiences. Analyzing the data and my interpretations was ongoing and reflexive (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The analysis process involved moving back and forth between writing and interpretation of the collected data (Van Manen, 1990). As I wrestled with this back and forth process I also wrote what Van Maanen (1988) calls confessional tales. In this way I was able to write and see the problems I was experiencing as I collected and interpreted the data from various sources. During the analysis of the data I reread my confessional tales, and I was able to unearth my core beliefs about who I am as a teacher and what I believe about teaching. As I attempted to learn about others, I had to write about myself (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). To add greater context to the study my data interpretations weave in and out of my confessional tale.

Ethical Issues

Research involving the study of humans, in my case pre-service teachers, raises certain ethical issues. All participants engaged in this study are adults, and prior to the beginning of the study written consent was obtained from all participants. The research avoided causing harm to participants (Cohen et al., 2000) by allowing the participants to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason, and by sharing my narrative writings and interpretations with the participants I allowed them safety and voice in the study.

Those students enrolled in Lakeshore Lutheran University's ED204 Developmental Reading class were recruited for this study. Potential participants were asked to take part in this study during the first day of class in August 2008. I explained the course description to the students. Lakeshore's School of Education dean then explained the study and the time needed to participate in it. I fully informed the students about the nature and the purpose of this research orally and in writing so that they had a complete understanding and were able to decide to voluntarily participate in this research. A consent form was distributed (Appendix C). Those pre-service teachers willing to participate returned the form to me prior to the second class period. The participants were made aware that they may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice to their learning or assessment in the course. Assurance of anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was given in writing. Students' real names are not used in the written research text. The only risk would be the accidental disclosure of the teacher candidate's name in relation to the findings of the study. Permission was also obtained from Lakeshore Lutheran University's Ethics Review Committee. A benefit from this study is that this research can provide information about effective teaching instruction that may benefit the candidates during their course of study and life as a teacher. The findings can also contribute to a stronger pre-service experience for teacher candidates. A greater understanding of how pre-service candidates perceive effective teaching and construct their teaching identity will help Lakeshore Lutheran University shape its education program.

Coda

The intent of this study is to inform teacher educators, including myself, of the nature of pre-service teachers' identity construction. An effective teacher needs to be competent in both the discipline he or she aspires to teach and in his or her approach to teaching. However, a teacher needs to have an awareness of who she or he is as a teacher. Why does our teaching identity matter? If teaching matters, then we need to know who effective teachers are and how these teachers have become who they are. When we stand in front of a classroom of students, we are who we are. Part of what we teach is our identity. It is hoped that this research study will add to the understanding of how pre-service teachers begin to gain their teaching identity. Research shows that beginning teachers do better during their first year of teaching when they have a strong sense of themselves as teachers (Kagan, 1992). Knowing and appreciating pre-service teachers' emerging teaching identities can help us understand how the transition from student to teacher occurs and help pre-service teachers on this journey of identity transformation.

The research on how pre-service teachers conceptualize teaching and their own teaching identity is still in its infancy. Attention to teacher identity formation in teacher education programs will serve to help teachers search out significant questions about why they do what they do (Vinz, 1996). Hoffman and Pearson (2000) call for research that seeks to understand how teacher education programs can prepare pre-service teachers for the complex endeavor of teaching. Assaf (2005) pleads for more research investigating pre-service teacher identity development as evidenced by online responses.

If long-term impact of teacher preparation programs and the development of teachers is truly what is needed, as argued by American Educational Research Association (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005), further exploratory studies are necessary to develop understanding of how pre-service teachers conceptualize teaching and develop their own teaching identity. How they construct their identity and how that identity changes during their teacher education program is a much needed area of study. This research project helps to add to this growing body of research and is critical for a fuller understanding of how students learn to become teachers. I am ready to live and tell, relive and retell stories of my own shifting

teaching identity with my students and the reader. In this way I hope that I might reveal to myself, my students, and the reader my transforming teaching identity.

In this chapter I described the nature of the teaching and research problem that guided this narrative inquiry into how one becomes a teacher. I acquainted you with my university, my students, my three focal participants, the education course I examined, and the teaching methods and data sources I used during this inquiry. I explained the critical constructive perspective that guided my teaching practice, research methods, and my narrative interpretations of what happened and how this process is an alternative to the objectivist myth of knowing. I also addressed trustworthiness criteria evoked when researched from this constructivist perspective. I discussed the ethical issues involved with conducting a research project with students becoming teachers.

I emphasized my emerging research practices and changing perspectives so that you might further understand who I am and what I hope to accomplish in this inquiry into becoming a teacher. To begin my inquiry in the next chapter I reflect upon who I was as a teacher and how I arrived at this point in my life. And so my story begins.

Chapter Four: Reliving My Teaching Years

Introduction

This autobiographical chapter is written to help build rich contextual detail and to foreshadow details about the main character—me—thereby helping to situate me in the autobiographical novel that follows in Chapter Five. This chapter is a starting point for me to explore my research questions. The first question asks, “How do pre-service teachers conceptualize themselves as teachers?” The second question turns the microscope back on myself and asks, “How does my own teaching practice facilitate or constrain development of pre-service teachers' emergent identities?”

By examining the process of narrative inquiry as teaching perspective in Chapter Two and as the narrative inquirer in Chapter Three, I recognized that I should first examine my own teaching identity before exploring that of my students. This autobiographical story that is Chapter Four helped me to do this as I probed my own experiences and my own feelings about becoming a teacher and being a teacher. I came to recognize how I was taught to act like a teacher but not to be the teacher I am. I see now how the teachers I had as a student impacted the choices I made decades later. Writing and analyzing this story helped me to relive the events of the past and come to a fuller understanding of who I am as a teacher and what I believe about teaching.

When people heard that I was finishing my PhD studies they often asked me about the topic of my dissertation thesis. As I began telling them that I was exploring what it means to gain a teaching identity, I was most often met by a blank stare. I believe this is because understanding the notion of a teaching identity is complex and a bit nebulous. With the ever-growing use of scripted curricula and mandated tests, teaching is often relegated to a role that a teacher must perform, following a manuscript that has already been written.

It seems to me that we need to empower teachers to take hold of their life's manuscript and encourage them to begin writing their own stories. If I ask my students to write about their lives then I too must share my stories and my own

becoming. To me, teaching is not just a role that I assume, but it is an identity that shapes all I do. I have come to recognize that my teaching identity encompasses everything I value about teaching. My teaching identity is made visible by the words I say, how I teach, the curriculum I use, the activities I assign, how I relate to the students before me, and how I sustain myself as a teacher and make it through the good days and the bad days.

I realized that my personal experience of teaching for eighteen years was important to how I interacted with the co-participants of this research—students in my Developmental Reading course—and how I generated and interpreted the data for this study. My teaching history and prior experiences were written in this chapter to enable me, and you, to participate more fully in the lives of my pre-service teachers, to enter deeply into their experiences as they became teachers, and to more readily reflect on the development of my own identity as a teacher. Lincoln and Guba (1989) describe this process as documenting and monitoring the researcher’s “progressive subjectivity” which takes place before, during, and after an interpretive inquiry. This short autobiographical story outlines key aspects of my eighteen years as a teacher and was used to critically reflect on the transformative process I went through as a teacher. I present this narrative so that I, and you, can be mindful of how our past affects our present.

I Am a Teacher

After graduating with my elementary education degree in 1991 from Dr. Martin Luther College (DMLC) in New Ulm, Minnesota, as an energetic twenty-four-year-old, I was full of hope and enthusiasm as I headed off to my first teaching position at a small Lutheran school in Reedsburg, Wisconsin. In my first position I was not only the teacher of grades four through eight, but I was also called as the principal of this private school. I recall an experience that occurred shortly after I found out I would in fact be teaching five grades in a classroom in a small Lutheran grade school. I ran to see Dr. Dave Wendler, my inspirational professor and mentor at DMLC.

That spring day back in 1991, I entered his office, full of worry and doubt, and collapsed into an office chair located on the other side of his desk. During my days of studying to become a teacher, Dr. Wendler had made a personal connection

with me and became a favorite teacher and mentor. Dr. Wendler taught classes in Psychology of Learning and Teaching Reading. His classes and teaching style inspired students to think about how we might make learning authentic and meaningful. I had a passion and desire to impact children in the classroom and make learning real. However, on this afternoon, after receiving my teaching assignment, I asked Dr. Wendler, “How can I possibly teach the curriculum to five different grades in the same classroom?” He reassured me that this in fact might be a positive situation. He encouraged me to make use of the unique gifts the students possessed and to use an authentic reading and writing workshop approach to teaching. That afternoon we spent over an hour discussing how I might design my classroom and create learning situations that would benefit each child no matter what grade he or she was in. In that hour-long discussion, I did not necessarily learn anything new, but this conversation allowed me a chance to be reminded that I would be teaching children and not just fifth graders or eighth graders. Dr. Wendler reminded me that I had become a teacher but should always remain a student myself. That afternoon I walked out of Dr. Wendler’s office with a sense of relief and hope for the future. I had become a teacher and yet I knew I had a lot to learn.

When I graduated from college my son Jacob was four years old, and my daughter Rachel was a toddling one-year-old just learning to walk. This was the first of many moves I would have my family undertake as I navigated and searched for my true calling as a teacher. The busyness of the move and preparing for my classroom for the first time allowed me no time to think about what it meant to be a teacher and especially a teacher of students in grades four through eight (ages ranging from ten to fourteen). Alongside this responsibility I was also asked to lead the school as the administrator. This school was in a unique position, as it was a parochial school that was an extension of five different Lutheran congregations. However, the school was actually begun under a federation of parents that wanted a spiritual alternative to the local secular public school.

As I thought about the wide range of the students in age and ability I realized that I needed to design a curriculum and learning environment that would span the needs of these students. From day one I implemented a reading and writing workshop approach to teaching literacy. Each day the students were immersed in

reading and responding to a variety of books. During our writing workshop time the students wrote personal narratives, poetry, and a variety of other pieces. To this day I have many of these writing artifacts and often share them with my pre-service teachers. Because I had five grades in the same classroom, I also had to rely on peer tutoring, reciprocal teaching, and independent learning projects. At times I was able to realize that the authentic way to teach reading and writing was to allow students choice and voice in the reading and writing process. Yet, my teaching perspective changed when I moved into the other content courses like math, science, and history. In these content courses I fragmented the classes, as I was intent on getting through the textbooks. I now wonder why I didn't integrate these subjects into the reading and writing workshop approach. I could have tapped into the wonder and curiosity of nature and allowed the students to explore and become an expert on a topic by reading, writing, and talking about what they had learned. Yet in college I was taught to write out the daily lesson plans that were neatly organized and cover a certain number of textbook pages each and every day. However, as a first year teacher and principal I struggled to make sure I covered all the content in the math, history, and science textbooks. The students in eighth grade were taking algebra, the subject I struggled with in high school. This class was basically self-taught by the students as I struggled to keep up with the other demands in the classroom. The students rose to the occasion as they sought help from each other. The older students would help the younger ones in the classroom. My biggest fear was that I was missing important concepts from the textbooks.

I do remember doubting myself as a teacher. It was not because I did not think I could reach the students, but because of the amount of time and energy necessary to sustain teaching five grades. It was a very small Lutheran school, yet the job I had assumed was vast and enormous. I began to wonder if I was cut out to be a teacher. I had to deal with minor classroom management issues and demanding parents and still try to construct creative and engaging lessons. It was virtually impossible. Through this time of doubt I leaned on my Christian faith and calling as a teacher and the support of my wife.

While teaching young pre-service teachers today I encourage them to find support and push through the first few years of teaching. I also encourage students to

take time to find quiet moments. These quiet spiritual moments can help sustain the teacher during the frantic pace of the first years of teaching. I do not necessarily think the teaching vocation becomes any easier, but I think experience and reflection help you to realize where you need to focus your energy and that the students are capable of doing wonderful things in the classroom if we step aside and allow them the time and space. Things in the classroom might not always be neatly organized, and children were not created to sit quietly in a desk for six hours each day. The main focus of being a teacher should be in creating opportunities to engage students in authentic and meaningful learning opportunities. As a young teacher I often failed to recognize this. I became too concerned that the measure of my success was in completing the assigned textbooks and seeing that my students were labeled as above average on the achievement tests.

Teaching is much more than textbooks and tests. Teaching is about children. There are those special moments when you connect with students inside and outside of the classroom that make the hard work, late nights, and failed lessons worth the effort. I remember one of those moments that occurred during my second year of teaching. This story involved a young first grade student named James. James was a loveable little blond-headed boy, but he came from a messed up home life and could not seem to hold it together even in the classroom where he was secure. James was being raised by only his mother, as I think his father was in prison. Early one school day little James ran out of our small Lutheran school and bolted down the street and was gone. Pam, the other teacher, came to my classroom in a panic that little James had run away from school. I asked her to keep an eye on both classrooms, and I ran outside. I couldn't see James anywhere. So I decided to turn to the law. I phoned the local police station, and not long after that the police officers brought James back to school. With lights flashing the squad car pulled into the school parking lot and came to a stop. James climbed out of the back seat of the squad car with tears streaming down his face. We sat down at the picnic table in the school play yard. I do not recall why James ran away, but I realized that at this moment James needed to know that he was loved. As a teacher and principal of a Christian school this moment allowed me the opportunity to share the peace that surpasses all understanding. I often wonder today what has become of James. When I think of his name a smile still crosses my face and I see his dirt-blond hair and tear-stained face. What is unique

then is the opportunity this brought for me to share the Gospel, the forgiveness in Christ and the security that James has for an eternity. To teach is to touch a life for an eternity.

During my two years at this school our third child, Isaiah, was born. That same year, 1993, I received a call from a Lutheran school in Minnesota to serve as principal and teacher of the upper grades, sixth through eighth. In our Lutheran circles you never really know when you are going to receive a call to serve a new church and school. Congregations that are in need of a teacher at their Lutheran school receive a list of potential candidates from the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod headquarters. The congregation members review the biographical data and then vote on a candidate. This newly called teacher then has the decision to accept the call or remain at the current school.

It didn't take me long to realize that this school was a little larger and afforded me the possibility of teaching with more support and help. So this time my wife and I packed up our three young children and headed about six hours west to a small rural community in southwestern Minnesota. At this Lutheran school I would serve as principal and teacher of grades six through eight. This school was housed in a typical brick school building. The building only had four classrooms (grades six through eight, grades three through five, kindergarten through grade two, and preschool).

Again I spent this summer preparing to teach in a multi-grade setting. During this time I found myself moving away from what I believed in as a teacher. I began to resort to using English textbooks and had students spend time learning the parts of speech. I drifted away from authentic learning and began to rely on following the scripted textbook lessons. As I reflect back on why I began to default to teaching the way I was taught, I feel it might have been because it was the easy way out. Our fourth child, Noah, was born during my three years teaching in this country school. Noah was a very sick baby. We spent many nights away at hospitals trying to sort through Noah's many medical issues. This stressful family situation consumed much of my time and I fell back to the scripted approach to teaching. I may have also

resorted to this traditional approach to teaching because I thought that it was what everyone else was doing.

Finding My Identity

In 1996, after three years of teaching in Minnesota, I received another call offering me a chance to move back to my hometown in Wisconsin and teach at a Lutheran school that was not far from the Lutheran grade school I attended as a student. This position did not include the administrative responsibilities and would allow me more time to focus on my family and teaching. Also, my mother and grandparents lived in the same town. I had a very close relationship with my mom and thought it would be nice to live near family.

At this Lutheran school I taught grades four and five. I began to transition back into what I would call a more authentic teaching perspective. I do recall that I was still tied to a textbook, but I began to once again allow student interests and passion to drive the classroom projects and learning opportunities.

As I think back to my time at this school a humorous moment comes to mind. As I was teaching an engaging social studies class, a young fourth grade student named Lloyd raised his hand and told me his tooth was loose. A few minutes later Lloyd raised his hand to tell me he had pulled his tooth. I told Lloyd to set it in his desk, and we would get a Ziploc bag for it later. I continued with my dynamic and engaging instruction, and Lloyd once again raised his hand. I said “Yes, Lloyd?” He replied, “Mr. Witt, my tooth is stuck in my ear.” Sure enough, I peered into his ear and saw a white tooth stuck deep in his ear. He had tried to fish his tooth out but in this attempt he ended up pushing it in deeper and deeper. I had a hard time holding my laughter in and maintaining my composure. I took Lloyd to the school office, and they called his mother, who was a nurse. She came to school and got the tooth out with a pair of tweezers. I still laugh as I tell this story to my pre-service teachers today.

It was during this time that my role as a teacher began to shift beyond the young students in my classroom. I was asked by my alma mater to be a student teaching supervisor. I thought this would be a great opportunity for me to share my

love and passion for teaching with a future teacher. When my student teacher, Jason, walked into my classroom I no longer viewed myself as a young and inexperienced teacher. I was becoming veteran teacher who still had a lot to learn. It is interesting to recall that during those months when Jason was in the classroom I noticed how I had grown as a teacher. Jason was most concerned with the same fear that my pre-service teachers talk about today, classroom management. It seems like an impossible task to keep twenty-five young students quiet and in their seats so that they can sit back and passively learn the curriculum. It is interesting to see how not much has changed over the last few decades. It seems students learn quickly that a successful teacher has a quiet, organized, and passive learning environment. The pleasures and joy of being curious and learning do not fit in this standardized classroom environment. Throughout all these years of doing school we have not yet realized that we might approach education differently. I recall reading a quote about Rip Van Winkle that said, "If Rip were to come back today after being asleep for one hundred years the only institutions he would recognize would be prisons and schools." Almost everything has changed and advanced, yet the educational model we are driving has not changed. The students we greet each day in the classroom are vastly different than the students I taught just five years ago. From Wisconsin to Minnesota to Texas, schools are becoming increasingly diverse, but future teachers remain mostly white, middle-class, and female; and our schools still use the same model of instruction that was used over one hundred years ago.

During my four years at this Lutheran school in Wisconsin our youngest daughter, Hannah, was born. In the spring of 2000, I received a call to serve as a teacher of grades five and six and as athletic director at a school in Austin, Texas. The warmer weather was an appeal, as was the chance to work in a different cultural setting. However, during this time my most inspirational teacher, my mom, had been diagnosed with stomach cancer. Just a few short years earlier, my mom had nursed her own aging parents through their final years of life. She underwent extensive surgery at the nearby Mayo Clinic. The surgery went well, and the doctors had hoped for the best, and initially her health began to recover. Knowing that my mom was struggling with cancer made this decision agonizing. I remember going over to my mom's house to talk about this new call. My mom wanted me to be happy and knew that this new position offered many possibilities for me. My wife and I talked

extensively and prayed fervently and it eventually became clear that God was moving me to accept this position in Texas. During the summer of 2000, we loaded up our family of seven and made one last stop at my mom's house for a tearful good-bye as we headed south.

During these years of teaching in Texas I allowed the students in my classroom to have choice in reading and writing, yet never made that connection to the other subjects I was required to teach. We struggled through the textbook pages and completed the science and social studies workbook pages. I could always sense a disconnect between how I taught reading and writing compared to the other courses. I was afraid that the students might miss out on important bits of information that the textbook companies had published.

As I reflect back on my teaching days in Texas, I recall an unusual moment in this urban Lutheran school. I was engaging the students in a dynamic and exciting Bible lesson. My fifth grade student, Yasmine, was so engaged in another one of my dynamic lessons that she was staring out the classroom window. During the middle of the lesson Yasmine raised her hand and said, "Mr. Witt, I think a homeless man just stole a garbage can from our school." I looked out, and sure enough a grizzled man in ragged clothes was walking down the road pushing one of our garbage cans. So without thinking, I bolted out of the classroom, down the road, and caught up with the man. Not sure what to do, all I thought was to ask if he needed anything. I looked back at the school and there were twenty-five students peering out the window. The man actually came down to the church for a congregational dinner and stayed for the church service. I wonder if it is moments like that that my students remember.

Several times during the 2000-01 school year, I took time off from teaching to return to Wisconsin and visit my mom. Her stomach cancer had progressively gotten worse and the cancer was not responding to the various chemotherapy treatments. I called my mom's doctor, Dr. Bible, and left a message that I wanted to speak with him. He returned my phone call moments later. I asked about my mom's health. He indicated that it was not good. I asked if I should return for another visit and he said, "I would cherish every moment I have with her." I knew what I had to do. I booked a flight to make a surprise Mother's Day visit to be with my mom. On

my way to her house, on that Mother's Day, I stopped by a store and purchased a single red rose as a small token of my love for all that my mom had done for me. I spent a wonderful week at my mom's house sharing coffee and talking about the past and the hope of an eternal future. We had to make the hour long drive to the Mayo Clinic for her chemotherapy treatment that week. During the ride there we talked about many things, and slowly the conversation turned to, "What if I don't make it?" As Christians, we shared the common hope of an eternal after-life. Not much else matters as you stand at the doorstep of death. During my mom's agonizing journey her faith and trust never wavered. She never asked, "Why me?" She just wanted to live and share in the lives of her five children. After my short visit I returned to Texas to finish the school year. The day after school let out we loaded up our mini-van to make the drive back to Wisconsin to be with my mother. During the month we were there my mom spent many weeks in the hospital. My mom was trying hard to accept the terminal diagnosis and we prayed that her life would be extended. I recall standing next to my mom, who was seated in a wheelchair. We were on the top floor of the local hospital in a commons area overlooking the busy road below. My mom said, noting the traffic, "No matter what happens, life goes on, with or without us."

As our stay in Wisconsin reached past four weeks I again consulted with the doctors about the time my mom had left. They said it could be a few weeks or months. Regretfully, we had to return to our life in Texas. This goodbye was even more agonizing as we knew that we might not ever see mom, Grandma Kay, alive again.

After arriving back to Texas, my thoughts remained by my mom's bedside. Each day I would call to speak to her or one of my siblings as she grew weaker, and as the end of July approached my sister phoned and said we had better make the trip to Wisconsin. My wife and I quickly packed our suitcases and loaded the five kids into the van for the twenty-hour ride to Wisconsin. During this ride not many words were spoken in the mini-van and few stops were taken. When we were within a couple of hours of my mom's house, my cell phone rang. It was my sister on the phone, and she told me that my mom wanted to talk to me. I could just barely make out the words she uttered to me in her gentle voice, "I love you." I replied, "I love you too." My sister said, "Hurry!" I hung up the phone and tears filled my eyes. My

wife and children knew the gravity of the situation and they began to sign Christian hymns while I wiped away the tears and began to reflect back on the impact my mom had on who I was. She led her five children by showing love and trust. My mother was the finest example of a teacher that I could ever know or aspire to become. She always had a kind and gentle word for every situation.

Think for a moment about the darkest valley you have faced in your life. My mom died at the age of fifty-nine. She passed away just twenty-four hours after I arrived to be by her bedside on July 23, 2001. At this moment I was at the darkest place I had ever been. Why did she need to be taken away? Why did she have to suffer so much? Why can she not be here to watch my children grow? For many years after her death I continued to ask why. Teachers are good at asking why.

While writing about this valley I recognize that I had been focusing on why this had happened to me rather than how this deep valley might impact and transform my life. I recall how my children embraced my grief in that van ride from Texas and how they sang hymns of trust to help sustain me, their father. The most powerful moments in teaching are often the times when little children teach us. During this writing process I have moved away from asking why this happened to thinking about how I might use this valley to positively influence the lives of my children and all whom I touch. Even though the pain still resides in my heart, and my mom has missed many milestones in my life, I understand much of who I am and what I have become leads back to my mother and how she led her life even through her death. My mom continues to inspire me to become a teacher and parent that has hope for an eternity.

Not long after my mom died I enrolled in a graduate program at a private Lutheran university in Austin, Texas. Because of my love for literacy I chose to pursue a degree in Advanced Literacy. The classes met in eight-week sessions in the evening. Through these courses, reading, and class discussions I was undergoing a transformation. I was becoming a different person and teacher. I began to think about the larger questions in my teaching. I graduated with my master's degree in Advanced Literacy; I passed the Texas licensing exam and became state certified as a Reading Specialist. Yet how had I changed? The dean of the School of Education encouraged me to continue on toward a doctorate. I had never really thought about

the notion of getting a PhD. I did not feel smart enough. I was afraid of being out of place. I knew I loved to teach and I loved learning. But I applied to the University of Texas. I took the GRE entrance exam and was accepted into the Language and Literacy PhD program. I jumped into a number of doctoral classes on learning, literacy, and language. Most importantly I began to think deeply about what I did in the classroom and what our schools were doing. This is where I met Dr. Jim Guszak, who emerged as my literacy hero. I also made a connection with Dr. Beth Maloch. Dr. Maloch had an interest in literacy, discourse, and action research. This was my first introduction to action research. Beth asked me to think about the discourse that occurred in the classroom. As I thought about this, I realized that my voice was predominant in most of what happened in the classroom. I wondered how I might step out of the spotlight and allow space for my students. Beth spoke to me about the power of literature circles. I designed an action research project in my own classroom and begin to realize that I could release control. Students began to become curriculum makers. “The use of literature circles demonstrated that the students were able to understand and apply the concepts in their self-directed literature conversations” (Witt, 2007, p. 187).

The use of literature circles provided a chance for my students to use higher-level thinking skills in an authentic conversation. Students’ insights and reflections, rather than ready-to-use questions from the teacher, drove the learning in literature circles. The students also learned to generate their own ideas and contribute to thoughtful conversation about what they read. This format is similar to the open discussion I hope for in my undergraduate college course, as these unstructured conversations evoke a much more meaningful dialogue.

The use of action research in my classroom was a powerful and transformative moment in my own becoming. I finally was viewing my classroom and teaching practices through both eyes. During this shift in my perspective, the dean of the local Lutheran university where I had earned my master’s degree phoned and asked me to teach an undergraduate writing course. Again a sense of fear washed over my being. What do I know? Am I smart enough? But I followed my passion for teaching and writing and begin teaching an evening course on the writing workshop approach. At this time I was also teaching grades five and six and had

assumed the role of administrator at my elementary school. Alongside this, I was taking PhD courses part-time at the University of Texas. I was transitioning each day and each moment from a teacher to a student and back to a teacher.

I Teach Future Teachers

In 2004, I began my position as adjunct education professor at the university where I had received my master's degree. Each time I stepped into that undergraduate classroom, my life carried new meaning, as I was now sharing my beliefs and views about teaching with another generation of teachers. I spent two years as an adjunct professor alongside my full-time elementary teaching position.

After those two years of teaching as an adjunct professor, I received a phone call from the dean of the School of Education at a private Lutheran university in California. The dean spoke to me on the phone about the university's need for a full-time literacy professor. Again my first reaction was that of fear. "Do I belong?" This would be a major shift in my teaching identity, from a teacher of young children to a teacher of future teachers. I flew to California and went through the interview process. In 2006, I was offered a position as a full-time assistant professor of education. At this point our oldest son, Jacob, had moved out of the home and gotten a full-time sales position back up north in Minnesota. Yet we had lived in Texas for six years, and the idea of uprooting the family from their friends and school was not an easy decision. But I decided to take the new position.

Alongside this move from Texas to California was a spiritual shift in my Lutheran understanding, as I moved from a more conservative Lutheran church body to a larger and more diverse Lutheran synod. This move was also a shift in my teaching focus. I moved from standing before children to teaching students how they might become teachers. In the fall of 2006, I once again became a first-year teacher as a full-time education professor. At the university in California, I taught a reading class, a psychology of learning class, and an integrated methods class. I was also a field student teaching supervisor. Again my passion and heart for teaching was reinvigorated as I thought about the impact these future teachers could have on authentic teaching and learning in our schools.

My story would not be complete if I did not add the conflict that arose when I was offered the full-time professorship position. The pastor of the church connected to the Lutheran elementary school where I was principal responded to my announcement about the new position in a harsh manner. When I informed him of the difficult deliberation I was going through in the process of deciding whether or not to accept this new position, he told me, “I cannot ask our members to pray for you during this process, because you are deliberating a position in a heterodox church body.” I was stunned. The university was a part of a larger Lutheran denomination. These two separate synods were not too long ago affiliated with each other. Yet the narrow-minded thinking of this pastor had led him to believe that, by even entertaining this decision, I had committed a sin. I was disparaged for taking this position in a “heterodox” Christian denomination. It would seem in his mind that the Lord’s work can only be completed by those of the same narrow-minded ilk.

During this time I began to think about my continued doctoral studies. As I began to grow as a teacher I had always been pushed to think beyond the techniques and methods we use in the classroom. Several professors at my university in California had been going through an international PhD program. Curtin University in Perth, Australia, had a cohort doctoral program at several locations throughout the United States. I attended one of the information sessions and was encouraged to connect with Dr. Peter Taylor, a professor of education at Curtin University. Dr. Taylor is an educational researcher who is focused on transforming the practice of teachers and education worldwide. As part of Taylor’s work at Curtin University, he is the director of the Transformative Education Research Group (TERG). TERG proposes that we move “towards revitalized and ethically astute systems of education worldwide contributing directly to environmental, cultural, and personal sustainability.” Because of my reflective and spiritual identity, I made an immediate connection with Taylor’s perspective and approach to teaching during an online course I took on constructivism. Taylor began to nudge me forward in my thinking about how I have become a teacher and how my transformations might affect those I teach and those I know.

In the spring of 2008, I received an offer to become the Director of Graduate Reading at Lakeshore Lutheran University in the Midwest. Alongside the director

responsibilities I would also be teaching an undergraduate Developmental Reading course. It seems in some sense I have come full circle as I began my teaching profession in Wisconsin, and now I return with my family to that part of the country. During the summer of 2008, the Witt family moved three thousand miles east.

Through Dr. Taylor's guidance I designed this research study you are now reading. My research study was set to begin in September 2008. In 2007 I had submitted my research proposal to Curtin University and received approval from Curtin's ethics committee. Next I also needed ethics clearance from Lakeshore Lutheran University. This type of research project was new to many of the faculty members at Lakeshore. I was asked to meet with the Institutional Review Board at Lakeshore Lutheran University to explain my research inquiry. After much debate and dialogue, I received clearance to conduct this narrative inquiry project. As each day moved forward I dug deeper into who I am and what I believe.

Reflection

This chapter is an autobiographical summary of my life as a teacher from my first teaching position in Reedsburg, Wisconsin in 1991 and through the various other critical moments in my life up until the current position in 2009 as both a teacher of future teachers and a researcher. I have included critical incidents, humorous moments, dark valleys, and my own transformation as a person to give the reader rich, contextual background to the novel that follows.

Writing about the critical moments in my teaching career has helped me to see what I am passionate about in my life. The autobiographical process has helped me draw conclusions about myself. Reexamining these critical moments in my teaching life has helped me to notice how my teaching identity has changed, and a stronger sense of empathy has emerged inside of me, especially for those that set out to become teachers and resist the way things have always been done. This narrative inquiry has helped to alter faulty conclusions and beliefs I had about myself, others and education. I see how these faulty assumptions have kept me from making the most of my present and future life as a teacher and from changing what I do in the classroom and at home. I have come to realize that when I was teaching in authentic ways and connecting with my students about real events, I was the teacher that I

wanted to be. The autobiographical examination has made me more aware of the gifts and strengths I bring to teaching. The strongest gift that I believe I possess is captured in the word *hope*. I believe that the hope I have for authentic teaching drives me to be who I am. Recognizing the gifts we bring to teaching helps us teach more consistently from our identity (Palmer, 1998). I came to recognize that when I was an effective teacher I was not bound by the curriculum in the book or the best practice methods I was told to use. When I was most effective, I let go. When I was the teacher I wanted to be, the students were engaged in conversations (literature circles), we were noticing the world around us (the garbage cans being stolen), and thinking about life (and the death of my mom). In writing this autobiographical story I noticed that my teaching years followed the path of a roller coaster filled with its ups and downs. My teaching career has been filled with moments when I tried to grab hold of my students and tried to direct them to be the way I wanted them to be. I see now that when I lost focus and become disconnected with why I became a teacher, I began to resort to filling the school day with busywork. Palmer (2000) compares this disconnection with our self as a “glimpse of my own life, a life hidden beneath the ice”—a hint that the “life that I am living is not the same as the life that wants to live in me” (p. 2). Noticing these good and bad moments in my own teaching life helped me to understand the words of my pre-service teachers in the next chapter, such as when Susan struggles with finding “the one right way” to teach and wrestles with the tension of whether or not she is cut out to be a teacher, because her life does not align with the standardized pedagogical methods marketed by publishing companies. The process of writing about my spiritual shift in my beliefs helped me to understand perspectives that others bring to the classroom and realize that someone might view something differently than how I see it.

This story helped me come to a stronger understanding that I can be a teacher of teachers. Tracing my path as young teacher to my present vocation as a teacher educator has helped me to reaffirm that I am not a perfect teacher, and I do not know the perfect method to be used, and that is all right. The one constant in my story is that I am always changing.

I believe that this autobiographical story has also nurtured an awareness in my life, as I have become more aware of how my home, school, and spiritual culture

has shaped and informed who I am and what I do. I have become more conscious of being true to my teaching philosophy. In the next chapter you will read how my pre-service teacher, Amy, makes this same connection, “Through this entire class I have become more aware of what my reading philosophy is” (10/8/08). By writing this narrative I have become conscious of the values that have led me to my emerging perspectives on what a teaching identity is and how it impacts what we do in the classroom.

Through the process of writing and rereading my own story, it seems I now tend to perceive more clearly how I might empower my students to become advocates in their classroom and in the educational arena. By writing my story I was able to relive the successful moments in my classrooms and think about those days and weeks that did not happen as I now wish they had. I believe that teachers must come to an understanding of why we do what we do in the classroom. This autobiographical story helped to strengthen my understanding of the vision I have for our teachers and our schools (as described in Chapter Six as I “dream beyond what I can be”). This autobiographical story, Chapter Four, has helped me to construct theories of learning that will be presented in Chapter Six. This autobiographical story has been a reflective tool that I have used to understand the ways in which my teaching identity has been transformed (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I also hope that this chapter has helped you build context about who I am and what I believe, so that I might also begin to understand how my students become teachers. The following chapter will reveal even more about me, my students, and what it means to construct a teaching identity.

Chapter Five: Reconstructing Our Teaching Identities

Preface

Now that I have written and examined my own teaching autobiography in Chapter Four, I am ready to further explore the process of how I became a teacher by reconstructing the identities experiences of myself and my students. Chapter Five is the life and breath of this research project, as I make use of the theory of narrative inquiry writing (discussed in Chapter Three) to investigate how my students, the pre-service teachers, develop and transform their teaching identity during my teacher education class. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) tell us, narrative inquiry becomes a shared narrative unity between researcher and participant. It can be seen as benefiting not just the researcher but also the research participants, the research site, and the community itself.

In the story that follows, I am both the teacher and researcher constructing and retelling the story and providing my interpretations. My participants are both students and pre-service teachers. This narrative chapter helped me explore the research questions that initially guided my thinking. In this chapter I begin to understand how my students' prior knowledge and beliefs shape and constrain their emerging teaching identity. I also use the reflective writings and discussions of my students to illustrate how they negotiate the tensions involved in constructing a teaching identity.

My students' stories and discussions reveal how they deconstruct disempowering curriculum myths that constrain their emergent teaching identities. Writing about what I did as the teacher of future teachers helps demonstrate how my teaching practice at times facilitated and at other moments constrained the development of my pre-service teachers' emergent identities.

This chapter is a narrative story about my life and the lives of my students. In my writing I have attempted to represent events as accurately as possible. Every story needs characters, conflicts, and sometimes resolutions. These pieces are present in the story you are about to read. The novel below is a story about me as a teacher

and my narrative inquiry into what it means to become a teacher. This novel is based on real people and experiences, written from my perspective. The entire chapter spans only a single day, the first day of class in September 2008. However, throughout the story my students and I look backward on our entire lives. In the story you will learn much about the main character, me, and the numerous other characters, including my pre-service teachers and mentors from my past and present. The conflicts in the story mostly involve the difficult process of becoming a teacher. As you read this story you will see my interpretations of what happened to me and what my students told me about becoming a teacher weave in and out of the storyline. The direct quotes spoken by the characters in the novel are taken from actual interviews, field notes, online Blackboard discussions, and journal entries. These quotes are woven together to form my story and highlight my interpretive thoughts.

I have chosen the narrative form to represent these lived experiences because I believe stories are a rich way to represent our lives and who we are (see Chapter Three for details of narrative inquiry method). This research story is intended to speak to teachers, future teachers, and educational researchers as I present the struggles, critical reflections, and complex process of becoming a teacher.

This story is autobiographical in nature and intended to represent what has actually happened according to my perspective and my life. Other than changing the names of my university and my pre-service teachers to protect their identities, I have attempted to remain true to the events that have happened in my life and during the course of my research project. As Deborah Britzman (1991) informed me, the acquiring of teacher identity is complex and is significantly influenced by biography, experiences, context, culture, and the activity of the learner.

