Extending the Conversation

Experience Over All: Preservice Teachers and the Prizing of the "Practical"

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Anyone who has worked with preservice teachers has occasionally felt the vehemence of their desire for more "practical" material and less (or, sometimes, no) material they deem "theory." By "theory" they seem to mean not only theory in the classic sense but also any evidence from research, discussion of ethics or socioeconomic issues or policy, or other aspects of the context for teaching. By "practical" they seem to mean concrete activities that they can use in the classroom the next day with little or no modification or reflection. Tensions between theory and practice permeate the work of English teacher education, reaching into every area of our work all the way down to course organization and the methods texts we choose (Barrell, 1996; Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995). "Just tell me what to do, and I'll do it," we have heard a preservice teacher remark to her classmate. These attitudes are ones we notice most as students enter our programs, most likely inherited from a wider prejudice against "over-theoretical" education programs spread via mass media reporting on education issues and at times by teachers themselves, and as students begin to engage their coursework in earnest these attitudes do soften. Yet as they approach their first field experiences, preservice teachers do seem hungry to know exactly how to teach—and if we know how, they seem to plead, why won't we just tell them?

It is understandable that preservice teachers reach for—and deserve help in finding—concrete tools to use in their initial steps into teaching practice. However, it's also the case that their preference for the practi-

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cal—and, as we will discuss in this article, the notions of experience and its origins and value that accompany such a preference—reflects a limited and troublesome engagement with experience in teaching. That is, they simultaneously (1) prize direct classroom experience as the most "practical" and therefore most valuable way of learning about teaching and (2) hold a definition of experience that is limited in both breadth and depth in ways that block access to important opportunities for learning to teach. Among our goals for preservice students are that they develop ways of articulating their emerging practice as teachers, develop productive ways of sharing those in professional conversation with colleagues, and through such conversations develop sets of principles that can guide their ongoing thinking about teaching into the future. We have worked to develop spaces—in our methods courses, in field placements, and in third spaces such as online discussion platforms—in which preservice teachers can engage in professional conversation toward just such goals. Yet we find that the limited range and depth with which they envision "experience" limits the avenues teacher educators and preservice teachers can tap into to articulate principles that might guide us as we develop pedagogical practices.

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The understandable desire of preservice teachers to "prepare" by gathering practical tools before a challenging new experience in the field links in to a wider tendency among teachers of valuing experience (narrowly defined as firsthand classroom experience) over other bases of authority from which to speak about teaching. We see this, for example, in the way both preservice teachers and their mentors tend to grant automatic credibility to mentor teachers who are "in the trenches" and know how it is out there, compared to professors whose experience may have been short and is certainly growing stale in the pantry up at the university. And we see it in the way, at professional development workshops and conferences, teaching ideas (even ideas from fellow classroom teachers) are often dismissed with "that won't work with my kids," suggesting that the only way to learn anything about teaching is through direct experience in a single context. Yet make no mistake—we see much that is right in these perspectives. Mentor teachers do have much to offer from their positions in the field that university-based faculty cannot offer; professional development programs do often ignore important local contextual features that make it difficult to change practice in any meaningful way. Yet our preservice teachers have not usually taken up the nuances

of these problems; rather, they tend to use practicality as a filter for making decisions about what to pay attention to in their development as a teacher.

This tendency to prize experience over other forms of learning about teaching is also apparent in teachers' professional communication with one another, in how they frame arguments about their work for an audience of colleagues. Fredricksen (2008) has shown how teachers preparing presentations for their peers must carefully calibrate their use of theory and research so as not to undermine the experience-based ethos their peers find most persuasive. Further, studies of preservice and inservice teachers who have written articles for publication in professional journals also confirm that teacher-authors sometimes struggle to find an authoritative stance from which to write, concerned that other teachers will not find their experience sufficient in duration or in quality (Whitney et al., 2012; Whitney, Zuidema, & Fredricksen, in press). And this, in turn, is linked to the wider devaluing of contributions teachers might make to the theoretical and research bases for educational decision-making, in which teachers are either excluded entirely or are positioned as the "road testers" of ideas generated by others. Indeed, currently in national media it is fashionable to devalue the expertise of teachers altogether. At the same moment that teachers seem to prize direct time-in-classroom experience over all, these media voices seem to send two conflicting messages about experience, neither one empowering to a preservice teacher: First, they seem to argue that classroom experience may be detrimental to student achievement (in the form of the jaded, unenergetic tenured teacher whom unions have made it impossible to fire). Second, they seem to offer the contradictory view that in-classroom time is the only form of learning about teaching that should ever enter into the teacher preparation picture (as seen in the rise of fast-track preparation programs in which university coursework is dramatically reduced or eliminated altogether).

