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Community-Based Field Experiences in Teacher Education: Possibilities for a Pedagogical Third Space

By
Heidi L. Hallman

Abstract:

The present article discusses the importance of community-based field experiences as a feature of teacher education programs. Through a qualitative case study, prospective teachers' work with homeless youth in an after-school initiative is presented. Framing community-based field experiences in teacher education through "third space" theory, the article discusses the value that such experiences have for prospective teachers' learning. The goals of the article align with the commitment to preparing a future teaching force for the diverse educational settings that they will encounter in the twenty-first century.

Community-Based Field Experiences in Teacher Education:

Possibilities for a Pedagogical Third Space

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Early and diverse field experiences have been touted as one of the keys to successful teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Feiman-Nemser & Buchman, 1987; Sleeter, 2008; Zeichner, 2010). Holistically, such field experiences exist to promote teacher candidates' understanding and practice of culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2001), as well as bridge beginning teachers' reflection on the constructs of theory and practice present in the teaching act (Shulman, 2005). Though field experiences have been acknowledged as an important component of teacher education programs, little work has explored the unique qualities of community-based settings as potential sites for teachers' learning (see Coffey, 2010). Coffey (2010) suggests that community-based settings have the power to transform the ways that beginning teachers think about the effects of schooling in their students' lives, as well as the extent to which social factors influence students' success in school. Community-based settings offer sites for beginning teachers to consider how schools reside in the greater context of a community, and this can potentially broaden beginning teachers' understandings of where learning takes place (Rogers, Marshall, & Tyson, 2006).

Extending teacher education programs' commitment to preparing teacher candidates for environments that are not only part of schools, but situated within communities, becomes a commitment to preparing beginning teachers for understanding that teaching and schooling extend beyond the walls of the classroom and into the world.

In this article, I discuss the importance of community-based field experiences as a feature of teacher education programs. I explore, through a qualitative case study (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995, 2000), teacher candidates' work with homeless youth in an after-school initiative. Drawing on the literature in teacher education that proposes community-based field experiences as potential sites for beginning teachers' learning, especially as these experiences relate to beginning teachers' understandings of teaching diverse students, I explore how such settings align theoretically with teacher education programs and articulate the value that such experiences bring to teacher candidates' learning. I build on Zeichner's (2010) proposal of framing field experiences through "third space" theory (Bhabha, 1990), and show how tenets of third space theory are especially relevant to community-based field sites. The tenets and goals of the study align with the commitment to preparing a future teaching force for the diverse educational settings that they will encounter in the 21st century. My inquiry is framed through the following questions:

- 1) How do teacher candidates conceptualize the significance of their work in a community-based setting? How do they view their work in such a space as relevant to their future work as classroom teachers?

- 2) How can community-based field experiences, as a feature of teacher education programs, be situated as “third spaces” for teacher candidates’ learning?

Background Literature and Conceptual Framework

Community-Based Field Experiences in Teacher Education

The disconnect between university-based teacher education and school-based components of these programs has been recognized as a central problem that has plagued teacher education for many years (Zeichner, 2010, p. 89). Citing a variety of reasons, from graduate student turnover (Zeichner & Miller, 1997) to lack of incentive for tenure-track faculty to invest in this aspect of teacher education (Goodlad, 1990; Labaree, 2004), Zeichner (2010) notes that coordination and thoughtful oversight of field components in teacher education programs has been lacking as an overarching commitment.

Yet, at the same time, field experiences in teacher education have long been viewed as a pivotal feature of teacher education programs because prospective teachers enter such programs with strong beliefs and values about teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006); experiences in field sites have the potential to mitigate these beliefs. Feiman-Nemser and Buchman (1987) acknowledge that teacher candidates’ belief systems are unlikely to change unless beginning teachers are engaged in experiences that “challenge their validity” (p. 9). Likewise, a growing consensus has shown that teachers need to learn in and from practice rather than learn in their preparation for practice (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005). As the field of teacher education responds to the call for teachers to learn “in practice,” field placements continue to play a crucial role in the preparation of a future teaching corps. Yet, what

features of field experiences matter in the preparation of teachers? What types of field experiences encourage novice teachers to think deeply about the practices of teaching and learning? As field experiences in teacher education continue to be re-framed as important sites for teacher learning rather than merely spaces for prospective teachers to “try out,” demonstrate, or apply things they have learned about (Zeichner, 1996), field experiences move toward being conceptualized as productive sites for teacher learning. Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (2009) articulation that the site of one’s teaching practice is a site for inquiry reiterates that field experiences are, indeed, productive sites for teacher learning.

Amidst the debate of field experience in teacher education is the wide acknowledgement that the demographics of school-aged children in the United States is rapidly changing (Marx, 2004) while the dominant portrait of the teacher workforce remains predominantly white, English-speaking, and female (NCES, 2010). As more teachers encounter children whose background does not match their own, it becomes even more imperative that teacher education programs respond to training teachers to understand diversity as it relates to teaching all students. Some scholars (e.g., Coffey, 2010; Rogers et al., 2006) have suggested that community-based field experiences can potentially work on multiple levels to enhance beginning teachers’ insight into both students’ lives outside of school and the ways in which the institution of school responds to students. Community-based field sites, often contrasted with traditional “apprenticeship of observation” models of field work (Lortie, 1975) within classrooms and schools, work toward the goals of broadening beginning teachers’ conceptions of where student learning takes place as well as support the idea that teachers are not only part of a school but part of a larger community.

Community-based field experiences encourage beginning teachers to contextualize students' lives as part of the fabric of the larger community, and emphasize that familiarity with students' communities is important to the work of teaching. Oakes, Franke, Hunter Quartz, and Rogers' (2006) research on community involvement as paired with Center X, the urban teacher education program at UCLA, asserts that community-based field placements possess the potential for teachers to draw on local knowledge that extends outside of the school. The notion of "expert" becomes not only a role for teacher or teacher educator, but rather a role that can be assumed by others in the community. Oakes et al. (2006) state that, in teacher education, "the idea of expert needs to be broadly constructed to include not only guiding teachers, colleagues, and university faculty but also parents, community members, and students themselves" (p. 229). Beginning teachers, therefore, need to envision a Funds of Knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) approach that extends beyond "experts" as identified solely within teacher education programs and local schools.