The Very First Day

I turn my vehicle onto the campus road and give a wave to the security guard at the entrance gate. It's a mild Tuesday morning on this first day in September 2008. This private Midwestern university campus is idealistically situated on the shores of Lake Michigan. I follow the campus road as it curves around a steep embankment that

overlooks the expansive lake. It is only 8:00 a.m., and the main parking lot is almost full. After finding a spot to park, I walk across the lot and see students rushing quickly to their early morning classes with their backpacks slung over their shoulders. Young trees line the walkway and I notice the green leaves gently fluttering as they respond to the cool breeze blowing in off the lake. I think to myself that in a short time the leaves will be transformed to their brilliant autumn colors. I think ahead to my undergraduate education class and the students that I will teach. These college students wait anxiously to begin their transformation from student to teacher. I'm reminded of my days as a student on a similar college campus many years ago. I make my way into the main lobby and head up the stairs to my office on the second floor. I have two short hours before my two-hour ED 204 Developmental Reading class begins.

I connect my laptop and get ready to start my day. I notice the light glowing on my office phone and say to myself, "That voicemail is going to have to wait for later. I need to get ready for class." I print off a few sheets for a reflection activity that I will have the students complete. I head to the copy machine and, of course, the photocopy machine gets jammed. I remind myself that next semester I need to make my copies earlier. I do some final preparations and check my watch. I cannot believe class starts in just twenty minutes. I gather my copies and make sure I have the consent forms for my research project. Anxious to begin this class and start my research investigation, I head out of my office door and down the stairs to the main hallway. I head down the long corridor to my assigned classroom on the campus of Lakeshore Lutheran University. I cannot believe that this is my third year as an education professor.

As usual, I arrive early on this first day of class to make sure I have everything arranged correctly—including my heart, passion, and courage to take on my calling as a teacher. In my vocation as an education professor I must help students become teachers. An anxious sense of wonder and excitement is present inside me as I open the classroom door. I wonder if other teachers feel this way on the first day of class. This same sense of excitement and anxiousness has greeted me on the first day of class for almost two decades. I know that each year and each day in the classroom presents something wondrous. I recognize that this class and this

semester in particular hold something new as I will not only be the teacher in the classroom preparing future teachers, but I will also be a researcher.

As I open the door and enter into the classroom that is mine for the next fifteen weeks, I size up the learning environment that has been given to me. The furniture in the room is modern and up-to-date. The classroom has all the latest technical gadgets and devices. Yet it feels more like a lecture hall than a collaborative environment where people learn to become teachers. I notice the classroom even has a podium for a teacher to hide behind.

Creating a Space for a Community of Truth

As I observe the theater style format of my classroom, I am consciously made aware that there are so many things in teaching we cannot control. Yet part of teaching is the intentional act of creating conditions where learning will emerge. It is my intent as the teacher of this course to create an environment that will thrive on honesty and trust. I hope that this atmosphere will lend itself to engaging discussions and a means in which I can honor each student as they aspire to be called teacher. Perhaps this engaging environment will transcend the physical conditions of the room. In preparing for this semester and my research project, I was drawn into the ideas of Parker Palmer. Palmer (1998) nudges me to think about creating a space where the *community of truth* is practiced. To define what I mean by a community of truth, I share the inspirational writings of Parker Palmer.

According to Palmer (1998) the traditional classroom is built on a way of knowing, teaching, and learning that is dominated by a mythical model of truth called the objectivist model. In this model the truth flows in a linear fashion from the object (knowledge) to the expert (teacher) and finally to the amateur (student). Experts are people who are qualified to know or to teach and amateurs are people who are qualified only to receive the truth. The object is far beyond the reach of an amateur. The expert is in the center in this model, and the expert is who the amateur uses to get access to the truth. Therefore, “In this myth, truth is a set of propositions about objects; education is a system for delivering those propositions to students; and an educated person is one who can remember and repeat the experts' propositions” (p 101).

Palmer proposes another model called a community of truth. His model is subject-oriented instead of being oriented to the object. A subject is open for relationships, while an object is not. In this case, Palmer puts the subject (not the expert) in the center of the community. In contrast to the previous model, the flow is far from linear; it is circular and dynamic. In this class, Developmental Reading, the subject my students examine is two-fold. We are examining both the process of becoming a teacher and the specific concept of being a reading teacher.

Palmer (1990) encourages teachers to create the space where this community of truth can be practiced. He (1983) speaks of what this space means:

A learning space needs to be hospitable not to make learning painless but to make the painful things possible, things without which no learning can occur—things like exposing ignorance, testing tentative hypotheses, challenging false or partial information, and mutual criticism of thought. (p. 74)

Palmer does talk about paying attention to the physical arrangement of the room, but more importantly, he asks me to reconsider the ways in which we engage in discussions. He also asks me to consider the potential use of silence, not always filling precious minutes with my words. I have come to realize the varied learning and communication preferences of the diverse students in my class. I make use of small-group discussion, informal silent writing opportunities, whole-group events, and online dialogue. As I seek to practice a community of truth in my class, the activities I choose on the first day are crucial for creating this space in my classroom.

In this open space we will discuss the things we believe about teaching, learning, and reading. In this open space I hope to have the students talk about their assumptions about being a teacher. Rather than having a communication competition in which one side tries to out-debate the other, I hope that we can see the strengths in a variety of perspectives that are present in teaching. In this space the students and I will both challenge and support each other. A community of truth accepts the challenges of varying ideas but fosters a mode of inquiry that begins to see things from a different vantage point and through the eyes of others.

It is my hope that a community of truth will be practiced throughout all our teacher education courses and beyond. However, too often the vocation of a teacher is one of isolation. The students enter the room and the teacher closes the door. But for me, learning to become a teacher does not stop when my students complete their education degrees and their teaching licenses arrive in the mail. Good teachers recognize that they are always becoming, through the excavating process of self-reflection and honest dialogue. Creating space in my classroom for open, honest, and supportive discussion and reflection may help these pre-service teachers see that teachers need a community of truth in teacher education programs and in our elementary, middle, and high school buildings.

Where Do I Begin?

As I begin to lay out the course syllabus and other handouts on a table near the front of the room, the students begin to enter the classroom. I informally greet the students as they trickle in. They are eyeing me up and I am observing them. It seems to me that many of the students in my class of twenty-two are familiar with each other, as they choose seats next to one another and begin to talk. The Developmental Reading class I am about to start is one of the first education courses students take in our elementary education program. As the students enter, I think about how young each of them looks—which, of course, denotes how much older I am getting. As in the early formative years of any development process, this may be the most important time for students to examine who they are becoming as teachers. As these pre-service teachers embark on a journey to construct their teaching identity, they “modify and reconstruct their professional images of self as teacher” (Kagan, 1992, p. 129). Most of the students in this class are in their second year of college.

As the students enter the classroom, I wonder if their goals and expectations are the same as mine and those of the university. It is my hope that each time they walk out of my classroom door they will be a step closer to becoming a teacher. The course syllabus describes the university’s goal for the course in this way:

In becoming a teacher, particularly an elementary-level teacher, one assumes a responsibility toward effective reading instruction. This is a formidable task as it involves an acute understanding of the reading process itself, including both

decoding and comprehension. Moreover, one must differentiate and apply varied instructional approaches, curricular materials, standardized tests, and assessment tools. The end result of a successfully constructed program are readers who possess not only basic reading skills but also the ability to successfully read for multiple purposes, including in other curricular areas as well as for recreation.

The practicum component of this course enables students to put some of these fledgling skills into teaching practice. This program, conducted at St. Peter Immanuel Lutheran School, will afford Lakeshore students direct contact with students of varying abilities. By completing hours within this practicum, students may also satisfy the requirements of other clinical experiences. (ED 204 syllabus, August 2008, Appendix D)

My main goal is captured in the first phrase of the course syllabus: “In becoming a teacher.” What a short goal, yet what a complex undertaking. As the students enter I recognize that this becoming began long before they stepped foot onto this campus and into my classroom. This class is set to begin in a few minutes, and at this moment there is a disconnect between the teacher (me) and the students. To open the space for a community of truth I need to bridge connections. I believe, alongside Parker Palmer (1998), that good teachers possess a connectedness with the content and most importantly with their students. I ponder from where these students have drawn their courage to step onto the path that will lead them into the vocation of being a teacher. It is my job as the teacher to help construct the bridge that will connect our lives and calling. Our community of truth will be built through the discussions we have, the stories we share, the fears we talk about, and the laughter that eases the process. Each one of my twenty-two students has entered my classroom door with the hope of becoming a teacher. As I think about becoming a teacher, I realize my own becoming began long ago and continues at this moment. As I stand in front of the class I eye my students and think back to the journey that brought me to this moment and come to realize that this is what transformative learning is all about. Mezirow (1991) defines transformative learning as a process in which individuals uncover within themselves “distorted, inauthentic, or otherwise

invalid assumptions,” resulting in new or transformed ways of constructing meaning from experience (p. 6).

I Am a Teacher?

“I am a teacher,” I thought to myself almost two decades ago on a cool spring day in May of 1991. “I am a teacher.” I had no idea what that meant, nor did I know what I would need to do as a teacher in the classroom. I had been taught how to follow the template and write a lesson plan and even how to set up a classroom management system. I had graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education, a certificate that stated I was certified as a Lutheran teacher, and so it would seem I was fully prepared to be a teacher. However, I did not feel fully prepared. During my years in college, as I was learning to teach, I had never truly thought about what it meant to be a teacher, nor had I been given time to reflect on this process of becoming a teacher. I had not thought of it until now. That third leg of my teaching identity was not formed upon completion of my teaching degree. I had been taught the content and teaching techniques. This Lutheran teacher education program had also told me about the special divine nature of a call into the Lutheran teaching ministry. But I had not yet wrestled with the deep spiritual questions of becoming a teacher (Palmer, 1998).

Yet I am now standing in front of my own students who are becoming. I know that I need to teach them about teaching reading, the varying philosophies, and the best practice instructional methods. However, and I feel most importantly, throughout this course I will continue asking them to think about their becoming. I wonder what path they followed that has led them to make the conscious choice to become a teacher. Each one of the students that entered my classroom today has a unique story of their own. They each have memories, experiences, mentors, and hopes and dreams that have nudged them forward on this journey of becoming a teacher. I hope to give them the space to share, grow, and learn from their experiences on the pathway to becoming a teacher.

There are experiences in each person’s life, both positive and negative, that are forever etched in memory and affect our becoming. It might be a global event like the JFK assassination, the explosion of the Challenger space shuttle, or 9/11.

Then there are other moments that are not heard around the world and barely cause a ripple. Yet these small experiences affect our becoming. One such moment for me was a very personal and life-changing day that has caused a ripple in my life and hopefully in the lives of my students. It was that spiritual moment on Call Day on the small, remote campus of a tiny Lutheran college in New Ulm, Minnesota that is etched in my mind forever. Outside it was a beautiful spring day. Inside the auditorium, emotions were mixed and anxiety was high. I had successfully passed my teacher education program and was certified as a Lutheran teacher. I was now waiting anxiously for my first teaching assignment. In this Lutheran church body, after graduating from the teacher training college, candidates received their first assignment or divine call. After a long list of teacher candidate assignments were read, I finally heard my name. “Steven Witt, Peace Lutheran School in Reedsburg, Wisconsin,” declared a booming voice at the podium. It was on that day that I thought I had finally become a teacher. I had in fact received a divine call to serve as a teacher in a Lutheran school. I had a job to teach students. I had a spiritual calling as a teacher. However, I have come to realize that becoming a teacher does not happen in just one moment with one proclamation. Becoming a teacher is filled with complexities and contradictions and is ongoing. But I also realize that being a teacher is a spiritual calling. This Lutheran church body had given me a divine call to be a teacher. I knew the Lutheran doctrines well. Much of Lutheran education stresses that we are all sinners worthy of eternal damnation, yet our Savior Jesus has freed us and given the gift of eternal life in Heaven. Yet all the rules and training in this Lutheran school seemed aimed at passive obedience and a focus on our own inadequacies. Nevertheless, as a Christian I also recognize that we have been given unique and diverse skills, talents, and perspectives. I recognize today that through my training to become a teacher many misconceptions and contradictions had been deposited into my teaching identity. Through this reflective writing I have been able to identify these contradictions and sift through them, through the process of writing and reading about my becoming.

In coming to better understand my identity I explored the spiritual side of my teaching identity. My spiritual life is connected to what I say and do in the classroom. At the private Lutheran university where I now teach, I am privileged to be able to share the spiritual side of my identity in my classroom. That is the very

reason I chose to become a private school teacher. It is this spiritual side of my identity that gives life, breath, hope, and fortitude to me, to what I say and what I do as a teacher. As I teach I cannot hide the spiritual side of my identity behind a podium.

The spiritual side of my identity is sustained by my Christian faith. In my eyes, the day after I graduated from college marks a miraculous moment in my life. After the graduation commencement service we had a graduation party. Most of my extended family members had made the three-hour trip to celebrate this occasion with us. At this time my wife and I had two children: Jacob, 5, and Rachel, 2. That graduation day we celebrated with food and the traditional Lutheran German beverages well into the night. The next morning my wife and I loaded up the car and headed out on our own three-hour journey back to our hometown for my brother-in-law's graduation celebration. It was about mid-morning and we were heading east on the interstate, nearing the end of our drive. The sun was shining through the front windshield and warming the vehicle. Martha and the kids were sound asleep. The last few miles of the trip included a rather steep descent down the side of a bluff that overlooks the Mississippi River. With the silence in the car, the previous late night weighing on my eyes, and the sun warming the vehicle, I drifted off to sleep. I was jolted awake by a bang on the side of the car. The car had drifted to the left side of the road—near the edge of the bluff—and hit a guardrail several times. From the back seat, Jacob, now awake, said, “What’s that bump, bump, bump?” My heart began to race as I steered the car to the right shoulder. Martha awoke and I explained to her what had happened. With my heart still pounding, I drove to the next exit and pulled off the road and got out of the car to see the damage. There were several small dents along the driver's side of the vehicle. I recall thinking about the miraculous hand of God that had just saved me and my family. I remember thinking that God must have awesome plans in store for us, since he used a simple guard rail to protect me and my family.

The Christian faith is built on miracles. Christian theology has typically understood the self as a being created by God for His companionship. This miraculous creation took place by the declaration of His word. The created self was connected deeply to God. The creation was declared good by God. However, the

Christian faith believes that the cloud of sin entered the world and caused the relationship to become disconnected. The cloud of sin darkens our perception of reality. When I read the life-saving story told in the Bible I find a peace that surpasses all understanding. The Scriptures talk about a cycle of renewal, rebirth, and restoration that occurs each day. It is this miraculous process that has guided me in the process of becoming a teacher.

What you are reading, then, is my legacy on becoming a teacher on the inside and on the outside. It is a story about me and who I am at this moment, about what I believe and what I value as a teacher and as a person, because the two are the same. This narrative is filled with lived moments and experiences that show who I was, who I am, and how I have changed and how I have begun to unearth those deposited truths. Within my story and with the words of my own students I hope to share my teaching identity with you. Sfard and Prusak (2005) suggest that our identities can be known by the stories told by individuals. In this story you will see the complexities and contradictions in my life as a teacher inside and outside of the classroom. I do want you to know that as I write these words I am frightened. Almost as frightened as I was when I stood before my students in front of the classroom on the first day of school. Now I stand before you as a frightened teacher and researcher. Guba and Lincoln (2003) describe the subjectivity of a researcher as reflexivity.

Reflexivity...demands that we interrogate each of our selves regarding the ways in which research efforts are shaped and staged around the binaries, contradictions, and paradoxes that form our own lives. We must question our selves, too, regarding how those binaries and paradoxes shape not only the identities called forth in the field and later in the discovery process of writing, but also our interactions with respondents, in who we become to them in the process of *becoming* to ourselves. (p. 283)

It is frightful to question yourself. It is frightening to question your beliefs. It is terrifying to question the administration. It is difficult to let the inner being connect with the outer. In order for me to connect the two as a teacher, I believe I need to name the structures that are around me and that have framed me. I must also name

the obstacles that constrain me, and yet recognize those that have guided and kept me from falling off the side of a cliff.

As I began to explore my past and see how my own teaching identity has been shaped, I realized that as a teacher I have been most influenced and guided by my mother, my years and experiences as a student, my past teachers, and now my own students. In this research investigation I set out to understand how my students become teachers and develop their teaching identity. I now realize that I am coming to understand myself and my beliefs about teaching and who I am. Palmer (2000) believes this awakening to be part of living and claiming the “authentic selfhood,” living as who we truly are rather than as how others may see us or want us to be. The process of reflexivity deliberately makes use of reflection as a means to increase self-knowledge and has helped me to make better sense of my lived moments and experiences and the social interactions that have influenced me and shaped me to be who I am. This process has transformed how I think, act, and live.

Opposed to a Lot of Teachers on Campus

Fast forward in time to the end of the 2008 fall semester. The Christmas break has ended, the trees are barren, and snow now covers the ground. I had arranged another interview with my student Hannah. Hannah had been one of the most engaging students in my class. She is the student that is coming to the teaching profession from a life of being home-schooled. As the semester ends I am conducting my last few interviews with my students, and as a researcher I believe that through my reflective writing and listening to the voices of my students I have begun to unearth my own teaching identity. Identity is our understanding of who we are and of who we think other people are. Hannah’s words during class and in my interviews seem to have resonated most closely with me and my identity. But I wonder if my view of myself matches how my students perceive me. So I ask Hannah during this interview, “How would you, as a future teacher, explain my teaching identity?”

Hannah: I think that, opposed to a lot of teachers on campus, it was very different, “Not only do I want to know who these teachers are, but I want to challenge them to the next level. I want to make sure that Hannah has gone from this point in her learning, point A to point B. I want to get her at least to

this level.” But I think that not only getting the students in 204 from A to B, you continually strived to get them past that point, to their highest potential. Also realizing that Rachel’s potential of getting from A to B may be different than Hannah’s, and grading them appropriately. Knowing the personalities and being able to apply, “Hey, I need to get them from point A to point B, but I need to know you before I can do this.” And so, I think that there are obviously the essentials of teaching what a phoneme is and definitions, but also going over the important part which you saw: getting the kids from having to know definitions to knowing about them. How did they learn to read? Seeing their potential and saying, “I’m going to bring you to this level.” And so, as a class, that may mean getting everyone to point B, but I don’t think it was in this case. I think it was taking each student further but that level varied.

And I think that you were very reflective which was also, in a sense, your teaching identity. And that played into it. It’s not at all something that you can say in one word. A teaching identity can be pages full. (2/05/09)

Throughout the semester I noticed how the pre-service teachers began to shift their perspectives from viewing their experiences as students to seeing them through the eyes of a teacher. Through their emerging teaching identity they begin to sense that there are similarities and differences in the notion of an identity. In Hannah’s narrative you notice that she defines my identity by first of all naming what I am not as a teacher. She says that, “Opposed to a lot of teachers on campus, it was very different.” Hannah then goes on to speak in first person as she names what my teaching identity is: “Not only do I want to know who these teachers are, but I want to challenge them to the next level.” Hannah uses specific examples from class to illustrate my teaching identity. In her dialogue I see her describing me as a teacher that tries to reach individual students where they are at, “Seeing their potential and saying, ‘I’m going to bring you to this level.’” I noticed throughout the semester that in interviews, Blackboard discussions, and journal reflections the students would often describe themselves as teachers by saying what they are not and name what they are. It is interesting that Hannah notes that part of my teaching identity is “very

reflective.” She ends this description of me by noting that it takes pages and pages to describe a teaching identity.

Come Sail Away – Metaphors That Define Us

So I have been filling the pages and reflecting on my identity and my becoming. I do aspire to see each student as unique. It is interesting to me that Hannah has set me apart from most other teachers on campus. Part of defining who we are or who others are is to draw upon similarities and differences. As I think about being different than other professors on campus, I wonder why. Everyone does have an innate desire to fit in. However, I do believe I am not like most other teachers. I have often felt like an other or an outsider because I do not ascribe to the traditional model of teacher. As I think about others on this campus and look up and down the faculty hallway I do not think I am as smart as other faculty members. I do not spend much of my class period lecturing. I like to discuss, talk, and share my experiences in the classroom. I love to listen to my students. Is this different than other teachers? I do have a passion for children and what our schools could become. As I continue to investigate my own becoming, I realize that I must be closely connected to my students, and that I cannot separate my own identity from my students.

To help me better understand what my pre-service teachers think about the teaching and learning I provided, I make use of reflective journal entries. I feel that these written reflections allow my students an opportunity to create a voice, an identity, a physical way to represent the inner experience of being a teacher. In these journal entries the students reference self as *I* and express the feelings, joys, doubts, fears, hopes, and dreams they have in becoming a teacher. This process allows the students to think about themselves and their experiences, analyze, criticize, evaluate, and become, because of the dialectical movement between the inner being and the external voice, writing, or representation. I offered this journal prompt about halfway through our course and practicum experiences: “I would like you to think about yourself as a teacher (the one you are becoming) and answer this question. ‘When I am teaching at my best, I am like a _____.’ Explain why...use your imagination...have fun...take a risk. :)” (10/25/08)

At one point, Amy described the strict structured environment her practicum teacher lived by. She felt there was “no breathing room in the classroom.” In contrast to this restrictive description of a teacher, in her journal response Amy likens herself as a teacher to that of a gold medal figure skater.

Amy: When I am teaching at my best, I am like a gold medal figure skater.

As a child if I could have been anything in the world it would have been a teacher or a figure skater. That is why I think that when I am teaching at my best I am fulfilling my dream of becoming a figure skater. A figure skater takes a lot of training and practice. You have to learn the steps and work on the jumps. To be a figure skater means to spend many hours of the day on the ice and thus you must love what you are doing and be highly driven and motivated to reach the goals of being a gold medal figure skater. The same is true for people who dream of being a teacher. It is very important that a teacher learn the methods and steps that it will take to make “jumps” with the students and awe them and inspire them to learn. Just like figure skating it is essential that if you are to strive to be the best teacher possible then you must dedicate hours of your time to become better and to accomplish all that you want to and what you want your students too. When an ice skater is doing their absolute best they nail all the correct steps but also adding new difficulties to surpass their opponents and win. *In teaching there are many steps to learn and steps that must be followed but to be the best teacher a teacher must step out of their comfort zone, add their own identity to these steps or methods, and change them to fit what the students need.* When I am teaching at my best I want to be doing everything that I have been taught to do but also that I am adding my personal effect and personal touch to every lesson or program that I give to my students. I want them to see the passion that I have for what I do and know that I am where I want to be and that I am dedicated to helping them. The best gold medal for me as a future teacher will be to see each student meet their personal goals and for information and methods to click with them and those will be my personal victories as well.
(11/06/08)

This journal entry was posted by Amy about halfway through the fifteen-week course. This metaphor illustrates the kind of teacher Amy aspires to become. She links the process that a figure skater goes through to that of being a teacher. Teachers, like figure skaters, continue to learn steps along the way to becoming a teacher. Yet Amy says teachers “add their own identity” so that the profession becomes their own. She also recognizes that the methods a teacher uses need to change to “fit what the students need.” Amy links her identity to being a gold medal skater. Her gold medal will be based on the success of her students. After reading this entry I have often thought about how I need to learn to step out of my comfort zone as a teacher and learn new ways to teach and new ways to see the world. In this way Amy’s metaphor has become my own. Throughout the entire semester I could sense Amy’s emerging teaching identity being transformed through the process of critical reflection.

In Amy’s voice you hear a reflective and passionate teacher. During class discussions Amy was never afraid to ask a reflective question or offer a word of advice. Amy often spoke about the use of reflection in transforming what we do as teachers: “Through reflection about my past experiences with reading in school I have seen what is successful and what students need in a reading classroom” (11/25/08). This quotation is taken from Amy’s autobiographical history and illustrates a connection between critical reflection and practice.

As I reflect on Amy’s metaphor and voice it seems that her description is now connected to my life as a teacher. Bullough and Gitlin (1995) suggest that another methodology for exploring the self is the practice of generating and analyzing personal teaching metaphors. Metaphors become another form of voice. Metaphors are used to represent what we think and believe about teaching, and the form we use has an impact on how we think and what we think. Later in the semester, during a one-on-one interview, Amy and I were discussing how students’ needs are different and what a gold medal teacher would look like.

Prof. Witt: How do you think that will impact you as a teacher?

Amy: Just to remember that all the students are different and to start thinking more about individualizing lesson plans to modify for students who are either struggling or excelling in an area.

Prof. Witt: If you could have the ideal scenario in a couple more years of becoming a teacher, if you think ahead to teaching and having your own classroom and teaching reading, what would the ideal situation be for you?

Amy: To have a classroom that had a really cool reading corner with lots of books and a really comfortable, relaxing place for students to go and want to read and be around all of these cool books. I love the idea of literature circles, and talking as a group and discussion because I think students get so many more ideas for each other sometimes than they do from the teacher. Students starting and knowing the rules of English, but also being exposed to a vast amount of literature and genres and especially non-fiction and just getting everything so that they can be exposed to all of that.

Prof Witt: So, if we peek into your classroom on a random day during reading, what would be happening? What would you be doing and what would the students be doing?

Amy: I really like the one-on-one conference with students. I like the idea of doing these during one-on-one silent reading in order to see what they are reading and what they think of what they are reading and to check and make sure that they are reading at the right level. So, definitely the one-on-one conferences during silent reading. And then also doing literature circles with projects going on about the books and activities with students working together to make connections to the real world with the books. (11/03/08)

This dialogue gives a view into Amy's teaching identity as she talks about the environment and her teaching beliefs and practices. Amy recognizes the importance of a comfortable and print-rich environment with a "vast amount of literature" and a classroom filled with "cool books." In this conversation you sense Amy's beliefs coming out about her practice in being an individualized teacher as she states that children are different. To meet these differences she talks about designing a classroom, curriculum, and methods that are built on students' interests and needs, for both those who are struggling and those who are excelling. In this way Amy is drawing on Ayers's (2003) "argument that teaching is a moral act" (p. 32) in that

they base their teaching decisions on what is morally needed for the student. In this case, Amy has made the moral decision that individualized teaching is a way to break away from the deficit-driven model of learning, which is based on trying to correct a student's deficits rather than building on her strengths. Amy hopes to do this by conferencing individually with students to help her understand the student's strengths. She sees the power of allowing students to teach each other. In this narrative Amy is describing her metaphor in detail, as she declares that to "be the best teacher a teacher must step out of their comfort zone, add their own identity to these steps or methods, and change them to fit what the students need."

To illustrate how Amy breaks further away from the traditional deficit model of instruction we look into Amy's reflective journal as she talks like a detective searching for clues (Ayers, 2003).

Amy: The third grader that I worked with this morning is a very strong reader. She does not struggle over pronunciations, skip over words, and reads fluently. I do think that some of her struggle comes in the writing aspect of her class. I am not sure that she understands prefixes or suffixes or how they fit with words. She struggles with understanding how to change words to add suffixes like today we had to identify the base word and the ending and she struggled to identify what the base word was and how it was spelled. She is special because she has such enthusiasm for reading and tries her hardest to get the write [*sic*] answer. She is active in the lesson and does ask questions when she is unsure. I think that these unique gifts she has will make her a joy to teach and she will present a struggle in that she does not have issues with reading and so instead I need to focus my impact on her writing and a better understanding of words and word parts.

The first grader, Christian, that I am also privileged to work with is also a very good reader. The weakness that I have identified so far is that he seems shy and a little uncomfortable around me still. Once the lesson is under way he relaxes but if I ask questions he hesitates and is unsure of his answers even though they are usually write [*sic*]. He is a very smart child and I think that it will be a struggle for both of us to become comfortable with each other and learn how to

work together and build a good relationship for the reading sessions we are going to have. I also think that it will be a struggle to convince him to speak with confidence and pronounce his words so that others can understand him. I think that the more we interact and the more opportunities I have to make things relate to what he loves and to allow him to somewhat take the lead then our time together will be well spent. (9/16/08)

Notice how Amy focuses on the positive aspects, the strengths, of her students and recognizes their unique gifts as strong readers, and smart, and even describes her third grade student this way: “She is special because she has such enthusiasm.” Amy has used the power of observation, reflection, and interpretation to draw out clues that will shape her instruction. Rather than jumping in and trying to rescue her first grade student from making mistakes she hopes to “allow him to somewhat take the lead.” The strongest source of knowledge we gain as teachers comes from the students we teach. This thought helps me to recognize that our teacher education program should help to develop the power of observation by offering a multitude of opportunities to interact with children, reflect, and teach them by allowing them to lead the way with their strengths and interests.

Hannah, another of my focal participants, used a metaphor of sailing in her reflective journal to describe her perspective on teaching. I thought this metaphor was an interesting window into how Hannah viewed her teaching identity. Below is a rather long portion of the conversation I had with Hannah. After having read her journal entry I wanted to dig deeper into this unique teaching metaphor. Listen in as Hannah describes the teacher she is becoming:

Prof. Witt: Let’s see... what I mentioned to you about your metaphor, which you maybe don’t remember writing...

Hannah: I was talking to my dad about that. I was like, “So Dad, I used a sailboat metaphor, and I went into Prof. Witt’s office and he gave me a compliment, and I can’t really remember exactly what it said.”

Prof. Witt: It talked about sailing and teaching. I think that metaphors are powerful for us in teaching.

Hannah: I use them so often; I get it from my dad.

Prof. Witt: Really? That's interesting. It typifies of how we act, if we're going to be a coach or a teacher. So, as you look at that (I show Hannah her reflective journal entry), do you remember your thoughts behind it?

Hannah: I grew up sailing; my dad loved sailing. And so, I had a lot of experience with jumping out. And my dad would often...we'd bring a lot of "newbies" on the boat. And so, they'd be sitting there and, in a sense, be enjoying the repercussions of sailing, but not know what they were doing. And so, my dad would take the liberty of...for anyone to come onto the boat...at least he'd have them steer, or at least he'd have them hold that rudder this many degrees going this direction. But, that understanding of, you can't just jump on a boat and get the repercussions of sailing without having the knowledge of how to steer, or how to put the sails up. Somebody on the shore can go, "Oh, that looks like a lot of fun. That looks like something I'd like to do." But you can't just jump on a boat and know how to get somewhere. You can't just jump on a boat and know what to do. You can't expect that you're going to enjoy that. It's going to take tough learning. You're going to hit ground a couple times. But, when you know what you're doing, and when you have the people alongside of you that are going to help you know what to do and get there, whether that be professors or whether that be people in your life who have shown you things...In a sense, there is that learning period. There is that person alongside of you that you need to have in order to successfully go through life.

Prof. Witt: I think that goes with both when you are a student, learning to be a teacher, and when you are a teacher. Because when you are a teacher, out sailing, there will be no wind, and the kids won't be excited, and kids will give up.

Hannah: Yes, and in a sense, I don't know if I noted this, but there will always be those dead days. Bruce, who owns a big boat simultaneous to my Dad goes, "Hannah, is it a good day for sailing today?" "Well, I don't know, there's not a whole lot of wind out, Bruce. I don't think I'd go sailing today. It doesn't sound like a whole lot of fun. You'd just be sitting out there." And he goes, "No, Hannah. Every day is a good day for sailing." And that comes back the answer every time you ask Bruce. And so, realizing that even though you may not be going so many miles an hour and being able to, in a sense, truly

have a passion for sailing, every day is a good day for sailing. Whether we make it one mile or seven. Every day is a good day for sailing. Every day is a good day for teaching. (2/05/09)

This lengthy conversation narrative is really about Hannah's emerging teaching identity and how she describes this identity formation process: "It's going to take tough learning." Hannah brings her prior knowledge and connection to sailing and ties it to her life as a teacher. Hannah makes a connection to a mentor: "I get it from my dad." She caught the passion and love he had for the sport of sailing and explains how she grew in the process of becoming a sailor. Hannah is connecting this process of development to the process of becoming a teacher: "When you know what you're doing, and when you have the people alongside of you that are going to help you know what to do and get there, whether that be professors or whether that be people in your life who have shown you things." Connecting sailing to teaching and the similar processes involved has allowed Hannah to define herself through this narrative as a teacher with a positive and optimistic outlook. It is my hope for Hannah that when she finds herself faced with those days in teaching when the wind is not blowing, she will remember her passion and her own words, "Every day is a good day for teaching."

In her journal entry this sailing metaphor is put into practice as Hannah describes the students she is working with during the practicum. Notice how Hannah is adjusting her teaching practice to the student she is with, just as a sailor adjusts to the ever-changing winds of the ocean.

Hannah: I'm working with two individuals at Saint Peter's Immanuel School that both have very unique things about them opposed to many of the other students. In my case, these differences pose different positive and negative aspects for the next couple weeks.

Tanabe, a little boy that is only 4, is very reserved and set apart. He seemed to take every possible chance he got to look in another direction, proving to be a very distracted little boy. I believe that not only will I learn how to be patient, but I will also learn how to overcome this stepping stone and shift it into a sort

of building block for the future students that will be in the same situation. Tanabe is very sweet and I believe that with a little bit of time, love, and some engaging activities that show effort on his behalf, Tanabe will be much more receptive to my teaching. (9/17/08)

Hannah observes Tanabe as a unique child with his own needs. She also describes how Tanabe, this young four-year-old, is helping her learn the characteristics of being a teacher—being patient, overcoming obstacles, and making use of engaging activities to reach out to her student. Just as the wind guides the sailors, so Tanabe is guiding Hannah’s development and understanding of what it means to be a teacher.

Next, in Susan’s journal response on creating a metaphor for her teaching identity she draws on the sun to clearly outline her teaching philosophy and identity. In her journal response she describes who she is as a teacher and what she will do as a teacher. As Susan says in her metaphor, she is full of power and might.

Susan: When I am teaching at my best, I am like the sun. I say this for a couple of reasons. I feel like when I am teaching and the children understand I shine. I am so proud of not only myself for being able to teach them, but also the students. It really makes a person feel good when they accomplished something, and teaching does that for me. When the sun is shining, it allows people to come outside and have fun. When I am teaching at my best, I allow children to be able to come out of their shell and have fun. Also, when the sun is shining it can warm people up. I like the sun can warm children up to the idea of learning. I hope that I can continue to shine like the sun and help my students shine as well. I choose the sun, because of its power and might. This is something that people see every day. It is necessary for our existence to have the sun; teaching is something that we need in life to help us survive. I want to be something that my students will enjoy having me as their teacher. That is why I choose the sun. (10/22/08)

Susan is using her metaphor to imagine her life as a teacher by associating herself with the sun and its benefits. Susan first focuses inwardly on being proud of herself and also of the students she is teaching. Susan hopes to draw students “out of their shell” and feel the warmth of her teaching. Susan also chose to use the words “power and might” to describe her teaching identity. In adopting a teaching identity Susan is acknowledge the power and positive influence she can have in the lives of children. Susan’s journal entry illustrates her metaphor and the influence she has as a teacher as she describes her experience of being a teaching in the practicum setting.

Susan: There is one child in particular that stood out to me. I’m sure that she is an exceptional child, but she has a lot of academic problems. I don’t know if it’s because she is only four, but I hate using that as an excuse. Yes, she is only four, but some of these things make me wonder if she gets help at home, or if the home life affects her. She has a hard time focuses [*sic*] on tasks and even being able to sit still for more than a couple of minutes. Today, she picked out a bible story and didn’t listen to a word of the story. She also has problems understanding stories, she looks to the pictures and when asked questions, she just pointed to pictures. I’m not sure if she is just not listening or what. Also, when writing her name she knew all the letters of her name, but when it came time to write it she couldn’t. She had such a hard time following directions and listening to directions.

I do have to say that later when I wrote her name lightly and she traced over it, she was able to form the letters properly. She was very friendly and open to meeting me. So, I would say that socially she was fine, I just have some concerns about her academics. This student with some special attention I feel can flourish.

I feel like this student stood out to me because she has so many difficulties. I feel like those challenges is what makes her so special and makes me want to work extra-hard to help her. I want her to improve and not be another child who gets lost in the system. I feel that all children if given the help that they need can be intelligent and be good students. I think it also makes me wonder about her home life and how valuable her time at school is. If she is not

getting the help she needs at home, then she needs this “special” attention. The little time that I am helping her now, may be something that she takes with her throughout her schooling.