In this article, we wish to consider how preservice teachers—and, ultimately, teacher educators—might broaden operating notions of experience and practicality to help one another access a wider range of sources of knowledge for their teaching and a wider range of options for taking stances of their own as teachers. We became most keenly aware of this problem when we noticed how preservice teachers in two strands of a single teacher education program (at the university where two of us teach) drew upon different forms of "experience" in their discussions with one another in an online context. While we do not intend to make comparisons between the program strands or even to suggest anything particular about programs at this point, we think a little context about the situation in which the student conversations took place might be helpful.

The preservice teachers described here are students in one of the two program tracks for secondary English language arts certification at a large public university, tracks we call "internship" and "campus" for short. One program strand is an internship-style program in which students begin their yearlong internship in a school having had no explicit preparatory coursework related to English language arts pedagogy. They have taken a full complement of English and media courses, and they have some introductory background in psychology and educational theory and policy, but they have not taken any language arts teaching methods courses before they begin in classrooms, instead approaching that content in seminars and inquiry sessions at the school site once the school year is underway. On the other hand, students in the more traditional "campus program" strand take a block of three methods courses (writing, reading/literature, and media literacy) in one semester, then another semester in which a further methods course runs concurrent with an 8-week part-time field experience, and then finally a full-time teaching semester. This program strand thus engages students in reading, peer teaching, lesson and unit planning, and reflection on their own school experiences before field experiences begin, and the transition into student teaching happens over a longer period of time. An instructor who had been teaching in both program strands invited the two groups of students—who would not ordinarily meet and, in fact, never did meet in person—to interact in an online forum. In this asynchronous discussion forum, students in both groups were encouraged to post questions that concerned them and to respond to others' questions and comments.

Standing on Experience

In almost all forms of participation—be it sharing feelings or sharing teaching techniques—and regardless of the specific content of the discussion, the primary move was to cite experience. Thus students in both programs cited inexperience as the source of their fears, students in the internship program cited experience—their own and sometimes even their mentors'—as the basis for any advice they offered, and questions or answers based on sources other than direct, in-the-classroom teaching experience—such as references to course readings or to activities in campus courses—were offered only tentatively.

One thread, for example, began in March with a student from the internship program, Cynthia (who had been placed in a school since September), asking a question specifically directed at students from the campus program (who would enter part-time placements the following September and full-time student teaching the following January):

> I was wondering what you are most nervous about when it comes to student teaching in the fall. The students? The mentors? The curriculum? I was also wondering if you had any questions for those of us who are finishing up our student teaching—feel free to ask away! I know we were all nervous our first few days . . .

Thus begins a discussion in which internship students are positioned as knowledgeable advice-givers and campus students are positioned as nervous recipients of advice. In the posts that follow, respondents from both the internship and campus programs do little to challenge that positioning. The interns' comments reflect a belief that they have the right to offer answers to questions posed by their peers because they are in the field; they have accrued credibility both from their own experience participating in "real teaching" and, interestingly, from that of their mentor teachers. Students in both programs seemed to accept that direct experience (even if owned through mentor teachers' experiences rather than one's own) is the most suitable framework upon which to base opinions and comments about teaching.