Tenets of service-learning are useful in describing how community-based field experiences can be theoretically situated within teacher education programs (e.g., Anderson & Erickson, 2003; Boyle-Baise, 2002). Service-learning, as applied to teacher education, has been conceptualized as more than volunteerism, and Feinstein (2005) states that "the broad intended outcome of service-learning is to blend service and learning so that the service reinforces the college students' understanding of the learner and educational practices, and in return the learning improves and strengthens the service they can provide as teachers" (p.3). Because we know that many beginning teachers learn to teach by teaching their university peers in mock-teaching environments (Shrofel,

1991), many beginning teachers have little direct, field-based experiences working with youth before student teaching. Service-learning offers the possibility of re-envisioning the relationship between teacher and students, therefore becoming a site where teacher candidates can mitigate and re-evaluate their prior beliefs (Feiman-Nemser & Buchman, 1987).

Service-learning in teacher education is frequently contrasted with “traditional” field experiences in classrooms where beginning teachers are immediately socialized into the role of teacher as “expert” (Cuban, 1993; Lortie, 1975). Portes and Smagorinsky have recently (2010) noted that teacher candidates are still by and large socialized into traditional, teacher-centered models of instruction, comprised, in part, of “a conception in which a teacher stands before students who face forward in seats and who are supposedly poised to listen and learn” (p. 236). Service-learning works against this model, thereby becoming both a counter-narrative and conduit for beginning teachers to reconsider the relationship between teacher and students.

The work that teacher candidates do in community-based field sites, then, can be conceptualized as service-learning for prospective teachers. Because the role of “teacher as expert” is put into question in the service-learning act, beginning teachers are prompted to critically examine the relationship between teacher and students, something that is often ignored in more “traditional” field placement or practicum/ student teaching experiences. In the next section, I elaborate on how “third space theory” (Bhabha, 1990) assists in conceptualizing beginning teachers’ work in community-based field sites.

Community-Based Field Sites as Third Spaces

Community-based field sites can be conceptualized as “third spaces” (Bhabha, 1990), a term that connotes a rejection of binaries such as practitioner/ expert and school/ community. These binaries often remain solidified and distinct in beginning teachers’ models of schooling, and Zeichner (2010), who has recently written about the possibility of framing field experiences in teacher education as “third spaces,” notes that in such spaces “the either/or viewpoint is transformed into a both/ also point of view” (p. 92). Instead of “teacher as expert/ student as learner,” the roles of teacher and student are put into question in third space theory, thus creating a reciprocal approach to the roles of “knowledge creator” and “knowledge receiver.”

Several scholars in education (Gutierrez, 2008; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, and Collazo, 2004) have written about applications of third space theory to educational contexts, though conceptualize third space theory in different ways. Gutierrez (2008) notes that third spaces “[encourage] us to examine a minimum of two interacting contexts or activities to produce more complicated understandings of how the social organization of people’s everyday practices supports and constrains people’s cognitive and social development” (p. 9). Likewise, Kirkland (2008, 2010) calls for a “pedagogical third space” in teaching that synthesizes traditional school literacies with students’ lived literacies. Echoing Bhabha (1994), whose discussion of third space refers to third spaces as sites “for elaborating strategies of selfhood...that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (pp. 1-2), Kirkland (2008) positions “pedagogical third spaces” as those spaces that challenge and expand what type of knowledge is valued in school and in the world at large. Through an invitation to youth to bring their everyday knowledge into the

teaching and learning process, Kirkland (2008) asserts that pedagogical third spaces can be fostered both in-and-outside of school contexts. The manifestation of a pedagogical third space in classrooms and after-school programs has been discussed by Moje et al. (2004) in that “third space” is, in practice, a merging of students’ “first space” (their home language) and their “second spaces,” or those spaces that they encounter in the world (such as the space of school). Resonant with research conducted on students’ in-and out-of-school literacies (e.g., Hull & Schultz, 2002), “third space,” as both a theoretical construct and real-world space, is particularly attuned to articulating the “mismatches” between students’ home and school literacies.

Like Bhabha, Soja’s (2004) conceptualization of “third space” recognizes the reciprocal relationship between first and second spaces in the creation of third space. Soja notes that, through the concept of third space, the classroom becomes “an expanded world of learning and literacy practice, [where] the roles also become reversed, as every space and place in the world becomes readable or interpretable as a classroom” (p. xi). Third space, then, is not something constructed, but is *already present*. This claim suggests the importance of reconsidering how we, as teachers, teacher educators, and researchers, prompt teacher candidates to classify and understand educational spaces, as well as how we invite them to situate knowledge and knowledge-making within these spaces.

Bhabha’s (1994) discussion of *hybridity* is critical to understanding the nature of third spaces, and how this paper operationalizes the idea of third space. Bhabha writes that hybridity points to “a difference ‘within,’ a subject that inhabits the rim of an ‘in-between’ reality...[T]his borderline existence inhabits a stillness of time and a

strangeness of framing that creates the discursive ‘image’ at the crossroads...” (p. 19).

Hybrid understandings and moments, then, are created when binaries are challenged and new possibilities and spaces for meaning-making are created. The pedagogical third space is one such hybrid space.

Soja’s (1996) concept of “thirding,” like Bhabha’s conception of hybridity, asks us to “set aside demands to make an either/ or choice and contemplate instead the possibility of a both/ and also logic” (1996, p. 5). Thirding, then, offers an option to step away from the tendency to create the binary battlegrounds (Flessner, 2008) that produce either/ or choices. Instead, thirding introduces an “other/ than” choice that rejects reliance on binaries and, instead, recognizes alternative spaces. Thirding produces alternative spaces that are not just an additive combination of binary options, but a restructuring of spatial possibilities.

Training teacher candidates to embrace and understand community-based field experiences as potential pedagogical third spaces becomes a process of encouraging beginning teachers to complicate the ways in which they view students’ learning and literacy, as well as the ways that they articulate the relational spaces of teacher-student, official-unofficial language, singular authority- pluralistic power, and server-served. Community-based field experiences have the potential to become the “pedagogical third spaces” in which beginning teachers can complicate the binaries often created in more “traditional” acts of teaching and learning.