I feel that this student is really going to help with my identity as a teacher. I don't want to feel like a failure with her and if at the end I don't then I know that I have done something to help her. The little successes in life are sometimes the most important and can have the most impact in someone's life. I feel like if I am able to help her that maybe I will be able to help other children. This experience may calm some of my fears, like if I will be patient enough. I hope that my resourcefulness will help her and be a strength I have as a teacher. As a teacher, I want [sic] be seen as someone that can work with even the most difficult students. I want to be a strong, confident teacher that is connected to her students. I feel that as a teacher I need to have that connection to my students, but also the subjects that they need to learn. If I don't like it or if I don't feel connected then my students will lose interest.
(9/16/08)

In her writing and in our face-to-face interviews Susan often talks about the “little successes in life” for both herself as a teacher and in the lives of her students. This view of noticing and celebrating successes might help Susan sustain her identity as a teacher during the failures. You can see how Susan is using her experiences and reflection as part of a meaning-making process through which she is constructing her teaching identity and connecting her identity to her hopes and dreams as a teacher. Susan is attributing her success as a teacher to having a successful impact on her students. Susan speaks strongly about the teacher she wants to become: “I hope,” “I want to be seen,” “I want to be strong, confident” and “I feel that as a teacher...” As Susan makes strong use of the *I* language she is identifying the teacher she wants to be as she constructs her teaching identity.

The metaphors seem to give the pre-service teachers a framework in which they position and see themselves. In this way I can gain a window into how my students view themselves and then notice if my interpretations of their identity agree with their view. In this way I gain a multi-perspectival approach (Taylor & Wallace,

2007) to understanding my students teaching identities. These metaphors might in fact guide and direct their teaching actions. The use of metaphor can be understood as a process of identity formation and thus provides a powerful way to understand ourselves and the craft of teaching. The process of connecting our teaching lives to a metaphor can help us give a *teacher voice* to pre-service teachers as they articulate what they believe about teaching, and what they will do as teachers: “I allow children to be able to come out of their shell and have fun.” This process provokes us to publicly share and present ourselves: “This is something that people see every day.” Making ourselves public as we become a teacher is part of the identity making process: “I want to be something that my students will enjoy.” So, Susan’s inner feelings of warmth are shared through her use of the sun in being a teacher.

Through reading and writing about these metaphors I was able to become a detective and get to know my students better. Using the clues I have illustrated above, I find that I need to change my instruction to better connect theory and practice (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). I need to focus more on the practicum experience and let my “students lead the way” in becoming the teacher that they want to be.

The reflective metaphors also help me to see myself in what my students write as I construct my own teaching metaphor. I see myself as a coach guiding the players on the field. Early in the semester I found myself trying to be the star player on the field rather than the coach on the side. As star player I found myself leading the discussion during classroom experiences. I always seemed to want to guide the discussion towards what I felt was important. After reading these metaphor entries my perspective on the possibilities in my own teaching has been expanded. The words and thoughts of my students are woven into my metaphor of being a coach. Like a coach I find that by physically positioning myself on the sideline, or somewhere other than the front of the classroom, more students are willing to jump into class discussion and talk about their experiences and beliefs.

As I look back on the events of the semester and go through the process of examining my writings and revising my story, it seems that this narrative has become a metaphor for who I am professionally and personally. The process of writing,

revising, examining my own past, and listening to my students transformed who I am as a teacher and what I do in the classroom. This story has allowed me the opportunity to recognize that when I am at my best as a teacher I break free from what others expect of me, skate freely, and hoist the sail in my life and be the teacher that only I can be. The process of reading and rereading the metaphors my students wrote has given me new a perspective with which to view the art of teaching. I have taken the multitude of perspectives my students offered me and utilized these in my classroom and in the writing of this story. It is interesting to note that I am borrowing Amy and Hannah's metaphors and giving them a voice in my own life story and in my identity as a teacher.

Teacher education programs offer course work, practicum opportunities, and student teaching experiences to help students become teachers. These are ways for students to engage in identity construction. These forums allow the student to go public as a teacher. There is value in allowing students to see the process of identity formation happening through their experiences. Susan identified the practicum experience as a construction event: "I feel that this student is really going to help with my identity as a teacher." Often success is determined by evaluating the lesson plan that is constructed, observing the teaching strategies that are used, and by testing content knowledge rather than acknowledging the formation of a teaching identity. Recognizing the importance of teaching identity is often ignored in our teacher education programs. It seems to me that, by intentionally evoking and using the term *teaching identity*, I am asking my pre-service teachers to dig deeper and think about who they are. Having them think and talk about their assumptions, pushing them to recognize their fears and doubts, and letting them share their dreams and goals have facilitated the identity-making process. The following excerpts are from face-to-face conversations I had with my three focal students. I asked each of them, "What does a teaching identity mean?" Each of my three focal participants brings a unique perspective to the term *teaching identity*.

Amy: What your goals and aspirations are for your classroom and yourself as a teacher. What you want to focus on. Where you can see yourself in five, ten, twenty years. What you hold as important in the classroom and what your

expectations of children are and how you're going to meet those expectations.
(10/8/09)

Amy connects the idea a teaching identity to what they will do later on and how people see you. Amy states that a teaching identity encompasses our "goals and aspirations" and what we "hold as important." In this way she is drawing on the reason she has chosen to become a teacher—in order to make a difference in the lives of children. Amy is developing her image of herself as a teacher and is in turn beginning to generate her own theories of what it means to be a teacher, by interpreting what a teaching identity is and connecting her teaching identity to her values and expectations for children.

Hannah views the perspective of being a teacher from the eyes of her students. Just as she views her teachers as being effective or not, she realizes her teaching identity will be understood by her students.

Hannah: It's the personalized teaching. What people see you as. In a sense, five years down the road, if I'm teaching in a third grade classroom, the kind of teacher they'll see me as. The teaching identity they saw you having. It's something that the teacher may know themselves, but a teacher may not know their teaching identity because they don't want to or maybe because they're a bad teacher. And that's the identity that that third grader may see down the road. "They didn't teach me anything; they didn't ever care about what I was learning." And I think the teacher may think they have a teaching identity which may conflict with what the kid sees as their teaching identity. So I think it's what you're seen as even after you've left that classroom. (2/05/09)

Hannah notices that a bad teacher doesn't "care about what I was learning." Hannah is authoring her teaching identity by paying attention to how the students read us as teachers even after "you've left that classroom." It seems Hannah is connecting our teaching identity to the legacy we leave behind through what we do as a teacher. It seems to me that my students are shaping their teaching identity by thinking about who they want to be as a teacher in the future and the kind of teacher

they do not want to become. In a written reflection, Hannah expands the notion of being more than a teacher:

Hannah: Not only do I want to be my students' teacher, I want to be the adult that children look to for guidance, the parental figure that they may not have present in their own household, the kind words that they so desperately cling to in times of difficulty, and *my dream is to be the teacher they say "made a difference."* One of my future goals as a teacher is to have a student come to me years down the road, after they have made something out of their life, and *tell me that I made an impact on their life.* (9/10/08)

Again Hannah sees the importance of being a teacher that has a relational effect on her students beyond the time spent in the classroom. Hannah wants to "make a difference" as a teacher. Is that not why we all become teachers? Hannah views her life as teacher having an impact and being an agent of change. She recognizes the value of having her students understand years down the road the impact she has had on their lives. This aspect helps me to understand that Hannah values highly the relationships she will have with her students. "Teachers and students need to be there to support each other and act as a living community."

In her response, Susan reiterates what Amy and Hannah said about positively influencing children. But Susan also recognizes that she is in the process of transforming her identity from a student to a teacher.

Susan: I just think it is who you are going to be as a teacher. Like what are you going to do? Are you going to influence kids are you not or is it just going to be that job that you're talking about. I want my identity to be: I am this guide for these kids and help them mature and grow. That's what I think of when I hear teaching identity.

Right now my identity is a student becoming a teacher. I don't think of myself as a teacher right now. Maybe later on...as I get through this process a little more I think of myself more as a teacher. But right now I am a student becoming a teacher. (11/4/08)

Susan defines a teaching identity and names what she wants her identity to be “I am this guide.” However, Susan recognizes that becoming a teacher is a transformative process one goes through and says that “I am a student becoming a teacher.” I believe this process perspective that Susan has adopted in becoming a teacher has helped to sustain her during her struggles.

As illustrated in the above dialogue, from face-to-face interviews and written journal entries throughout the semester, for these students the concept of identity has a multitude of dimensions, one aspect having to do with “goals and aspirations” and where “you can see yourself in five, ten, twenty years.” Another dimension of teaching identity is expectations and influence you have on children. Another dimension is the perceptions others have of us as teachers: “What people see you as.” A fourth dimension is naming the conflict that arises as we identify good and bad teachers. These varying dimensions of identity are discussed again and again throughout the semester by the pre-service teachers.

Susan states her definition of a teaching identity as being connected to the high calling of being a teacher: “Are you going to influence kids or are you not or is it just going to be that job that you’re talking about.” My goal through this story is to share my teaching identity with you. To me, teaching is more than a job. It is a spiritual calling to have an everlasting impact.

As a reading teacher, I love to read stories, and I love to tell stories. Carter and Doyle (1996) found that “biography, narrative and life history [are] at the centre of teaching practice, the study of teachers, and the teacher education process” (p. 120). Teachers tell and hear stories in hallways and staff-rooms. Teachers intuitively weave stories in and out of their daily teaching lives. However, few realize that each time they tell a story they are re-viewing, reflecting, and making sense and meaning out of the experience. Also, those who hear the stories are able to expand their understanding of teaching and themselves as they identify and make connections with the story being told. But a story and a process both need to start somewhere. As you read, it is my hope that you might engage in “pedagogical thoughtfulness” (Van Manen, 1990) and think about yourself as a teacher.

I Have All the Answers?

Back to the first day.

This research project, which is my story, has evolved throughout my life as I continue to be transformed and renewed in my understanding of who I am becoming as a teacher. How do I teach? Why do I teach the way I do? These questions continue to cause tension and turmoil in my life. These are the questions I want my pre-service students to wrestle with.

My attention is brought back to the moment as Dr. Michael Uden, dean of the School of Education, enters my classroom. Dr. Uden is going to present my research project to the students in my Developmental Reading course. Lakeshore's ethics committee advised me that an outside person should present the action research project to my students so that these pre-service teachers might view their participation more objectively.

As the clock on the wall strikes 10:10 a.m., I formally greet the class and introduce Dr. Uden. He presents my research project and asks for questions or clarification. One student asks if they might be able to use their participation in the study as a learning artifact for their teaching portfolio. Dr. Uden says that would be great. He then asks those who are interested to sign the consent forms that have been handed out and return them within the week.

Dr. Uden wishes us well and leaves. This class is in a theater-style room. Therefore, all the eyes of the students are looking at me. However, my Developmental Reading class is not all about me and neither is this story. Throughout this story you see my experiences weave in and out of the stories of others. An important piece of my research is the stories of my students. When these pre-service teachers were settling into their seats they were telling each other stories. But as if on cue the class is ready to begin and the students become silent. As I stand before my students, their eyes trained on me, I recognize that they have spent years as students sitting passively behind their desks and listening for the correct answer to be revealed from the teacher.

As students and teachers we often wait for the correct answer to be told. We fear mistakes; therefore, the system we are part of suppresses our creativity. We too sit passively as we are told what to do, like my student Katie, who told me about how she felt as a high school student “being herded along like cattle from one class to the next with little time to think.” Why do we do this to our students and perpetuate this process? I am so saddened when I hear about curricula that are scripted and mandated tests that allow no time for teachers or students to think or engage in authentic learning activities. As a teacher I have often felt like Katie being told what to teach and how to teach. Maybe I can make a change and have an impact.

My attention is again brought back to the present in my classroom and I see my students sitting with notebooks open ready to write down all of my words. I ask them to put their pencils down and listen and reflect as I recite a favorite poem of mine. As they listen, I ask them to think about the road they have chosen that has brought them to this moment.

“The Road Not Taken,” by Robert Frost (1915)

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth.*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same.*

*And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

I hold the silence as I think about creating space for a community of truth to emerge. This silence also allows the students the time to reflect upon the path they are on in becoming a teacher. My very first question to my pre-service teachers is loaded. I ask them who has the right answer on how to teach reading. One well-intentioned young lady sitting near the front points to me. Without intending to, I make an audible chuckle. I catch myself and realize that this is how most of the students in the class have been trained. The teacher in front of the classroom has all the answers. Yet that is the same way I was taught as a student. That was how I was taught to be a teacher. This training seems to have constrained and suppressed my own dynamic and creative perspective as a teacher. These thoughts push me to think about how I might teach differently these pre-service teachers sitting in my classroom.

When I was a student teacher I was given the model lesson template and told to follow the example. I never thought to ask why. I hope the students I am teaching do. I hope that the young lady in front might realize that there is not one right answer on how to teach.

A wish I have as you read this is that you might ask yourself why. I also hope that my story engages you to stand alongside of me and see what I have seen as we look backwards, inwards, and forward. Additionally, it is my hope that you find ways to connect my story to yours. “Make connections! That’s what good readers do,” is what I tell students in my undergraduate reading class. I hope that we can make connections as we weave together our experiences and understandings of those experiences, as we attempt to take on our calling as teachers. Together we can make change.

You might recall the story of how Dorothy and her gang in *The Wizard of Oz* joined together on their journey. As these characters and their stories intersected, they came together and followed the yellow brick road to self-knowledge and understanding. They came to realize that it was not what they had expected. My journey has not been what I had expected either. As I look back at my story and I reread my own words, I notice the highways and byways of my life and how they

have guided and shaped me in my identity transformation of becoming a teacher. On this journey I wish I had kept a travel guide in my pocket.

As I wrote my words I also listened closely to what I was saying. Winston Churchill once said, “It takes courage to stand up and speak but it takes even more courage to sit down and listen.” I invite you to speak your story and also ask you to sit back and listen to my story, and you just might make a connection along the way. Who knows? Our paths and stories just might intersect and we might help sustain each other as we transform who we are and what we do in our classrooms.

Today, I am a teacher of future teachers at a private Christian university. I am a teacher. In one sense, I am not very far from where I started out my professional teaching career on that Call Day in New Ulm, Minnesota. On the other hand, I am miles away from that moment based on who I am today and what I believe about teaching and being a teacher. As I teach this undergraduate class at Lakeshore Lutheran University, I am coming to understand that one of the most important aspects of becoming is not learning but unlearning. In order to unlearn many misconceptions that have shaped and formed me, I took a deep journey into my past and wrote my own autobiography and thought about how I gained my teaching identity. As my student, Amy, said above, we need to “step out of our comfort zone and gain our own teaching identity” and be who we really are.

Clearing Away the Dust from the Mirror

A reflective look at my journey.

I was not always a teacher. Yet the culture around me, the experiences I have had, and the choices I have made have shaped and formed me into the teacher I am today. I grew up in the Midwestern part of the United States. I was the fourth of five children. My parents belonged to a small, conservative, Lutheran synod. I was born January 16, 1967. Many moments are etched into our memory, like that Call Day when it was announced that I was a teacher. Some experiences in our lives have a great impact on us, yet we have no recollection of the moment. As a Christian, my sacred second birth is one of those moments. This story helps to bring forth my

spiritual identity. On a cold January evening just weeks after I was born, I was baptized and reborn into the Lutheran faith. Baptism is an important part of the Lutheran faith. It is a sacred moment. For me, this sacred moment occurred as an infant in haste in a hospital room; as I struggled to take each and every breath the doctors were concerned about my life. My parents phoned the minister of our Lutheran church, Pastor Fritz Miller. That night Pastor Miller performed an emergency baptism. The Lutheran faith believes that at the moment of baptism, through the water and Word, a person is given the gift of saving faith. So this moment that I do not remember is a critical moment in my becoming. I was transformed. My baptism is something I reflect upon for a daily transformation. I am a Christian. It is a part of my identity that I will not hide. I believe this spiritual aspect of my life is also part of my teaching identity. This faith has brought me a peace that surpasses all understanding.

As a youngster, going to church on Sunday was a routine part of our week. My parents both attended the same Lutheran grade school that I would later attend. These early childhood experiences shaped and formed my being and beliefs. My earliest recollection of school is the day that I spent in preschool. Yes, only a day. For some reason school terrified me and I would not return to preschool. At times today, as a teacher, school still terrifies me. My mother was a loving and caring woman whose passion and love for children continues to define me today even though she passed away almost nine years ago.

In order to get past that one day in preschool, my mother had to gently nudge me into the classroom the next year on that scary first day of kindergarten. I eventually did stay at school in that classroom as a scared kindergarten student. I recall that early during my elementary school years I was a struggling reader. My second grade teacher had a great concern about my lack of reading progress. She asked my mom to read to me, read with me, and to have me read to her. So from then on I have memories of reading books to my mom at any and every opportunity. I would read to her while she did the dishes. I read to her in the car and as we waited at the doctor's office, and my mom in return would read to me as she had opportunity. I believe that in this way my mom taught me to read. Or maybe I simply caught reading from her. There may not be one right answer in how to teach reading, but I

do recognize that my mom was the most influential teacher in my life. There is nothing more influential in a child's life than having someone care for you with all their heart and soul. To me it seems that this is how teachers should teach. I believe my struggles as an early reader profoundly influenced my path and journey in becoming a teacher and eventually a reading specialist and the director of a graduate reading program.

It is interesting to connect my emotion-filled learning episode as a struggling young reader to a recent phone conversation that I had with a former professor from the University of Texas, Dr. Jim Guszak. Here is an example of how we might be impacted by someone who comes into our life story. I was attending graduate school at the University of Texas at the time. I had been in the teaching profession for over fifteen years. I have five children of my own. Dr. Guszak recently retired from the university after serving as a reading professor for over forty-five years. He created the oldest field-based reading specialist program in America. I connected with him during a summer graduate-level course that involved working in an elementary school summer reading program. Dr. Guszak also has a passion and heart for children. He knows that the best way to teach children reading is to have them read books. His passion and beliefs about reading and teaching continually weave in and out of my own life and teaching moments.

In my conversation with Dr. Guszak, I mentioned my frustration with the current drive in the United States to force the phonics approach and the scripted reading curriculum on students and teachers. He said, "You can't fight City Hall." He described how school districts are mandating a scripted approach to teaching reading and math that did not match with what he was teaching his pre-service teachers. Jim went on to say that this was one of the very reasons he decided to hang it up. He decided to retire. It seemed to me that after the many years he had helped students become teachers, he was now throwing in the towel. He commented that he has tremendous fear for our children today. He believes that the only students who are going to grow up to be life-long readers are those that have moms that read with their children (personal phone communication, 9/21/08). He also shared an episode from a teacher in California who during recess invited those students who wanted to stay in for extra reading to remain in her classroom. She would then pull down the

shades, put away the scripted reading curriculum and bring out books. And the children and teacher would sit on the floor and read, laugh, and cry. I, too, fear for our next generation.

I fear for my own children. This last Sunday I told my youngest daughter that I was going to sit down and do some writing. Hannah, a fourth grader, responded by saying, “I’m going to go read my book so that I don’t become a recess reader.” How sad. You might be wondering what a recess reader is. At Hannah’s school the students must attain a certain number of Accelerated Reading (AR) points for each quarter. If a student has not reached a certain number of points, the child must miss out on recess and read a book, thus becoming a recess reader. Many schools in America have adopted the AR software program to motivate children to read, and I believe to take the place of the teacher in teaching reading. The child must select a book from AR, and after reading the book the child must then pass a book test on the computer. I wonder if the teachers and administrators understand what they are doing to children’s desire to read, to read for fun, to read to live. Again, I ask, “Why?” It is my hope that we will take the mantle from Dr. Guszak and help future teachers unlearn the scripted curriculum. As a father of five children and a grandparent, I hope that my children will have teachers like Dr. Guszak.

My attention once again returns to my undergraduate reading class, and I realize that as my pre-service teachers look at me they are really seeing those who have inspired and impacted who I am and what I believe about teaching. I recognize that these students will draw strength from family and other mentors.

My students had no trouble in responding to my questions about becoming teachers. Some, like Amy, claim that they “always wanted to be a teacher.” Others, such as Hannah, who said, “I struggled a lot with what I was going to go to school for,” went through a struggle before entering the teacher education program. All of my students talked about positive mentors that influenced their choice. During one of my first face-to-face interviews with Hannah, she talked about the influence her mother had on her identity formation. Again, Hannah comes to the teaching vocation from being home-schooled most of her life. During our conversation we talked about what it was like to come from a home-school environment to a college campus.

Prof. Witt: Did you feel an awkwardness coming in as a home-schooler?

Hannah: I didn't.

Prof. Witt: Did you feel at all like you were ahead or behind in classes?

Hannah: I didn't know what to expect, exactly, with the classes. But I jumped in and I was really comfortable. I felt that I knew for sure what I needed to do. I did well on the ACT, and in a sense my mom had given me the confidence I need to know that not only did I have an education and not only did I know the things I needed to know but I also had a relationship with my family and parents that the more I was submerged into real life I realized how special the bond that I have with my parents is. (2/05/09)

In this description we see Hannah draw upon the influence her mother had on her life. As Hannah is claiming her identity as a teacher she realizes the force her parents have played in this construction process. Hannah also voices the fact that her home-school experiences had fully prepared her for college-level academics. As she realizes how well she has been prepared she recognizes the special bond she has with her parents.

Family member, mentors, and former teachers can have a profound influence on the choice we have made to become a teacher and also on how we perceive good teachers. My student Amy talked to me at length in a face-to-face interview about how her kindergarten teacher was her inspiration:

Prof. Witt: Why don't you give me some background of who you are, where you came from, and why you're here?

Amy: I'm from Wyoming, I have two younger brothers. I attended a Lutheran school through eighth grade and then went to a public high school. My dad is from [this state], which is what brought me [here] to go to school. I have family in the area, so I thought it would be easier for Thanksgiving and birthday to be in the area. I played organ and piano and am in the Alleluia Ringers here on campus. I also play tennis. I have always wanted to be a teacher; it's always what I've wanted to do.

Prof. Witt: Keep going on that topic. Can you think of example that you remember, "I want to be a teacher?"

Amy: I haven't had too many awful teachers, so it's been really positive for me. From my aunt, who is a teacher, I've always really looked up to her. I guess it's just what I've always wanted to do. I used to play school as a child, and I was the teacher.

Prof. Witt: If you think back to grade school, you said you went to a Lutheran grade school, can you think of a teacher or teachers who had a positive influence on you?

Amy: My kindergarten teacher was very supportive. I was really shy as a kindergartener and I didn't leave the teachers side, and she was very supportive in getting me into the classroom by also making sure that I didn't feel uncomfortable or out of place. She was really instrumental in making me want to become a teacher. She had that excitement in the classroom, and we did so many art projects and everything.

Prof. Witt: Wow. A lot of people can't remember that far back.

Amy: Yes, I definitely remember doing ground coffee bears from when we had a bear unit and worked with teddy bears, and it was just awesome.

Prof. Witt: So how do you think that positive teacher will affect you as a teacher?

Amy: Well, she also got really involved in our personal lives. She was also the head teacher at the Lutheran school that I went to, so she was always supportive, even as I got older, by coming to volleyball games and sports events that I was in. She helped me and was always there. Even after I got out of kindergarten, she was always a part of my learning experience and wanted to know what I was doing.

Prof. Witt: And so, how do you think that will affect you?

Amy: Well, as a teacher, that's what I want to do. I want to be part of my students' lives, not just having them in class, but as they continue on in education. (9/3/08)

In this narrative we see Amy state that she always knew that she wanted to be a teacher. She identifies the positive teachers that she has had, especially remembering her kindergarten teacher, and notes that she was instrumental in making her want to become a teacher. She goes on to give specific examples of what this teacher did in the class and then extends the effect to the personal connections

this teacher made that extended through the years: “She was always a part of my learning experience.” I then prompted Amy to take the next step and think about how this teacher will impact her teaching identity. She stated that she wants to be “part of my students’ lives” even on into the future. Amy is connecting her identity to her kindergarten teacher and taking note of the influence and impact she has had on her life. That is the teacher she wants to be like.

Susan attributes her decision to become a teacher to her grandmother: “Grandma was probably my biggest influence.” The rest of the students in the study drew upon parents, coaches, and mentors as they talked about why they chose to become a teacher. All of my students were influenced by their social relationships with others. However, there were many other factors that influenced my students’ decisions, such as having an impact, helping others, and feeling a spiritual calling. I recognize these same factors in my own becoming.

In writing my own story I spoke about the impact my mother and a mentor, Dr. Jim Guszak, had on my becoming. While reading my students’ stories, and through the face-to-face interviews with my pre-service teachers, significant patterns emerged from the data on why we become teachers. I noticed that as we clearly develop our constructed identities we commonly link our identity to someone else—in these narratives, a parent or a teacher—and then offer stories to support the identity label and to explain the process of adopting an identity. As I link who I am as a teacher to my mother and to Dr. Guszak, I join Amy in saying, “As a teacher, that’s what I want to do.” I also saw that we have hopes and dreams for the future and desire to make a difference in the lives of others, just as our mentors shaped and guided our own lives. Teacher education programs can help students see themselves as teachers by asking them to continually rediscover and revisit the variety of reasons we want to teach. This connecting and reflecting process embodies the identity formation process in becoming a teacher. In addition to addressing content and methods, our courses can provide space for pre-service teachers to link their lives with real teachers in diverse settings. In this way students might discover new mentors and understand new ideas in teaching.

I am only minutes into this first day of class and wonder if my students will take the mantle from a parent, teacher, or mentor and carry forward a drive for authentic and passion-filled teaching.

A Prayer Answered

Grade school.

The first activity I have my students do is fill out a chart in which they list the teachers from their past (see Appendix B). This activity is intended to help my students begin to see the connection between the past, present, and future. I ask them to make note of those teachers that were positive teachers by placing a *P* next to the name and an *N* next to those that were negative teachers. They then place a *K* next to those teachers who on some level made a personal connection. It is amazing to watch how the students immediately begin to fill in the chart as they look into the mirror of their past. It is my hope that through this activity the students will see how the positive teachers in their lives were also the same ones that would most often reach out and make personal connections. I also hope that this opening activity will spur the students on towards a lifetime of reflections and connections as teachers.

As my students are writing and recalling their early school years, I begin to think back upon my own parochial grade school days. I can remember most of my teachers by name. However, I remember most vividly how I was taught. I was taught in a Lutheran environment and from a Lutheran perspective. Through this upbringing, my faith was sustained, yet my learning was constrained. I was taught not to color outside of the lines. My elementary school setting was a passive and structured learning environment. I was taught to be passive and taught that my interests and curiosities were not important during the school day. I cannot recall any incidents in which I was encouraged to read anything other than the textbook or to think about what I was reading. I do remember busily completing reading workbooks and spelling workbooks. School was not that hard for me, and it was not much fun either. I was not encouraged to read on my own aside from a few trips to the library. I do not recall any open-ended writing opportunities in grade school. I wonder today what I was learning.

After those early years of struggling as a reader, through the time spent reading to my mother, I became a strong reader. However, we were never encouraged in school to read for the love of reading. It was not until my middle school years that I stumbled upon a book that sent me on my journey in becoming a life-long reader. I remember picking up a book with a worn cover and slightly yellowed pages. I believe I came upon this book in my brother's room. It was by S. E. Hinton and was entitled *The Outsiders*. From the moment I began reading, I was transformed. Today I tell my reading students that I believe that it takes that one right book to connect with you to set you off on the journey to becoming a life-long reader. I was transported into the life of the main character, the plot, and into myself. The protagonist of this book is Ponyboy, the youngest in a family of brothers. Ponyboy analyzes many things deeply as he watches the sunset from his backyard. He often wonders what life would be like if there were no Greasers or Socs—no labels, just people being real. I did not complete a single worksheet for this book nor answer any comprehension questions nor take an AR computerized quiz. Yet I am thankful that this book landed in my hands. This book might just symbolize the paradox of my life as a teacher and researcher, as an outsider. I too wonder what life would be like without labels for our students.

At the end of this novel it becomes clear that Ponyboy is telling his story in an essay for his English teacher. This story is written as a class assignment. Yet this narrative has allowed Ponyboy an opportunity to construct his self. Through the pages of this story Ponyboy is transformed and his identity is created. By writing his story, Ponyboy is attempting to make sense of things that have happened to him. Things are beyond his understanding until he constructs a narrative. While reading his story I was nudged on to think about whom I was becoming. I was deeply and emotionally affected by this story as a young teenager and today as an older teacher. As a teenage boy things were beyond my understanding and out of my control. As an adolescent I had dreams about what I might become. I had always enjoyed writing and reading. Yet as a teenager I had no desire to become a teacher. I enjoyed both playing sports and watching sports. Yet somehow I was nudged on the road to becoming a teacher.

While writing the story of my becoming, and as I review my learning history, it is interesting to note that I can recall no authentic writing opportunities in school. I was not encouraged to write my own story. Yet, as a young boy I created real authentic writing conversations at home on my own. I would often write letters to the heroes of my sports' teams. I wrote letters to my grandparents who lived far away. I even wrote to the President of the United States. Yet in school I was taught only to underline the noun and find the predicate nominative. My teachers stood in front of me and diagrammed sentences and I was told to follow. Yet this work made no sense to me and still does not.

One would think that in the thirty years since I was in grade school, things would have changed. Yet in an interview with Kim, an undergraduate student in my Developmental Reading class, I discovered that not much has changed. Kim explains how her high school English teacher had her dissecting things that did not need to be dissected.

Kim: I had English classes...but I think that people tried so hard to teach to the aims and the NAP test, where we had a formula that we had to write by, where there's an introduction, and a five paragraph essay, and the syntax and we would read the same essay, "The Rattler," about a guy killing a rattlesnake in the dessert, and we read it like six times and each time we would go through and do the syntax, or the tone, or each time we would have to go through and pick out different parts, and I felt like I was dissecting things that I really didn't need to be dissecting. (09/12/08)

During my elementary schools days I had a passion for sports. I loved to play sports, watch sports, and talk about sports. I think I was a lot better at watching and talking about sports than actually playing the games. In fact, I remember many class periods in which I would be drawing up game plans for the next basketball or football game. I would think about the strategies and how to position the players so we could win. Through these events I now recognize I was actually beginning the process of becoming a teacher. I envisioned myself as a coach. That is very similar to how I view myself in the classroom today. As the coach I encourage, plot strategies, and set up situations so that my students might be successful.

Through my autobiographical story I recalled a moment that connects to my identity. My thesis began with this small but important story. I was a seventh grade student not interested in the classroom but in love with sports. At that moment in my life, winning the game of basketball was the most important thing in my life. I recall a specific game against a cross-town rival. The game was nearing the end and we were down by two points. My coach, who was also my classroom teacher, called a time-out. I do not recall anything he said in that huddle because I was not paying attention. I remember doing what I was taught to do as a good Lutheran boy. I was praying to God. I remember praying, “God, help us win this game.” I remember going a step further, “Dear God, if we win this game, I will become a Lutheran teacher.” Of course, we won the game. I do remember thinking shortly after that game how foolish and self-centered that prayer was. Yet I realize that my vocation is a spiritual calling from God. It is a call to make use of my gifts and strengths and share my passion with others.

It is interesting to note that until I began writing my autobiographical history, I had not thought of that moment in over twenty years. I had not even shared that moment with my wife, Martha. Martha’s father was also a life-long teacher. So she is familiar with the long hours, lack of respect, and low pay facing many teachers. She told me once that she vowed never to marry a teacher.

Once again my attention is brought back to my undergraduate reading class, as I overhear two students sharing stories about the teachers they are remembering. Prompted by the desire to give each of my students a voice, I ask them to share a teacher or story with a classmate. Soon the class is abuzz with stories and laughter. We are starting to become a community. It is my hope that my students are nudged to view the classroom and their life through a new lens: through the lens of the teacher they are becoming. Looking back is one of the first steps in finding out whom we are becoming as a teacher. As I wander through the classroom I hear stories about kindergarten teachers and high school memories.

♪ *Don't know much about history*
Don't know much biology
Don't know much about a science book
Don't know much about the French I took ♪

High School.

I recall little of what I learned throughout my high school years. However, I do remember two teachers who profoundly influenced me, one negatively and one positively. I attended a private Lutheran high school for one year before transferring to the local public school. As a freshman in algebra I had a math teacher who moved swiftly. The concepts were flying over my head left and right. I remember looking around the room and seeing others succeed, yet I did not get it. I was not learning, and the teacher did not seem to be helping. The teacher never bothered to slow down and see if I was getting it. I am sure my homework demonstrated my lack of understanding. However, after a few weeks I came to realize that there were others in class just like me.

About ten of us were moved out of this class and into Mr. Sponholz's algebra class. Mr. Sponholz did what the other teacher was unable to do for me: he made math relevant. Mr. Sponholz was able to link or associate the abstract algebra concepts to words or structures that had meaning to me. To this day I am still fearful of math because of the lack of connections with what I already know. I wonder if this fear would still be present if I had more math teachers like Mr. Sponholz. I wonder how my life might have changed if I had had math and science teachers that would have reached beyond the textbook to connect the numbers and symbols to my life.

Mr. Sponholz was also my science teacher that freshman year. He taught a class called Scientific Thought. I recall more learning from that class than any other during my four years of high school. What a great freshman class! Mr. Sponholz strongly believed that before you teach science concepts, you teach scientific thought and the historical development of science concepts. In the 1970s and 1980s this was a new approach for many, especially those from the Lutheran educational field. Mr. Sponholz believed that students must recognize the human origin of scientific theories and laws and understand that scientific knowledge is tentative and subject to change. This was a controversial statement for some who viewed science as the means to truth. Yet science is from human origin and design. This view is controversial because it diverges from the premise that human reason can conclude absolute truth. Mr. Sponholz constructed the curriculum around the perspective that

science is a framework of evolving concepts and methods. In this class I was taught that we cannot be sure of a true science.

As a teacher, Mr. Sponholz was animated and passionate. I can vividly remember the style of the room in which the class was held. We sat in wooden desks in a stadium seating format. Mr. Sponholz did not follow a scripted curriculum. I recall him telling stories and tossing erasers across the room to prove a scientific point. This Scientific Thought course developed by Mr. Sponholz was discontinued at the high school after he accepted a professorship position at Dr. Martin Luther College (DMLC). Fortunately, I met up again with Mr. Sponholz during a physical science class I took at DMLC.

After a year at the private Lutheran high school, I transferred to the local public school. The main reason I transferred in the midst of my high school years was because of the expense of tuition required to attend a private school. During my high school years my parents went through a difficult separation and eventual divorce. My father left the house and my mom was left behind to raise my sister and me, as my three older siblings had moved out of the house. I did know several kids from the neighborhood who attended the local public school, which made the transition to a new school a bit easier.

I breezed my way through most high school classes, getting mostly B's without trying very hard. The class work was not that difficult for me, and I did not learn much. I continued to enjoy reading and writing outside of class. I did take a high school aviation class, which was fascinating. The instructor taught the mathematical concepts needed to navigate a plane. I recall the day that he finally took us to the small local airport to try our hand at piloting the plane. As the plane lifted off the ground, my stomach immediately began to turn. I do not remember if the instructor handed the controls over to me. I only recall a dramatic feeling of airsickness. This experience led me to see that a life of flying a plane was not for me.

Through my high school years my main passion and interest revolved around sports. I enjoyed participating in and watching sports. I went through the typical adolescent identity formation issues. I wondered about what I could become. I was

told by teachers and others to think about what I was good at. As a teenager I had no idea. I believe that as teachers we need to help our students discover and identify their strengths, interests, and passions. When you combine these in your life, your identity and vocation will emerge. No teacher had ever told me I had gifts. I needed to know that I should pursue a vocation that allowed me to fully use my gifts and talents. Yet I had no idea what these were. I knew I had weaknesses, yet I was encouraged to find my passion and interest. I had to believe that my Lord had given that talent to have an impact in this world. I loved to read and write. I also wanted my vocation to convey my love for sports. Now today I am coaching future teachers.

College and the Emergence of My Teaching Identity

After high school I enrolled at the local university. Unsure of what I really wanted to do, I entered a mass communications program with a desire to become a radio or television announcer. I continued to love to read and write. However, as I grew out of my teenage years, I realized that I could be more and do more. I feel it was a spiritual nudge that pushed me towards becoming a teacher. It is at this point that I recall one of those moments frozen in my mind. It was a typical gray January day in Wisconsin. I was nineteen years old with no plans for becoming a teacher. I was driving on Highway 16 on my way to a mass communications course on January 28, 1986. A news bulletin interrupted the music on the car radio. The announcer said, "Moments ago the space shuttle Challenger exploded shortly after lift-off." I was stunned. At that time space shuttle lift-offs were becoming routine. This disaster had even more of an impact on me as Christy McAuliffe, an elementary teacher, was aboard this doomed space shuttle. McAuliffe had once said, "I teach. I touch the future."

However, it would not be until about a year later that I came to realize that I wanted to touch the future by becoming a teacher. I had realized that as a teacher I may be able to have an impact that lasts beyond a day. At that same time I realized I wanted this impact to last an eternity. Alongside my growth as a person I had also grown spiritually as a Christian. I kept looking at how I might touch the future for an eternity. The prayer of that seventh grade basketball player was beginning to take form.

During that transformative time, I met my future wife, Martha; we became engaged and eventually married in the summer of 1986. We were actively involved in our local Lutheran church. It was through this time of spiritual reflection that I contemplated how I might have an impact on the future. As I looked back on my life as a student in Lutheran schools, I also looked ahead as to how I might impact future generations. I decided to apply to our church body's small teacher training college in New Ulm, Minnesota. There at Dr. Martin Luther College I began my formal training to become a teacher in the summer of 1988.