Replies to Cynthia's question from campus students not only report on the concerns that any beginning teacher would be likely to have, they also frame what acceptable responses from their internship counterparts should look like. For instance, when campus students express concerns and request feedback, they also include phrases such as the following:

> If you have any suggestions . . . from your own experience . . .
>
> While we as [campus] students have had lots of theory and time to think about ideology . . . you've been working hands-on . . .
>
> . . . I'd love to hear some stories . . .
>
> Sure we're getting experience working on lessons as students-preparing-to-teach, but it can't compare to actually being in a real classroom.

Campus students signal that responses are to come from interns, not their classmates in the campus program, and that the content of those responses should be reports of direct high school classroom experience rather than experiences from university classes or readings.

Later in the thread, contributions by Mark, an internship student, reflect this focus on experience in an interestingly layered way. First, he adopts an advice-giving stance based on the time he himself has spent in the classroom, in a post about lesson planning in which he issues direct suggestions in tones such as these:

> If you plan your unit well, you will have an easier time doing the day to day . . .
>
> . . . I've found it better to think in terms of . . .
>
> . . . You don't have to go through the rigmarole of writing a formal plan . . .
>
> . . . Planning is also kind of fun . . . . You haven't done it yet, so what may become blasé later is still exciting.

In all of these comments he claims authority to advise, using the direct second-person "you" as a rule and couching suggestions in the more indirect "I have found" only once. And in the line about the "rigmarole" of writing a lesson plan he (wittingly or unwittingly) directly controverts what the campus students hear from their professors. Later in the thread, Mark again cites experience as a basis for advice, yet this time it's his mentor's experience, which he appropriates by adopting the mentor's voice. When another student reports feeling nervous about making mistakes in front of a mentor teacher, he replies:

> It can be intimidating when you fail the first time, but that's okay because you're learning. Learning about failure is the point of student teaching, and I kind of agree with him. The idea is that you don't know anything yet, and so a lot of your theory will probably not work out. So that's when it's great to have a mentor. I've had lessons bomb like Baghdad, but it was really reassuring to have an experienced teacher to discuss the issue. Then, you go right back and try it again, differently.

This comment reflects appeals to experience on several levels: First, Mark takes an advice-giving stance based on his own experiences, as above. Yet he also points to the mentor's value as "an experienced teacher." Even further, he quotes the mentor in saying "Learning about failure is the point of student teaching," actually appropriating his mentor's voice to such an extent that in first constructing the sentence he presents the statement as his own, and it only becomes clear to readers at the end of the sentence that he must be quoting.

We also think it important here that Mark is making an implicit, though underarticulated, case for the role mentors can play in helping student teachers reflect on their experiences with students. In doing so he inches toward recognition of a goal of teacher education that undergirds this article: to help beginning teachers develop a "conscious competence." In other words, we want beginning teachers to learn how to talk about why they

do what they do (or did) in interaction with colleagues, in such a way that they can begin to name pedagogical principles that carry across a range of specific classroom situations. These are the principles that often get named "theory" by preservice teachers and are thus set aside. While Mark points to his mentor's words as important and as having been helpful in changing his perspective on a tough moment in teaching, he apparently does not see the naming of pedagogical principles as something that he or his mentor are doing. So, we might learn or help other teachers learn how to "discuss the issue" and to figure out and articulate what it is they'll "go right back and try . . . again, differently" and why—and to see that this is in fact an important function of non-classroom-experience components of a certification program such as "theoretical" readings and seminar discussions.

In other parts of the discussion, moments where campus students might reasonably be expected to offer insights from things they have read or classroom activities they have engaged in repeatedly pass without that occurring. For example, campus student Julia raised this question about teaching literature:

> I might be searching for the Holy Grail of teaching, but does anyone have any tips for engaging HS students in discussion? Aside from making interactive discussion/activities, if you want to have a straight-up literary discussion, how do you get students to talk? I realize there's not one straight-forward answer, but has anything worked for you?