As beginning teachers are socialized into the role of “teacher,” it is imperative that teacher education programs provide contexts for questioning what such a role entails. As teacher education programs move to identify salient features of their programs, they

must examine how these features theoretically align with the goals they have for beginning teachers. Fostering possibilities for teacher candidates to recognize pedagogical third spaces is essential for novice teachers' growth and view of the teaching act. In the remainder of the article, I articulate how a community-based field experience initiative fostered the possibilities for a pedagogical third space for a group of prospective English teachers. Through attending to these teacher candidates' experience teaching in a community-based field site, I illustrate how tenets of third space theory bolstered the prospective teachers' inquiry about teaching and the role of the teacher over the course of one academic year. Specifically following the work of Bhabha (1990) and Soja (2004), I move toward articulating the benefits of including community-based field experiences as a feature of teacher education programs, and urge teacher educators to consider how such experiences move future teachers toward responding to students' needs.

Method

Throughout the course of one academic year, I investigated how four prospective English teachers conceptualized their work in a community-based field site. These beginning teachers, who are featured in this article, completed at least forty hours of tutoring/ mentoring with adolescents involved in an after-school initiative for homeless youth. My study, framed as an exploratory qualitative case study (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995, 2000), took place in the context of Family Partnership's (all names of people and places are pseudonyms) day center for homeless families, as well as in the teacher education program in which the prospective teachers were enrolled. The youth at Family Partnership with whom the teachers worked over the course of the year were homeless during the time of the study, and all were officially part of Family Partnership's program

for homeless families. During the entire course of the study, the prospective teachers were enrolled in the Secondary English/ Language Arts education program at Green State University, and were also enrolled an English education methods course as well as other education courses that comprised their teacher education program. The study, consistent with the description of case study as described by Stake (2000), follows this small group of beginning teachers' work in a community-based field site in a detailed manner, and aligns with the commitment of preparing beginning teachers to teach in diverse educational contexts.

Context(s) of Study

Family Partnership Day Center for Homeless Families.

Family Partnership is a national organization framed by a model with a successful history. The program has been implemented nationwide in multiple communities and was adopted in Cedar Creek, the community in which this study was situated, in November of 2008. Family Partnership, a nonprofit organization committed to helping low-income families achieve lasting independence, is oftentimes contrasted with a “shelter model” of assisting homeless individuals and families, as the program was founded on the premise of assisting homeless families through providing “an integrated approach that begins with meeting immediate needs but reaches much further to help people achieve independence and to alleviate the root causes of poverty.” Family Partnership works with a small group of families over the course of a period of three to four months with the intention of fostering lasting independence.

In Cedar Creek, Family Partnership is one of several programs serving homeless individuals. Selecting Family Partnership as the community-based field site for beginning

teachers' work with homeless youth was purposeful by the [Author], as the directors at Family Partnership had sought connections with Green State University the summer before the program was implemented as they had hopes of creating an after-school initiative for the youth who were part of the Family Partnership program.

More broadly, my purposeful selection of a community-based field site focused on serving homeless families and youth, in part, acknowledges that the education of homeless youth has been continually represented in scant ways in the research literature. It is now estimated that approximately 50,000 youth in the United States are homeless for six months or longer (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2010). Most typically, the homeless youth population has been represented as residing in the inner-city with single-parent (female)-headed families. Yet, the "face" of homelessness has changed considerably in the past few years, and continues to change. It is now estimated that 14 out of every 10,000 people are "rural" or "suburban" homeless (as compared to 29 out of every 10,000 people who are "urban" homeless) (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2010). Homelessness since the beginning of the recession in 2008 has continued to rise in the United States, especially with regard to the homelessness of families (<http://www.justneighbors.net/poverty-facts-your-neighborhood-does-working-work>). Cedar Creek, a community of approximately 90,000 people, is classified as a suburban community. The suburban nature of the community challenges the idea that homeless individuals and families reside in the community. This notion perhaps made it even more imperative that prospective teachers enrolled at Green State University become aware of and acquainted with the diversity within their local community.

Family Partnership's day center, the site of the tutoring and teaching work that

beginning teachers undertook, was located in a nondescript residential house in the center of downtown Cedar Creek. The director of Family Partnership told volunteers the day center was unmarked so as not to draw attention to the purpose of the house when the morning bus picked up children for school. Families involved in the Family Partnership program spent their days (7 am-5 pm) at the Day Center and then moved to rotate between participating congregations in the evening hours. In Cedar Creek, thirteen congregations were participants in the Family Partnership program. The congregations' role was to provide an evening meal and sleeping arrangements for the families. The role of the Day Center was to provide computer access and a stable place for families to reside during the daytime hours. The work that prospective teachers undertook at the Day Center was arranged on a Monday/ Wednesday, 3:30-5:00 pm, schedule. This arrangement allowed youth who were part of the Family Partnership program to arrive at the Day Center after school in time to meet prospective teachers for tutoring and homework help.

Green State University.

Research has shown that carefully constructed field experiences that are coordinated with campus courses are the most influential types of field experiences in supporting beginning teacher learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Tatto, 1996). The community-based field experience at Family Partnership was initially conceived of as part of a course I taught entitled "Teaching English in Middle/ Secondary Schools." In years prior to the fall of implementation, [the Author] had included only "traditional" field sites as options for teacher candidates' completion of the field experience component of the course. However, I desired to broaden the field experience to purposely

include a community-based site. I initially conceptualized the community-based field site as an “option” for interested prospective teachers; however, over the course of the pilot year, I came to think about community-based field experiences as part of the framework for the course. During the fall semester of the study, four prospective teachers volunteered to work with Family Partnership day center for homeless families throughout the fall and spring semesters of one academic year. These four prospective teachers (out of nineteen total) are the beginning teachers featured in this article.¹

At the time of the study, all four prospective teachers who are the subjects of the case study were in the process of becoming licensed teachers in the area of Secondary English/ Language Arts education at Green State University and all were in their junior or senior year of college. Green State University is a large research university located in the Midwest United States. More specifically, Green State University resides in the heart of the community of Cedar Creek, a suburban community of 90,000 people. Because the university is also situated 45 miles from Marshall City, a large metropolitan area of just over 2 million, the relative proximity of Marshall City to Green State University offers teacher education students the ability to attend the state’s flagship institution, yet complete their student teaching experience in schools located in the state’s largest metropolitan center. Green State University, also surrounded by rural communities and towns, offers teacher education students the option to complete early-field experiences and student teaching in any or all of urban, suburban, and rural contexts.