I spent the next three years learning and growing spiritually and academically. However, most of the teaching methods I was taught were those that had been used for decades in our Lutheran schools. Lutheran schools were first built in America in the mid-1850s when many Germans immigrated to America. These Lutheran schools, like most in America, were built around the time of the Industrial Revolution to serve the church, society, and industry. Lutheran schools were designed to preserve the German culture, German language, and Lutheran religion. Public schools were designed in much the same way during the nineteenth century. Public schools were created to meet the needs of industrialism. Industrialism is built on a hierarchy of needs. So a value system is placed on our schools. The public school system was also designed for students to learn an academic culture predicated on academic success, so that successful students could move on to the next step, which is life in a university. Those that can be successful in this academic culture are rewarded with degrees and oftentimes money. Therefore, those who are highly talented and creative in something other than academics do not believe they can be successful, because what they do is not valued by the culture of school. This format of training students continues today. Schools are designed to stop students from making mistakes. Students enter schools with a sense of curiosity and adventure. Children are anxious to take a chance, and they are not frightened about being wrong. Yet schools stigmatize mistakes and weaknesses. Schools teach children that mistakes are the worst thing that you can make. Since we were all trained this way, it is difficult to re-envision and rethink how our schools might look. We come out of schools being afraid of making mistakes. Yet do we not learn through our mistakes? Have not your most successful moments come when you took a risk?

Aside from Prof. Sponholz, I had two other teachers at my college who propped open the door to authentic teaching and learning. Dr. David Wendler taught Psychology of Learning and Teaching Reading. Prof. Rolland Menk taught a writing workshop approach to teaching language arts. These two teachers inspired me to try something different in reading and writing. They asked me to think about how reading and writing could be done differently. They taught me to look for something more meaningful than worksheets and workbooks. They explained the philosophy and methods of using a reading and writing workshop approach to teaching. They encouraged me to step outside the conventional approach and take a risk. This was the first time that I actually began to think about how I was taught as a student and how I might do it better. These teachers asked me to step out of the curriculum comfort zone. However, I still was not asked to think about who I was becoming as a teacher.

Gaining My Teaching Voice – My Pre-service Teachers Speak Out

Today, in my role as a teacher of future teachers, I ask my students to reflect upon who they are becoming as a teacher. I ask them to think about the beliefs they bring into the class about teaching.

Early on in this semester's class my students are tentative and quiet. I will ask an open-ended question and hold the silence beyond what is comfortable. The silence of these pre-service teachers speaks volumes. There is a fear of making a mistake as they wait anxiously for me to tell them how to be a teacher and how to teach reading.

After we complete the activity about former teachers and have discussed how the ways we were taught might affect who we become as teachers, I begin to describe to the students the reading practicum portion of this class. The reading practicum is an attempt to integrate theory and praxis. On Tuesdays we meet at an urban Lutheran school and work one-on-one with students ranging from preschool through third grade. The students prepare a forty-five-minute reading lesson. For many of my students, this is the first time that they officially assume the role of teacher. On Thursdays we meet back on the university campus. We spend much of our time discussing the practicum experience. We talk about what went well and what did not. I ask them to think about their teaching identity and their becoming.

For many this is their first experience in a diverse school setting. This school is part of a county school choice initiative. Parents choose to send their children to either the local public school or an accredited private school. Tax dollars for each student are then used at the private school. At this Lutheran school almost all of the students are African-American urban students. The school teachers are all Caucasians.

After our first visit to this school, the students are asked to respond in their electronic journal to the following prompt: “Describe the culture of the school environment (open & welcoming, rigid, chaotic, etc.) Compare this school culture to what you remember of the culture of your school.”

Susan writes about what she anticipated seeing and what she actually observed at this urban school, and then she also compares this urban setting to her own school culture:

The first time I went to Saint Peter Immanuel, I was shocked. I was told that it was a multicultural school, which was in an interesting location in [the city]. I expected something totally different. What I saw was so much more than what I had anticipated. I thought that the school was going to be in shambles and it was going to be messy and very disorganized. What I really saw was a school that seemed brand new and was really organized. They took the safety precautions that seemed necessary like the call button and the signing in at the office. It was a nice surprise. The staff was very welcoming and knew how things needed to be run to ensure the best for the children. When I went back last week Tuesday, I saw many of the same things that I saw the last time. The only thing that was different were some of the classrooms were in different places. I didn't like how they didn't follow an order. They seemed to not be in an order, to me this would be confusing for a child.

The kids that I saw in the classroom were surprisingly well behaved. I went to observe a kindergarten class for another class. The teacher was telling me that some of the kids have problems with behavior, but I didn't see them. I think that at the age of kindergarten, kids will be kids. They naturally have a lot of energy that needs to be burned off. I really think that the kids in other classes

were well behaved and had a love of learning. The kids come from a multicultural background. Being so diverse, did not seem to have an affect on neither the students nor the teacher. This was very nice to see. The students coming from a multicultural background is very different than what I experienced at school. I went to school on the Southside of Milwaukee, which when I was in the early elementary grades was not very diverse. It was a primarily white, Polish community. Later, the Southside started to become more diverse and there were many more Hispanics coming to my school. That didn't really happen until my late middle school years. My high school, didn't have that much more diversity. It was still primarily white and had a Hispanic community. Other than the diversity, the environment was very similar to what I experienced as a child. The only other difference is that I felt my school was much older.

I do have to say that I preferred the diverse culture. I think it's much more interesting. I really enjoyed seeing it. (9/7/08)

Susan has clearly sought to engage her teaching identity with this culturally diverse setting. This engagement is influencing who she is becoming as a teacher. Susan recognizes that, going into the school setting, she had prior assumptions of what an urban school culture would be like, from the look of the building to the behavior of the students. What she experienced in this urban setting was new and surprising. It is interesting to note that she was also surprised by how well-behaved the students were. I am not sure if in her surprise she recognizes that she assumed the African-American students wouldn't be well-behaved. This narrative might provide Susan an opportunity to reevaluate her assumptions. From her response, we see that Susan is ready to use this experience to make sense of herself.

This positive cultural experience was a common theme across all of the journal entries written by the pre-service teachers. In the excerpt below Jill wrote about her view of the school:

SPI had a very welcoming culture. The principal took the entire Developmental Reading class on a tour around the school so that we would

get ideas from the setups and layouts of each classroom. The teachers and students were all very welcoming and student work was proudly displayed in the hallways. Ethnically, the school is made up of primarily African American students and White teachers. The students all wear uniforms and the students were well-behaved. I also found it heart-warming that the first grade teacher spoke so openly about her faith to us. The school seems to be a great Christian environment in which to grow. (9/07/08)

This experience in an urban setting was a challenge to my Caucasian pre-service teachers and their prior beliefs and knowledge. This experience with difference and diversity helped to bridge the cultural space and impacted the students' emerging teaching identity. In Kathy's entry she compared her grade school with Saint Peter Immanuel:

It's hard trying to compare the differences between this school and mine because I only have a student's perspective but I do believe that my grade school was similar in the fact that the teachers had a good relationship with one another (or at least from my point of view) but I do feel that SPI is more strict on their discipline and seem more unified with the other teachers about how to discipline the students. The parents of the students at my grade school were very involved in their child's achievement and goals but I sensed that many of these students don't have parents who work with them every night on their homework or read to them which is what I remember from those years. I always looked forward to reading books with my mom and it was a chance for me to unwind from a long day. I just hope that these students with [*sic*] remember those memories of reading with me as I do with my parents. (9/10/08)

It is interesting to see early in the semester that Kathy understands that she is seeing her educational history and this urban school through a student identity perspective, "Because I only have a student's perspective." She then shifts her identity to becoming a teacher and connects her identity to her mother and hopes that she can provide the same type of memories to students that her mother gave to her. This is identity work in progress.

As part of the class, we also meet every other week on Blackboard for online discussion. The students are divided into online groups of five or six students. Throughout this class we spend much time talking about the Great Debate in reading instruction—phonics versus the whole language approach to teaching reading (Ayers, 2001). The Great Debate rages on even though, with few exceptions, all children can learn to read. Reading is a miraculous process. Readers figure out that symbols carry meaning. These symbols are usually in the form of a group of letters and carry meaning. When groups of letters are patterned, organized, and used in the same order, they carry the same meaning. These words can be decoded, unraveled, and dissected. For some students the reading process is picked up effortlessly, while others struggle and stumble. Children experience pleasure when they put it all together.

The proponents of the phonics approach teach children that they need to crack the code, get the skill, and move from the specific to the general. The students trot along from letters to sounds to words. The proponents of phonics assume that the sense of meaning and power to read will come in time.

The whole language advocates favor a *whole word, language experience* or *whole language* approach that moves from the general to specific, and they reason that once the power of language is understood in context, the relationship of letters and sounds will also emerge.

The tension in my class is that although I believe a balanced approach to literacy is effective, I also strongly believe that reading is caught, not taught. My philosophy is exposed through class discussions. Most of the students in my class were taught to read through the traditional phonics method. Likewise, during the practicum part of the class at the urban elementary school, the teachers strictly use the bottom-up phonics approach to teaching reading. In this space the students then must negotiate this view and settle into what they believe. Alongside of class discussion, I also provide the students a chance to meet online and have a Blackboard discussion about this debate. The students were given the following writing prompt:

In this Developmental Reading class I have asked you to think about traditional literacy instruction and your past experiences. As you have done this you are also challenging the assumptions you have about teaching and school. This notion has been explained as “teaching against the grain.” I would like you to share with the group:

How your view of teaching changed or shifted (if it has or why it hasn't) due to your experiences in this course and the practicum? Draw upon your teaching beliefs, values, and experiences to explain this change. (11/5/08)

Hannah is the first student to respond online. Hannah’s response highlights the need to teach theory and practice simultaneously in our teacher education programs. In this way pre-service teachers have a chance to explore the assumptions they hold and the learning theories that are being discussed in the college classroom. As you read Hannah’s response you will note how her prior assumptions about teaching reading change because of the class discussion and the face-to-face teaching opportunity.

One of the views that shifted significantly is my perspective on the “top down” approach to reading. Before clinicals and many of the lessons learned through the exposure of Education 204, I was extremely skeptical of the “top down,” or sight word approach to reading. As I grew up I created a preconceived idea that learning reading through the utilization of sight words was incorrect. Phonics, sounding words out by their sounds, was the only logical to begin reading from my perspective merely because that was what I was used to. After being exposed to clinicals I began to realize that my preconceptions were false. My 4-k student, Tanabe was not able to read prior to us Lakeshore buddies coming out to work with them. Out of mere curiosity I utilized the “top down approach with Tanabe and delved into the “go” book which is focused on sight words. The concept of a “well-rounded approach to reading being highly beneficial” came alive as I saw Tanabe’s eyes light up with confidence with every word he read off the pages of the “go” book. Instead of seeing the world in the same view we always have, we need to broaden out horizons by trying new techniques and activities. Though these

may not have been ideas that we ourselves would have created, we need to understand that our students could possibly benefit from the chosen variations in our teaching. Like many have said in the past, we are all unique individuals that learn in different ways. In summation, I realized that even though “top down” reading was not an approach I would have ever picked up on my own, Tanabe was able to benefit greatly from my openness for different techniques. The light in his eyes as he read was enough for me to learn that there is so much to teaching that I have yet to learn. (Online discussion, 11/6/08)

Hannah is open to learning more about becoming a teacher and realizes that we need to learn about different and diverse ways to teach the diverse students before us. Hannah is negotiating her prior assumptions alongside of her experience in teaching Tanabe in our practicum. Hannah talks about seeing the world in a different way: “We need to broaden out horizons.” Hannah talks about trying a method that she had never been exposed to before.

Susan responded to this same prompt by drawing on her prior knowledge, beliefs, and the process of reflection in constructing her teaching identity:

Before this practicum and even our class, I thought that the way that I learned how to read was the only way. I felt like I learned how to read, and felt very confident in my reading skills. However, through this practicum I have seen that there are so many different ways to teach a student how to read. I got really confused about how I could tell which method was the right one. There had to be one out there that was The One. I quickly learned that most of them are good methods and that we need to decide based upon our children learning ability, which one would be the most appropriate. This was hard to sink in, but when it came time for the practicum it reaffirmed my beliefs. I needed to figure out how these kids would best receive the information that they need to learn. It is difficult to do, but with some hard work and faith it was possible. I also attribute my success in finding a method that worked for my kids because of reflection. In class we took time to reflect on our experiences, and I think that hearing what other students had to say really helped me to get some ideas that I could try with my students. Both this class and the practicum has helped

me to see that each students is uniquely created in God's eyes and we need to change our teaching methods to fit with each student's needs. (Online discussion, 11/6/08)

It is interesting for me to see two things in Susan's response. First, she is recognizing that she came into my Developmental Reading class with prior assumptions about how reading should be taught. Then she says she was able to recognize that her misconceptions were inaccurate, partially due to the reflection process. Susan seems to believe that knowing her students' individual needs is essential to becoming an effective teacher. She also gives value to the process of reflection combined with collaboration. Learning about students' individual and unique needs was a prevalent theme in both the online and face-to-face class discussions. Often teachers in education programs are afraid to step aside and allow the space and time necessary for this process to take place. I wanted to see if I could encourage further reflection and discussion by Susan, so I wrote: "I believe your point about reflection is vital to effective teachers. Why do you think publishers are continuing to put out programs that don't treat students as individuals?" (11/06/08).

Before Susan can reply to my question, Amy joins the dialogue and reaffirms Susan's voice:

I think it is great that you can reflect so well on your past as a student and apply that to your future as a teacher. There is no method that works for all students because everyone learns differently. It sounds like you had a very rewarding practicum experience and that is great! (11/06/08)

Amy reiterates the belief that students learn differently and validates what Susan has said. Through their practicum sessions, readings, and class discussions the pre-service teachers are coming to believe that children are unique and that we each learn in unique ways. Dialogue, reflection, and negotiation are part of identity construction. Yet the students also realize that their values will be challenged by the structures that are in place. Susan recognizes this tension:

I think that many publishers are trying to create "The One" which is the programs [*sic*] that is going to be the cure all to teachers' problems. I also feel that publishers find research supporting a program, so they right away jump to conclusions and say that it must be effective with multiple levels of students. Another reason that I sometimes think that publishers put programs out is that they do not test the students who come from backgrounds where education is not important. They test the "normal kids." Publishers can be very greedy and are after money so if they advertise a program that is "good" and hook teachers and parents they make money. We live in such a society that is driven by money and not the important things such as educating our future. (11/09/08)

As the teacher of this class my voice is off to the side, as the students use this space to question, share, negotiate, and wonder as they take apart the forces that impact their emerging teaching identity. By opening up this space it is my hope that I am continuing to create a community of truth. You see in Susan's Blackboard response an identification of several authoritarian structures that impact our lives as a teacher. Susan recognizes that the publishing companies have a strong voice in what happens in the classroom. As my students are recognizing the authoritarian forces that impact our lives as teachers, you notice that this process is allowing their teaching identity to emerge as they begin to see their life through the eyes of a teacher. Susan the teacher is naming the forces that constrain her life as a teacher, and in this way she is constructing her own teaching identity. Sarup and Raja (1996) suggest that identity is only conceivable when individuals communicate what they are not and what they do not believe to set themselves apart from the *Other*, whose actions are in contrast to the individual's own emerging identity.

I wonder how I can encourage these students, my future colleagues, to realize that they are agents of change in a constraining vocation. Cochran-Smith reminds me of the importance of preparing teachers who are able to challenge the status quo when they become teachers. In "Teaching against the Grain" (1991), Cochran-Smith points out the need for pre-service teachers to understand that they are part of a larger struggle and that they have a responsibility to reform the field. She concludes that transforming the status quo is done best through partnerships between the university

and the school site in the form of *collaborative resonance* programs in which cooperating teachers and pre-service or student teachers work together to learn how to teach against the grain.

In understanding the status quo, students need to recognize the forces that have shaped their beliefs. It was my intention during this class to help students unearth their hidden assumptions about being a teacher and teaching reading. While reading the students' dialogue, you might have noticed that on their own students recognize that they have come into my reading methods class with prior assumptions about how reading happens. Students then identify that it is through the process of reflection that they are able to see beyond the "One" way to approach teaching reading. Susan goes beyond the classroom and students and makes a connection to how profit is driving the standardized curriculum. I also feel that my students are coming to this realization through telling, both in oral and written reflective comments. Hannah joins in on the online discussion:

I really liked what you had to say because it related a lot to the way that I have learned things in this class. I was sure that Phonics were the only way to go and quickly learned that there are many approaches out there. The thing that I like about this class most is that I am realizing more and more that if you balance the methods that you are using and give students choices of how they want to approach reading, they have a bigger chance of becoming the life-long readers that we are setting out to initiate. Your view about reflection is so true! We have learned a lot through all the thinking and talking in class and outside. (11/11/08)

It is interesting to see how Hannah recognizes her previously held belief about phonics being the only way to teach reading. This transformation is taking place as the students begin to remove constraints and preconceived assumptions, notions, and values (Mezirow, 1991). In a one-on-one interview, Susan commented about connecting practice to reflection, "As I found something that worked, I would use that again in the next lesson but in a changed way, like talking about some of the letters, or pictures, and just doing things a little bit differently. I did this because it was working in them. I could see and reflect on what things worked" (11/08/08).

Brookfield (1995) defines assumptions as the “taken-for-granted beliefs about the world and our place within it that seem so obvious as not to need stating explicitly” (p. 2). Through critical reflection, retelling, and discussion students have a new perspective that is emerging into their teaching identity and will inform their instruction. Their emerging teaching identities and teaching philosophy seemed to be shaped by the course readings, in-class discussions, online responses, and the process of critical reflection. Learning to be a teacher is an active process of questioning, negotiating, evaluating, and reflecting.

These Are My Children You Are Teaching

As I work to build a community of truth in the classroom, I spend time during the first class period getting to know my students. I ask them to give some background about who they are and why they have chosen to become a teacher. I ask them to also share one thing with the class that they could teach us. The students seem to enjoy this getting to know each other time as we hear that everyone has something special to share and to teach us. Each of my students is unique.

During my class I also hope to nudge my pre-service teachers toward the understanding that teaching is about the children. As a father of five children, it is fascinating to see them each grow and change and develop into who they are becoming. Any parent soon realizes each child is unique, different, and special in their own way. What interests and motivates my fourteen-year-old Noah is far different than what sixteen-year-old Isaiah finds motivating and interesting. As a teacher, when you walk into a classroom, what do you see? I see my five children—Jacob, Rachel, Isaiah, Noah, and Hannah—each unique, different, and with special gifts.



However, because of today's school culture and language, children are often labeled and categorized—LD, ADHD, “at risk,” “gifted and talented,” and so on. I would much rather teach children who have names. Labels and categories are limiting and self-fulfilling. When we focus on a child's deficiencies, we are limiting our perspective. We need to look at our children's ever-changing strengths and interests. Bill Ayers (2001) suggests we focus on these questions: “Who is this person before me? What are his interests and areas of wonder? How does she express herself and what is her awareness of herself as a learner?” (p. 29).

I hope that the teachers of my own children recognize them for what unique qualities and strengths they each bring to the classroom. Jacob, my oldest (twenty-two years old), has a wife and beautiful young daughter, Ella, and holds down a full-time job. Jacob is also a part-time business student. Jacob has a beautiful way in developing relationships and connecting with others. He is also a talented athlete. I would hope that his teachers would draw on these strengths to allow him to thrive in his own way.

Rachel, nineteen years old, is a full-time college student aspiring to become a teacher. Rachel is deeply reflective and has a passion towards children. Rachel has watched me struggle with my calling as a teacher and in finding my happiness. She often talks about how she has been uprooted from friends and homes throughout my several teaching moves. Rachel needs a teacher that will trust and depend on her. Rachel is hard-working and dedicated and wants to know that what she is learning is important.

Isaiah, sixteen, loves to read has a quiet and strong personality. Isaiah is comfortable with those he knows. Isaiah is intelligent and often allows others to lead the way. Isaiah needs a teacher that will get to know him, accept his voice, wait for him to share his insight, and push him to assume a leadership role.

Noah, fourteen, has a spark and energy that does not stop. Noah would much rather climb a tree and build a fort than sit mindlessly behind a school desk. Noah has had underlying medical issues since he was very young. Noah was created to be

in a place that is filled with wonder and adventure. Noah needs a teacher that will affirm and build on his strengths.

My youngest child, Hannah, is ten years old. Hannah has a warm smile and a personality that looks to please. Hannah started reading at a young age and loves to read. However, this love was squashed the moment the school told Hannah that she must be tested on each book that she reads. Hannah needs a teacher that will allow her choice and know and build on her interests as a growing young girl. I want the teachers of my children and of all students to know the person before them and build on their unique interests and passions.

Early in the semester I want the pre-service teachers to begin think to about how diverse and unique are the students we teach. After each tutoring session, pre-service teachers write in their reflective journal. After the fourth week of tutoring, I give the students the following personal journal prompt to guide their thinking about what they believe about the students before them and who they are as a teacher: “Certainly you have experienced a lot of new things within this practicum thus far. What is something you did not expect, however? What has caught you ‘off guard?’ More importantly, however, what have you done to meet the challenge?” (10/1/08).

As you read the journal excerpts below by Kayla, Kim, and Susan, notice how these pre-service teachers draw on their life histories and the teacher education program to help them understand the diversity of children. Yet they are surprised by the uniqueness of the students they are teaching.

Kayla: I did not expect to have forgotten my reading experience as a child. Talking with my students and trying to explain to them some reading strategies/skills make it a little difficult because I don't really remember how I was taught or went about it myself. (9/24/08)

Kim: Even though everything I have learned in life and in the education program has repeatedly stated that children are little individuals and learn as such, I was still caught off guard by my students. My first grader, Tyren, is still unable to read. This surprised me (even though it shouldn't have) because

I babysit for a first grader who seems to read as well as I do, and I just assumed that Tyren would be able to as well. I've been meeting this challenge by reminding myself (once again) that Tyren is his own little person, and that when I am helping him I need to constantly be assessing where he is in his reading, what his strengths and weaknesses are, and how he is improving. I cannot compare him to a first grader in another school with a completely different home life and just assume that he's not where he should be in his academic development. (9/24/08)

Susan: The thing that has caught me most off guard is the differences in the children at age four. Some of these children are super mature and calm, where others have this immaturity about them. They do not know how to sit still and listen for a short amount of time. I was so unprepared for having to “baby-sit” one of my kids and teach the other. It scares me a little bit, that I do not have good control of the situation. It seems I only think about how I acted as a student. These children have very noticeable differences that I didn't expect. (9/25/08)

Kathy: I know that children progress and develop at different levels but I did not expect such a huge difference in development as what I observe through my two Junior Kindergartners. (9/25/08)

Hannah: I would say that I was much more surprised this past week at Saint Peter's Immanuel than previous weeks. Tanabe, the little four year old that I work with, was much more receptive of the fact that I would be creating my own lesson plan and he seemed pretty excited when I asked for his opinion of what he wanted to do in the following weeks. Tanabe is such a quiet child, so it was great to see him interacting. Second hour, Courtney, my first grader, and I started trekking through the ABC book that I brought. Assuming that Courtney was a good reader due to her fantastic reading last week, I brought a more challenging book because I thought it would fit her skill better. I was wrong. Courtney still does have a good sense of reading, however, she was reading by memory much more than anything the other week. Both of these just go to show that the moment you think you are catching on and finding a

pattern, you need to be flexible to change for the betterment of the students that you are teaching. (9/24/08)

Amy: I do think that this practicum has been a very good learning experience. I have not had a lot of experience of being in a teacher position in a reading class and it surprised me how much I can tell these students reading level by just the small amount of time that we have spent together. I think what has caught me the most off guard is the excitement that these students have knowing that we are coming every week. My third grade girl referred to me as her friend from the very first day and I guess I was not expecting that they would be so comfortable around us so quickly. I think that this excitement puts pressure on us to realize that we are teaching and that these students do look up to us and that we should act appropriately and put time and effort into these lesson plans because they are for actual students. In the coming weeks I hope that I can remain focused on that task and create lesson plans that are beneficial for them and are good experiences for both of us. (9/23/08)

Later in the semester, during a one-on-one interview with Amy, I asked her to talking about reflection and the link to teaching.

Prof. Witt: Now, reflectively, we looked at some clips about what you said earlier, and I printed off a writing prompt you journaled on. This is one the most important things you learned from this practicum experience. One of the things you said was that “being a teacher is more than just planning fun things to do.” What do you mean by that?

Amy: Well, I guess I, in the past, had always thought about reading as having a student pick a book, read it, and answer questions or do an activity. But it’s more than just planning the activity, its thinking about how you can make it relevant to the student’s learning and how you can improve it and use different strategies that we’ve been looking at. I’d never really thought of that when teaching reading. I thought of it as something they just picked up when reading. But it’s more about focusing your activities and not just making them fun but that is showing them how to predict, summarize, or comprehend.

Prof. Witt: So, why do you think you had the prior assumptions that it just happened?

Amy: Maybe because I never really struggled in reading. I just always loved to read and it was always one of my favorite classes. Even through high school, the literature part of my English classes was always my favorite. So I guess I never really sat down and thought, “Okay, if you’re struggling with reading, why are you struggling? What is it you’re not understanding? Why can’t you predict or summarize, and where does the reading comprehension come in?” And I guess this was just because I internalized it more easily than some. (11/03/08)

Teacher education programs talk about differentiated instruction and the uniqueness of children. Yet these pre-service teachers’ reflections seem to demonstrate that they were caught off guard by the reality of how diverse students are. These pre-service teachers are drawing on their past experiences to bring meaning to the teaching situations they face. Carter and Doyle (1995) found similar results, explaining how years of educational experiences are used as a lens to encounter new ideas about education. They found that when most pre-service teachers encounter something new in their professional development experiences, they think about it through the eyes of a student. That is, they consider how the practice would have worked for them in the given classroom context. Their beliefs about the new experience or concept are strongly shaped, therefore, by their own educational histories. These excerpts give us a window into how a teaching identity emerges and shifts. That is, the pre-service teachers typically put themselves in the position of a student (Carter & Doyle, 1995) to filter what they are experiencing as a teacher. Through the process of role shifting between what they experienced as a student and how this affects their beliefs as a teacher, they engage in active identity construction.

In another journal excerpt from the same week, Kim talks about two different things that surprised her:

Kim: I have to admit I was very surprised with how children's reading ability can really vary. I car-pool to SPI every week and we always

discuss what our child is struggling with and what things they have been successful with. It was really interesting to see how far apart the students are on their reading skills, and it was disappointing to hear that many of the students are not read to at home. With my child, it was obvious he is not read to, and he lacks confidence with reading. What really shocked me was the amount of video games that the 4 year old plays. Every time I'm reading to him he finds some way to connect it to a video game he was playing. Often times he even discussed very violent games in which the people were having limbs blown off. This really upset me that this little boy was spending so much time playing video games instead of having books read to him or trying to read himself. (9/24/08)

Kim is not only surprised by the uniqueness of her student but also the child's home life. The above responses were private journal reflections. Believing that our identity is also socially constructed, the pre-service teachers participated in an online discussion on Blackboard about the uniqueness of the children we teach. I asked my pre-service teachers to think about the students they are teaching and to respond to the following quote from their course textbook:

“Not only do children bring to school huge differences in the amount of reading and writing experiences, they have had, but they also come with their own personalities.” What does this quote mean to you as a teacher? Please draw on what you have read in our textbook, journal article, and your experience during the practicum. Connect what you are learning to the students you are working with and to your future life as a teacher. (9/18/08)

I asked the pre-service teachers to post an initial reaction and then comment on a classmate's post. Susan initiates the online discussion by expressing her belief in the uniqueness of each child:

This quote means a lot especially to a teacher. Children are truly unique individuals. God created us to be individuals and He created no two people alike. I feel that each student that will enter into my

classroom will have a unique set of gifts that were given to him/her that make them who they are. As teachers, we need to recognize these differences and adjust our teaching in order that these students benefit most from their education.

The children that I have at SPI fit really that quote. My first group of Junior Kindergarten students is a prime example of displaying their individuality. I have a child that cannot write her name and the other child can, which is part of their academics differences. The personalities of these children are also different, one just sits in awe that I can read and that I am giving him attention. The other child would rather get up and move around then sit and listen to me. We are going to have an array of learners in our classroom, but I feel that it is important for teachers to realize that the personalities are also different.

The book discusses how if the parents do not work with the children that sometimes it affects their studies. I feel that the book shows how children are individuals regarding their academics. We from our clinicals can see how they are individuals based on their personalities. We know that children have learning and personality differences, but I think physically witnessing it, that puts it all in perspective.

Whenever I look at children I am amazed at how different they are. I cannot wait to have a room full of these children. Although, it makes me a little nervous that I won't be able to teach them. I feel that God will help me through the different challenges. (9/24/08)

From Susan's initial reflection we see that she will not just see a boy squirming in his desk, disinterested in the textbook. Susan will see my son Noah's big smile and give him the opportunity to inquire, discover, move, and learn. Hannah joins the online discussion:

I would say that this quote brings a lot of truth to the surface of reading and writing for the teachers, parents, and students. In many ways, teachers desire to create a formula for teaching subjects, including reading, in order to make

teaching easier and best for the students. With more research as well as the point that this quote is making, educators begin to understand that even though preparing and trying to create a formulated way for teaching are great and beneficial at times, children are not robots. The students who walk through that classroom door are each coming from their own homes that may hold for them many different emotions. Moreover, this quote recognized that there is much more to the equation of teaching reading when it comes to these unique students that are dealt with. With concern for good education, teachers are challenged to dig much deeper into the lives of their students. Find out the books that they have read, the words and vocabulary that they are surrounded by, the structure of their family life, the prior knowledge of reading and how they acquired that knowledge. Those are all critical questions for a teacher to find out through a friendship and other means that will allow for some of that information to be shared. We as future teachers need to understand the quality of understanding how to create a detailed lesson plan with the flexibility for change. Like I mentioned in my journal, the moment you think that you have your students figured out, you are faced with a curve ball. Like the first grade teacher at SPI said, “Teaching greets you with a different job every day you walk through the doors of the school you call your own.” (9/24/08)

In Hannah’s response she is naming herself as a teacher who realizes that teachers are just as different as their students, and that there is not one right formula for teaching. Hannah’s comment is packed with an intense amount of connections. Hannah has recognized the role that prior knowledge and experience should play in teaching. Hannah realizes that she will be teaching my children and your children. Hannah seems to believe that knowing her students’ individual needs and home life is essential to being an effective reading teacher. She also recognizes that flexibility is needed to meet the diverse needs of students. In her post Hannah is naming her beliefs and identity as teacher. In their discussion the pre-service teachers are engaging in identity construction.

Amy joins the discussion again and reaffirms Hannah’s voice in her online response and offers a suggestion on how we do not need to be the only teacher in the

classroom. They together are evaluating their beliefs, their teaching, and who might also be able to have a voice in the classroom. Amy writes:

You have a great point in that many times teachers forget the importance of the students teaching each other. Teachers become so focused on what they need to do to change their lesson plans and how much they need to help an individual student and they forget that sometimes their classmates are a teachers best resource for motivating and encouraging a student to learn new skills. The interaction between students needs to be encouraged more in classrooms and time needs to be allowed for students to work in groups and fed off of each others ideas and skills. (9/24/08)

Again Amy is defining herself as a teacher by naming the other—the opposite of who she is becoming. This other teacher is a contrast to the teacher she is becoming. Her identity construction in this post was partially the act of setting herself apart, again defining herself by what she was not. In this way, Amy used the online discussion opportunity to clarify her beliefs about teaching and students and to make a statement about what she will do as a teacher.

Amy also realizes that some children, like my son Jacob, the social butterfly, need positive social interaction in the classroom. In this online discussion the pre-service teachers are themselves engaging in social identity work. Susan comes back into the online dialogue and provides affirmation and connection to her teaching experience. She writes:

I also really like your point about how children can teach other children. I can remember in school helping other students and the other students understanding the way I taught them instead of the teacher. Students can have a totally different perspective about things and can really help each other. I also feel the same way about my Junior Kindergarten student. It's frustrating, but then I just remember that like you said they develop at different rates. (9/24/08)

The pre-service teachers recognize the importance of students teaching each other. These soon-to-be teachers are doing exactly that in class through the online discussions. They are teaching each other about what it means to be a teacher. They are learning to become a teacher.

Learning how to be an effective teacher is an active process of questioning, negotiating, and building upon the words and ideas of others. As you read this online dialogue between the pre-service teachers and their understanding of teaching each child as a unique person, you see them affirm each other's beliefs and share their changing perspectives on teaching and learning. The pre-service teachers considered two major aspects of this responsive teaching: learning about students' family backgrounds, reading interests, and abilities; and making learning meaningful and engaging by individualizing, giving students ownership of their learning, and empowering them to relate their learning to their own experiences.

It is essential for pre-service teachers to develop their own authentic teaching voices and perspectives as they begin to recognize a change in their identity from a student to a teacher. As pre-service teachers grow and develop, it is important to acknowledge the value of being influenced but not overwhelmed by the voices of others, and what they say and believe. This is one step in allowing multiple voices and perspectives to be heard in the quest for transformation of our schools into schools that have classrooms filled with teachers that understand our children.

Autobiographical Stories – Oh, the Places I'll Go

My pre-service teachers also shape their identity through the autobiographical stories that they write. As a culminating project in my Developmental Reading class, I have the pre-service teachers write an autobiographical learning history as their final project. This assignment has two parts: one is the written paper, and the other is a visual presentation of who they are as a teacher and what they value in education. In the paper the students revisit their childhood days and think about their literacy and learning experiences with their parents, grandparents, mentors, and teachers. I also encourage them to think about how these experiences, class discussions, and the tutoring sessions impact their emerging teaching philosophy and teaching identity. The narrative format of the assignment gives the students the opportunity to talk

about their educational histories and to establish relationships between their educational experiences and their current practices.

The incidents I include below do not represent a complete picture of my research participants' educational histories or their lives; instead, they represent specific and significant incidents that I selected from their autobiographical narrative as being examples of identity construction. "Oh, the Places I'll Go" is the title of Sally's autobiographical story. As we look through Sally's window to the past, we get a glimpse into whom she is becoming:

Dr. Seuss was once quoted, "The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go" (2008). To me, Dr. Seuss has captured what literacy is, an adventure. Adventures are all different in their destinations, preparations and conclusions. So it is true with reading we all have different models or strategies that we have been taught with. We all read and comprehend at different levels and paces. In order to get insight and understanding on the full extent of literacy, we need to experience literacy.

When I think about reading and literacy, I recall the first memories made at home on the lap of my dad. As a little girl, I cherished story time with daddy. I would crawl into his lap with a great big book and we would read. At first it was daddy who always read to me, books like *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Dick and Jane*, or my personal favorite, Bible stories. There was also a book with lots of ladybugs on every page and as we read together I would find them all and count them. It did not matter what time of day it was because any time was a good time for reading with dad, especially right before bed. This time together became even more special when I started reading to dad. I cannot recall the books I began reading with but I cannot forget the excitement I had when I could show off to daddy what a big girl I was. I remember how proud he was of me and how he praised me for reading.

However, not all of my memories on dad's lap were perfectly positive. Unfortunately, my grandfather had a heart attack and passed away when I was

six years old. I remember the moment so vividly. My grandparents happened to be visiting us. The night it happened my grandma had screamed up the stairs that something was wrong while dad and I were spending time reading together. I remember us abruptly stopping my “Jesus” book and running downstairs. I was so young, confused and utterly frazzled as to what was going on. Yet, to this day [I] can remember where I was and what I was doing when that happened. Nevertheless, reading has always been something I liked to enjoy with someone. I have always been a people person and as a result always desired to take that adventure through books with others. (11/25/08)

As I read and reread Sally’s story, I recalled my own unforgettable lived moments I spent reading with my mother. I recall how those experiences affect who I am today. Often teacher education programs do not practice what they teach. We ask our pre-service teachers to be reflective, but only after we have told them how teaching should be done. Perhaps we need to allow time and space for pre-service teachers to walk alongside of us as makers of the curriculum in becoming a teacher. Autobiographical stories open up memories and space for pre-service teachers to share their beliefs and recognize the values they have been naming and telling in their story. In her story Sally recalls those exciting reading moments when her parents would share books with her. It reminds me of and reinforces what my mentor, Dr. Jim Guszak, taught me: “Reading is caught, not taught.” Kayla put her thoughts this way:

From taking the Developmental Reading course, I have been informed of so many literacy strategies, conflicts, questions, answers and resolutions that I did not even know existed. I feel that I am so much more aware of just how complex such a basic learning skill literacy can be. Many theories and practices of reading that I was taught growing up as being the right and most influential are actually some of the worst to use. I have also learned that there are so many philosophies of reading, that it can be overwhelming to know which philosophies are the most beneficial to become familiar with and implement in my classroom. At the same time, Developmental Reading has shown me that, although I am a teacher, I will not be teaching reading. It is a

complex process that is caught. I just need to make sure I am there for my students to make them the most successful readers that I can. (11/25/08)

Kayla goes on in her autobiography to think about the notion of round robin reading and how it goes against what we have been talking about in class. Round robin is the technique where each student takes a turn in reading a paragraph aloud. Kayla writes:

In middle school, I went through that phase where I was very quiet and shy, and I just hated reading aloud or just talking in class. I remember how nervous and tense I would get when the teacher would come into the classroom and say, “Okay, take out your Scholastic News packet and Sarah, start reading a paragraph and pass it on to another student”. Round Robin is what that was called, and I always felt like I would vomit if I was called on. I think I actually was more afraid and worried while waiting in anticipation, than I was when actually called on to read. (11/25/08)

Kayla’s story, as well as all the autobiographical histories from this assignment, focused on how past experiences made them *feel*, and on their current justification for using or not using the practice because of how it made them feel as a student and because it could now give their current students that same bad feeling. Kayla went on to explain how she believes these experiences will impact her life as a teacher.