Here Julia both glosses over what she has already learned or what her campus peers might offer and asks potential respondents to limit their comments to reports of direct classroom experience in the internship. First, at the time of her post she is enrolled in a block of three linked methods courses for language arts teaching. Her experiences in that block have included reading about, experiencing, and leading a wide range of discussion models, ways of structuring student talk in response to a literary text, strategies such as fishbowl discussions, pair-share schemes, interpretive workshops, and the like—a rich set of personal experiences that she seems here to lump together and dismiss as "interactive discussion/activities," seeking instead strategies for "straight-up literary discussion," and specifically those that have "worked for you" in the high school classroom rather than others that peers might have read about or experienced at the university. Second, she has read chapters and articles specifically on handling classroom discussion, yet she neither mentions those readings here nor asks for more to read.

The two comments that internship students offer in response to this query closely resemble answers that the campus students were well equipped

themselves to offer—and do offer in their written work for courses on campus. Paul questions the need for "pure literary discussion" and suggests freewriting or discussing in pairs before asking the whole class to discuss something, and Marianne tells a story about a time when discussion "came to a grinding halt" and she got it rolling again by breaking the class into small groups. Campus students are practicing these exact approaches regularly in their courses, and unlike the internship students, they have also read about and discussed theoretical bases for such practices. Yet those potential points remain unstated, and the question of literary discussion ends after these two "answers."

Later, discussion in the thread turns to the question of teachers' content knowledge. Ashley, a campus student, expresses fear that juniors or seniors will ask her a question about literature to which she does not know the answer. In response, internship student Mark offers a quote from Olitsky (2007), an article that in fact had also been read by all of the campus students in one of their shared courses.

> Olitsky (2007) writes, "Rather than losing respect for [the teacher], students seemed to respond in a positive way to Linda admitting when she did not know an answer or understand why something had gone wrong" (p. 52). Kids aren't stupid, and they know when you are trying to pull one over on them. Be honest with them and they'll respect that, it may even make students more comfortable, because then they will be less afraid of being wrong in your classroom. It's important to remember that you still know a lot, you are as close to an "expert" as that class will have. Be confident, be humble, and always be willing to learn. A good teacher doesn't know everything, but is willing to learn anything.

This post is significant in that (1) it is the first time any poster has cited scholarship of any kind in the discussion, and (2) although all of the campus students have also read the cited article, none claims that knowledge. Brittany, to whom the response is directed, makes no connection to having read the text and instead simply thanks Mark for his insight: "Thank you so much for your response! I was wondering if it was a bad thing to say that you don't know and tell them to look it up, so thank you for the reassurance :)." Another campus student, Danielle, confirms: "This really did help, thank you so much . . . . I really appreciate you taking the time to answer my questions and those of my classmates."

This series of interactions, just one thread characteristic of all of the discussions these sets of students engaged in, raises a set of questions for us that reach beyond the online discussion itself or the differences between our two programs. We see a lesson here about the wider ways our teacher educa-

tion students seem to value the various sources of knowledge and authority that are available to them. What is it about these interactions that muffled campus students' voices, where they might instead have shared salient ideas about their experiences with theory and classroom practices in their campus coursework? Why were campus students so willingly apt to agree, adopt, welcome, and validate the classroom experiences of peers who had been in the classroom for less than a year—peers who had in fact done much less reading in theory, research, and practical literature of our field, had done less supported practice teaching (such as in peer teaching and observed lessons), and who had had fewer opportunities to collaboratively analyze instances of teaching practice compared to campus students?

Unpacking "Experience"

We wish to draw attention to two ways in which these preservice teachers define and use notions of "experience" in ways that limit their thinking as they develop practices and perspectives of their own. One, we think our students have a narrow definition of what counts as experience that they can draw from to respond to teaching challenges. That is, there is a problem of breadth, of what counts as relevant experience. Two, in large part because the sets of experiences preservice teachers bring to the table are so limited, we then see our preservice students missing important ways of thinking through those experiences. That is, there is a problem of depth. Thus we are concerned about the ways our preservice teachers think through and reflect on experiences—that is, once experiences are identified as useful in learning to teach, what do preservice teachers do with those experiences? Further, how have we ourselves contributed to this unhelpful set of notions about experience, and how might we improve?