Prospective Teacher Participants

As previously mentioned, four prospective teachers volunteered to take part in the community-based field experience of working with students at Family Partnership and participating in the research study on which this article is based. Upon initiation of the study, I had hoped that more prospective teachers would be interested in the experience. My hope was that at least half of the class (approximately ten students) would opt to participate in the community-based experience. To obtain a more accurate picture of the reasons why prospective teachers chose to participate in “traditional” field experience options (15 out of the 19 teachers), which included an English classroom in a local high school (7 out of 19 teachers) and an after-school program at a middle school (8 of the 19 teachers), I handed out a questionnaire in the middle of the fall semester of the study. This questionnaire asked prospective teachers why they had elected to choose the field experience site that they did. In very consistent ways, the prospective teachers who selected the “traditional” field site (working with adolescents on their writing in the context of a high school English classroom) iterated that they thought this was the “real work” of an English teacher; therefore, they felt that they would benefit most from experience in this context. Prospective teachers who selected the after-school program site at a middle school for completing their field experience articulated their desire to understand after-school programming. Finally, prospective teachers who chose the community-based field site (the smallest group of teachers in the larger group of 19) iterated their desire for what they viewed a community-based field experience as an “alternative” field experience in teacher education. The notion of “alternative,” through their perspective, was connected to the fact that the field experience took place in a non-school venue.

Although this could be seen as a limitation of the study in that a small group of beginning teachers indicated interest in working in a community-based setting versus a “traditional” school-based setting, it illuminates the consistent expectations that reside with beginning teachers about the role of teacher and the work of teaching. As the investigator, I opted to look favorably on the fact that four prospective teachers were willing to undertake work at Family Partnership, and, consistent with case study (Stake, 1995), I viewed the small number of participants as an opportunity to inquire deeply about the experience they would have at Family Partnership. Next, I provide a short biography of each of the four prospective teachers who elected to participate in the community-based field experience of working with homeless youth.

Ming Nguyen.

Ming Nguyen, a student in her early-20s, was one of two non-white students in her cohort of English/ Language Arts education majors. Unlike many of the students enrolled in the teacher preparation program at Green State University, Ming, a self-identified Chinese-American student, lived with her extended family in a community 40 miles from the university. This community, a suburb of Marshall City, afforded more diversity as well as more employment opportunities for others in Ming’s family. Most days, Ming took the university bus back and forth from Marshall City to Cedar Creek.

Ming struggled in many of her English content area courses, as well as in courses that required her to lead presentations or discussions with large groups of students. Ming expressed her discomfort with taking such roles in the classroom with me. During the course of the year of the study, other instructors in the School of Education asked me about my perceptions of Ming’s ability to be a future classroom teacher. Ming often

appeared to be quite nervous in front of her college-aged peers and this may have prompted instructors to express concern about her ability to lead a classroom of adolescents.

Sarah Emerson.

Sarah Emerson, a student in her early 20s and a native of the state in which Green State University was located, was representative of the majority of Green State University's teacher candidates in several ways. Sarah was white and well prepared in her content area, English, and her plans for post-graduation from the teacher education program included residing within a one-hour driving proximity to both Green State University and the Marshall City metropolitan area. Sarah intended to continue pursuing graduate coursework that would lead to the completion of her master's degree while beginning her first teaching position the year following the completion of the teacher education program. Sarah's intent was to teach middle or high school English and she was also, at the time of the study, completing an endorsement in TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages).

Tara Stance.

Tara Stance, a student in her early 20s, was an out-of-state student from a neighboring state. Tara was white and a student who was considering teaching in an international context after the completion of the teacher education program at Green State University. Tara cited her semester-long study abroad experience to Ireland as a catalyst for this interest. Tara was a confident young woman who looked favorably on new experiences. She was the first student to express interest in working with homeless youth in Fall 2010.

Rebecca Avery.

Rebecca Avery, a white student in her early 20s, was overt about her commitment and adherence to teaching practices framed by tenets of social justice. She specifically cited the book *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up: Teaching about social justice and the power of the written word* (2000) by Linda Christensen as espousing an ideology she wished to embrace in her teaching. Rebecca was a student attending Green State University from a neighboring state, and intended to secure a teaching position in her home state upon completion of the teacher education program.

Data Collection and Analysis

Throughout the study, prospective teachers' work at Family Partnership was explored through their stories of 'self,' and these stories were viewed as important windows for identifying beginning teachers' understandings of themselves as teachers, as well as beginning teachers' perceptions of their relationships with students. Mishler (1999) notes that the stories we, as people, tell about our lives are the ways we "express, display, [and] make[s] claims for who we are—in the stories we tell and how we tell them" (pp. 19-20). Therefore, the stories that prospective teachers told throughout the course of the study in group interviews, seminar meetings, reflective journals, as well as at the community-based field site, were viewed as identity claims about who they were and wanted to be as future teachers. In discussing the concept of identity throughout the study, identity was conceived of as fluid and complex, as well as inherently 'social.' Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) discuss the premise that "identities, the imaginings of self in worlds of action, [are]...lived in and through activity and so must be conceptualized as they develop in social practice" (p. 5). Identities, then, are always

formed in relationship to others and are always historically and culturally situated (Harding, 2004).

Prospective teachers' stories of 'self' are featured throughout this article as opportunities to understand their work at Family Partnership. On several occasions, in group interviews and seminar meetings, prospective teachers were purposefully prompted to focus on the 'self' as a way to situate teacher identity as a gradual formation of "becoming" (Gomez, Black & Allen, 2007). Throughout the remainder of the article, these beginning teachers' stories of their work with homeless youth at Family Partnership are depicted as ways to understand the "becoming" of participants' teacher identities, as well as possibilities for beginning teachers to articulate a pedagogical third space within their teaching.

Group interviews and seminar meetings.

The study used a number of data collection methods to attend to prospective teachers' stories of 'self.' The first of these methods involved conducting group interviews with all four prospective teachers throughout the course of their work with homeless youth. The group interviews I conducted asked prospective teachers to comment on: 1) the nature of their work with homeless youth at Family Partnership day center, 2) the triumphs and challenges experienced, 3) how they, as future teachers, thought about their role within a community-based field site, and 4) a particular experience working with one adolescent during their time at Family Partnership. All group interviews were between 20-30 minutes in length and occurred twice during the fall semester and twice during the spring semester, within the context of seminar meetings (described below). The rationale for using group interviews in the interviewing

process was based on the intention to elicit dialogue between the four prospective teachers that would more authentically reveal their feelings and perceptions about their work at Family Partnership. A rationale for conducting group interviews also included the premise that beginning teachers may be able to synthesize the experiences they had in deeper ways by being privy to other's narratives of their experiences.