Kayla: Based on all the reading experiences I have had in the past and what I have learned in all my education classes, I feel that I have a fairly firm foundation of what my reading philosophy is. As a teacher, I want to make reading fun and enjoyable by encouraging reading time in a positive way to help interest students. I know that when I am a teacher, I will not call on students to read out loud because it puts so much tension on them and I do not think that when they are reading aloud, they are focusing on the comprehension of what they are reading. Having students read aloud, especially without any kind of warning, is unfair and may turn them away from liking to read. I will do most of the reading out loud to the class and try

to set a good example by modeling reading aloud and to myself while the kids are reading. (11/25/08)

In this narrative you see Kayla stake a strong claim against what she will not do as a teacher: “I will not call on students to read out loud.” Amy’s language reveals her emerging teaching identity as she consciously speaks against a practice from her own educational history. By taking this stance she is doing her part to ensure that the practice will not be perpetuated. In the beginning of the excerpt we read how Amy is merging together her personal experiences and the education courses to bring forth the teacher she is becoming. In another portion of her educational history, Amy shifts her voice and perspective to that of a student as she talks about positive experiences she had as a student.

Kayla: With first grade came new challenges and steps in my literacy experiences and my identity as a reader. When it comes to reading the memory that sticks out from first and second grade was the enthusiasm for reading that my teacher had for herself. I remember seeing her after school reading her own books at her desk and she was an excellent model in that we as students would always see her with a book. Every day after lunch recess my first and second grade teacher would read to us for about twenty to thirty minutes. During that time there was nothing that we had to do. We could color, work on unfinished assignments, or just sit and listen. Although you may think that the students were distracted or were not paying attention I remember every book she read to us and some of them I have read countless times since then. She exposed me to the Laura Ingalls Wilder books and Beverly Cleary’s books about little Ramona. The love of reading was evident in my teacher when she cried when the dog drowned in *Little House on the Prairie* and when she really laughed at funny parts of any of the books. Her classroom was full books and as students we were free to borrow or browse through them as much as we wanted to. (11/25/08)

Speaking through the eyes of a student, Amy validates that children observe all we do and know who we are. From a student’s perspective, Amy shares with us the statement that children are impacted by every move we make in the classroom.

Amy saw that her teacher shared who she was as a teacher by sharing her emotions of crying and laughing. In recollecting her memory of being a student, Amy is noticing how a teacher can share her true self in the classroom by being who we truly are (Palmer, 1998).

Amy's identity and voice again shift to her role as a teacher in the narrative below. This excerpt is another example of the tendency to draw upon the emotive nature of experiences when constructing practices and identity. Below, Amy talks about herself as a future teacher. Based on her past experiences, Amy goes on to explain her emerging teaching philosophy this way:

As a future teacher and drawing upon my past experiences as a student I believe that a successful reading program contains an equal amount of both phonics and time set aside for individual reading and the whole language approach. When reading is approached both from bottom-up and top-down then students are given the greatest chance to succeed at reading. Students need to learn how to decode and break down the words that they read but they also must be able to comprehend what they read. A teacher can in this way individualize the lesson for each student and provide more decoding tools for the student that learns better that way and more opportunities for the student to focus on the whole language approach if that is what they need. (11/25/08)

Again Amy's identity and perspective as a teacher is emerging, likely from our Developmental Reading class, as well as from her own past experiences as a student, to strongly voice her beliefs about how she will teach. Amy reiterates that she will be teaching diverse students and seems to recognize that diverse students have different individual needs. Amy ends her autobiographical story highlighting the reflection process:

Through reflection about my past experiences with reading in school I have seen what is successful and what students need in a reading classroom. This semester my beliefs about reading have evolved and become more specific and focused on what students need from me as a teacher to create good

readers and I look forward to putting my beliefs and views into practice and seeing what students really need. (11/25/08)

In Amy's autobiographical story she makes a direct connection to the impact reflection has on the teacher she is becoming. The ability to reflect critically on our own assumptions is difficult yet vital. This process can make us consciously aware of our self, our beliefs, and how we teach. As Amy says, "I look forward to putting my beliefs and views into practice and seeing what students really need."

As I read the autobiographical stories of my students, I noticed similar emotion-based reactions from the life stories and their influence on their future practice as teachers. Building on Lortie (1975), Clandinin (1985), Carter and Doyle (1995), and others who have explored this area, the fact that the pre-service teacher attributes or justifies instructional decisions based on student-positioned emotional stories from their pasts indicates an important characteristic about who they are becoming as teachers. Sometimes, they construct their understanding of their own practice based not on what is taught in teacher education courses, but rather on how the specific practice made them *feel* when they were students. The educational history narratives also allowed my students the opportunity to make judgments, both positive and negative, about their past experiences and how this might impact their future actions as a teacher.

In a face-to-face interview, Amy responds to a question on the role of reflection in her life as a teacher.

Prof. Witt: Okay, one final question or thought. This interview process has been reflective, with looking back on what you said or wrote before and what you did as a tutoring teacher. What role do you think reflections play in your life as becoming a teacher, or as a student?

Amy: I guess as becoming a teacher to reflect on how I went through school and the things that I did through school, it's important to reflect on how teachers have taught you and to reflect on both the positive and negative experiences of teachers. Also, with the practicum, reflecting on what you've done with lessons, and how they worked well or not and using that same idea,

because it worked well in these past lessons, or which ones you need to modify. I think reflecting is the only way to improve your lesson skills or become more in tuned to what your students need. (11/03/08)

“I look forward to putting my beliefs and views into practice and seeing what students really need.” Amy’s words bring a bring smile to my face as I reflect back on my own beliefs and goals for my students. After graduating from college, I taught in several different Lutheran elementary schools in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Texas. In each classroom I entered, I thought about authentic learning and how I might help students open doors to real learning. I had students read and write things that I had not learned in school. I realized that creating these authentic learning opportunities took time. It was during those busy times that I resorted to giving the students busywork—worksheets and workbooks. I neglected to think about why. After long school days and long faculty meetings we can lose our perspective on what we believe about teaching and what it means to be a good teacher. As a young teacher I experienced the “uncertainties, the ambiguities, the contradictions, and the variability of the human enterprise that teaching is” (Dudley-Marling, 1997, p. 188). What sustained me during these times of crisis and doubt was the spiritual calling I believed I held as a teacher. I continually reminded myself of the aspirations I had about teaching for an eternity.

I hope that my students Amy, Hannah, Susan and others will have the strength and voice to sustain their belief in the importance of authentic teaching and learning.

“What If I Mess This Up?” My Biggest Fear

My consciousness returns to the first day of class in my undergraduate reading course. It is now time to look at the syllabus that the students picked up on their way into the room. I ask them to peruse the syllabus, objectives, goals, and assignments. I ask them to put a star next to something that they already feel comfortable with at this moment. I also ask them to circle something that is unknown, something that makes them anxious or nervous.

Part of the process in becoming a teacher and through this reflection process is to recognize and share our fears, doubts, and contradictions involved in being a teacher. Susan grapples with her fears in her weekly journal reflection about her practicum experience.

I think that this practicum has taught me a lot about becoming a teacher. It made me really reevaluate where I stand as a teacher. I hate to say this, but it made me question whether I really want to become a teacher. I feel like I have such a call to become a teacher, but I was struggling. (10/9/08)

Traveling down the reflective road in becoming a teacher can be difficult. This journey requires an introspective look at where we have been and where we are going. This reflective journey forced Susan to examine her taken for granted assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and our way of being. This reflective process can be a struggle. As Susan states, "It made me reevaluate where I stand as a teacher." Yet to go through this reflective process can be a form of empowerment, as we realize we can take control of who we are in the classroom.

Becoming a teacher is a struggle, especially when we begin to realize that teaching is more than just a technique or method. When we neglect the third leg of the stool, our identity as a teacher, we begin to falter. Our teaching identity is about who we are and also about continually reexamining our calling as teachers. Yet sometimes our own fears and expectations can drive us away from our calling. In one of our first online discussion sessions I prompted the dialogue with this question: "Please draw on what you have read in our textbook, discussed in class, and observed in your life as a student. What is your biggest fear about 'becoming' a teacher?" (11/7/08). Susan responded with these words:

I think that it is only natural that we have fears about becoming teachers. We are going to be teaching children, who are going to grow up and become productive members of society. I constantly think to myself, "What if I mess this up, I am going to be setting them up for failure later on in life." I have many fears that I won't be a good teacher that somehow I will mess these children up. I want to be creative, but what if I am not creative enough. What

if I don't fully understand something, I can't very well teacher [*sic*] something that I don't fully understand. I also fear that I won't be able to teach the various learners in my classroom. It's hard enough to teach one child, but having to teach a whole class full of different learners is difficult. What if you miss someone? How will it affect them? I think I need more confidence with my skills and hopefully my future classes will help prepare me for the road ahead. (9/5/08)

Susan is brave enough to share her doubts and concerns with her fellow classmates. In her response you see Susan wrestling with the deep issues involved in being a teacher. In this tension I see the awakening of Susan's teaching identity. She recognizes the impact a teacher has. She also senses the consequences of failure. Susan is interrogating her inner being. Teaching is a frightening calling. Part of taking on the calling of being a teacher is to ask the very questions that Susan does. Through this process she is reaching out for help. Too often in the classroom the teacher is alone and isolated from the support, encouragement, and help of others. During the Blackboard discussion, Michelle relates to Susan's thoughts and offers some advice.

I can totally relate to you on having to teach a whole classroom rather than just one child. That's another fear of mine. But once we get into more education classes and in the field, I think it will become easier and less stressful. (9/5/08)

Does it become easier and less stressful? As a teacher for almost twenty years, I do not think it gets easier, but I think I have become more confident in knowing what I do and why I do it. But during this online student discussion I keep my voice quiet so that my students might learn to lean on their teaching peers. Another pre-service teacher, Kathy, offers Michelle her support and some guiding advice.

I think it's important to understand that most of us are thinking the exact same thing that you are and that we are all in the process of learning. What seems impossible to us now we will eventually succeed in because of our studies and more importantly, our hands-on experiences. There is so much more for us to

learn and reflect on and you will get so many great ideas that you won't have enough time to do everything you want to. You're going to do great. (9/8/08)

In the above discourse the pre-service teachers are constructing their understanding of becoming a teacher. This online student-led discussion gives my pre-service teachers space to explore their own learning and teaching identities with others and seems to help them come to see themselves as real teachers imagining their hopes and goals for the future. They are supporting and helping each other as their self-understanding and self-efficacy grow. These teachers recognize that words of affirmation and encouragement in the classroom boost the confidence of any student.

In a one-on-one conversation I continued to explore with Susan this struggle:

Prof. Witt: Do you have any other comments as you continue on your journey? I'm interested in the honest tension you shared. Because when we talked earlier, you talked about teaching being a calling.

Susan: Yes, I think that everyone is going to have struggles, both low points and high points. Even if you're a hundred percent certain in something, you're going to reflect and say, "Hey, is this really something I'm going to do?" But you can get through it.

Prof. Witt: I think that's important to realize, because, as in your analogy, you're going to have sunny and rainy days, and there will be times when you don't feel like dealing with it. Have you had those experiences?

Susan: Yes, I think I did. Especially when they're not taking to you and they're not focusing and they're not doing what you tell them to do. That is like a rainy day and you just want to kind of give up.

Prof. Witt: What do you think will sustain you through those days?

Susan: I think the small successes. Them sitting down for a whole forty-five minutes is a huge success. That made me think, okay, I can do this now. I think those little successes have been the most important.

Prof. Witt: What we've been doing here has been critically reflecting through your journals and our talk at your last interview. What role do you think reflection has had on you as you work towards becoming a teacher?

Susan: It makes me more certain that I want to do this. I think about where I want to be. I thought about where I saw myself ten years from now. Married with kids? Teaching? Where? It's important to have those opportunities to sit down and reflect on these opportunities. (11/03/08)

Fast forwarding to my current career of teaching future teachers at Lakeshore Lutheran University, I realize that I still struggle, doubt, and reevaluate what I am doing. I have left behind a conservative Lutheran synod which I now sense rigidly constrained my faith and belief yet gave me my Christian faith. I now stand as a part of Lakeshore Lutheran University. Lakeshore is a member of a large network of universities within a large Lutheran synod. This synod is much larger than the former conservative synod I was a part of and is more diverse. Yet the tension in this Lutheran institution still remains, as evidenced through my teaching and research perspectives at my university. So it seems, as my student Hannah noted, I am different than other teachers on campus. "I think that, opposed to a lot of teachers on campus, it [my teaching identity] was very different....Not only do I want to know who these teachers are, but I want to challenge them to the next level." (2/05/09)

My Spiritual Identity – The Inner Meets the Outer

It seems that as an "other," I am living in a paradox. In my life I believe it is vitally important to be consistent in all that I do and in all that I am. As a Christian I am committed to a perspective that believes the words Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Yet as a scholar I am committed to a radical search for truth that embraces particularity and uncertainty, knowing and not knowing. So a dilemma that I am wrestling with is how can my identity as a Christian, as a scholar, and as a teacher come into sync with one another? Possibly I stand in the space where these intersect. From my constructivist perspective I would argue that no single ideology is any more compelling than any other. But as a constructivist I also believe that Christianity deserves a place at the academic table alongside the rest of the guests. Christian theology has always claimed that all human beings are finite and sinful and caught in a web of our own limitations. I believe our perspective is limited and clouded by sin. It is at this point that I can reconcile how the Christian faith and postmodernism (or post-structuralism) can work together.

So then I wonder what it might mean to teach and research from a combined Christian and constructivist perspective. I believe that it means to teach and research from a perspective of wonder. This is a wonder and amazement at the world we live in. It is also wonder that elicits a curiosity about how I might teach. This is very important to me as a teacher and as a teacher of future teachers. I do not believe that I can present my students with a one-size-fits-all prescriptive method for teaching. I believe it is my job to inspire wonder, to stimulate discussion, to awaken imaginations, to share what I have learned and what I am learning through my research. One realization that I am coming to is that my commitment to my Christian, Lutheran faith need not depend on certainty in knowledge. Therefore, as I look to understand my teaching identity, I believe that I must also understand the religious tradition that has formed and shaped me. The Lutheran faith has given me an eternal hope in Jesus. Yet it has also created a paradox of truth. In my continuing research I have stumbled upon a book by Daniel Taylor, *The Myth of Certainty* (1986). Taylor grew up in a fundamentalist Christian church. He discovered that his fellow Christians typically prized both certainty and orthodoxy, and prized them in oppressive ways. Taylor struggled with the fact that he was not allowed to question the church, its beliefs, or its practices. He discovered that “questioning the institution...was synonymous, for many, with attacking God” (p. 29). Years later as a graduate student, and then as a young professor, he discovered that same oppressive reality in the context of the American academy. He further discovered that those who embraced secular orthodoxies often punish those who dare to question their legitimacy.

Taylor’s struggle seems to parallel my own journey outside the traditional form of research as I look to find hope in teaching. Knowing myself has begun to help me see what inspires me. I see now as I continue to be a life-long learner that I am undergoing a life-long task of unlearning. I realize that when I am teaching at my best I am teaching who I am and what my beliefs are.

Through my faith and struggles I have come to understand much more about myself than about my church. For spiritual guidance I rely on the words from the Holy Bible. Through my spiritual journey, I have come to realize that through these words God told me his story. I have come to understand that he never expects me to

be anything but myself. God speaks to us, young or old, from our point of view and in a way we can understand. He spoke to the woman at the well about drinking water and to the lawyer about the weightier matters of the law. But he never speaks like a lawyer to the woman at the well, or to little children in words only an adult could grasp. The fishermen of Galilee knew exactly what was involved when he said, "Launch out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." He appeared as the Bread of Life to the famished, and as the giver of rest to weary souls. He is the bridegroom to the unloved and unwanted, and the physician to the sick and wounded. He is the way to those who are lost and gone astray, and the door to others who are always on the outside looking in. To the mourners in the house at Bethany, Christ comes with just the right words: "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Transformed

This process of spiritual reflection has helped me to know. What is interesting to me is that this process has a long history in the Catholic and Lutheran church bodies. Through this process of confession and debriefing the church member not only receives forgiveness but has an opportunity to make sense of the lived experience. I need to ask students for forgiveness for the time I had them waste, because I too handed out reading worksheets and have used spelling books. I have wasted the time of my students and not let them be themselves. I believe that this occurred because I stopped asking myself, "Why I am doing this? Why am I having my students do this?" Today I want my students who are becoming teachers to realize that teaching is a complicated and evolving process. I also hope to have them see how theory and practice are linked together. I want them to stop in the middle of the teaching day and silently ask themselves, "Why am I doing this?"

Reflecting on this research process and writing about my own becoming has been a daily transformative process. I have come to learn more about the self in me and how I am continuing to become a teacher by connecting the inside self with how and why I teach. I believe that this is my job, as a teacher of future teachers, to move them to think about their own becoming. I want them to grapple with the theory and practice in their profession, and at this crossroads they might find their self. Students arrive in my class as students, not yet teachers. I have undertaken the job of helping them get there. It is the goal of the university's education program that these students

end their program identifying themselves as teachers. This process is a process of becoming. Deborah Britzman (1991), in her work with pre-service teachers, describes the qualitative difference between achieving an identity in contrast to playing a role: “The newly arrived teacher learns early on that whereas role can be assigned, the taking up of an identity is a constant and tricky social negotiation” (54). When I play a role, I am not teaching. Parker Palmer (1998) states it this way, “The teacher within is not the voice of conscience but of identity and integrity. It speaks not of what ought to be but of what is real for us, of what is true” (30).

For educators, then, the challenge is two-fold. Not only do we want our students, future teachers themselves, to think creatively and recognize themselves as positive agents within the context of teaching, but also we want them to provide opportunities for their elementary students to develop a deep, personal connection with reading, science, math, and history.

What has most profoundly affected me is to realize and recognize my own values and beliefs about teaching. I have also come to understand that the values and beliefs I cling to were taught to me discretely and hidden. Through this research I have been able to unearth the values and beliefs that have become deposited into my own being. I believe that my being was like a scorched desert, hard and cracked and almost impossible to break through with a shovel. The writing and research process has been the shovel that has allowed me to lift and turn the soil so that fresh, black, living soil has risen to the top. Through the interview process with my students and through reading my students’ autobiographical stories I have been able to see, in turn, my own students unearth their hidden values and beliefs. These narratives allowed me to understand their experiences and beliefs as interconnected and interrelated systems, rather than as isolated pieces. Research suggests (Pajares, 1992) that this systematic understanding of beliefs gives a more accurate picture of how individuals construct, evaluate, and change their beliefs (Drake et al., 2001, p. 3).

However, belief in something does not necessarily translate into practice (Haney, Czerniak, & Lumpe, 1996) nor do changes in beliefs necessarily transform into changes in practice. As Bryan and Atwater (2002) suggest, examining prospective teachers’ beliefs about teaching seems to be an important first step in

“getting them to think about the creation of inquiry-based learning environments,” but “more research is needed in exploring how these beliefs translate into practice” (p. 189). I argue that an even deeper, more personal commitment to understanding who we are as teachers and why we teach the way we do is needed. Jersild (1995) stated it this way:

The search for meaning is not a search for an abstract body of knowledge, or even for a concrete body of knowledge. It is a distinctly personal search. The one who makes it raises intimate personal questions: What really counts, for me? What values am I seeking? What, in my existence as a person, in my relations with others, in my work as a teacher, is of real concern to me, perhaps of ultimate concern to me? In my teaching I seek to transmit the meanings others have found in their search for truth, and that is good as far as it goes. But as I try to help young people discover meaning, have I perhaps evaded the question of what life might mean to me? How can I, in my study and my teaching and in the countless topics that engage my thought, find a home within myself? (p. 5)

Today as I look back at my stories I realize the storytelling has nudged me to evaluate more critically and even change long-held beliefs about teaching and life. My hopes and desires for education go much deeper than they once did. As a young teacher I was concerned mostly with classroom management techniques and getting through the textbook by the end of the year. It seems that politicians and leading experts often have all the answers to turning around our flawed educational system. But those who remain on the front lines of the educational field long enough have seen it all. “The motion picture is destined to revolutionize our educational system and...in a few years it will supplant the use of textbooks,” said Thomas Edison in 1912. Twenty-three years later, a Cleveland school administrator, William Levenson, predicted another scenario: “The time may come when a portable radio receiver will be as common in the classroom as is the blackboard.” In the 1960’s, psychologist B. F. Skinner said, “With the help of teaching machines and programmed instruction, students can learn twice as much.” But access to more information does not necessarily lead to more learning. More recently, No Child Left Behind legislation was enacted. Now our students and teachers spend an enormous amount of time

preparing to take the test. Information is not synonymous with education, and tools of the trade are not the trade. Like the shop teacher said, “I teach carpentry, not hammer.” No replacement has yet been found for an inspired, inspiring teacher who has in his heart a love for his students and his subject.

Reaching Beyond

Being an inspiring teacher who is given a voice in the classroom curriculum is a powerful move. Bill Ayers (2001) talks about how we can inspire teachers through liberating the curriculum. Ayers suggests that teachers start asking themselves the following questions in order to reach beyond the canned and scripted curriculum. “1) Are there opportunities for discovery and surprise? 2) Are students actively engaged with primary sources and hands-on materials? 3) Is productive work going on? 4) Is work in my classroom pursued to its far limits?” (p. 91).

Sally, one of my pre-service teachers, shared a story about her seventh grade science teacher. As you read Sally’s story keep those questions in mind.

I remember in 7th grade we were doing intense anatomy stuff such as bones and muscles. Specific, detailed things that I didn’t think I could handle at the 7th grade age. But he really seemed to challenge us in extending that knowledge. Taking that content and stretching it to a higher grade level. And so, when I had to take anatomy in high school, having that prior knowledge was very helpful to me, and some people had not had that at their school.
(2/05/09)

Sally continues to tell us about how her science teacher worked hard to reach beyond.

He had handouts that we colored. Each color, whatever color, could represent whether it was a muscle, and if it was a muscle if it was an arm muscle, or a leg muscle. Or, just coloring the different parts and being able to label them. He’d give us a blank sheet where we could practice on and point to muscles and find that. He also had Fred, which was our skeleton. We were very blessed to have him. I know that maybe not all schools have skeletons, but we did have one and so we could come up and point to where bones were on

Fred. And so, *we had that opportunity of teaching science too*. I think also, though, I really have a love for science, because it seems very mathematical to me, and I've always been very confident in math. But we did things like dissecting animals. I remember we dissected a baby shark in 7th grade. And I know a lot of kids are like, "Dissecting, ewe! I don't want to do that!" But for a small Lutheran school I thought we were very blessed to be able to say that we had done something like that. And so, he worked very hard to reach beyond, "Okay, we're a small school, we're just going to accept that mediocrity and teach what we can teach." But, "How can we get fun? How can we get grants?" And say, "Hey, my 7th graders dissected something." Or "Hey! We now have a classroom microscope lab for each group instead of maybe just one microscope lab for a classroom of maybe 20 kids." So, we did have the opportunity to be actively engaged where we could be kinesthetic learners and feel around. (2/05/09)

As I read and reread Sally's vivid description a few thoughts jump off the page. First of all, who is teaching? It seems this science teacher has clearly answered the questions Ayers (2001) poses. The teacher has created a learning environment that is engaging, interesting, and productive. The teacher also pushes the students to the farthest limits. As Sally says, "He worked very hard to reach beyond." This teacher worked to reach beyond worksheets and lectures. The students moved to the front of the class and took their turn at teaching. The teacher was not concerned about teaching to the test and making the standards. He and his students were concerned about learning. The teacher and students were connected to science. By reaching beyond, the teacher and students were working together toward a common goal and interest. Working together, not accepting mediocrity, having fun, and learning. In this description you hear nothing of vocabulary words and science workbooks. Yet the students are experiencing science and literacy. I do not know Sally's teacher, but in her description I can see his teaching identity jump off the page. By asking ourselves Ayers's penetrating questions, we can begin to liberate the curriculum, begin to empower students, and connect to a deeper calling as teachers.

This feeling of personal connection is one of the difficult truths about teaching that Palmer examines. He writes that what we teach will never become part

of our students' lives unless it connects with our students on a personal, innermost level. "If it is important to get students inside a subject, it is equally important to get the subject inside the students" (Palmer, 1990, p. x).

As we continue to think about Sally's seventh grade science teacher, she goes on to talk about how she is taught science at the university level. Notice this contrast:

During science class here at college we are usually sitting and taking notes. And usually in a dark classroom. It was an 8 o'clock class, and so that's tough too as a college student! A dark classroom and you're taking notes. But, that's kind of how our style of class was. And, I had the same professor for both classes, Life Science and Physical Science, which is part of the curriculum here for elementary ed. (2/05/09)

Sally goes on to explain how her university level class did link back to her seventh grade science class:

We had lab every Wednesday and those were often active, as far as, we did do a similar lab where we took a look at onion cells where it was dissecting and stained for us so we could take a look at that. Also, we did do a lab where we looked at the different stages of mitosis and meiosis and comparing that sort of thing. *And it was funny, because we had done something like that in seventh grade* [emphasis added]. And it wasn't to that level, but we had done something like that.

The other days *were strictly lecture* [emphasis added] through Power Point. And for me, I struggled to sit through an hour and a half of lecture on science. With science, I think there are so many active ways through which you can learn it. (2/05/09)

The contrast is notable. I wonder if this teacher has asked the penetrating questions. Is this work productive and engaging? Is there opportunity for discovery? Are the students asked to reach beyond? I recall Hannah's description of the two types of teachers:

The definition of a teacher that goes through the college classes where technically they know how to teach the kids and gives tests, and maybe they know a lot about history so they're going to be a history teacher. But, they jump into the school system and they don't teach kids. In a sense, they're just spewing out the knowledge that they have. And the kids aren't learning much. And then, there are those teachers who may not have all the history or math, but they go to college and learn the basics and learn how to, in a sense, manipulate that curriculum and learn from themselves. Because, in a sense, a teacher can teach anything that they may not even know the subject for. It takes the passion and the leadership qualities that they have either learned through their parents or through a role model in their life and being able to manipulate that into any sort of subject area. (2/05/09)

Hannah has evoked her teaching identity first by describing the teacher that she is not. Then she talks about the teacher she is becoming. She is a teacher that can teach any subject. Hannah is going through the process of naming who she is not and who she is. This negotiation is identity construction in action.

We Are How We Teach

What we do demonstrates who we are as a teacher. As I penetrate even deeper I recognize that a teacher must consider their true calling and ask if teaching is “the place of their deep gladness” (Buechner, as cited in Palmer, 1998, p. 30). In defining a teacher and what we do in the classroom it comes down to our identity.

Is this profession my vocation? Am I gifted and called to do it? Is this vocation a place of intersection between my inner self and the outer world, or is it someone else's image of what my life should be? If this vocation is not mine, no matter how externally valued the profession is, it will do violence to the self—in the precise sense that it violates my identity and integrity. (Palmer, 1998, p. 30)

In seizing our calling as teachers we must look at everything we do in the classroom. As teachers we must decide who we want to be and what we value. A teaching identity is connected to ourselves, our students, and the subject at hand. To

teach does mean that we touch the future. We affect the stories our own students will tell. To teach is to enable others to be empowered, to succeed, and to make choices. Therefore, in teaching we must make learning relevant and powerful. Too often the constraints of the institution, the administration, or the curriculum reduce teaching to a role in which we spew forth information that students must memorize. Memorizing and reciting this information without this personal connection leads to students who do not want to challenge themselves or think creatively or who do not envision themselves as active agents within these contexts (Palmer, 1998). In an interview with Hannah, she talks with me about the college-level science class she had last semester and how she, the science, the teacher, and the learning did not connect. As you become part of the dialogue below, think about how Hannah realizes the curriculum and how it connects directly to who the teacher is. Hannah begins this narrative by talking about her Life Science class. She points out that they were required to memorize seventy science vocabulary words.

Hannah: Those random words you often have a hard time connecting. Being able to connect is important...I think it'd really be important for as much hands-on as possible. I think the negative to the science last semester was that they would do all this hands-on stuff and teach you all this information but then they would test on the minor concepts. The very specifics which are very important but you have to cement in the generals and make sure they know. And so, I think it's very important to make it very clear to your students what they are going to be tested on.

Professor Witt: You didn't know which ones were going to be taken?

Hannah: Right. And the other thing with the vocabulary is that they didn't give you the definitions. They gave you a word bank of seventy-some words, you make your own definition, and we're testing you on it.

Professor Witt: So, you had to find the definitions and you hope it matches the test?

Hannah: Right, and so it was like, "Okay, I can try to pull these out from the science book." But there were certain terms that weren't in there. And so it was like, "Okay, maybe this is from a lab." And so, it was really hard to guess what you were going to be tested on.

Professor Witt: So, what would you have done?

Hannah: It was fill in the blank. We didn't have a word bank for the vocab test. And so, I had to pull out of the seventy-four words I had made up definitions for on my own. I had spent more time studying for that test than I have ever in my life.

Professor Witt: And so, there were seventy-four words, and you were tested on twenty of them?

Hannah: Yes. Having to pull those out [of the air]. Yes it's important to know what a prokaryotic cell is, but reality tells you most of the time you're going to at least pull it from somewhere. But how many times do you just have to know it from nowhere.

Professor Witt: So that teaching style to me really doesn't seem like how you should teach.

Hannah: No. I think that it would've been very helpful to either...I mean, I created seventy-two flashcards in my bag...

At this moment in the interview, Hannah hesitated in her answer because of a tension with the interview being video- and audio-taped, which I didn't recognize at the time. I sensed her frustration but I did not realize the tension was very deep. Hannah realizes that what we are discussing about this science class is connected directly to the science teacher. Britzman (1991) states: "Most teaching academics believe they have learned to teach on their own" (p.39).

After the interview, and when the video-tape was shut off, Hannah turned to me as she was leaving my office. She looked me in the eye and said, "I didn't tell the truth." I was stunned. I wondered aloud what she meant. She went on to say that because the interview was being taped and she was a student here she could not tell me the full truth about this science class. As I read over her comments I wondered what truths she was withholding and why was she afraid to tell the truth. What a critical moment in creating space for a community of truth.

"I didn't tell the truth" is a revealing statement. Later that semester I asked Hannah what she had meant by that statement. She told me that it in order to get through school; students have to follow the system. As a pre-service teacher Hannah recognizes that she needs to keep her head low. This seems to be how you remain a

teacher. Hannah realizes that she is not in a position of authority, and it is frightening to think that she is afraid of the repercussions that might follow. But this is very real. It is part of the culture that teachers and students face. Hannah is learning deep lessons as a pre-service teacher. In a real sense we teach and learn in a climate of fear. Students and teachers are caught between feelings of power and powerlessness by a system that affords administrators and politicians more influence than teachers in classrooms. Hannah is being trained to be passive and keep quiet. We are afraid to speak up, but why? It is because those who have assumed positions of influence and power are afraid of hearing something that might challenge or change the system? Even in our higher education institutions we are perpetuating the myth that in order to get by you need to comply. This compliance kills the love of learning and flattens the creativity and curiosity of students and teachers.

As you dig even deeper it is evident that this culture of compliance is rooted in a “culture of fear” (Palmer, 2000). My student, Hannah, recognizes that her science teacher is not making use of sound educational principles, yet she must quietly follow the lead—just as my young fourth grade daughter Hannah must comply in her classroom and fill in the bubbles. My daughter is no longer motivated to read for enjoyment and fun, but rather reads out of a fear, in order to pass a test. Hannah the college student is driven to not speak out against a random testing of science vocabulary words.

This culture of fear is often hidden from our view. Teachers and pre-service teachers need to spend time reflecting, talking, and writing about our teaching identity. Through this process we might begin to see how the inner and outer collide. As we peel away the layers and recognize our identity as a teacher we might clearly see that school is about learning. But what are we learning and what are teaching? Until we dig deeply into this big question of “why is it that way?” we will continue to comply and not ask why.

Hannah has a suggestion for us on how we might navigate through this culture of fear:

I would view that instead of teaching kids to be good test takers, it's more important to teach kids how to problem solve or to teach kids how to solve problems that they may not understand. Instead of just relying on, "Teacher, what's the answer?" "What do you think the answer should be?" or "*Why is it that way?*" [emphasis added] and then maybe directing them into a better way of finding it, or these are good resources of how you can find an answer, instead of someone else simply telling them the answer because they need to get it right on the test. And so, I guess the disagreements which could occur between the passion I see for teaching and the way someone else is taught how a teacher should be. And so, I guess I just disagree with some curriculum and that. (02/05/09)

You can see Hannah resisting the culture of fear by imagining how her classroom might be. As Britzman (1991) points out, this process is helping Hannah become an author and interpreter of her experience. As the author of this experience, and through the process of self-analysis, a space has been opened for Hannah to ask, "Why is it that way?" Examining this experience not only helps to raise deep questions but also helps Hannah understand theories and perspectives behind the experience. This struggle and contradiction of beliefs about education is helping Hannah gain a voice as a teacher. Likewise, as I heard and now read Hannah's account I am driven to think about myself and the struggles I have gone through in gaining my voice and teaching identity.

Hannah is also drawing on Palmer's (2000) community of truth. Palmer suggests that a community of truth occurs when the teacher and the students gather around the subject and share perspectives and develop a connectedness. Hannah hopes to bring this community to her classroom. Hannah believes she needs to empower her students to take ownership of their own learning.

Prof. Witt: So, as you think of stepping more formally into the classroom, what would you say right now is your fear, or fears?

Hannah: The main thing...kids don't give me fear...but I would say, possibly, in a sense, the system. Because of it becoming so test-oriented and because of No Child Left behind I think that the revisions that it will take....And I think that's part of a quality of teachers that has to be there. To be able to adapt to wherever they're at. To realize, "Hey, if I show myself faithful in this area, then I can make an impact above teaching level and above that administration level." But I think it's important to adapt to your situation at first and to realize that you can build credibility or respect in that way.
(2/5/09)

Palmer (2000) believes that one of the major constraints on this community of truth is the culture of fear. In a culture of fear there is a disconnect between the teacher, the students, and the subject. There is a fear that someone might have a different perspective or tell a different truth. In Hannah's answer you see that her perspective of good teaching goes against this culture of fear and our current test-driven culture of schools. This fear is clearly linked to the identity of the teacher. The teacher may be afraid to let go of his principles and beliefs that have informed what we do and say in the classroom.

I hope that our teacher education program can continue to nurture Hannah's passion and support her transformative voice for a community of truth. As we support pre-service teachers in gaining their teaching identity it is important that we nudge students to notice how school works and then ask them to think about what students do each moment in the classroom. Making space for honest dialogue and critical reflection will help students to gain their voice as teachers as we make room for new perspectives and more voices. Critical reflection helped Hannah make the shift from seeing things as a student to viewing learning through the eyes of the teacher she is becoming.

The Connections We Make

In my Developmental Reading class, I propose to the students that in each subject they teach, an understanding of literacy is important. In the recent research literature

on teaching identities, few studies have examined how teachers' identities are interconnected with the subjects they teach (Spillane, 2000). However, a study by Drake, Spillane, and Hufferd-Ackles (2001) examined the role of elementary teachers' identities as teachers and learners in subject-specific contexts. Using observations and interviews, these researchers found that the subject matter of mathematics and of literacy acts as essential context for the construction of teacher identity. They noted that different self-identities had important consequences for teachers' efforts to transform their teaching practices. This research highlights the need to understand how identity in relationship to subject matter plays an important role in how subject matter is taught.