A Too-Narrow View of Experience

In our view, both groups of students seem to ignore or devalue all of the varied experiences they bring to teaching—all, that is, but the experience of time spent in direct contact with secondary students in the field. Thus we see them defining "experience" much too narrowly—as if one is to be deemed "experienced" when one has punched a card for a certain number of days in the classroom, almost without regard to what occurs during those days or how the content of the days is talked about or thought about. Meanwhile, they seem to ignore their own experiences as students, and the deliberate and conscious reflection on these that campus students have undertaken in education coursework—experiences that, we know from research, power-

fully shape most beginning teachers' practice, even more so if they are left unexamined. They seem to ignore their experiences as readers who, through campus program coursework, have thoughtfully considered a range of practices endorsed by others along with explicit consideration of the theoretical assumptions upon which these practices are based. They seem to ignore their own experiences as lesson and unit planners—an area in which the campus students have had a good deal of well-supported practice and feedback. And, perhaps most ironically considering that they are preparing to go and teach classes of their own, they seem to ignore the experiences they have had in coursework, even going so far as to agree aloud that coursework has no value and that the only way to learn anything is through field experience.

In our teacher education programs we place a high value on field experience, and even in the campus program described here we do everything we can to integrate it with coursework at every turn. So our aim in this article is not to suggest that one's student life, readings, planning activities, and other experiences we list above are somehow more valuable than field experience; instead, we wish simply to point out that those are experiences, and that they are experiences we think are valuable to preservice teachers and upon which they would do well to draw as they begin teaching.

Why, then, is experience (as they are so narrowly defining it) so attractive to preservice teacher education students? We argue that they are drawn to direct classroom teaching experience as the prime source of internal and external authority because it holds for them a promise of making the multiple, changeable, and messy complexities of teaching more manageable. Students have a different vision of what they are doing in the program than what we might see as the vision. We tend to see our work as helping people enter into the community of professional educators—people who rely on and build knowledge of subject matter, teaching, learning and learners, and of the context. Students, on the other hand, seem to think the point of the program is to collect all the strategies that will work on the first day of their teaching careers and that they will use thereafter. Whereas we're helping them to learn how to learn as teachers, they are struggling to envision or imagine themselves leading classrooms in successful ways. This makes sense, because it's the classroom strategies that they've always seen their teachers engage in, and certainly if we know of useful strategies, we do share those.

Thus part of what is in play when preservice teachers conceive of, assign value to, and worry about "experience" and draw from it in learning to teach is tension around how their immediate task is framed, in their minds and in teacher educators'. We teacher educators frame our work as helping candidates to enter a professional community of teachers, taking

up the critical tools of that community and learning to ask and answer the questions that characterize life within that community. Thus we see them engaged in entering a professional community in which people disagree about, discuss, and problematize pedagogical moves, and we see their experiences as readers and as learners as useful resources for them to draw from.

Our teacher candidates, on the other hand, see learning to teach less as a task of learning to think in a particular way and instead as a task of learning to do particular things. Of this we are forgiving, for we know that as teacher candidates entering their first field experiences, they face staggering uncertainty—uncertainty about what they will do, whether they will know what to do or how to do it, whether they will be successful in it, and the consequences of their success or failure for their future plans. They then reach toward whatever knowledge sources seem to them to offer the greatest sense of certainty. Floden and Clark (1988) have pointed out that while it is human to try and make things more certain, less ambiguous, in truth teaching is essentially uncertain in many of its aspects. Beginning teachers must, first, learn to discern between that which they are uncertain about because of their own lack of knowledge and that which is just uncertain. Second, they must learn to become more comfortable with those uncertainties that are unavoidable—and thus restrain themselves from treating essentially uncertain aspects of teaching as more certain than they are. Floden and Clark suggest some ways to reduce uncertainties in teaching where possible, but they (rightly) also suggest strategies for coping with "residual uncertainty" (p. 519), that which is inherent in all teaching and thus must be addressed so as to reduce stress and make space for thoughtful action in uncertain moments. These are, first, engaging in teacher-to-teacher talk—whereby the uncertainties of teaching can be articulated, analyzed, and shared with colleagues—and second, acting decisively and with confidence whenever appropriate, so that uncertainties in one's teaching practice are understood within the wider picture of one's overall competence (pp. 519–520).