Seminar meetings.

Before beginning their work at Family Partnership, as well as during the months of their work at the day center, prospective teachers involved in the study participated in monthly seminar meetings with me. In these seminar meetings, the beginning teachers discussed their weekly work at Family Partnership, and the challenges and triumphs that were occurring for them as they pursued their work. I asked them to share stories of their expectations for their work and how these expectations were being met. I also asked them to reflect on their work over the course of previous weeks and how this work related to their conceptions of teaching. Four of the seminar meetings also included conducting audio-recorded group interviews (described above).

Prospective teachers' reflective journals.

An additional source of data for the study was the participants' reflective journals. Through reading the participants' journals, collected a total of four times throughout the study, I viewed these journals as individuals' identity performances, or "imaginings of the self in worlds of action" (Holland et al., 1998, p.5). Prospective teachers were given a series of prompts to guide their journal writing (see Appendix A). They were encouraged to respond to any of the prompts in multiple journal entries throughout the course of the study. Although the series of prompts featured in Appendix A spanned a range of topic

areas, the journal entries that corresponded to how prospective teachers envisioned their role in the community-based field were identified.

Observation of prospective teachers' work in community-based field sites.

I was a participant observer (Fine, 1991) at Family Partnership over the course of the study, assuming a tutoring role alongside the prospective teachers. Her participation included a once-a-week visit to Family Partnership as well as frequent communication with the director, Alexandra Britton.

Data Analysis

Data from the group interviews, seminar meetings, and reflective journals are viewed as “stories.” These stories emerged, as Flannery (2008) describes, in the “contexts of interaction in which social actors, dotted with histories, engage in social practices and position self and others” (pp. 111-112). A qualitative process of data analysis was initiated when reading participants’ stories by articulating inductive and deductive coding constructs (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The analysis of data was inductive in the way it first sought to find recurring themes in preservice teachers’ stories of ‘self’ in group interviews, seminar meetings, and reflective journals. In reading through transcripts of the interviews and reflective journals, an inductive coding process illuminated the ways in which prospective teachers described their work at Family Partnership, the youth with whom they worked, and their perceived role at the day center.

The analysis process also used deductive coding constructs as a way of triangulating the findings that were gleaned through the inductive approach. In taking a deductive approach to coding the data, themes were sought within the data that resonated with the literature on community-based field experiences, teaching diverse students, and

third space theory. After inductive and deductive analyses were completed, prospective teachers' stories that exemplified an identified theme or themes were highlighted and featured within the findings section of the article.

Findings

Community-based Field Sites as Hybrid Spaces

The community-based field experience for beginning teachers took on a very particular meaning in this study: working with homeless youth. As previously stated, working with homeless youth in a community context was initially perceived of as an “alternative” field experience to all four prospective teachers involved in the study. Both Tara and Sarah wrote in journals entries that they had never met someone who was homeless, and Ming and Rebecca made comments that they had not been aware of students who were homeless in any of the schools they had attended. The unfamiliarity that the four beginning teachers expressed with the issue of homelessness resonates with the research literature, as homelessness is often described as an “invisible” aspect of students' lives in the classroom (see Barton, 1998).

The beginning months of participation at Family Partnership prompted beginning teachers to focus on their perceptions of homelessness in the community of Cedar Creek. In a seminar meeting held during the first month of the study, after prospective teachers had attended the two-hour volunteer training required by the Family Partnership program, beginning teachers were asked about their familiarity with the issue of homelessness in the local community. Very candidly, Rebecca responded by saying to her peers,

I didn't know that programs like Family Partnership existed in the community.

My experience of serving food at the community shelter made me assume that the

shelter was the only place for homeless families. And the shelter model is the only model that I knew existed before starting our work with Family Partnership.

In making her comment, Rebecca acknowledged that she inherently contrasted the model of Family Partnership with the shelter model as she began her work at Family Partnership. In a second seminar meeting of the semester, she again referenced the differences she observed between two models of serving homeless individuals and families in the community of Cedar Creek. She said,

Family Partnership is different from the shelter model because there is consistency with families at Family Partnership. There is also accountability. I mean, if I were homeless, I would want to have a program reach out to me and get to know my needs rather than just serve me a meal. But, maybe some people who experience homelessness aren't comfortable with the kind of intervention that Family Partnership offers. Maybe it is almost *too* personal.

In response to this characterization of the Family Partnership model and the “shelter” model, Sarah observed:

I don't think it is a matter of one model against the other. It's not that black and white. I think that Family Partnership's model is more holistic, but not necessarily more personal. Someone who is homeless may share a lot about their life, while someone else may share very little, and that might not be because of the model.

The initial reactions that prospective teachers had to characterizing models of serving homeless individuals and families are depicted above as evidence of how they narrated initial perceptions of homelessness in the local community. Further, their comments provide an illustration of how they began to question their understandings of

homelessness, even early in the course of their work at Family Partnership. In the excerpt featured above, Sarah prompts Rebecca to renegotiate the initial characterization she had asserted about models of serving homeless individuals.

The concept of community-based sites as “third spaces” became operationalized in conversations that occurred throughout monthly seminar meetings. For example, in her rebuttal featured above, Sarah acknowledges a *third space* model of conceptualizing the work of both Family Partnership and shelter models that serve homeless families and individuals by disrupting the tendency to set up binary choices for categorizing such models. Soja’s (1996) warning of the danger in creating such either/ or binaries is heeded, and Sarah is able to prompt her peers to restructure a new conception of such models. This new conception was a defining point in prospective teachers’ early conversations about community-based field experiences in teacher education.

Challenging the ways in which community-based field sites were situated as “other” than school spaces was another step in legitimizing the work that the four prospective teachers undertook at Family Partnership. In the third seminar meeting of the fall semester of the study, prospective teachers shared portions of their reflective journals with one another. Excerpts from their journals showed that, although they viewed their work at Family Partnership as meaningful, they continued to question the “direct relevance” that their work in community-based sites had to their work as future classroom teachers. Rebecca wrote in her journal:

At Family Partnership, I can work one-on-one with students and can get to know their interests and strengths. I know this is important in teaching also, but it seems more possible in an out of school space such as the one we are working in. When

working with Jason [an adolescent at Family Partnership], I've been able to ask him about what he is good at and how this matches up with what he studies at school. There seems to be a space for me to interact with him and a way to use his strengths to help him with school knowledge. I don't know if I could do this in the classroom.