Pre-service teachers' stories and beliefs about literacy and content subjects are another window into their emerging teaching identities. During my interview process I asked my students to reflect on how they were taught literacy and science and how these experiences might affect them as a teacher. The stories my students told me about their experiences with literacy and science helped me to understand their sense of self and identity (Bruner 1990). I believe these stories have also helped these pre-service teachers construct their teaching identities and see how their current beliefs about teaching do not match how they were and are being taught. There was one clear difference in the stories the pre-service teachers told me about literacy and science. It seems the pre-service teachers viewed reading (literacy) as a subject that they learned both in and out of school. Amy shared these words:

My first literacy experiences were very positive ones. Like many young children my parents read to me most nights from a very young age. I especially remember nights lying on my parent's bed and my dad reading to me and usually falling asleep as he did so. One of my favorite books was *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*, but some nights as my dad would fall asleep the story would change and I remember waking him up saying, "That's not what the story says." Of course my favorite books were read numerous times and one such book my parents read to me so much that by the time I was ready for preschool I could tell you the whole book word for word from memory and my parents would just turn the pages for me. Another literacy experience that

I had as a young child was the hymnal and church. We attended church every Sunday and I listened to my parents sing and speak through each service and slowly I became familiar with parts of the liturgy and could sing them from memory. (11/25/08)

Amy talks about how her growth in literacy occurred at home, in church, and at school. Students such as Amy are able to see the authentic value of Developmental Reading based on their experiences both inside and outside of school. On the other hand, nearly all of my pre-service teachers told me stories about science that happened only in school, except for Hannah, my home-schooled student.

When my pre-service teachers told me inspirational and positive science stories they never used words such as *real world*, *nature*, or *authentic learning* to describe their science experiences. However, the pre-service teachers did perceive in their positive experiences the connections across the curriculum. Does it not seem odd that these prospective teachers did not recount any stories about how science connected to the world outside of school, especially in relation to their home life? Yet children are naturally curious about the world around them. Watch how young children explore, investigate, and ask questions. When I was a child I spent my summer vacation building forts, catching fireflies at night, and looking for living things under any rock. Science is the wonder of nature around us. In school, however, science tends to be taught as an isolated body of knowledge that is part of the mandated curriculum and standards. Science is viewed largely as something that happens in the classroom lab. And thus students become most concerned with following the lab recipe and passing the test. It is my contention that the test-driven climate in the United States pushes aside the wonder and curiosity of nature.

In the excerpt below, from a face-to-face interview, Sally talks about making connections. Sally, a college sophomore, almost always had a warm, wide smile on her face. She was vibrant and outgoing. She knew the names of everyone in my class and appeared to be at ease talking with me and with any of the students in class. She had a positive outlook on most everything she talked about. She was particularly

fond of her middle school science teacher. In a face-to-face interview with Sally, she talks about making connections in science, math, literacy, and across the curriculum.

For me, I think obviously is to present those subjects in their individual area but to not only do that but to realize that when you teach science you don't have to just teach science. It doesn't mean that you don't have to bring books in or you can't use numbers. Not to just strictly say, "Okay, we're in a math class today. We can't have any books in here." Or, "We're in a history class today. We can't have any videos in here." Something like that. But to be able to have those connections. It's bridging those areas and taking a look at people from the past, like our early presidents. What were they good at? What did they like to do? Can you identify with any of them? Can you say, "Hey, I was kind of like Lincoln, I grew up in the country." Or I say that science idea happens outside. It's making those connections and personalizing it. Because I think when I as a student make connections, those are the things that I remember. I remember dissecting. I remember, as a freshman in college in Math 119 she read, "You are Special" by Max Lucado to us. Did that have anything to do with math? No, but then again, it was, "Hey, you are special!" And bringing that identity back into the subject. And I think that that's kind of a subject in itself. And I think that's a big part especially when we look at kids in middle school, not that the younger kids don't have an identity to be creative as well, but at that middle school age they do have those, "Who am I? What are my beliefs? Am I special?" And maybe they need someone to tell them that. Maybe they need to hear that. (2/28/09)

As a pre-service teacher Sally recognizes the need for the teacher to help students to make connections across the curriculum. The connections, personalization, and integration of science, children's literature, math and history can help students find relevancy in their learning and in this way have a deeper and more meaningful learning experience. Sally realizes that her teaching identity is connected to the identity of her students, as she says students also ask, "Who am I? What are my beliefs? Am I special?" And so, as a teacher, Sally hopes to build bridges and

make connections by providing opportunities that draw upon a variety of resources. She explains:

When I took Children's Literature, our professor encouraged, "Hey, have you ever thought of using a book to teach the information which may be tough stuff and to kind of bring it to an understandable, enjoyable level?" When we did those methods with the first and third graders, it was that goal, "Hey, can you find a book to go along with eyes or ears that might make that connection for them?" So, providing those connections, or providing opportunities for kids to make those connections. Not just me making connections for them but providing those as well. (2/28/09)

Sally has taken what she is learning in her teacher education program and is applying it to her identity as a teacher: "We did those methods with the first and third graders" during our practicum sessions. I suggest that we need to take the next step and provide these connections and build these bridges in authentic situations. As a teacher of reading, I advocate to my students authentic teaching in reading and writing. I must also ask them to think about how authentic learning can occur across the curriculum both inside and outside of the classroom.

During another face to face interview Hannah and I were talking about her college science class and the approaching final exam where the students had to memorize four hundred science terms. I could sense Hannah's complete frustration with the science content and teacher. "Yes...it's important to know what a prokaryotic cell is, but... reality tells you most of the time you're going to at least pull it from somewhere. But how many times do you just have to know it from nowhere." In this emotional conversation, Hannah evoked her teaching identity first by describing the teacher that she is not, "spewing out the knowledge." Then she talks about the teacher she is becoming, showing "passion and leadership qualities." She is a teacher who can teach any subject with passion. Hannah has gone through

the process of naming who she is not and who she is by building on the experiences she has gone through. This emotional negotiation is identity construction in action.

It seems to me that such a disconnect from nature and the world is disempowering. Furthermore, it seems that the disconnect between science and the world has impacted the global ecological crisis we currently face. I believe it is time to radically revise and revision schools for the sake of the children. As Hannah illustrated, and as I see when I step into classrooms today, schools often do not equal authentic education.

Nature and science in the classroom are different. Nature is the creation that surrounds us and science is the wonder and connectedness we have with the creation. Science is our human attempt to bring forth an explanation and patterns to the natural world around us. Science is the study of nature. Science is not a synonym for nature. Scientific theories are created and limited to our human ideas. Science changes as observations are made and data is collected and interpreted from different perspectives by different people coming to new understandings in an attempt to explain nature. Science should not be reduced to four hundred vocabulary words on a test. It seems to me the single item that separates science from nature is the teacher, the scientist, the human. Perhaps the teacher is the missing link in connecting science to nature. To link these together, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi states that the aim of education should be for the teacher to bring the student to nature.

Pestalozzi was not simply an educational theorist; he practiced what he preached. His school at Yverdon stood in dramatic contrast to other schools in early nineteenth-century Europe, where beatings, endless recitation, and harsh teachers were common. At Pestalozzi's school, children were treated with respect and kindness, given tasks equal to their abilities, and above all taught by word and by example that love in its most generous, selfless form is important. He said,

I wish to wrest education from the outworn order of doddering old teaching hacks as well as from the new-fangled order of cheap, artificial teaching tricks, and entrust it to the eternal powers of nature herself, to the light which God has kindled and kept alive in the hearts of fathers and mothers, to the interests of parents who desire their children grow up in favour with God and with men. (Silber, 1965, p. 134)

Parker Palmer, Marcy Jackson, Rick Jackson, and David Sluyter (2001) contend:

Good teachers possess much more than information and technique. They possess “a capacity for connectedness.” They offer up soul, or selfhood, as the loom on which to weave a fabric of connectedness between themselves, their students, their subjects, and the world. (pp. 132-133)

As Pestalozzi suggested, the teacher can lead the student into nature to see how it is connected to science. Hurd (2002) contends that science learning should be connected to students’ interactions with life and living—a “lived curriculum” (p. 7). Good teachers bring a connectedness to the world we inhabit. Good teachers understand that science is an attempt to neatly explain what is happening around us. The difference between science and nature rests in the history that has gone before us. Nature and the world are phenomena that are limited by our human explanations. Throughout the course of history the development of science has been in constant change. Historical insights into the changing theories of science help us understand the limitations of science. With historical reflection and insight we see the rise and fall of scientific theories and then critically measure the current theories that we are being taught.

Nature is real, but our science is limited and always changing. When I look into classrooms today I see the content being taught, the standards being met, and the

tests being taken. What I often do not see is that light and love of learning and the connections and relevancy to the wonder of the world that surrounds us. If a move towards an educational reformation is needed, we should lean on the likes of Pestalozzi as we bring a love and connectedness not only to what we do as teachers but to what our children do as students and how we inhabit and understand nature. Sally goes on to comment about how she hopes to instill the sense of wonder and inquiry into her students, especially the girls:

I can just see someday down the road doing an experiment with girls and hearing them say, “Oh, this is so gross!” So, trying to encourage them to *step outside of their comfort zone* [emphasis added]. Realizing that some of the best learning can be doing stuff outside of your comfort zone *when it’s not the norm. When it’s not the structured* [emphasis added], rather than saying, “This is how it is; there’s no room for flexibility.” But when you do step out of that comfort zone. In seventh grade, my lab partner was a girl who dissected a shark with me. That first day, she was so disgusted that she didn’t want to touch it. And I just thought, “Oh, this is great, more time for me!” But as the week went on, we took a whole week to look at the shark, I noticed that she started being a little more active. And so, it’s not as bad. Maybe society says, “Girls, science isn’t for you, it’s gross.” But, to give them that opportunity to find out, “Hey, this is getting a look to investigate on your own terms and finding that out and being an active learner.” (2/05/09)

We Define Ourselves

The major part of the construction of a teaching identity is to define yourself. Another part of this identity construction is to define the content you teach. As I had the students think about their learning history, I asked them to define science. As the students told me their definitions, I was thinking about the definition that was taught to me as a high school student during a course called “Scientific Thought” by my teacher Marty Sponholz: “Science is an

ever-changing body of knowledge based on human attempts to explain the natural world which our Lord created and now maintains.”

It is interesting to me that after almost three decades I still remember that definition word for word, and it still has meaning and relevancy today. Sponholz, whom I wrote about earlier, was my high school science teacher and later college professor. Sponholz received the Antarctica Service Medal for courage, devotion, and sacrifice from President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1967 for his research discoveries. Professor Sponholz talks about his own becoming in his unpublished book, *Among the Magi*. He talks about how he questioned his own beliefs:

I also attended Grace Lutheran Church, a Wisconsin Synod church, in Falls Church, Virginia. The members, although members of a church of my heart, seemed very removed from a young man of twenty-five years of age. They also seemed to be all Republicans. Why was it that to be conservative in one’s scriptural beliefs, it was expected that you had to be hard heartedly conservative in your political beliefs, which in my view meant you were callous and unforgiving to the poor. (Sponholz, 1995, p. 88)

As a scientist, Sponholz saw scientific data bend and its truth change. He saw that some explanations were favored; others were laughed at. This struggle prompted him to seek a higher calling, that of a teacher. His journey in becoming a teacher occurred because of his own reflection as a scientist and as a Christian and because of the inner struggles and conflicts. In becoming a teacher Sponholz brought life, beliefs, and occupation together. Professor Sponholz is still a science teacher at Martin Luther College in Minnesota. Professor Sponholz now brings his life and experiences to his subject, science.

Alongside teacher education programs that teach content, methods, and identity we ourselves need to analyze, and our pre-services teachers need to ponder, the essence of the subjects we teach. Today the state has set out to define the content and standards, and teachers have no stake in what is being done. We spend an enormous amount of time and money educating teachers, yet too often when teachers step into their own classrooms the state has determined how and what each student

needs. Canned and scripted curriculum programs are provided, and state objectives are mandated. As we think about who we are as teachers and how we teach, we also need to think about the curriculum before us. In an interview with my pre-service teacher Sally I asked her to define science. She said:

Well, I think from a Christian perspective science is often related what's around you to creation, and that's where you can kind of get into that creation/evolution that's still going on among scientists. One thing I did like about classes, as some of us were Lutheran or Christian Ed in that classroom, some of us had the opportunity to say, "Okay, God created this." And to be able to link, "Oh, guess what, you are God's creation!" And being able to link the wonderful intricacies of the body or even what's around you. Taking a look at the world and plants and animals. Taking a look at kingdom, phylum, class....When you look at all of those classifications of what's around you and realizing, "Oh, God created this!" And taking opportunities to surround yourself with that, maybe through outdoor ed or just going outside and picking stuff up. Science is what's around you and what you can experiment with. And I think those are two ways I probably take a look at science. (2/05/09)

Sally identifies her Christian belief as she talks about science as the world around us. In another interview, Hannah adds another dimension in her definition of science: "Science is understanding and making sense of the world around you, whether it be life science or any sort of science (physical or general.) Making sense of the complex ideas of how it came to be" (02/05/09). Hannah realizes that, just as in reading we make sense of letters and symbols, so also in science we attempt to make sense of nature. Science is a human endeavor that seeks to make sense and meaning of a world that is uncertain and changing. Absent from all the science definitions my students gave me is reference to the changes that have taken place in the scientific community. Missing from a scientific perspective is the fundamental view that scientific theories and explanations change. The history of science has shown us that whatever we teach and learn will be changed. "The universe not only is stranger than imagined, it is stranger than can be imagined," said Albert Einstein. The laws of science are in fact our human laws.

Teaching is an uncertain endeavor. How do we teach this uncertainty when we teach in a climate of certainty? Just as my pre-service teachers realize their views of literacy are changing, so also it is imperative in our teacher education programs that we talk about and examine the changes that have taken place in the content we teach across the curriculum. The search for scientific certainty and scientific truths has permeated educational research in America. It has been said that math is the language of science. So the logical progression is that mathematical research will lead to scientific research and scientific truths. With a greater and greater reliance on statistics and probabilities in education and generating new and unmeasured statistics, the potential to forget who we are as teachers is imminent.

Class Is Ending, but the Journey Is Beginning

My consciousness returns to my undergraduate reading class. During this first class period the students were introduced to my research project, and they listened to a reflective poem about the path we have chosen in becoming a teacher. We did an activity that prompted us to think about our past teachers and how they affect our own becoming. We also discussed how we would integrate theory and practice in a practicum as we spend a large amount of time teaching reading lessons to individual students. We also took time to get to know each other's uniqueness. We looked through the course syllabus. How quickly two hours of class time go by! The time to leave is soon. In closing I have the students write down two goals they have for themselves this semester. It is my hope that my students' goals will help them lead the way this semester.

We spent the next fifteen weeks talking as teachers about their practicum experiences. As my students move through the semester I see a definite shift in their perspectives. They seem to be coming to understand that there is not one right way to teach and that there is not one right way to be a teacher.

Near the end the semester we examine what the students have learned. In an attempt to connect theory and practice to their emerging teaching identity, I provide a reflective journal prompt: "What is the most important thing the practicum has taught

you about yourself—and becoming a teacher?” My three focal students talk about what they have learned. First, Amy’s words:

This practicum has taught me that this is what I am excited and ready to do for my life. I enjoy going to the school each week and it has shown me that there is so much more to being a teacher than just planning something fun to do. This practicum has shown me and taught me that these students are aware of what I am doing, what I wear and look to me as their role model. This practicum has shown me that I am someone that these students look up to and that job comes with a lot of responsibility. As a future teacher I am put in this classroom, called to be there by God to teach his little children. Through this practicum I have also seen how much time and effort it takes to plan a lesson that will engage the students yet also teach them what they need to learn. Through this entire class I have become more aware of what my reading philosophy is and how important it is for me to understand the different methods of teaching reading. This practicum has given me a glimpse of the personality that I will have as a teacher and what will excite and motivate me with my future students. I have learned already how rewarding teaching can be when you put time into a lesson and the student is engaged and excited about what they are learning. (10/08/09)

In the beginning of the semester, Amy told me, “I always wanted to be a teacher.” It seems this class has reinforced Amy’s calling to be a teacher. Amy recognizes that her teaching identity is spiritually connected to being “called to be there by God.” Amy’s reflection is a positive emotional response based on her experience teaching children during the practicum. She mentions that she has “become more aware” and understands that “different methods” are needed to teach children. She also realizes that her personality is connected to her teaching identity, which reminds me of Amy’s figure skating metaphor. Amy also realizes the students she teaches “are aware of what I am doing, what I wear” and that they “look to me as their role model.” Through the practicum experience Amy feels the rewards that come when “you put time into a lesson” and when students are engaged and excited about learning. Amy is using teacher jargon and discourse in the language listed

above, making these words part of her positive teaching identity, and developing her reading philosophy.

Hannah answered the prompt with these words:

As a future teacher I have learned to be reflective and flexible in my view of teaching. Students have so much that they each bring to the table when it comes to education and we need to bring an equal amount in order to meet them at their ability level. Clinicals at Saint Peter's Immanuel had opened my eyes to the actual versatility that we talk about. I was able to see the validity in many of the topics we have gone over regarding the student's learning abilities.

The variety of ideas that pertain to lesson plans in the future have been immensely helpful and applicable for the clinical we are currently going through. The ideas that we are presented with are creative and because of the vast number of them, we are able to apply them in the right situations with the assistance. Talking and reflecting on lesson plans inside of class has also helped me to be creative and learn how to take that creativity and manipulate those ideas into a successful lesson plan. (10/03/08)

Hannah begins her response by identifying herself as a future teacher who has "learned to be reflective and flexible" in her view of teaching. Hannah draws a connection between the ideas and topics discussed in class and making use of these ideas in clinicals. Hannah notes the power reflection has played in her growth as a teacher: "Talking and reflecting on lesson plans inside of class has also helped." Hannah has positioned herself as a future teacher as she tied the practice of reflection to her teaching experiences. She is also naming the type of teacher she is becoming by making use of teacher words and ideas: talking and reflecting, being creative, and learning to "manipulate those ideas into a successful lesson plan."

Susan offers her thoughts on what she has learned:

This practicum has made me realize something about students. Students that we are working with come from very diverse backgrounds. Some of these students do not receive the attention that we did when we were younger. They struggle with basic concepts and are crying out to us to help them. I really feel like with a little structure and good teachers these students can succeed. They can really surpass stereotype that they will never achieve things. (10/07/08)

Susan focuses her response and identity as being an advocate for the students. Her response is an emotional connection, “I really feel,” to the children from the urban school. Susan is revealing what kind of teacher she is by talking about the students from the practicum experience as having unique, diverse backgrounds. She believes that this diversity calls for good teachers so that the children can succeed. Susan also brings into light the necessity for teachers to help these urban children break free and surpass commonly held stereotypes. You might recall an interview I had with Susan earlier in the semester, in which she described how she felt when the religion professor was casting a wrong stereotype about Catholics. As Susan constructed her narrative and identity, it seems she made meaning of her life through her personal experiences as a student, her new experiences as a teacher, and her stated beliefs.

In another journal entry Susan again takes an emotionally strong stance on what she believes about teaching reading.

In all honesty, I think that children are all together reading the wrong books. I think that they are reading books that don't interest them and are not to their designated reading level. I think that all too often children are being forced to read books that aren't right for them. As a future teacher, I want my children to be excited to read. I want them to get so lost in a story that they can't wait until the next time they get to read it. I think that as teachers we need to create this safe environment for children. We can do this by guiding them [to] make the proper decision with books. They should be able to choose the book that they want, but teachers need to guide them into selecting one from the proper level. If children try to read a book that is way too complicated for them they will get lost and very frustrated. They will not like it and in turn they will get

frustrated, with reading. Also, I want them to feel like it is ok to not like a book. People are entitled to their own opinions and children should be entitled to theirs about the books they read. I also feel that it is important for parents and family members of children [to] showcase a love of reading. Children lead by example and if they see that it is ok to read then they will be more apt to reading. I want my classroom to show that books are fun and exciting. I feel that I can do this by using books in my curriculum and displaying books in my classroom. Also, I will create a comfortable environment for my children so that they will be able to relax when they read and don't have to be restrained to reading in their desks. I ultimately think that with this new safe environment and children reading proper books that they will find a new passion for reading. (09/30/08)

Susan has positioned herself as an advocate in the family of teachers by saying, "I think," "As a future teacher, I want," and then recasts her voice as a teaching professional among her teaching colleagues by saying "We can do this." Based on what she has witnessed Susan, goes on to explicitly state that she feels that what is happening in the classroom needs to change. She makes use of teacher discourse by talking about creating a safe environment, a comfortable environment, where "they should be able to choose the book that they want to read," and these critical decisions will help the children "find a new passion for reading." As Susan makes sense of her experiences and her beliefs, she is constructing her teaching identity. Earlier in the semester Susan drew a direct link between her teaching identity and the student she was teaching: "I feel that this student is really going to help with my identity as a teacher."

Amy, Hannah, and Susan's stories, reflections, and practices noted throughout this novel confirmed the understanding of the complex relationship among told life stories, stated beliefs, critical reflection on experiences, and revealed identities through hopes and dreams, as they worked discursively to shape who they are becoming as teachers and how they will teach. My pre-service teachers have started bringing together the stories from their lives, their descriptions of the practicum experience, and their beliefs and hopes about teaching reading, and they all contributed interactively to the construction of their teaching identities.

A few of the students are shuffling their papers together and opening their backpacks. This movement and the clock on the wall indicate to me that this two-hour class period needs to draw to a close. I remind the students about posting their first journal entry online, and tell them that I am looking forward to our semester together. As most of the students begin to dash out the door (probably heading to the cafeteria for lunch), a few students linger afterwards to talk about being teachers. We talk about teaching, the upcoming practicum, and course assignments as I gather my things together. I head out the classroom door still talking to my students. I smile to myself and think that these future teachers understand the importance of being a teacher.

As I arrive back in my office and notice that voicemail light still shining, I reflect back on the class that has just ended, and I hope that the pre-service teachers have changed in some small way during this first class period. I wonder if they know that they have taken a small step forward in gaining their own teaching identity. I do know that I have been changed by the students sitting in front of me and by those that have gone before. My mind is now racing ahead to the voicemail message, emails, and planning ahead for Thursday's class. I pause and close my eyes.

Epilogue

I began this chapter with a preface as a means to explain to you how this story captured one teaching day in my life. However, the life stories, the student quotes, and the class context you read in Chapter Five were pulled from my entire life. Student perspectives and insights came from one single semester class. I attempted to weave the perspectives of my pre-service teachers through my own life's story. Living these experiences was powerful. The act of reflecting critically and writing about these vignettes and providing my interpretations has helped to move me into a deeper consciousness and self-awareness about what I believe and hope for as a teacher.

Writing the various portions of this text has been a cognitive process that has caused moments of disruption and confusion in my mind. As much as I attempted to avoid the contradictions in my life, I was determined that I must wrestle through the paradoxes and riddles. I am now more aware of what I see happening in my own classroom, in the classrooms that I visit, and in my spiritual life. Hunters tell me that the best game is found in the thickest part of the forest. The same was true in my writing. The most valuable insights were inside the tangled experiences of my life and the complex discussions my students held. In my writing I have attempted to describe, show, analyze, interpret, and tell about these experiences. I doubted myself as a writer, just as I have doubts about myself as a teacher. My perspective on teaching has changed throughout my life from trying to keep children busy in the classroom to transforming our schools into authentic learning communities. My perspective on educational writing has changed too. Therefore, although I say this cautiously, writing has become a political process for me. I discretely chose the stories and discussions that I presented to you as a means to lend credence to what I believe. I withheld certain stories and student dialogue from you for a number of reasons. I had an enormous amount of data to sift through. I filtered the data judiciously through my lens and attempted to provide you with stories and quotes that were important to me. I zoomed in on three focal participants as a way to magnify my own life. I found that my students' words were just as powerful as my own. Their unique perspectives on becoming a teacher caused me many times to pause and reflect. I then attempted to synthesize what I heard and read, and tried to

connect these events to my life and my beliefs about teaching. While reading my text, you undoubtedly noticed that my pace and style changed as I became emotional and adamant about certain aspects of teaching and what I heard being said. The same perspective is true for me as a teacher. My teaching and writing is filled with ebbs and flows. My teaching and writing is not value-free.

The stories we read in books and watch on the big screen are filled with unique characters, humorous moments, tragic events, and life issues. To me the most powerful part of reading stories is noticing how the main character develops, faces challenges and struggles, connects with other people, and most importantly how he changes throughout the story. Before I wrote this epilogue to Chapter Five, I set out to reread my story through this lens of discernment. In this way I had the opportunity to experience these events multiple times and determine what the problem was in my story. I tried to notice a turning point in my life. It took me a while to realize that the problem in the story was me. The turning point was not a sharp corner but rather a gradual bend that weaves back and forth just like the softly curving road that winds its way onto my campus. As I reread my story I remembered my days of sitting passively in the grade school classrooms. I recalled how most of my learning experiences occurred in isolation. I revisited how I was trained to be a teacher and realized that I was given a lesson template and told to follow the curriculum.

As I reread my story I became more thankful for the spiritual focus and framework of my upbringing and how I was able to make my way by trusting in my Savior. It took a spiritual courage for me to share and relive the valleys in my life, especially the death of my mom. I struggled through the reasons why I left the constraining dogma of one church body for another denomination. I sifted through the bitterness of being cast out and being labeled a heterodox Christian. Yet I have come to understand that religious institutional contradictions are a part of life. This writing experience has nurtured in me a calmer and more reflective spiritual peace. Yet at the same time I feel empowered to share what I believe.

Throughout my teaching life I noticed that I had resisted what I truly believe about teaching. I had occupied the learning space and attempted to take control of my students rather than empowering them to be the drivers of their educational

experiences and ultimately their own lives. By attempting to empower my students, I have my own sense of empowerment as manifested in the following final chapter. In Chapter Six I will explain the lessons I have learned, the conclusions I have drawn, and the new questions that have emerged. Finally, I will hand the power over to you.

Chapter Six: Revolutions

Writing separates us from what we know and yet it unites
us more closely with what we know.
Max van Manen (1990, p.127)

Introduction

This chapter is titled “Revolutions” because all stories reveal something to the author and to the reader. I am using this ending chapter to discuss the educational revolutions that occurred to me while conducting my research project. But as you will see, my research does not end with this chapter. I am only starting to understand that I have more questions than answers. The findings of this study echo the ideas and language of Parker Palmer, Deborah Britzman, Stephen Brookfield, Michael Connelly, Jean Clandinin, and several others. The writings of these authors informed my teaching practice and the framework of this research project, and they helped me interpret the data on becoming a teacher. My research study and findings bring together their notions of identity transformation through critical reflections and add rich contextual details to these merging perspectives. I have gained insights into my own shifting teaching identity, while also noticing how a teaching identity emerges as my students started on their path to becoming teachers.

This research process as a whole has transformed my thinking and has allowed me to see that teachers’ identities can be shaped in a particular way during pre-service preparation by critical reflective thinking via autobiographical histories, Blackboard discussions, reflective journals, narrative-based interviews, and a practicum experience. Furthermore, these methods can help to give rise to a teaching identity that resists the notion of a standardized way of becoming a teacher. In this interpretive inquiry into my life and the lives of the students, I sought to understand the complex transition from student to teacher. The data demonstrate that as their teaching identity emerged they went through a similar process, yet they were becoming unique individual teachers. In this concluding chapter I will revisit my initial research questions and discuss several emergent factors that I feel influenced the complex development of my identity and the identities of the pre-service teachers involved in this study. The findings include the following points of discussion:

- Questions answered?
- Empowering our voices
- Generating our own teaching theories
- A community of truth in concert with a narrative inquiry approach
- Dreaming beyond what I can be
- Becoming a teacher is a heart and soul endeavor
- My life unconstrained
- New possibilities

Questions Answered?

I started out this research inquiry looking for answers to my guiding research questions:

1. How do pre-service teachers conceptualize themselves as teachers? In particular:
 - a). how do their prior knowledge and beliefs shape and constrain their emergent teaching identities,
 - b). how does reflective writing enable them to construct their emergent teaching identities, and
 - c). how does critical reflective thinking enable them to deconstruct disempowering curriculum myths that constrain their emergent teaching identities?
2. How does my own teaching practice facilitate or constrain development of pre-service teachers' emergent identities?

Looking across the landscape of the data I have presented, it seems that my initial questions have raised many more questions. So what does this research project mean? What did I learn through writing as a process of inquiry? What do all these quotes, interviews, discussions, and interpretations tell me? What have I learned? How can I transform and change schools?

To understand my questions, I turn back to Chapter Three where I discussed how I used critical constructivism as a social epistemology to frame this research inquiry. In this concluding chapter, I return to this framework and consider the ethics of the discursive practice of becoming a teacher. In Chapter Five, I examined the socio-cultural context of my life and my students' lives to see how our teaching identities emerged and then to understand how this process can serve as a referent for cultural transformation (Taylor, 1996) by changing myself, changing pre-service teachers, and possibly transforming schools. The critical theory of Jurgen Habermas (Grundy, 1987) helps me to be mindful of the sources of domination and authority in my life that constrained the construction of my own unique identity. Habermas identified language as the vehicle that I should pay close attention to as I try to understand how the teacher and students are co-participants in the process of constructing and reconstructing our teaching identities and transforming our schools and society.

During my data interpretations woven into Chapter Five, I was continually driven back to the words of Parker Palmer (1987) to embrace and reconstruct my own epistemological stance as I interpreted my values, my beliefs, my experiences, and my actions. In this chapter I draw my conclusions and realize that my own writing has a moral course. "I argue that every mode of knowing contains its own moral trajectory, its own ethical direction and outcomes" (Palmer, 1987 p. 22). My writings have revealed to me that I was taught implicitly that there is a certain way of knowing, of living, and of being. I believe that society and cultural values wrap around us like interwoven vines in the rainforest wrap around the trunk of a tree. This study helped me to realize through my own words, my vehicle of understanding, and the words of my students that the social, cultural context of our education experiences not only wraps itself around us but shapes how we learn and teach. In today's politically-charged educational context, teachers are facing intense pressure to improve students' standardized test scores and, as my student Susan said, find the "one right way." In many ways, teachers' effectiveness is being measured officially by numbers on a standardized test; teaching is being reduced to methods and techniques. But good teachers recognize that our students are not standardized, and therefore teaching cannot be reduced to one right way. In a broad sense my research

inquiry has led me to believe that we might need to transform how society views education if it is to have a lasting impact on our future.

Yet I know that, in a narrow sense, this can only happen by each of us transforming ourselves. That is what this research project has done for me. Although you might be disappointed that I have not come up with one single answer to each of the research questions, these questions did guide my thinking, but more questions have arisen. Being surrounded by a positivist view of educational research in America, I initially thought that I could sequentially, concisely, and neatly find an answer to each question. However, I came to understand why narrative inquiry research truly is messy and complex and not standardized. When I wrote Chapter Three, I thought that I actually knew what it meant to take a critical constructivist stance, yet it seems that the objectivist view was embedded in my research approach. I now realize that I needed to work through this conflict to understand that I have deeply embedded beliefs because of how I was taught, what I did, or—more accurately—what I did not do as a student, how I was told to be a teacher, and often how I was told what it means to be religious. In this space of contradictions I began to truly embrace a critical constructivist perspective. Through embracing this perspective, I have to be careful not to eliminate or dominate the objectivist perspective, but seek to understand how these views might live together. At this tension point I find my identity.

Initially, as I presented data, I felt an inner need to let the data speak entirely for itself. I was afraid that I could not represent the truth. Through the encouragement of my advisor, Peter Taylor, and by rereading my methodology, I began to share how I perceived the events that happened to me, the experiences my students shared with me, and what these moments were telling me about being a teacher. I became more perceptive of how my students took discursive positions on topics such as their beliefs about being a teacher and how they were realizing their views had changed throughout the semester. There was Susan, who talked about her struggles on the discussion board: “It’s hard enough to teach one child, but having to teach a whole class full of different learners is difficult. What if you miss someone? How will it affect them?” (9/25/08). By deliberately interpreting my students’

struggles in becoming a teacher, I have come to better understand the struggles I face in being a teacher and researcher.

My initial research questions simply helped me build a frame around what I was looking to understand. As I wrote my narrative I thought about how my students are becoming teachers. At the same moment I was also reminded of how I became a teacher. This discursive practice of moving back and forth between the narrative story of my own becoming and the process my students were struggling through brought to light many ethical questions about how we were taught in school and why we were taught this way. Throughout my years as a teacher I had never taken the time to examine these deep, penetrating questions. Together, my students and I discussed many of these questions that capture why becoming a teacher is so difficult.

If I was forced to write an answer to each of my questions, I would simply state that being true to myself and being a teacher is difficult yet possible. Through this research process I have come to better understand myself, to recognize the multiple perspectives students bring to my classroom, and to realize that I have become a better teacher by accepting the notion that I do not have all the answers on how to become a teacher.

My story reveals to me that my teaching identity is built on Parker Palmer's (1998) premise, "Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p. 10). And, as my student Amy wrote in her autobiographical story, "More importantly than the method used to teach reading is the end goal that the teacher has for the students" (11/25/08). To me, teaching is much more challenging than being a student. A teacher needs to set the stage for learning to occur and allow questions to be asked. The teacher designs the backdrop, develops the context, nurtures relationships, and then raises the curtain by empowering students to seize control of the action, make decisions, and lead discussions. Then the students and teacher can wrestle side-by-side with the subject at hand, in my case becoming a teacher. This is what I did in my classroom. I believe that when I stepped to the side and became a participant, rather than the leader, my

students were able to become more engaged in understanding what it means to be a teacher.

Deborah Britzman concluded, “Everyone in teacher education needs the space and encouragement to raise questions that attend to the possible and acknowledge the uncertainty of our educational lives” (p. 243). Through the process of writing, interpreting, and generating data, I have unearthed more questions about becoming a teacher and have discovered that the process of becoming a teacher is even more complex than I initially thought. I feel this lens of uncertainty provides a meaningful over-arching framework and gives validity to my data generation process and the conclusions I have drawn. My own professional transformation lends legitimacy to my narrative inquiry interpretations and the autobiographical moments I have shared. With this perspective in mind, I notice how opening space for a community of truth allowed the narrative inquiry process to help me give rise to my own teaching theories as I scrutinized my own life and the ongoing construction of my teaching identity. Similarly, this posture allowed me the chance to give space and offer encouragement to my pre-service teachers as they began to raise their own questions.

Empowering Our Voices

This process of raising questions gave voice to my students and made their emerging teaching identity visible. Throughout the process of writing and reading my research story, the stories of my pre-service teachers, and my interpretive insights, I have discovered that I would like the door to be opened so that my voice and the voices of my students might be heard in the educational arena and we might begin to transform teachers and schools. In this way I am beginning to answer De Lauretis’ (1988) call to use my stories as a *critical instrument* to examine my teaching identity and thereby empower my life.

My pre-service teacher, Susan, told me during an interview that “teaching is more than a job.” I have learned that gaining a teaching identity, becoming a teacher, is a process that takes time and effort and can be excruciatingly painful and contradictory. I have discovered that it is important to examine the hope we have as teachers, together with understanding why we became teachers. Bringing to light our

hopes and struggles might lead us to teach more authentically so that our classrooms might be a place where students learn. In this way teachers might write about their own theories of teaching, rather than only being told what to do and how to do it so that their students pass the test. I have realized through this experience that I have hopes and dreams of what our schools might look like.

As an education professor, I hope that my writing might open up more conversations and that teachers might write their stories about becoming a teacher instead of simply following someone else's scripted narrative. A teacher education program's ultimate goal is to help pre-service teachers become teachers. An important part of becoming is adopting a teaching identity. Research into exploring teacher professional identities through using the teacher-researcher's own autobiographical narrative to derive educational theories is a relatively new line of inquiry. Exploring my teaching identity through critical reflection while also trying to understand how my students become teachers allowed the space for my students' voices to be heard beyond the walls of our classroom.

Travel guide.

To have my students take hold of their teaching theories and empower their voices, I asked them to write words of wisdom in the form of letters to future students in my class. I have come to see these letters as a form of travel guide, a means of support on a difficult path. Part of my research inquiry process included a residency visit to Curtin University in Perth, Australia. To prepare for a long journey takes much preparation, similar to the process of becoming a teacher in a teacher education program. During the process of making my travel arrangements to Australia, one of the first things I did was peruse the many travel guide books available at the local bookstore. These travel guides are filled with witnessed events of other travelers. The stories are from fellow travelers informing the reader of their own encounters across strange new places. The experiences told can help others prepare for the uncertainty of travel in a strange new world. These travel guides offer suggestions and opinions about what to do and what to avoid. The teaching world we travel in is strange and uncertain. It is my hope that my story might serve as a travel guide for others. It is my hope that teachers may succeed and thrive in the high calling of being called a

teacher. It is my hope that my voice might help open a door to a new educational world.