Rebecca recognizes the pedagogical third space in a community-based field site but questions how this is the same or different in a classroom. She alludes to a "bridge metaphor" between Jason's out-of-school interests and the academic learning that she sees he will undertake in a school context.

In her comments, Rebecca imagines what she believes to be the "pedagogical third space." She sees this space as residing between students' out-of-school knowledge and in-school knowledge, yet contemplates whether a recognition of this space is possible within a school context. However, a key facet of her work at Family Partnership, is that she sees students residing in such a space. Later, in her journal, she writes about the particulars of the pedagogical third space. Rebecca writes:

Jason is really knowledgeable about cars and is always reading magazines about cars and other vehicles when I'm at Family Partnership (until I ask him if he has any homework). I know nothing about cars and many times I have asked him questions about why he is into cars. I've learned that he has actually worked on cars, fixed his uncle's car, and just has a lot of knowledge about cars, in general. I wouldn't necessarily think that this translates directly to school, but I've found that through our conversations that Jason is able to tell me quite a bit of detailed information about cars. I think this has made him feel more comfortable with me,

and when we worked on an essay for English class, I think he was more open to describing things and writing about them because of our many conversations about cars.

Rebecca articulates the pedagogical third space in sophisticated ways, as she is able to see how the knowledge that Jason creates in his conversations with her both functions as a “bridge” to other types of learning (such as academic learning) yet also functions as knowledge in and of itself. The “bridge metaphor,” therefore, signifies not just a direct translation from out-of-school to in-school, but knowledge itself. The “bridge knowledge,” in Jason’s case, is a third space for meaning-making and Rebecca is able to recognize this. Like Bhabha’s (1994) view of hybridity, the identification of the bridge “requires a movement away from a world conceived in binary terms” (pp. 20-21), and instead toward alternative spaces for knowledge. Rebecca’s discovery about how Jason’s knowledge might assist him in particular ways with school tasks was impressive, as she recognized the complex construction of knowledge in-context and how this is continually re-shaped.

In considering the construction of “third space,” it becomes important to recognize that third space relies on a notion of impermanence. The notion of “third space,” then, is not to create another static option to accompany a solidified binary. Instead, a third space urges educators to continuously expand definitions of knowledge. To clarify that third space is not just another solidified space “option,” Sheehy and Leander (2004) use the term “unsettling” to signify the perpetual motion within third space. They write that “the purpose of spatial analysis is not to reduce space to a stability, but to show that it is always changing” (p. 2). Community-based field sites, then, do not

just become a “third option” to the in-school/ out-of-school divide, but spaces with multiple possibilities concerning how knowledge is situated. Rebecca is able to discover this during the course of her tutoring work with Jason.

Ming also saw how situating students’ reading interests and abilities was not a simple split between in-school and out-of-school arenas. Throughout both semesters of her work at Family Partnership, Ming spent a great deal of time reading with middle-school students. One particular student, Penny, a 13-year old middle-school student, liked to read aloud to Ming. Ming would interact with Penny during the reading, usually in the form of asking questions and asking for clarifications. Penny was particularly fond of vampire books and she and Ming read aloud Kimberly Pauley’s (2009) *Sucks to Be Me: The All-True Confessions of Mina Hamilton, Teen Vampire (maybe)* over the course of several tutoring sessions. Ming, at first, viewed the book as pure pleasure reading for Penny, yet came to reflect on how her view of Penny’s reading changed as she spent more time reading with Penny. Below is an excerpt from Ming’s journal:

Penny loves reading vampire books and I thought this was fine but saw it as outside of school reading. I thought that reading aloud a book like this was really only good for her fluency with reading. As we got more into the book, though, I could see how she was really imagining things about the story-world presented in the book. The book was a creative place for her mind, not just a fun book. This is what English teachers want books to do for kids and I am not so judgmental of these types of books anymore.

Ming is able to move from an either/ or conception of knowledge to a both/ also view of the benefits of young adult books—particularly “vampire books.” Instead of

dichotomizing reading choices into out-of-school and in-school books, Ming gives recognition to a pedagogical third space where knowledge can reside in new ways. The pedagogical third space becomes a hybrid space of both school-based knowledge and out-of-school based knowledge, and this allows her to reconsider the benefits that Penny's reading choices have to her.

As beginning teachers, like Rebecca and Ming, work to actualize pedagogical third spaces, they discover new conceptions of teaching. This new conception is not merely a “blending” of first and second spaces, but a new possibility for recognizing students' knowledge. In such a space, students' learning takes precedence over “teaching” and becomes recognized as important. Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, and Turner (1997) recognize that in this focus on learning, teaching becomes “consciously local, contingent, situated, and strategic” (p. 372); teaching resides in a pedagogical third space.

Re-Envisioning the Roles of Teacher/ Student in Third Spaces

Possibilities for viewing work in community-based field sites as potential pedagogical third spaces became most striking in the stories that prospective teachers told about the roles of teacher and student in their work at Family Partnership. Portes and Smagorinsky (2010) remind us that the dominant model of classroom teaching into which teachers are socialized is one that adheres to a role of ‘teacher as authority.’ The role of ‘teacher as authority’ endorses a *teaching mythology* that constrains beginning teachers' views of an appropriate teacher's role (Hallman & Burdick, 2011). This model, one that “presents” knowledge to students in a way that encourages a passive consumption of knowledge, has been confirmed also as a dominant teaching method in studies of

classroom discourse (e.g., Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur, & Prendergast, 1997), linking it to a culture of schooling resistant to change. At the same time that the entrenched nature of this paradigm is acknowledged, other models through which to socialize beginning teachers must be encouraged, thereby urging beginning teachers to question the taken-for-granted relationships between teacher and students.

Work in community-based field sites encourages beginning teachers to think about and enact new relationships between teacher and student. Some scholars, including Howey and Zimpher (2006), have written about alternative conceptualizations of the work of teachers. They write about “boundary spanners,” or those individuals who “[blur] the lines of responsibility between traditionally assumed by those in universities, schools, and school districts” (p.5), as those teachers who seek to challenge the roles that they are socialized into, and instead renegotiate those roles.

Throughout her experience at Family Partnership, Ming related to the idea of teacher as boundary spanner, as she was frequently engaged in the process of questioning how students responded to her as a “teacher.” Her focus on the self/ other, or teacher/ student, relationship became a focal point of her reflective journals, and she articulated this when she wrote:

I have been at the Day Center three times now and still am not sure what to expect. The training we had before we started made me nervous about saying or doing the right thing the right way. A lot of the data and videos that Alexandra (the director of the Center) showed us were very informative, yet also intimidating. I feel as though when the issue of treating homeless people “normally” is addressed, it is as though I need to treat this group of people with

even more sensitivity (even though I know I should treat them “the same” as I treat others). I have been so worried that I will say something that will hurt the kids’ feelings or something along those lines.

Early in her experience at Family Partnership, Ming had a desire to think about her role as teacher and tutor. In her journals, she reflected on her role at Family Partnership, but was often quiet in the focus groups she participated in with the three other prospective teachers. In a group interview held in December of the fall semester, Tara and Rebecca articulated their perceptions of what it meant to assume the role of “teacher,” exuding confidence that Family Partnership was a space “other” than school. Tara and Rebecca’s views on the role of teacher at Family Partnership situated it as “other” than classroom teacher, even after a semester of fieldwork.

(Author): Over the fall semester, did you feel that you consistently inhabited the role of “teacher” or “tutor” while you were at the Day Center?

Tara: I think we were in a nontraditional space so we were asked to be nontraditional. There weren’t any set expectations for being a teacher, so we sometimes would play games with the kids.

Rebecca: Yeah, I think we had to just rely on our own motivation for getting the kids engaged. A lot of times the kids didn’t want us to help with homework so we weren’t really in the teacher or tutor role.

(Author): How do you feel the work you are doing at Family Partnership relates to the work of teaching in a classroom?

Tara: I think it does relate in some ways. But this experience is about the relationships you build and there's really no expectation that we teach the students about English. As a teacher, we'll mostly be focused on the teaching of English.

Rebecca: I think this experience has shown me that I can get along with students, but as far as building your skills as a teacher, I don't know that it directly relates to that.

The act of teaching, as defined by Rebecca and Tara in the above excerpt, is viewed as largely constituted as a series of teaching techniques (see Harste, Leland, Schmidt, Vasquez, & Ociepka, 2004). Rebecca and Tara both hesitate to observe a direct alignment between their work at Family Partnership and their work as future teachers; yet, as the spring semester progressed, their understandings of what constituted the teaching act began to change when they reflected on the self/ other relationship.

In the spring semester, Tara and Rebecca both stated that observing manifestations of teaching English in "unofficial" school spaces, such as Family Partnership, had, indeed, assisted them in viewing the teaching of English as a complex negotiation of multiple systems at play (Lave & Wegner, 1991). This was a shift from prior articulations in the fall semester. Tara said:

When I started at Family Partnership in the fall, I didn't see the work we did as teaching. I saw it more as mentoring. I've been a Big Sister through the Big Brothers, Big Sisters program, so I wasn't really sure I needed to get better at mentoring. I thought that I was already good at it. I see now that the more experience you have building relationships with students, the better you get at

teaching. Teaching English is not just teaching about literature or poetry or something, but about interacting with students about something.

Rebecca also iterates a similar feeling about the act of teaching and her role as “teacher,” and reflects on her role with students at Family Partnership over the course of the academic year. In framing the way her thoughts about teaching had evolved, Rebecca recalls the essay she wrote as part of her application to the teacher education program, and is able to see some of her changes.

I didn’t really know what I was getting into (laughs). I mean, I knew that teaching would be about being with students, but I thought it would be more one-sided.

Like that I, as the teacher, would be the one making all the decisions. I think this year I saw how that is really never going to work in the classroom. Family Partnership wasn’t a classroom, but what we did at Family Partnership was what we’ll be doing with students when we are out teaching.

Prospective teachers, like Ming, Tara, and Rebecca, begin to re-construct their perceptions of the roles of teacher and student through reflecting on the work they undertook at Family Partnership, and they begin to acknowledge how the self/ other relationship resides at the heart of teaching. As prospective teachers take up the act of teaching in community-based field sites, they begin to engage in critical reflection of their own role as “teacher” in relationship to the roles that their students assume.

Third space theory (Bhabha, 1990), at its core, is an exercise in the deconstruction of binaries. The self/ other binary, one that is articulated by Bhabha (1994), most applied to prospective teachers’ notions of teacher and student, and prospective teachers involved in the teaching act at Family Partnership authored themselves as future teachers, in part,

through authoring the relationship they had with the ‘other’—the students with whom they worked. Over their academic year of working at Family Partnership, beginning teachers created what Flower (2008) calls *reciprocity*, or an exchange in roles, within their relationships with students, and began to notice how work in this particular community-based field sites had the potential to break the self/ other dichotomy.

Adjacent to the discussion of binaries, third space theory (Bhabha, 1990) acknowledges that the spatial and temporal contexts in which we live are central to what we can know and understand, and therefore, it is not surprising that beginning teachers rely on dominant models of what it means to be a “teacher” and what it means to be a “student.” Yet, it is critical that beginning teachers have exposure to contexts for learning that push them outside of these pre-conceived roles. Community-based field sites are appropriate places for such work.

For example, throughout the year, Ming reflected on her notion of self-as-teacher, yet undertook the work of thinking through how she constructed the homeless students with whom she worked. Throughout the time she spent at Family Partnership, Ming worked extensively with Penny (the student introduced earlier). Penny was drawn to Ming’s reserved demeanor, and was extremely talkative with Ming about her experiences in middle school. At the beginning of the school year, Penny told Ming that she had recently been recommended to participate in the Gifted and Talented program at her school, and Ming shared this with her fellow prospective teachers in a seminar meeting. The conversation that ensued among the beginning teachers elicited questions and comments about students’ abilities and economic class in ways that challenged previous perceptions.

Ming: Penny told me today that she is in the Gifted and Talented Program at her middle school.

Tara: That is great.

Rebecca: Wow! That is great.

Sarah: That seems like something that you may not hear very often—a homeless student in Gifted and Talented. I mean, it is a stereotype that homeless students must not be very smart.

Tara: But that is a stereotype.

Sarah: Yes. But I bet a lot of people in the community I grew up in believe these kind of stereotypes. They can't imagine it would be any different.

Rebecca: Like because the kids aren't coming from stable homes they can't succeed. I see what you are saying.

Tara: And now we are seeing evidence that stereotypes aren't always true. They are stereotypes.