The words we give to others are part of the legacy we leave behind. This is one small way that students can have an almost immediate impact on others. I direct the pre-service teachers to write to future students in the form of a letter. Amy, the gold medal figure skating teacher, offers these words of advice:

Dear Developmental Reading students,

In the next couple weeks you are going to begin your practicum at a private grade school as Lakeshore University Buddies and work with individual students during their class reading times. This is an amazing opportunity to get your feet wet in a teaching environment, get to know your teaching style better, and form a relationship with a student.

My first piece of advice for you is to always remember that these students look up to you as their teacher but also as a role model. They view us as not only teachers but cool older children kind of like a big brother or sister. If you come to clinicals with a positive attitude, a smile on your face, and an enthusiasm for teaching you are going to have a wonderful time because the students will share the excitement. These students are aware of everything you do at clinical so it is important to show them how to be a good Christian role model through the way you dress and the language you use because they are watching you.

You may feel overwhelmed or nervous about teaching these students or preparing these lesson plans but always keep in mind why you want to be a teacher. To be a good teacher means to form that close relationship with students and this is a great opportunity that will not happen very often to have one on one time with a student. Through your lesson plan show excitement for teaching and enthusiasm for the subject matter that you must prepare. There are going to be requirements and things that you must do for the lesson plans but it is important to insert some of your personal style into the lessons. When these lessons are personalized you will have more invested in what you are teaching and the students in turn are going to learn and retain more of the information. It may feel like just an assignment but keep in mind that these are real students who really are ready to learn and need to learn. The teachers are entrusting to you their care for that hour a week and take advantage of that opportunity and put thought and time into your lessons. Now is your chance to think outside the box and try new and exciting strategies because in this class there is a lot of time to reflect and see how these ideas worked with a new student.

I was nervous when I started these clinical[s] but through the weeks I began to look forward to spending that very often too short forty-five minutes with two of God's children. Stay focused on the joys that come from seeing your students' face light up each week and the enjoyment that they find in your lesson plans. Stay centered on the trust that God has placed you here to have an effect on these students for the small four weeks and make the most of them to learn more about the importance of a teacher in a child's life and what and who you are as a teacher. With that in mind your lesson plans will be successful and you will be one step closer to your vocation as a teacher.

Sincerely,

Amy (11/08/08 journal)

Amy's teaching identity is evident in the legacy letter she has left behind. Amy's words show us that her spiritual faith sustains her in the calling to become a teacher. Amy's words also tell us that becoming a teacher is a process one must undertake slowly.

Susan, the warm sunny teacher, provides words of encouragement and insight for those who will follow her ray of light even during times of doubt:

Dear Developmental Reading Students,

You are about to start the exciting journey of your practicum. I know that it is a rather strange time for you. You may be feeling very anxious, nervous, or even excited. I know that at this time, I was scared and nervous. I had so many questions running through my mind. I didn't know if I would be able to handle the kids, handle the lesson planning, and would I be able to reach out to these kids.

These children at SPI need your help more than you can ever imagine. Some of them come from backgrounds where school and learning is not a top priority. They are not given opportunities to advance or even practice their learning at home. Thus the importance of you coming into this practicum. It is so important that you work with these kids and form a connection with them that they may not have at home. You have the opportunity to really make an

impact in these kid's lives, take full advantage of this. It will help you to become a more confident teacher and also student.

Another thing, if you start to question, whether or not teaching is what you want to do because of this practicum, do not worry you will get over the bridge. I know that there were many times where I felt like giving up and not becoming a teacher. It is going to be ok. I thought of it this way, there is always going to be a problem and a solution to the difficulty that you are experiencing. Do not worry so much about are you doing what the teachers want you to, focus on what you can do to help the child. If you see that the child is struggling greatly in one area, fix that. The themes and focuses are just bonuses in fixing problems.

Just remember to have fun and enjoy your time with these kids.
(11/05/08 journal)

Susan's identity is clearly connected to the children she teaches. Susan's travel guide notes that becoming a teacher will be an emotional process filled with a variety of problems that need a multitude of solutions.

Hannah hoists her sail as a teacher and puts forth her voice in the educational arena:

Dear Lakeshore student,

First of all, relax and have fun as you begin. I would like to give you a little encouragement as you begin your clinical. Many things on your mind might be similar to mine when I started. Feelings of insufficiency, maybe not knowing if the ideas you have will be fun for your student, or there even might be an overwhelming feeling of not being able to accomplish all the tasks and lesson plans in the allotted time set out. Take things slow and ask lots of questions in and out of class and be open to the fact that you don't know all the answers.

The students may not be intimidating to you in particular or maybe they are, but one of the bigger challenges for me was continuing with lessons as teachers walked by. Learn right now that

they understand the stage you are at. They are only trying to help and bring you to the level that you can reach. Our job is to understand that they are there to help us in our education.

Above all, the students will bless you in ways that you could not have imagined and I'm not merely talking from my own experience. Every student that I talked to after finishing clinical was sad to leave the students that they had come to have relationships with. Tanabe, one of my students that was learning English as a second language, posed to be a challenge at first when it came to getting to know him because of the language barrier that was between us. As time went on, the little four year old that I wasn't sure would learn anything read for the first time under my tutoring. The feeling of success as a teacher far surpassed my expectations and I look forward to that being more consistent in my future.

In ending, I would like to restate the many things that will enhance your clinical experience. Accept the opinions of others including the internet as a resource for creative ideas. Be the teacher to your student but realize that they desire to be your friend too. Be prepared, but relax when the lesson doesn't go exactly how you planned. Realize that teachers and even your teachers are there to help and understand the premature stage of teaching you are at, which means that they are willing to answer your every question. Above all, have fun with your students and remember that you have a unique opportunity to impact their lives for this time you have with them. Make the best of it and enjoy it while it lasts.

In Christ,

A fellow future teacher (11/08/09 journal)

As I reread these words of advice, I am strongly encouraged as a teacher. My students walked into my classroom on that first day of class as students. These letters on their final days with me help illustrate that they are emerging as teachers. Along this path in becoming a teacher the most important suggestion I can make is for pre-service teachers to engage in critical reflection. This reflection may be most valuable if it is ongoing and daily and includes an examination of what personal educational

experiences and myths have shaped our perspective. In this way we can hold a mirror to our selves. Often we do not think of what impact our former teachers and schooling have on what we do as teachers in the classroom today. Many of our teachers were wonderful and inspiring, but some were less than effective. It can be empowering to realize that both teachers and students are characters in each other's stories. The stories we write and tell can reshape our personal myths about learning and help engage the reflective teacher in refining their teaching.

Generating Our Own Living Educational Theories

Educational theories are often thought of as being developed by researchers and permeating down to the teacher. However, Clandinin and Connelly (1999 & 2000) suggest, and my data confirms, the power of narrative inquiry for enabling pre-service teachers to construct their teaching identity by generating their own theories of teaching through critical reflection and discussion. Britzman (1991) reminds me that as my students enter my classroom, "Their view of the teachers' work—grounded in their student perspectives, constructed from their prolonged experience of classroom life—is incomplete insofar as it is simplified to mere classroom performance" (p.47). In this study this issue translated into a deconstruction of the myth of one right way to become a teacher. My student Susan said, "I really began to question if I should become a teacher," because she discovered there is no one right way to teach all students. Reading the data generated through this thesis made it evident to me that there is a closely connected relationship among autobiographical stories, narrated experiences, identity construction, and the generation of personalized teaching theories. As my three focal pre-service teachers engaged in practicum classroom experiences, they frequently thought about what happened to them as students, what they experienced during the practicum, and what they believed about being a teacher (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), thereby infusing their own teaching theories into their teaching identities. Their identities and teaching theories were made visible to me as they narrated their past experiences and voiced their beliefs about teaching. My three focal students came to realize that the process of critical reflective discussion is a powerful way to learn. As Hannah said, "Through all the thinking and talking we have learned a lot." We all learned a lot about becoming a teacher.

Thinking ahead to the implications of personalized teaching theories for my future practice, I realize that narrative inquiry and reflective thinking and writing can be used to reconstruct and build possibilities. When I close the door of my classroom, during my practical and complex experiences with students, I am living out my own teaching theories. And so it seems to me that if we can offer the time and space to reflect on and discuss our complex theories, we might find better ways to engage our students in meaningful learning experiences.

At the heart of my current teaching theory is recognizing that what I do as a teacher is dynamic and fluid, and that I must always be a student of teaching, pursuing a better way. In education classes I will continue to focus on examining the process one takes in becoming a teacher. I feel that if we do not scrutinize the process of becoming a teacher and of making our teaching identity visible in class writings and discussions, then future teachers might continue to perpetuate faulty educational theories. Holt-Reynolds (1992) demonstrated, for example, that pre-service teachers often accept the practices they learn in university classes without actually understanding their theoretical basis; in fact, the practices are often in opposition to long-held beliefs or attitudes developed throughout their lives, and once they get into their own classrooms, many new teachers revert back to their pre-existing systems of belief and practice. You might recall how my student, Hannah, came to theoretically interpret her negative science class experience set against the backdrop of our class discussions on transforming our teaching identity. These differing perspectives helped Hannah generate her own teaching theories and teaching identity as she asked the question, “Why is it that way?” As Britzman (1991) pointed out, examining our experience not only helps us to raise deep questions but also to understand theories and perspectives behind the experience, and thus to live in the uncertain world of being a student while becoming a teacher.

By developing a more complex understanding of the ways previously held ideas actually impact how pre-service teachers construct their teaching identities, teacher educators, like me, may be able to more effectively empower students in the decisions they make in teacher education programs and classes.

As evidenced in this research, in my own autobiographical story, and in my classroom, I believe that teacher education programs need to give pre-service teachers time and space to deconstruct their personal learning experiences and their pre-service practicum experiences in order to facilitate personalized teaching theories. As Britzman (1986) suggested:

Pre-service teachers need to participate in developing critical ways of knowing which can interrogate school culture, the quality of students' and teachers' lives, school knowledge, and the particular role biography plays in understanding these dynamics. Without a critical perspective, the relationships between school culture and power become “housed” in prospective teachers' biographies and significantly impede their creative capacity for understanding and altering their circumstances....trapped in a cycle of cultural maintenance. (p. 454)

As you read in Chapter Five, from the first day of class I challenged my pre-service teachers' view of being a teacher. I proposed that teaching and especially teaching reading is much more than methods and strategies. What you do as a teacher and how you teach comes down to who you are as a teacher: your teaching identity. Identity is the decisive element in understanding the process of becoming a teacher. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) tell us:

With the knowledge of the narrative history of school stories and of the central stories to live by for teachers and others in school, we believe that it is at least possible to understand and plan for change in a way that is sensitive to the question of who we are as practitioners. (p. 102)

Most importantly, writing my own stories has helped me to better understand myself as a teacher and what I believe about teaching and our education system, and to take hold of my own teaching theories. Brookfield (1995) contends that “stories of reflective practice can become emotional touchstones for our own attempt to live the reflective life” (p. 220). Rereading of my own experiences and stories continues to awaken my own new interpretations and helps bring to light new possibilities in my classroom. The narrative inquiry I have conducted here has awakened a critical

conscious voice within me which I hope is evident in my writing. Grundy (1987) states that action research “promotes emancipatory praxis in the participating practitioners; that is, it promotes a critical consciousness which exhibits itself in political as well as practical action to promote change” (p. 154). I hold on to my theory that the process of transformation is daily and ongoing as I am still becoming the teacher I want to be.

A Community of Truth in Concert with a Narrative Inquiry Approach

Parker Palmer (1998) argues that “engaging students in the dynamics of the community of truth is a principle of sound pedagogy” (p. 135). For me, it is important to attempt to create a community of truth in my classroom and in my relationships. It appears from my study that teacher educators, like me, have the potential to invite more characters to offer their voices and provide their travel guides to the world of education by allowing space for a narrative inquiry stance to arise inside a community of truth. When I have been moved to allow my curriculum and methods to be more dependent on my students’ desires and needs, I have felt that we moved in and out a community of truth during the semester-long course. Most university classrooms are designed to place the teacher firmly in front as the expert. But when I allowed myself to step to the side, the teaching and learning focus turned more fully to the process of becoming a teacher. This leads me to think that perhaps I might provide more engaging opportunities for student-led conversations in the classroom, giving students the chance to engage more actively and thereby opening a window for them to more often begin thinking like a teacher. It seems valuable for pre-service teachers to wrestle with the contradictions and struggles that full-time teachers face every day. I have come to realize that it is important for me to allow both time and space for pre-service teachers to examine, discuss, and reflect on these contradictions, struggles, questions, and conflicts that arise in their teacher education program.

In my classroom I attempt to foster a community of truth by stepping to the side and allowing space to open, so that assumptions about reading and learning can be examined in light of past histories and present experiences and beliefs. These tense and open spaces seem to help nurture and shape emerging teaching identities. My own tense moments come as I struggle with a compelling feeling to take control

and guide the discussion and thinking of my students so that they see things my way. After these moments, through critical reflection, I have realized that although I was well intentioned in wanting to offer a frame for my students thinking, I was constraining the identity development of my students.

When inside the community of truth that I try to create in my classroom, it appears that an inquiry approach to becoming a teacher generates powerful learning opportunities. This inquiry stance makes important questions visible to my students and me as we ask ourselves and each other about teaching. Some scholars have observed that inquiries do not always receive, or even have, answers. Inquiries include our puzzlements, our wonderings, and new questions. As Duckworth (1987) posited, “The virtues involved in not knowing are the ones that really count in the long run. What you do about what you don’t know is, in the final analysis, what determines what you will ultimately know” (p.68). For me, narrative inquiry is a means to attempt to unravel the mystery of becoming a teacher. By taking a narrative inquiry stance as both the researcher and teacher, I am led to ask more questions instead of simply providing answers, both in my own classroom and in my research text. Schools have been heavily influenced by standardized tests, which indoctrinate teachers to pursue the one right answer whenever possible (Duckworth, 1987). In my classroom I believe that an inquiry stance supported by a community of truth allows my students diverse opportunities to explore teaching identity issues from multiple perspectives, as open-ended questions are examined and students speak about the unique and diverse needs of the students they will one day teach.

My three focal participants talked about finding their place as a teacher by asking questions. In one way or another, their narrative discussions reflect deep identity questions: “Who do I want to be as a teacher?” (Amy), “How do I want my students to view me?” (Hannah), “Are you going to influence kids or are you not or is it just going to be that job that you’re talking about?” (Susan). As they began to shift roles and language from student to teacher, they questioned everything from what kind of teacher they would be to what methods they would use to impact children.

This inquiry perspective opens the door for transformation to occur. Through online discussions students can dig deeper into their questions and the complexities involved in becoming a teacher. Susan commented on the discussion board about her changing identity: “Before this practicum and even our class, I thought that the way that I learned how to read was the only way” (11/06/08). Susan questioned her prior beliefs about finding the one right way to teach. She imagined ways that she might meet the unique and individual needs of her students as she faced off against administrations and textbook publishers who have tried to standardize and compartmentalize students. This negotiation that Susan undertook appears to constitute teaching identity work in action.

By having my pre-service teachers construct their autobiographical narrative histories, they have opportunities to excavate past experiences and to re-examine and question their beliefs about education, with the hope that they might positively impact their future students. My focal students spend time reflecting on their own perspectives and discussing issues of power and status that will occur in their classrooms and in their lives as teachers. The narrative inquiry format of this study gave my students the space to write and talk about their educational histories and to establish connections between their educational experiences and how they might teach differently. Hannah wrote in an online discussion,

Amy, I found your post interesting when you wrote about how you realized that so much of the way you are forming your own view of teaching is reflecting upon what you did and didn't agree with in the ways that you were taught. All in all, I think that for us future teachers, any schooling was good even if it didn't teach us well because we could learn from it and therefore have better schooling for our students in the future. (11/11/08)

Carter and Doyle (1995) suggested that when pre-service teachers encounter new ideas and practices, they tend to view them from the perspective of their past student lives. I saw the presence of a teaching identity arise when my pre-service teachers began to view new ideas and alternative practices through the lens of the teacher they were becoming. It seems my focal students began to realize that as

teachers they might be able to do things differently in their future classrooms and make learning more meaningful.

In my own autobiographical stories I was drawn to question the things I did as a student. The process of narrative inquiry guided me to a clearer understanding of my own assumptions about teaching and how my identity had been transformed. Mezirow (1991) explains this “transformative learning” as a critical self-examination of assumptions leading us to change our perspectives on how we understand ourselves and the culture that surrounds us.

The reality of teacher education programs is that, intentionally or not, students go through ongoing identity construction. In one sense or another, students become teachers. During my class, by fostering an inquiry approach inside a community of truth, my students are led to keep asking questions rather than simply seek right answers. I have observed my students engage in critical reflective thinking (Schön, 1983) which may have shaped and facilitated their teacher identity construction process.

Hoffman and Pearson (2000) argued that the quality of a pre-service education program can determine the level of success of the program’s participants in maintaining the teaching practices learned in their teacher education courses once they move into actual teaching vocations. My study has helped me to see that I was able to create an environment that allowed the topic of becoming a teacher to take center stage. This environment fostered an inquiry stance in both my pre-service teachers’ discussions and in my own life. Together we had the space to ask important questions in light of our experiences and beliefs. Was my class successful? I think I became a better teacher. Hannah told her classmates, “We learned a lot through all this thinking and talking.” Based on the outcomes of this study I will continue to engage pre-service teachers in an inquiry stance designed to open up conversations about what it means to become a teacher, beginning with an exploration of their own life histories, and to provide time to discuss and write about their emergent teaching identities. It is my hope that these identity conversations and writings might continue during their professional lives as teachers and during my life as a teacher educator.

Dreaming Beyond What I Can Be

Returning once more to my own classroom at the beginning of the school year (see Chapter Five), as I watch my pre-service teachers leaving this first class period I think about the vocation they will be stepping into on their first day as a teacher in their own classroom a few short years down the road. I wonder what kind of schools they will walk into. I think about the community of truth I am attempting to build in my classroom. I wonder how this might take shape in our elementary, middle, and high school classrooms. As I close my eyes I see schools that I want my children to learn in: I see a school that is full of people excited to be a part of a learning community. I see teachers waiting at the entrance of the classroom door smiling and greeting the students as they arrive each morning. I see students talking to each other about what happened last night and what this new day will bring. I see the classroom filled with books, books, and more books. Plants are growing and fish are swimming in bowls throughout the room. I see large windows revealing nature outside surrounding us as warm sunlight streams into this room. The classroom is also warmed by the presence of the teachers, Amy, Susan, and Hannah, as they reaffirm the entrance and presence of each unique student who enters the classroom door. I see my granddaughter, Ella, bound into the room with wonder and curiosity. I see the children find their project folders, grab their books, and take their seats at their table. I see the school day start, I see the teacher, not sitting at a desk, but moving about the room and interacting with individual students. I see teachers modeling strategies they use in their life as a real learner, reader, and writer. I see authentic learning take place inside and outside of this classroom as teachers and students are reading, writing, calculating, and figuring out important things in their own lives.

I hear student voices talking about the books they are engaged in and the problems they are trying to solve. I see children bringing their lives to school. I see students investing their heart and soul into their projects that have meaning. I see students helping each other as they sit together and write music and create their own songs. I see arms linked and hands joined in this community. I see a community of truth emerge in the wide open spaces in this classroom. I see students who know they can excel. I sense that students are discovering their special gifts and talents.

I observe teachers watching children and celebrating their successes. I find teachers reaching out to those difficult children and families. I see teachers trusting their own voices and having the courage to take a risk. I see teachers greeting failure as another opportunity to learn. I watch teachers encouraging and supporting each others as allies in this endeavor we call education. I notice teachers talking, writing, and sharing their own thoughts and stories as we make connections across pages and oceans in this community of truth. I find people who have become teachers now helping their own students in their own process of becoming. I see students in classrooms becoming the person they want to be.

I see schools where administrators, teachers, and students know and respect each other. I see schools that are rich in relationships and deep in meaning. I see principals offering guidance, support, and time to help teachers in their calling. I observe productive and engaging meetings that are filled with diverse perspectives on how to meet the needs of the children seated before us. I see teachers positively impacting the lives of children. I see teachers smiling because they are teachers and they know why. It is my hope that the pre-service teachers leaving my classroom will be the architects of these new classrooms, taking the lead from Amy, who said, “My own experiences have helped shape me into becoming the reader and writer that I am today. Without those experiences, I never would have realized the affects literacy has on my life or how important those areas are. I now recognize the benefits that I receive from them not only from my own point of view, but also from the view of a future teacher” (11/25/08). It is therefore my hope that the methods I use in my education class can help to give rise to a teaching identity that resists the notion of a standardized way of becoming a teacher and helps to develop teachers that are unique.

Becoming a Teacher Is a Heart and Soul Endeavor

While getting to know my life and the lives of my students, you have had the opportunity to peer into my heart and soul. Through my writing I have tried to reveal to you who I have become as a teacher and what I believe about teaching. This story is about my teaching identity. For me, becoming a teacher is a process of engaging the heart and soul. A teaching identity grows from the whole of our lives. I am a teacher. I teach a reading class. Reading and now writing has become a way of life

for me. There often are times while reading that I will stop mid-sentence and wipe away a tear as I read to my students about Billy carry his dying dog in *Where the Red Fern Grows*. I chuckle aloud as we read together about Jess losing a foot race to a girl in *Bridge to Terabithia*. I look over my shoulder with a glance of fear as the Tucks are being followed by the man in a yellow suit in *Tuck Everlasting*. The stories I read become a part of my life. I also now realize that my writing has taken hold of who I am. I have written these words and stories for myself as well as for others to read. As I wrote these words I would stop mid-sentence and chuckle aloud or wipe away a tear. These words hold a dream I have for my students and for my children. I write with a hope that teachers will teach with passion from their heart and soul.

In rainy weather toadstools spring up on every dung-heap, and in the same way merely verbal definitions generate a mushroom-like wisdom which soon dies in the sunshine. A clear sky is poison to it. The power of description must precede definition. (Pestalozzi, quoted in J. A. Greene, *Pestalozzi's Education Writings*, 1916)

Stories are a relatively new way to define who we are as teachers. Perhaps they can be new lenses which frame our teacher education programs and serve professional development purposes. Not every teacher is going to want to write about why they became a teacher and why they do what they do in the classroom. But if identify formation is linked to the storytelling process and woven into the fabric of our teacher education programs, then the art of writing about what we do as teachers might ascend to a new level. Writing reflectively through a narrative inquiry approach might help teachers navigate the intersecting tension of being true to their individual teaching identity in a climate of standardization.

You might be thinking that we already know the stories we have lived, so why retell them? What compels us to share our life? Is it just a story that is meant to entertain? Do we need approval? I contend that at the heart of a teacher is his or her story. It is not until we reflect and tell our stories with others that we begin to see our stories and ourselves from many different perspectives and angles. Vygotsky (1978) called this development process “a doubling of experience” (p.33). Teachers tell

stories to understand. Just peek into any teachers' lounge and listen to the stories being told.

It therefore may be important for teacher educators, as well as pre-service teachers, to understand how our identities are influenced by family members, mentors, past school experiences, educational courses, practicum experiences, and the contradictions that arise. The process of reflective writing and discourse seemed to help nurture and support identity construction in my classroom. Kagan (1992) tells us that beginning teachers' identity construction determines success in the classroom:

The necessary and proper focus of a novice's attention and reflection may be inward: on the novice's own behaviors, beliefs, and image of self as teacher. Novices who do not possess strong images of self as teacher when they first enter the classroom may be doomed to flounder. Instead of expecting novices to reflect on the moral and ethical implications of classroom practices, teacher educators might be wiser to guide novices through their practice teaching: for example, helping them to examine their prior experiences in classrooms, and their tendencies to assume that other learners share their own problems and propensities. (p. 163)

I suggest that once teachers see the impact that reflective writing has on their life, they might even invite their own grade school students into this process. Ultimately, the story I have told has impacted my practice as a teacher, my role as a parent, and my life as a citizen of this country. Through the process of writing this story I have been changed. Through writing, in a sense, I became detached from who I was in order to write about who I am. I began this text by laying claim to the belief that these words you are reading are my legacy. As I typed these words I thought about you, the reader, and hoped that you might be drawn into my life. In this process you would also have been drawn into the lives of my pre-service teachers as I attempted to interpret their identities. I hope that you noticed things about me and my students that I overlooked or was afraid to write about. While reading this text you drew your own interpretations about who I am. Most importantly, I hope that while reading you came to think also about yourself. In this way, across these pages

and the space that separates the writer and reader, we may have constructed our own community of truth.

My Life Unconstrained

The transformative experience I have undertaken in this research project has been one of the most difficult experiences of my life, as I faced off against the constraints and contradictions of being a teacher in a system that did not teach me much as a student. By writing and thinking about my experiences I have slowly begun to find ways to be true to my heart and what I believe about being a teacher. Much of what I have written about how to become a teacher goes against the current of my training (Parker, 1998). I was taught to create lesson plans that were designed to have me, the teacher, occupy the learning space in the classroom. I wrote the objectives. I was the objectivist. I formulated the questions (with my anticipated right answers in parentheses). I placed the students in rows. I stood front and center. At the end of the lesson I expected my students to recite what I had said and complete a mind-numbing worksheet. I had the power. I was told that my classroom is my kingdom. Deborah Britzman (1991) talks about the cultural myth of viewing the teacher as a rugged individual in which his success depends solely on himself. I wonder if the system had set me up for failure by telling me what to do and how to do it and then claiming that as a teacher I could do it alone. In my early years as a teacher I struggled with the complexities of teaching. As many do, I even thought about giving it up. However, it was my spiritual faith that helped sustain me by reminding me of the reason I was a teacher.

You might remember that I stated earlier that I do not think I learned much at all during my grade school years. I became a teacher so that I might teach opposite of how I was taught and in this way my students might just learn. However, I often reverted back to how I was taught. My teacher education courses told me that I must teach in a certain way. So as a teacher I was simply doing what I had been told a teacher must do. The lessons plans I had been told to use did not often work, and the students did not seem to care. No wonder! The work we were doing had no connection to life outside of the classroom walls. I have come to realize that it was not truly my classroom. Those were not my lesson plans. I was trained and felt compelled to teach the way the system had been constructed. I was taught to

maintain the status quo (Britzman, 1991). As I began to examine the motives behind what I do and the curriculum I teach, I realized that the federal government, the state, the policy-makers, and the school administrators are not in control of my pedagogy. I am the teacher. Struggles and stress arose when I sought to reclaim my vision for why I had become a teacher. Through this difficult and risky process I have reclaimed my vision of being a teacher. There is a certain innate feeling of safety in keeping things the same. I see this week after week as my students arrive in my classroom and sit in the exact same location each class period. We tend to feel safe if we remain in the same position. It is difficult to step outside of the system and take a risk by assuming a different position.

Now go back and reread the above paragraph and insert researcher where it says teacher. The struggles I faced as a teacher parallel the constraints and contradictions I have wrestled with as a researcher. In writing this research text I have been constrained by the scientific culture of educational research in America. In many ways this was a self-imposed constraint, as I tried hard to have my research fit into the dominant research style of today. The system seems to say that you must conduct and write educational research in a way that can be generalized and replicated in classrooms across the country. But I know that my classroom is not like yours. Applying the rugged individual myth of being a teacher to my research identity, it seems at times I felt as if the success of this research project rested solely on my words. I did try to reach out to the educational community around me for advice. I attended research conferences and read about similar research studies. I asked colleagues if they would be interested in reading my thesis. They would look at me as if I had asked them to kill their dog. Why would they want to read a whole bunch of words that had no connection to their life? Yet I did not go about this research alone. My students spoke to me about the importance of becoming a teacher and constructing and honoring our teaching identity. Palmer, Britzman, Brookfield, and other authors were continually whispering in my ear. Peter Taylor, my research advisor, played a most important role as he helped to nudge me away from an objectivist style of writing and asked me to be real, remain humble, and share with you what I have learned. I discovered that from my perspective this research project has been successful, as I have become more at ease with being true to myself as a teacher who is not exactly like others on campus. I want my students to engage in

meaningful learning opportunities that transform their lives. I want my own children and grandchildren to have teachers that look at things differently. I recall what my student Hannah said: “All of these experiences through my life and the semester of Developmental Reading have really influenced how I think children should be taught in grade schools” (11/25/08).

As I think about my research questions—“How do pre-service teachers conceptualize themselves as teachers?”, “How does my own teaching practice facilitate or constrain development of pre-service teachers’ emergent identities?”—I have come to see this conceptualization process as reflective, emergent and complex. This research project indicates to me that as we become teachers our past experiences and beliefs have an impact on who we are as teachers. Through the process of recognizing and evaluating the constraints placed on my life I have been able to transform my life.

New Possibilities

Several main ideas stand out as emerging areas for future research exploration. As I began this study I was looking into how pre-service teachers conceptualize themselves. I would like to conduct a longitudinal study done with students entering teacher education programs and following them through completion of the program and into the vocation of teaching. I believe that reflective writing and discussions can help sustain teachers and keep them centered on what is truly important in education.

Further study into the past experiences of full-time teacher educators (like me) through writing, collecting, and publishing autobiographical teaching stories may also help us understand how to support teachers and help us to take control of the pedagogy of our life and reclaim the hope that we had when we were aspiring young pre-service teachers. Sharing our stories might also help us realize that we are not in this alone.

This research project was designed as a narrative inquiry focusing on a small number of participants who were the researcher’s students. Instead of trying to distance myself objectively from my participants, I have tried to be open about my research methods, my relationship to my participants (especially my three focal

students), and my dual role as their teacher and researcher, to build a connection between my students, myself, and you, the reader. It is my hope that by writing my story, spanning only a day in the life of teaching my students, yet also reflecting on critical moments in my life, I have been able to draw you into the research process. I hope that this research writing style opens new possibilities in the arena of educational research, as we recast and reclaim experiences in our life and understand what it means to be a teacher sharing our stories with others.

Through the process of reflective writing, I have come to recognize that I have most importantly informed and transformed my own self. In my writing I noticed how the objectivist myth had shaped my thinking and practice as a teacher. I sense that a new moment in my life has risen through this narrative inquiry. My mind returns to that grade school basketball game experience that I reclaimed at the beginning of this text. In that huddle I prayed to God for a win, and I did ultimately become a teacher. I have come to understand that my teaching identity encompasses all my lived experiences, my beliefs, my attitude, my family members, my students, and my mentors. That is my teaching identity. I like to think that schools can be better than what I experienced because of teachers who take time to tell their stories. While we are living our lives, I am going to strive to continue my own reflective writing process to see how my story actually ends and discover if schools can change. I started this final chapter by claiming I have more questions than answers. Now it is time for me to ask you one final question: “What is your story?”

Epilogue

Since I began my story with a prologue to help provide context and background for my research study, it seems fitting that I conclude this study with an epilogue. Epilogues are often written to allow the main character a chance to tie up loose ends, ‘speak freely’, and possibly preview a sequel.

Having shared this research study with scholarly experts in the field of transformative education, I feel compelled to clarify my thinking. In my study the reader and I have engaged in a shared conversation similar to a face to face conversation. In this “public space” we might discuss, critique, and compare our practice with “interest, regard, and care” (Greene, 1988, p. 19). As a reader, you were constructing meaning and attaching value to the words I used. In Chapter One I chose to clearly define only three words that I felt were important for the reader to understand: identity, pre-service teachers, and critical reflection. I recognize now that other important terms merged into my writing and need careful consideration. I would like to define what I meant when I used the terms: learning, an educator, education and educational theories.

Learning: Life is complex, messy, and even chaotic. Every human is endowed with the capacity to learn. Learning involves the process of making sense of the life we live. We draw upon a variety of influences as we make sense (learn) and relate to the world around us: parents, friends, teachers, books, experiences, etc. We learn to navigate within the rules of our culture. We learn what is valued in our society and what is not. We tend to take on the values of the society we live in while other times we find that our values are in conflict with the choices of others. Jack Whitehead (2009) makes a distinction between learning and educational learning by stating that, “much learning is not educational” (p. 107). Whitehead goes on to

discuss how we need to un-learn some of the learning that has taken place throughout our life (p. 107). Through the process of critical reflection, I raised my own level of awareness about what I had learned. I came to realize a sense of dissatisfaction with the traditional model of education. I learned that I am a teacher and my values and identities should align with my teaching practices.

Educator: This study was about constructing a teaching identity. It was not about constructing an educator identity. A teacher helps to organize and facilitate the process of learning and un-learning. After reading over my story, it seems to me that when I chose to use the term ‘educator’ I was turning to a broad audience. In effect when I used ‘educator’ I was casting a broad net and speaking to teachers of teachers or teacher educators. If this writing was occurring as an oral dialogue then the moments I chose to use ‘educator’ would be signaled by the eye contact I make with my fellow professors in teacher education programs across the world as a collective whole. When I used ‘teacher’ I turned my attention to each of us individually as a teacher in our own classrooms.

Education: Education means many things to many people. I would like to distinguish my definition of education from what I see as the current and pervasive, traditional model of education in America.

The traditional model of education views the teacher as the fountain of knowledge and dispenser of given knowledge to the students in the classroom. Currently, the effectiveness of this type of American public education model is empowered by political policy that places value on raw scores from a standardized test, a model that is said to be ‘data-driven’. Student achievement is determined by standardized data and norms and now teacher effectiveness is being linked to these same student scores. Traditional education teaches a curriculum that is guided by a

proliferation of top-down standards. Traditional education is similar to the factory model of production. Teachers and students are required to follow the instructions of the ‘one size fits all’ scripted curriculum. The contradiction arises in that teachers know that each student is a unique individual.

The traditional education system was set up to produce industrial workers who worked independently, did not think for themselves, and just did as they were told. Thinking and understanding were not encouraged or valued in schools or in the workplace. This type of education is what Freire refers to as the ‘banking’ model of education. “Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits, which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (2003, p. 72). However, this type of education does not prepare students to grow into productive members of society in the world we live in today.

The process of writing my story helped me to see my own educational influences and understand how these influences shaped my being. I now see clearly the distinction between the traditional model of education and my hope for an authentic education. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) state that “quality autobiographical self-studies offer fresh perspectives on established truths” (p. 18). The established truth or goal of traditional education is to increase test scores. Compared to my authentic model, the difference boils down to product versus process. The traditional model of education places enormous value on the product (i.e., test scores) whereas, from my perspective, an authentic education values the process of learning and the product together in a unique and customized perspective. Each model of education includes teachers, students, curriculum and pedagogical

methods. It seems to me that teachers play a central role in what happens in education. Today, teachers must try to navigate through the traditional model of education and either succumb to its prescribed mandate or work towards a better future and different forms of education in America.

My perspective on an authentic ‘education’ is that it includes the personal knowledge and experiences we bring to the classroom and is driven by relevant and individualized goals and aspirations. Education needs to pass a test. Jersild (1955) addresses this important point in his writing on teachers: “The crucial test in the search for meaning in education is the *personal implication* of what we learn and teach.... .We as educators...must make an effort to conduct education in depth....Such an endeavor means an effort to overcome the prevailing tendency in education to encourage the learner to understand everything except himself” (p. 80) .

Education includes the teachers, students, the curriculum, the family, and the community. An authentic education cannot be boiled down to a raw score on a standardized test. Education is a process that helps students and teachers unleash one’s confidence, make sense of this world we live in, discover and pursue one’s passion. Authentic education involves learning from failure (via critical reflection), growing from experience and constructing one’s identity. Authentic education is much more than rote memorization of facts and bits of information and regurgitating this information on to a worksheet or a test, and counting the mistakes a student makes. Rather it is about celebrating the success students have made. Authentic education is about creating understanding, building relationships and making personal connections.

When I officially began this research study (now almost two years ago) I set out to discover what it means to be a teacher, and to learn how my students begin the

transition into their teaching identity. If a student receives a grade of 'A' in my class does that mean that they have been successful in the process of "becoming a teacher?" To me, the final grade does not matter overly much. What is most important to me is that the student has come to understand herself better, and recognize the complex process of teaching and learning. As a teacher, I feel that I hold myself accountable. This accountability is not simply premised on awarding a final course grade to each student. To be fully accountable I must also understand deeply my own classroom practices and match these practices to my professional teaching identity.

As I examined my past in this research I began to see the educational influences that shaped my underpinning beliefs, influences that shaped my beliefs much more than the few years I spent as an undergrad student writing lesson plans and reading textbooks about teaching. Examining my life's journey helped me realize the need for critical self-reflection and transformational learning. It is my hope that the students in my class wrestle with their lives, both past and current, especially the inherent contradictions, and thus begin to unearth their own educational influences and come to understand that they might have a lot to learn and un-learn as they test the waters of "becoming a teacher."