In the above conversation, prospective teachers use Penny's status as a gifted and talented student to challenge the construction of the "homeless adolescent." Although it is but one example, this example provided a concrete context from which to discuss preconceived notions of students and how teachers react to these preconceptions. The example of Penny came up several times throughout the course of conversations in seminar meetings and appeared to be a powerful influence on beginning teachers' perceptions of students.

Questioning the appropriate roles of "teacher" and "student" allowed Ming, Sarah, Tara, and Rebecca to interact with students at Family Partnership in ways that

valued students' individual perspectives and needs. Though prospective teachers initially expressed that their work in the community-based site did not support the formation of a "traditional" teacher identity (Zembylas, 2008) in which a teacher creates and shares curriculum with a homogenous group of students, beginning teachers came to acknowledge that their vision of a teacher's role changed over the course of their experience. Understanding that one's future students will have different needs and are bringing these needs to the classroom is a step toward beginning teachers' willingness to negotiate and reconcile the place of students' needs with the notion of a "traditional" teacher role and identity.

Conclusions and Implications

Ming, Sarah, Tara, and Rebecca used the stories they told about their work at Family Partnership as sites for processing how they viewed who they were as future teachers and what the work of teaching would entail. They also reflected on what they believed about the students with whom they worked, homeless youth, and questioned who these youth were and what possibilities existed for them. Over the course of one academic year, they used their stories from their work at a community-based field site to imagine their future work as teachers and deconstruct binary notions of school/ community and teacher/ student.

Particularly, through exploration of the self/ other relationship present in the teaching act, all four prospective teachers reflected on how their biases as future teachers affected their perceptions of students, as well as affected their ability to extend themselves beyond these initial perceptions. Their stories of negotiating the pedagogical third space, as well as their negotiations of the roles of teacher and student functioned as

counterstories (Yosso, 2006) that synthesized their perceptions in their own past, and therefore allowed them to assert new identities as beginning teachers. Yosso (2006) describes the purpose of counterstories as: to “build community with those at the margins,” to “challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society’s center,” to “nurture community wealth, memory, and resistance,” and to “facilitate transformation in education” (pp. 14-15). All four prospective teachers used the counterstories they crafted as responses to their work in a community-based field site. Their counterstories allowed them to negotiate and embrace the identities they wished to assume as teachers.

Work in the community-based field site encouraged prospective teachers to think more carefully and consciously about what constitutes good teaching. In Sarah’s case, the stories she told served as a way for her to offer rebuttals to the ideologies about homelessness and poverty expressed by her peers. Sarah’s challenges of “the perceived wisdom of those at society’s center” (Yosso, 2006, p. 14) appeared throughout conversations with her fellow prospective teachers in the context of seminar meetings and group interviews. In other cases, prospective teachers’ stories resonated with Yosso’s definition of counterstories as “facilitating transformation in education” (p. 15). Ming’s frequent acts of providing books for the youth, including Penny, at the day center confirmed her commitment to transformation in a very concrete way.

Framing community-based field experiences as fostering the recognition of a pedagogical third space for beginning teachers allows for the possibility that prospective teachers will question the roles that teachers and students play in the teaching act. Situating community-based field work as potentially providing beginning teachers with the opportunity to acknowledge a pedagogical third space inherently prompts these

teachers to articulate what they know about teaching and learning early in their teacher education programs, thereby putting into question the ways beginning teachers are unconsciously socialized into dominant models and roles, such as “teacher as expert.” Work in community-based field sites encourages an overt exploration of teacher identity. In contrast to an immediate socialization into “teacher as expert,” prospective teachers’ work in community-based sites facilitates a discussion of the appropriate role of “teacher.”

Prospective teachers’ work in community-based field sites has tremendous potential to encourage teacher candidates to learn about their students’ capabilities, strengths, and interests (Sleeter, 2008) early in teacher education programs. Most convincingly, work in community-based field sites encourages teachers to deconstruct the assumed binaries of school/ community, self/ other, and teacher/ student that so frequently limit beginning teachers’ conceptualizations of teaching and learning. As a feature of teacher education programs, community-based field experiences have the potential to work toward prompting prospective teachers to question meanings of diversity and equity.

Many teacher educators (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Gay, 2003) have asserted that what is needed in teacher education programs is space and opportunity for prospective teachers to undertake such work. Teacher candidates must be presented with contexts for broadening their belief systems and constructing more sophisticated understandings of students as learners. As the group of prospective teachers involved in this study illustrate, prior beliefs can be influenced through such community-based field experiences. As the field of teacher education reiterates a commitment to prepare teachers to teach diverse

groups of students, it is important that this move beyond rhetoric and into the spatial and temporal contexts in which we live. Creating spaces within teacher education programs where beginning teachers can question assumed binaries in concrete ways is a worthwhile endeavor and a move toward embracing programmatic features committed to beginning teachers' growth during the preservice years.

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Appendix A

Prompts that guided prospective teachers' reflective journal writing

Describe two or three literacy practices in the classroom/ field site

Describe each practice in terms of what the teacher does, what the students do, what materials are used, and how the students are organized. Also describe your role in participating in the practice. Describe each practice in terms of its goals and its implications for learning and student achievement.

Select "focal" students

Describe these students in terms of how they are achieving in the classroom or field site and how they interact with the teacher, the other students, and the practices in the classroom. Also describe the ways you interact with these focal students.

Questions you might respond to include:

- How does the teacher view each of these students in terms of achievements, needs, and goals she/he has for them?
- How would you characterize each student's strengths and weaknesses? What's your evidence for this?
- What do these students think of reading and writing?

Describe how each of these students interacts with the literacy practices you described above (it's O.K. if both of your students don't participate in all of the practices you've described). Some questions you might consider about their participation:

- How do the students behave?
- What do the students think of the practice?
- What do the students appear to get out of it?
- Is there evidence that the students are learning anything or otherwise making progress?

Assessment

Questions you might respond to include:

- What kinds of assessments are used in the classroom? How do they match the literacy practices?
- What do these assessments tell you about your focal students' strengths and areas of needed improvement?
- Are the measures used to assess the students' reading/ writing appropriate? Why/ why not?

Your role in your field site

Describe the role you took in the classroom/ field site in working with students.

- What triumphs and challenges did you experience?
- What questions do you have?

If you did take certain initiatives with the students, describe why you made the choices you did. Also, note how long you feel your interventions will be effective, how they were meant to help each student, and what evidence you observed that may indicate that the student made/ was making progress.