Educational Theories: In Chapter Six I attempted to discuss my perspective on constructing my own educational theories. I wrote, "Educational theories are often thought of as being developed by researchers and permeating down to the teacher" (p. 205). Here I was thinking about the formal 'Educational Theories' we talk about in my Developmental Reading class that appear in educational textbooks, especially the course textbook for my class, "Classrooms that Work" (Cunningham & Allington, 2007). In this book on reading methods, the authors theorize that, "the

teacher is the most important variable in how well children learn to read and write” (p. 10). But how does this theory play out in our classrooms? Whitehead (2009) states, “Living theory differs from grounded theory in that the theory is not an abstract analytic scheme of a process” (p. 110). In my study, the pre-service teachers together co-generated explanations of their own living educational theories as they reflected on and discussed their educational influences, the Educational Theories they read, and the experiences they engaged in as pre-service teachers.

Our own living educational theories are the bridge that connects our teaching identity to our teaching practices (Whitehead, 1989). We can learn from what effective teachers do in their classrooms, but these Educational Theories, or abstract generalizations, become our own when we connect our teaching identity to our classroom practices and explain the rationale behind what we do. I construct this bridge by understanding what I do as a teacher. I look at what works and what does not work in my classroom. Through the critical reflection process, I have learned about who I am and what I value. In writing my story of becoming and being a teacher, I was ultimately asking myself how I could improve my practice. How can my values align with my teaching practice and enable me to be an effective teacher? In this way, I am generating a living educational theory. In some ways, I had always unconsciously done this. However, in this narrative I have attempted to make my educational theories visible and explicit as I described what I did and what my students did and talked about during a semester-long education course. Whitehead (2009) states that, “These living theories are constituted by the explanations of teachers, teacher educators, student and pupil researchers, for their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of their students and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work” (p. 107). During my reading

class, my students and I went through the process of thinking through what we have experienced, what we know, what we can do with students, and what our students know or can do (Danielewicz, 2001).

My living educational theories emerge from what I have come to believe about teaching and learning by becoming critically aware of my life and our society as a whole. In writing about my living educational theories I am not attempting to proclaim truth. Rather I am attempting to explain the rationale behind what I do as a teacher. My own living educational theories inform my classroom practice. In this study, I attempted to make sense of what I did in the classroom as a teacher and as a student. I have learned that there is not just one right way to teach and learn, but I am aware that my practices must align with my teaching identity. I am anxious to hear about what kind of teacher you are becoming.

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Appendix A – Research Proposal Submitted July 18, 2008

Candidacy Proposal for Doctor of Philosophy

Steven C. Witt

Title

Becoming a teacher: An interpretive inquiry into the construction of pre-service teachers' teaching identity

Abstract

Teachers need to know the content they teach and how to teach. Learning to teach, however, is a complex and frightful endeavor involving more than learning content and methods. Learning to teach involves constructing a new identity and negotiating previous identities and beliefs. Exploring our teaching identity through critical reflective practice is at the heart of this research project. Research into teacher's professional identities is a relatively new line of inquiry. As teaching and a teacher's identity is a complex concept this research will be qualitative in nature. This study is an interpretive inquiry into how pre-service teachers construct their teaching identity during a course on Developmental Reading at Lakeshore Lutheran University in Michigan. Our identities are composed and improvised as we go about living our lives embodying knowledge and engaging in our contexts. The researcher is also the instructor of this course. Data will be generated through critical reflective writings, including autobiographical stories, journals, online interactions, and interviews. During this study the researcher will reflect critically on his own shifting teaching identity. It is hoped that the findings will lead to an understanding of how pre-service teachers begin to construct their teaching identity and also contribute to a stronger pre-service experience for teacher candidates.

Objectives

1. To investigate how pre-service teachers conceptualise themselves as teachers. In particular, to investigate:
 - (1a) how their prior knowledge and beliefs shape/restrain their emergent teaching identities,
 - (1b) how reflective writing enables them to construct their emergent teaching identities, and
 - (1c) how critical reflective thinking enables them to deconstruct disempowering curriculum myths which restrain their emergent teaching identities
2. To reflect critically on my own teaching practice in order to better understand how it facilitates/restrains development of pre-service teachers' emergent identities.

Background

Teachers need to know the content they teach and how to teach. However, learning to teach is a complex and frightful endeavor involving more than learning content and methods. Learning to teach also involves constructing a new identity and renegotiating previous identities and beliefs (Palmer, 1998). Teachers need to know who they are as a teacher (Britzman, 1991). In order to address this subject we need to excavate and recontextualize the moral values that underpin one's professional identity and action (P. Taylor & Wallace, 2007). Research is beginning to look at how pre-service teachers develop their identity in teacher education. Geijsel and Meijers (2005) challenge teacher education programs to help pre-service teachers develop a strong sense of identity. Identity has been defined as: (i) a socially constructed process always in the making (Bruner, 1990); (ii) multiple and dynamic, something that can only be understood by the various contexts influencing individuals (Sarup & Raja, ; Weedon, 1987); and (iii) as carrying particular yet dynamic set of interests, goals, values, beliefs and knowledge-making practices that help shape how humans make sense of their world and their experiences (Ivanic, 1998). Thus the purpose of this study is to understand how pre-service teachers uncover and understand their emerging teaching identity as they construct and deconstruct curriculum myths through critical reflective thinking. I will also critically reflect on how my own teaching identity has emerged, shifted and effected my decisions and life as a teacher.

Objective 1. To investigate how pre-service teachers conceptualise themselves as teachers. In particular, to investigate (1a) how their prior knowledge and beliefs shape/restrain their emergent teaching identities.

The concept of a teaching identity refers to teachers' knowledge of themselves as teachers and answers the question "Who am I as a teacher?" and "What kind of teacher do I want to be?" "Why do we teach what we teach?" "Why do we teach in this way?" "Whose interests are being served?" Pre-service teachers are encouraged to ask themselves these questions regularly as a part of my Psychology of Learning course at Lakeshore Lutheran University by reflecting critically on their experiences in practice and theory. Pre-service teachers do not enter teacher education programs as blank slates. Based on theories of cultural psychology, Bruner uses the notion of "conceptual Self" (1990, p.99) to explain the social construction of identity. This identity changes as one changes and develops from young to old and from one social setting to another.

Becoming a teacher is about becoming who we are not who others think we should be. Palmer (2000) claims that our identity and integrity is living and claiming our “authentic selfhood.” Palmer continues that when one lives as who they are not as who others want them to be then true joy and fulfillment can be found, and that remembering ourselves and our power can lead to revolution.

Objective 1b: To investigate how reflective writing enables [pre-service teachers] to construct their emergent teaching identities.

This study will use reflective writing as a method of excavating the inner self and construct a teaching identity. Donald Schön (1983) (1987) introduced the concepts of the “reflective practitioner” and “reflective practice.” Schön’s approach encourages reflection by both the educator and the learner in an active and integrative manner. Using narrative inquiry to help students reflect and understand who they are is a method that helps them link who they are and how their attitudes and biases will affect their future practice and choices. What is a narrative? Max van Manen’s (1990) book, *Researching lived experience*, states that “Narrative, to narrate”, derives from the Latin *gnoscere, noscere*, “to know.” To narrate is to tell something in narrative or story form’ (p. 120). According to Dawson (as cited in P. Taylor & Wallace, 2007), a narrative aims to portray in a rich and compelling way the problematic nature of life (including research).

Objective (1c). To investigate how critical reflective thinking enables [pre-service teachers] to deconstruct disempowering curriculum myths which restrain their emergent teaching identities

To examine the deeply held concepts and beliefs that pre-service teachers bring to my Developmental Reading class, I will draw on the work of Stephen Brookfield (1995, 2000) use of critical reflective thinking. Brookfield claims that critical reflection is a process that helps us to clarify and question assumptions. How do adults engage in critical reflection? Brookfield (2000) believes that this is done through a constructivist perspective, “which emphasizes the role people play in constructing, and deconstructing, their own experiences and meanings” (p. 6). Brookfield (2000) sets out the task that I have as an educator and researcher. “The adult educator’s task is that of helping people articulate their experience in dialogic circles and then encouraging them to review this through the multiple lenses provided by colleagues in the circle” (Brookfield, 2000, p. 7). Brookfield (2000) believes that this process will help to uncover assumptions about teaching practices that we believe are common sense wisdom and that we take as being in our own best interest, “without realizing that these same assumptions actually work against us in the long term by serving the interests of those opposed to us” (pp. 9,10).

Objective 2: To reflect critically on my own teaching practice in order to better understand how it facilitates/restrains development of pre-service teachers' emergent identities.

Jersild (1955) wrote that in order to teach and affect others we must look to understand our selves. Therefore, it is the teacher’s task to face his own fear, anxiety, loneliness, meaninglessness and hostility to transform himself thus, and in order that he may model how to do so for his students (Jersild, 1955). Palmer (1998) sees this

conflict as the “moving intersection of the inner and outer forces” (p. 13) as the space where identity is born out of the cocoon.

I believe that my teaching identity is clearly linked to my spiritual being. Along with my students I will also continue to critically reflect on my own beliefs about my teaching identity and on being an effective teacher. I wonder how I have constructed my own self as a teacher. How have I constructed my beliefs, attitudes, and teaching habits? What is my teaching identity? These are questions I hope to answer during this research study.

Research Problem

Over the past several decades there has been significant research on teacher education and the impact it does or does not have on prospective teachers. Research into teacher’s professional identities is a relatively new line of inquiry. The choices teachers make about who they are as a teacher impacts the decisions they making in planning and in the classroom. During their teacher education program at Lakeshore Lutheran University pre-service teachers must pass several state-mandated teacher tests. How do we as teacher educators help our students gain their teacher identity which influences the teaching choices they will make? The problem I am looking to understand is how pre-service teachers’ perceptions of effective teaching beliefs, practices, and habits effect the construction of their teaching identity. I am also interested in understanding how my teaching identity was constructed and how my past as a student and teacher has shaped and changed me as a teacher.

Significance

An effective teacher needs to be competent in both the discipline s/he aspires to teach and in her/his approach to teaching, and needs to have an awareness of who she/he is as a teacher. When we stand in front of a classroom of students we are who we are. Part of what we teach is our identity. It is hoped that this research study will add to the understanding of how pre-service teachers begin to gain their teaching identity. Research shows that beginning teachers do better during their first year of teaching when they have a strong sense of themselves as teachers (Kagan, 1992). The research on how pre-service teachers conceptualize teaching and their own teaching identity is still in its infancy. Attention to teacher identity formation in teacher education programs will serve to help teachers search out significant questions (Vinz, 1996). It “provides a distinct opportunity for the development of insights about teaching and can help us rethink our assumptions and beliefs” (p. 10). And it recognizes that “teachers cannot become members of a knowledge community by adopting others’ practices wholesale” (p. 10). Instead, “teachers should produce knowledge for one another” in hopes of creating “more images of teachers that help us rethink our ideas or imagine new practices, but will not try to convert us” (pp. 10,11). Assaf (2005) pleads for more research investigating pre-service teacher identity development as evidenced by online responses. If long-term impact of teacher preparation programs and development of teachers is truly what is needed, as argued by AERA (Education, Cochran-Smith, & Zeichner, 2005) further preliminary studies are necessary to develop understanding of how pre-service teachers conceptualize teaching and develop their own teaching identity. How they construct their identity and how that identity changes during their teacher education program is a much needed area of study. This research project will help to add to this growing body of research. A

greater understanding of how pre-service candidates perceive effective teaching and construct their teaching identity will help Lakeshore Lutheran University shape our licensing program.

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to understand how pre-service teachers construct their teaching identity during a Developmental Reading course.

Teaching Method.

This course is taught twice a week. One class period is a discussion format. During the second class period the pre-service students work with grade school children. Critical constructivism is a key referent that shapes my teaching practice in this course. A constructivist perspective views knowledge as being actively built up by the student from their own experiences Gube (1990). Critical constructivism is a social epistemology that is concerned with the ethics of discursive practices: it addresses the socio-cultural context of knowledge construction and serves as a referent for cultural reform (P. C. Taylor, 1996). Adding the critical theory of Jurgen Habermas (Grundy, 1987) also helps us look at the sources of domination and authority in society and schools that constrain the construction of our identity. Critical theory pays attention to the importance of communication and media in shaping culture and ideology. By coupling constructivist theory to the critical theory of Jürgen Habermas, there emerges a social epistemology -- 'critical constructivism' - - which offers an avowedly ethical basis for regulating the discursive practices of knowledge construction. The moral values associated with an emancipatory ethic emerge from the perspective that teacher and students are co-participants in the process of constructing and reconstructing actions, beliefs, and values. Habermas identifies language as the vehicle for attaining this goal (P. C. Taylor, 1996).

My hope is that my pedagogically thoughtful perspective encourages my students and me to be circumspect and critically reflective on our past beliefs and our learning experiences. The focus of my Developmental Reading class is not on given knowledge but on beliefs and concepts of knowledge and the students' own personal beliefs and theories about teaching reading and their teaching identity. Stephen Brookfield (1995) states we have four lenses through which we view our teaching: "(1) our autobiographies as learners and teachers, (2) our students' eyes (3) our colleagues experiences and (4) and theoretical literature." I will use these four lenses with narrative inquiry throughout my course to have students examine their emerging teacher identity as they begin to understand who they are becoming as a teacher.

Research Method.

In this study I am using a critical constructivist perspective also to shape my research design in which I will employ qualitative methodologies. I chose to use qualitative methods because I want to make sense of the complex and sometimes contradictory world of becoming a teacher. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) argue that meaning-makers draw on their own experiences, knowledge, and theoretical outlooks, to collect data and to present their understanding to the world. The perspective that I have adopted is a constructive approach which "assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities) and a naturalistic set of

methodological procedures” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 21). Interpretive research refers to a set of approaches where the central research interest is the meaning that humans give to their experiences and social interactions. Interpretive researchers try to understand the interpretations of the individuals about the world around them. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) suggested that theory in an interpretive perspective is emergent and is grounded in data generated by the research act. Interpretive research involves in-depth field research and careful recording and collecting of data. This is followed by reflection and writing using rich descriptions, narrative pictures and direct quotations (Erickson, as cited in Wittrock & American Educational Research, 1986). Critical reflective inquiry makes the invisible visible. Munby (1984) argues that qualitative methodology is particularly appropriate to the study of beliefs because additional insights can be obtained, along with ‘thick descriptions’ of the contexts in which beliefs are framed. Critical reflection or persistent, active and careful consideration of any belief (Dewey, 1933) seems to find the basis for one’s beliefs and/or actions (Mezirow, 1991).

During the Developmental Reading course I will rely heavily on having students reveal their identity and beliefs about teaching through narrative inquiry both written online, during class discussions, and during private oral interviews. Students will be asked to write an ongoing autobiographical sketch of their learning history. I will prompt my students to dig deeply into their learning history and write about their positive and negative learning experiences and teachers. I will ask them to explore how they think this will affect them as future teachers. Taylor and Settlemaier (P. Taylor & Wallace, 2007) state that through autobiographical inquiry we might start to question that which seems unquestionable to us. Online journal entries and blackboard discussions will center on students’ stories and beliefs about effective teaching and their teaching identity.

My role as a researcher in this study and course is as an active participant as a researcher, teacher and learner. Britzman (2003) points out that we cannot study the experience of learning to teach without returning and reflecting on our own experiences of education and particularly teacher education. All that I think about, all decisions, questions, and all that I write in this research text is mine. It is written from my perspective. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) comment that an interpretive study is incomplete without the researcher’s autobiography. I am ready to live and tell, relive and retell, stories of my own shifting teaching identity with my students and the reader. In this way I hope that I might reveal to myself, my students and the reader my teaching identity.

Data Generation and Analysis

Volunteer participants will be drawn from 12 pre-service teacher candidates, males and females, English speaking, post-baccalaureate, between the ages of 18-50 enrolled in my Developmental Reading course. Data will be obtained from unstructured and semi-structured participant interviews, interview recordings, participant observation, electronic messages and course responses, reflective journals, electronic portfolios, my own journal writing and my field notes. Clandinin and Connelly (1990) describe journals as powerful ways for individuals to give account of their experiences. Comments in journals may be used as starting points for interviews. As the teacher and researcher I will reflect in my journal upon the teaching and research process. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a reflexive

journal is a diary in which the investigator records information about him or herself that provides information about the researcher's insights, methodological decisions, and questions related to the study.

Journals. Each student is required to write a weekly reflective electronic journal. This reflection could be based on the student's learning history, beliefs, or attitudes about teaching, or whatever the student was thinking about, challenged by, agreed or disagreed with, but will not be a summary of course materials. I will instruct students to tell stories about their learning journey through writing their autobiographical history.

Electronic blackboard discussion dialogue. Every other week students will participate in an online discussion board activity. Students will be instructed to respond to open-ended questions regarding teaching and to reflect and respond to other students' comments.

Interviews. Interviews of participants will occur 4-5 times throughout the study: at the onset of the course, in the middle, and after the course has ended. Each interview will last about 30 minutes. I will use open-ended questions and questions about stories they have reflected upon in their reflective journal. Each interview will be audio-taped and transcribed and reviewed in order to shape the next scheduled interview and to help interpret the narratives.

Field notes. Throughout the Developmental Reading course I will keep a reflective journal that documents my thinking and wondering about the interviews, discussion board dialogue, and reflection journals.

Quality Research Standards

The purpose of my qualitative study will be to provide a deeper understanding of the emerging teaching identity of pre-service teachers. As stated by Lincoln and Guba (1989) 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity' reflect the underlying perspective of this study. In order to establish 'credibility' I will take several steps, the first being **prolonged engagement** (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) with my participants (five months time), which will help me develop a relationship as both teacher and researcher with the participants and will give them time to reflect and respond to events that occur during the semester. The second is via **progressive subjectivity** and a view of the "researcher as a learner" role (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The researcher records what he expects to find and then revisits these notes with the understanding that "the inquirer's construction cannot be given privilege over that of anyone else" (p. 238). Exploration and an honest rendition of the subjectivity of the researcher's own personal focus, particularly as the researcher is also a participant in this study, will allow the reader to connect on an empathetic level, especially if the reader has had similar experiences. The next is through periodic **member checks**, in which I shall ask my students to discuss or clarify comments they made in their writings for this course including their autobiography and discussion board comments. I will then send the participants drafts of what I have written and ask them for feedback. This way I hope also to optimize authenticity by ensuring fair representation of all stakeholders' perspectives. I shall achieve **transferability** of this research by writing narratives for a professional audience the researcher will aim to stimulate the reader to engage in the process of 'pedagogical thoughtfulness' (Van Manen, 1990) by

writing in “a reflective way that draws the reader into reflecting critically on his/her own pedagogical values (Taylor and Settelmaier in P. Taylor & Wallace, 2007).

Ethical Issues

The research will observe the principles of fairness, beneficence and non maleficence (Cohen et al., 2000). Students enrolled in Lakeshore Lutheran University’s ED 204 Developmental Reading course will be recruited. I will contact potential participants during Orientation in August 2008 and explain the voluntary process of the study and the time needed for participation. I will fully inform students about the nature and purpose of this research, orally and in writing, so that they have a full and frank understanding of this research. A consent form will be distributed and volunteer participants will be required to return the form prior to the start of the course. Participants will be made aware that they may withdraw from the research at any time without prejudicing their course of study. Assurance of anonymity and confidentiality of participants will be given in writing. Students’ actual names will not be used in the written research text. Permission to conduct the research will be attained from Lakeshore Lutheran University in Mequon A major benefit of this research is that it may provide information about effective teaching instruction that directly benefits the candidates during their course of study and subsequent life as a teacher. The findings also may contribute to a stronger pre-service experience for future teacher candidates.

Facilities and Resources

This study will require library facilities available at Lakeshore Lutheran University as well as electronic access to Curtin University library and its data bases available via the World Wide Web. Required word processing, data base, and statistical software are available locally.

Data Storage

Data will be stored in a secure, locked location at Lakeshore Lutheran University. The data will be retained for five years in case the research team wants to complete another phase of the study, such as conducting longitudinal interviews with the candidates in the study.

Research Timeline

- April 2008 - May 2008. Literature review
- June 2008 - July 2008. Development of discussion questions & reflection prompts; piloting of interview questions.
- August 2008 - Participant consent obtained.
- September - December 2008. Developmental Reading Course—data collection via 4-5 unstructured and semi-structured interviews with each participant, lasting 30-40 minutes. As part of course requirements participants will post responses on Blackboard and maintain weekly online reflection journal.
- January - March 2009. De-identification, analysis and coding of interviews, commentary and journal reflections.

- April 2009 - July 2009. Narrative interpretation of data.
- December 2009. Thesis submitted for examination.

Appendix B – Consent Form

Curtin University of Technology
Science and Mathematics Education Centre (SMEC)
Perth, Western Australia

My name is Professor Steven Witt. I am currently completing a piece of research for my PhD degree at Curtin University of Technology.

Purpose of Research

I am doing a research investigation into *Becoming a teacher*.

I would like to investigate the construction of pre-service teachers' teaching identity.

I will ask you to participate in three interviews which will usually last no more than 30-40 minutes and will take place at Lakeshore Lutheran University. The interviews will be video and audio taped. You will be told that you may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will not miss any class instructional time. You are also asked to allow me to use your online reflection journal, course assignments including an autobiographical sketch, and discussion board dialogue as a part of the research project.

Consent to Participate

Your involvement in the research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any stage without it affecting your rights or my responsibilities. When you have signed the consent form I will assume that you have agreed to participate and allow me to use your data in this research.

Confidentiality

The information you provided will be separate from your personal details, and I will only have access to this. The interview transcript, journal, and discussion board dialogue will not have your name or any other identifying information on it and in adherence to university policy, the interview tapes and transcribed information will be kept in a locked cabinet for five years, before it is destroyed.

Further information

This research has been reviewed and given approval by Curtin University of Technology Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval number SMEC20080027). You would like further information about the study, please feel free to contact me on (714) 858-8550 or by email: steven.witt@cuw.edu. Alternately, you can contact my supervisor Dr. Peter Taylor on 618 9266 7501 or email: p.taylor@curtin.edu.au.

Thank you very much for your involvement in this research, your participation is greatly appreciated.

CONSENT FORM continued

- I understand the purpose and procedures of the study
- I have been provided with the participation information sheet.
- I understand that the procedure itself may not benefit me.
- I understand that my involvement is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time without problem.
- I understand that no personal identifying information like my name and address will be used and that information will be securely stored for seven years before being destroyed.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions.
- I agree to participate in the study outlined to me.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Witness Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Appendix C – Interview Questions/Prompts

Note: These questions/prompts will be used as a guide to initiate discussion. The participant may take the conversation in any direction he/she desires.

Prompts:

- 1. Tell me a story from a positive experience you had as a student.**
- 2. Tell me a story about a teacher—from schooling—who influenced your life the most.**
- 3. Tell me another story about how that teacher, who influenced you, still influences you today.**
- 4. Tell me a story about when you knew you wanted to be a teacher.**
- 5. How do you think your personal life affects your teaching life?**
- 6. What do you think your identity has to do with your teaching? Tell me an identity story.**
- 7. Tell me a story describing the relationship between you and your supervisors.**
- 8. Tell me a story from a negative experience you had as a student.**

Appendix D – Course Syllabus

ED 204 Developmental Reading, Grades K-9 Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:05 a.m. - 11:55 a.m.

Instructor: Steven Witt, M.Ed., M.A., PhD Candidate
Assistant Professor of Education
Telephone: Office xxx.xxx.xxxx
E-mail: steven.witt@cuw.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10-2; other times by appointment
Appointments suggested whenever possible

Required Textbooks

Cunningham, P. M., & Allington, R. L. (2007). *Classrooms that work: they can all read and write*. (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson.

General Bibliography

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Course Description

In becoming a teacher, particularly an elementary-level teacher, one assumes a responsibility toward effective reading instruction. This is a formidable task as it involves an acute understanding of the reading process itself, including both decoding and comprehension. Moreover, one must differentiate and apply varied instructional approaches, curricular materials, standardized tests, and assessment tools. The end result of a successfully constructed program are readers who possess not only basic reading skills but also the ability to successfully read for multiple purposes, including in other curricular areas as well as for recreation.

The practicum component of this course enables students to put some of these fledgling skills into teaching practice. This program, conducted at Mt. Calvary Lutheran School, will afford Lakeshore students direct contact with students of varying abilities. By completing hours within this practicum, students may also satisfy the requirements of other clinical experiences.

Course Objectives

Upon the successful completion of this course, a student should be able to

A. Concepts, principles, and understandings

Standard 1. identify and critically evaluate the major approaches to the teaching of reading;

Standard 1, 2. articulate and define the various skills involved in the reading process, including the incorporation of phonics as part of the complete reading curriculum;

Standards 4,7 3. provide sufficient instruction in basic reading skills, reading in the content areas, and recreational reading;

Standards 3,4,7. develop flexible and varied reading instruction which is unbiased and meets a continuum of student needs;

B. Attitudes, interests, and appreciations

Standards 3,7,10 1. experience direct contact with students of varying abilities in reading within classroom contexts;

Standard 4,2. witness firsthand the interdisciplinary role of reading and language arts at the lower elementary, upper elementary, and middle levels of instruction;

Standard 7,3. demonstrate a greater awareness of available instructional materials for the teaching of reading;

Standards 2,6,4. incorporate proficiently the progression of materials in a school system.

C. Habits, conduct, and skills

Standard 8,1. provide ongoing evaluation and assessment of a student's progress in reading;

Standards 1,9, 2. read, analyze, and apply current research in reading;

Standard 8, 3. interpret and apply standardized tests in the classroom.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Examinations -- 115 points

(Midterm [50 points], Quizzes [15points], Final [50 points])

Your success in this course is commensurate with your effort and diligence in this course. One way to assess your active engagement is through written quizzes and examinations. These may include all lecture material, all assigned readings, practicum experiences, and content from group activities.

Lesson plans (5) 50 points – 10 points each

Lesson plans must be keyboarded and handed to the school staff upon arrival on the teaching day; students must also provide Prof. Witt a copy of the lesson plan as a file attachment with the journal reflection from that week. (Timely submission of all five lesson plans) Failure to do either of these things will result in a grade deduction.

Reflective Journal – 50 points

Each student is required to write a weekly reflective electronic journal and submit a hardcopy. This journal will chronicle your experiences during your this course. This reflection could be based on the student's learning history, beliefs, or attitudes about teaching, or whatever the student was thinking about, challenged by, agreed or disagreed with, but will not be a summary of course materials or during the clinical session. In the practicum, you will be assigned several students with whom to work each week. Your overriding focus is to be on your emerging teaching identity.

After each practicum session, you will respond to a journal prompt provided by your instructor. Your weekly entries may also include observations of student behavior, concerns and/or questions to be addressed through the instructional course of action, resolutions of dilemmas, teaching techniques, classroom management strategies employed, anecdotal records of student progress, etc. This is your opportunity to practice techniques and tactics learned in class as well as through one's independent study and research. A response score of 5/5, 3/5, or 0/5 will be given to each entry and will returned to the sender. You will submit an electronic copy of this journal on webct.

Electronic blackboard discussion dialogue. 30 points

Every other week students will participate in an online discussion board activity. Students will be instructed to respond to open-ended questions regarding teaching and to reflect and respond to other students' comments. *To encourage the timely completion of this assignment, students should respond to the questions provided on WebCT and submit responses to the instructor as indicated on the entries.* Entries should be thorough and reflect the stated parameters.

Autobiographical Learning history 50 points

Write in APA style 4-6 page autobiographical learning sketch of you and your perceptions about teaching and learning. Please address the following criteria: a) information about you personally, your emerging teacher identity, and your philosophy of teaching/learning (how do students learn? how will you teach? Paying particular attention to how your learned to read and write) b) your memories of positive and negative learning experiences c) your view of what makes an effective

teacher d) who has influenced you to embark on the journey of becoming a teacher.
<http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/character/palmer.htm>

The teacher within is not the voice of conscience but of identity and integrity. It speaks not of what ought to be, but of what is real for us, of what is true. It says things like, "This is what fits you and this is what doesn't." Parker Palmer

The paper should be 5-7 typed (word-processed), double-spaced pages. You should utilize the APA format (5th ed.) throughout your paper; all sources, therefore, should be cited in the "References" page. If you are uncertain about the parameters of this assignment or the format of APA, please contact the instructor early in the process! One final note: when submitting the research paper, please submit it electronically and submit one hard copy. One will be kept on file.

Mini-lesson presentation(s) 30 points

Throughout the semester you will present individual and group mini-lessons. Near the end of the semester you will be asked to post four lessons plans to a collaborative blog for use with students in the area of reading instruction. You must create (or adapt) a complete lesson plan for each of the language arts (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). You will offer a one-page introduction and/or rationale for each lesson which will include an indication of how you would adopt this to a future situation or class. In addition, you should attach the file of a one-page complete lesson plan.

Toward the end of the semester, all students will share their favorite lesson with the class. *An imperative component is that you relate your experience with the topic.* Share with us your insights into the topic as a practitioner who has used it!

Focus questions – 40 points

Students will make typed dated entries responding to reading questions from the textbook and other assigned readings as indicated in the Course Schedule. The entries should be personal critical reflections or responses to the class, readings, education or the student's life. Due weekly.

Diagnostic/Prescriptive Report – 30 Points

This report will be based upon a testing session with an elementary-grade student. The instructor will arrange this testing session and will specifically outline the components of this report. The report may be revised and resubmitted for full credit.

Reading Article Reviews (3) 10 points each (30 points)

A responsible educator must stay abreast of current research and trends. To that end, you will be allowed to submit two article reviews of contemporary issues in reading instruction. (These articles may not have been used on the WEB CT discussion groups.) Students are encouraged to select articles which reflect their individual interests and/or fit the research design of their research paper. Each review

should be typed (word-processed) and double-spaced. Please include a complete APA citation of the article selected. *Be careful not to merely summarize the article.* Agree with, argue, question, or apply the findings of the authors to your teaching development. Please demonstrate a collegiate mastery of grammar, syntax, and orthography. Article reviews will only be accepted, however, if the student completing them has completed all required assignments of the course on time (this includes the D/P report).

Rincker Library houses many journal options:

- Phi Delta Kappan
- Reading Teacher
- Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy
- Journal of Reading
- Reading Research Quarterly
- Reading Today
- WSRA Journal

Participation

Your regular attendance in class and full participation are assumed. This expectation is especially stringent on the practicum days at the school site. You are expected to be punctual, prepared, and professional in every aspect.

If you are absent (mentally or physically ☺), you are still responsible for the material covered and assignments due. Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor in the event of unusual or extenuating circumstances. You must contact your practicum site (414.873.3466) to alert them to your absence. Poor attendance or a lack of professionalism WILL impact your course evaluation for participation.

Assignments are due as indicated within the schedule. Assignments which are late, incomplete, or which fail to satisfy stated expectations will not receive full credit. This, of course, put one's final grade in perilous jeopardy.

Instructor's Intent Regarding Full Inclusion and Participation of Class Members

Lakeshore Lutheran University and this instructor wish to affirm the intent of the Federal Law: PL 93-112 Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the PL 101-476 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Any person who may require alternative instructional and/or evaluation procedures due to a handicapping condition should feel free to discuss these needs with the instructor so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

COURSE EVALUATION

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

| Assignments | Points |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| Examinations | 115 pts |
| Lesson Plans | 50 pts. |
| Reflective journal | 50 pts. |
| Blackboard discussions | 30 pts. |
| Autobiographical Learning history | 50 pts. |

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Mini-lesson presentation(s) | 30 pts. |
| Focus questions | 30 pts. |
| Diagnostic/Prescriptive Report | 40 pts. |
| Reading Article Reviews | 30 pts. |
| Total | 425 pts. |

Point Scale and Grading:

| | | |
|----|--------------|---------------|
| A | 95% - 100% | =425-404 |
| A- | 90% - 94% | =382-424 |
| B+ | 87% - 89% | =381-369 |
| B | 83% - 86% | =368-352 |
| B- | 80% - 82% | =351-340 |
| C+ | 77% - 79% | =339-327 |
| C | 73% - 76% | =326-310 |
| C- | 70% - 72% | =309-297 |
| D+ | 67% - 69% | =296-284 |
| D | 63% - 66% | =283-267 |
| D- | 60% - 62% | =266-255 |
| F | 59% or below | =254 or below |

This syllabus and schedule as presented is a best estimate as to how the course will unfold. The instructor reserves the right to make adaptations and changes as warranted.

Course Outline and Schedule (Fall 2008 - Tuesday-Thursday)

| Week | Topic | Assignments Due |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| 1 Aug. 26, 28 | Course Overview: Introduction, Syllabus, your teachers, your philosophy, What is Reading, clinical experience What is reading: the great debate Creating classrooms that work | Aug. 26, 28 – Read Chap. 1 (Cunningham and Allington) |
| 2 Sept. 2, 4 | Approaches to the teaching of reading – Creating independent readers Practicum orientation | <u>Week 2 Assignment</u> (Cunningham and Allington) Chapter 2 |
| 3 Sept. 9, 11 | History of Reading instruction – building the literacy foundation Practicum session #1 | <u>Week 3 Assignment</u> (Cunningham and Allington) Chapter 3 Journal review one due |
| 4 Sept. 16, 18 | Lesson planning, miscue analysis, readability – develop fluent decoders and spellers Practicum session #2 | <u>Week 4 Assignment</u> (Cunningham and Allington) Chapter 4 |
| 5 Sept. 23, 25 | Phonemic Awareness, Phonological Awareness and Phonics Building vocabularies Practicum session #3 | <u>Assignment week 5</u> (Cunningham and Allington) Chapter 5 |
| 6 Sept. 30- Oct.2 | Midterm Examination Practicum session #4 | <u>Assignment week 6</u> |

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| 7 Oct. 7, 9 | Comprehension Learning History Practicum session #5 | <u>Assignment week 8</u> (Cunningham and Allington) Chapter 6 Journal review two due |
| 8 Oct. 14, 16 | Writing Practicum Session #6 | <u>Assignment Week 9</u> (Cunningham and Allington) Chapter 7 |
| 9 Oct. 21 | Multilevel instruction vs Components of a Basal Reading Program Observation of Reading or Lang. Arts class | <u>Assignment Week 10</u> Cunningham and Allington) Chapter 8 |
| 10 Oct. 28, 30 | Assessment Informal Reading Assessment and Diagnostic-Prescriptive Report | <u>Assignment Week 11</u> (Cunningham and Allington) Chapter 9 Journal review three due |
| 11 Nov. 4, 6 | Extra support School Field Experience | <u>Assignment Week 12</u> (Cunningham and Allington) Chapter 10 |
| 12 Nov. 11, 13 | Four block Observing a reading class or Lang. Art class | <u>Assignment Week 13</u> (Cunningham and Allington) Chapter 12-13 |
| 13 Nov. 18, 20 | Reaching beyond the classroom | <u>Assignment Week 14</u> (Cunningham and Allington) Chapter 14 |
| 14 Nov. 25 | Addressing the needs of special students | <u>Assignment Week 15</u> |
| 15 Dec. 2, 3 | Reading and Writing workshop | Assignment for Final |
| Finals Dec. 8- 12 | Final | |

Appendix E -- Reflection Activity

| | Teachers in School | Teachers Out of School |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Primary – (K-2) | | |
| Intermediate (3-5) | | |
| Junior High (6-8) | | |
| High School (9-12) | | |

- **S – Learn a skill – Name the skill or knowledge if you remember**
- **K - Teacher making personal connections**
- **P – Positive teacher**
- **N – Negative teacher**

Appendix F – Copyright Consent

Dear Steven Biskofsky:

It is my understanding that you hold copyrights in the following material:

Legacy

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I would like to reproduce an extract of this work in a doctoral's thesis which I am currently undertaking at Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Western Australia. The subject of my research is: **Becoming a Teacher: An Interpretive Inquiry into the Construction of Pre-service Teachers' Teaching Identity**

I am carrying out this research in my own right and have no association with any commercial organisation or sponsor.

The specific material / extract that I would like to use for the purposes of the thesis is the lyrics to **Legacy** © 2007 Steven Bishofsky. Once completed, the thesis will be made available in hard-copy form in the Curtin Library and in digital form on the Internet via the Australasian Digital Thesis Program. The material will be provided strictly for educational purposes and on a non-commercial basis. Further information on the ADT program can be found at <http://adt.caul.edu.au>.

I would be most grateful for your consent to the copying and communication of the work as proposed. If you are willing to grant this consent, please complete and sign the attached approval slip and return it to me at the address shown.

Full acknowledgement of the ownership of the copyright and the source of the material will be provided with the material. I would be willing to use a specific form of acknowledgement that you may require and to communicate any conditions relating to its use.

If you are not the copyright owner of the material in question, I would be grateful for any information you can provide as to who is likely to hold the copyright. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for your consideration of my request.

Yours sincerely,

Steven Witt

Fri 4/24/2009 10:41 AM

Hi Steve,

Your very welcome to use my song lyrics. You might want to credit me for them in a foot note or an acknowledgment. I'm curious as to which you wish to use. Please let me know.

I'm interested in your work. What is the title of your dissertation? If it's philosophical, do you then not need a research question or do you have a central question?

Steven Biskofsky