However, as the excerpts from student discussion above show, the prizing of "experience" (defined primarily simply as length of time spent in the classroom) over other bases for talking about teaching with colleagues make these strategies almost impossible for preservice teachers to access. First, defining experience so narrowly immediately shut half of the participants out of the conversation, at least as potential contributors of anything other than requests for advice, to which more-experienced students alone would then respond. Second, their definition of experience and the weight they afforded it cut off all but one potential knowledge source, rendering impotent anything they might have learned another way. To talk with colleagues in

substantive ways about persistent uncertainties in one's teaching practice requires that all participants in the conversation get to claim "a practice," however tentative, and that multiple perspectives on any given uncertainty can be examined in the conversation. Meanwhile, Bourdieu (1990) has argued that beliefs exist only as justifications for or explanations of practices that we have already developed in response to the conditions of circumstance and of history. This view—in which practices generate beliefs and not the other way around—makes it even more important that all members of the knowledge-generating community be able to claim to have a "practice" and are qualified to draw upon it in discussing teaching with a professional community. When some participants in the conversation are deemed authoritative by virtue of the duration of their time in the field and others are not, those conversations silence some voices immediately. Further, when the extensive discussions of persistent uncertainties in teaching practice that can be found in research and theoretical literature are devalued or even omitted from those conversations, the conversations wind up simply perpetuating the erroneous notion that experience leads to certainty.

Looking at our own programs, we wonder, did we actually reinforce their narrow sense of experience ourselves, by having positioned time-in-classroom as an end point, and thus all other forms of experience as simply preparatory preliminaries that would then be tested in practice? We have fallen short of our intention to frame experiences as sites of knowledge creation rather than just knowledge implementation or to instill a sense that they feed one another in mutually shaping ways. For example, we see the false dichotomy of theory/practice instantiated even in the papers we ask students to write. Both strands of the program described here share an emphasis on inquiry, with students engaging regularly in both formal and informal inquiry activities. Yet when writing or presenting about their inquiries, our students have usually presented first summaries of readings and research on their topics, and then in a separate section the results of their own analyses. While we have exhorted them to integrate these and bring them to bear upon one another, they rightly model their papers on those they have read as course assignments—articles from research and practitioner journals in which "theory" and "data" or "practice" appear in separate sections under separate headings. Consider also the sources from which they see experienced teachers drawing in the field. How many mentor teachers draw from professional books, articles, and websites in explicit, visible ways in front of their mentees? How many engage in inquiry and think aloud about their wonderings in ways a beginning teacher can see and learn from? In how many professional conference sessions or

workshops do teacher-presenters directly acknowledge the sources of their insights (a point Stock [2001] has made as well)? In how many schools will preservice teachers find in-classroom coaching, collaborative planning sessions, lesson study, critical friends groups, or other structures by which teachers learn from experiences other than their direct in-classroom time? Are our students placed in field settings in which teachers are positioned as developers of knowledge and in which conversations about the multiple sources of knowledge for practice are commonplace? We know that these things do occur, and we work to develop them in our own partner schools. Yet in the main, on self-examination we know we have exacerbated the way students perceive the relative value of various forms of experience far more than we have disrupted it.

Counting All Kinds of Experience

On the other hand, if and when participants in these conversations do eventually dare to move beyond standing simply on the time they have spent in the classroom—or, as we saw teachers like Mark do, introducing their mentor teachers as surrogates and standing on their time in the classroom—the conversations between preservice teachers can open up pathways by which expertise can be developed and teaching considered more thoughtfully even before all those valuable years of classroom time accrue.

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That is, we see a broadened definition of experience—an adjustment in thinking about "what counts" as experience in learning to teach—as a necessary condition for real growth in thinking about teaching to occur. We want students to not only collect a set of relevant experiences but also to develop ways of thinking through experiences and of building knowledge by reflecting on experiences. To use terms from Schön (1983), this means being able to reflect-in-action and reflect-on-action.

In the asynchronous discussion described in this article, we imagined students being able to reflect on their work with peers in ways that made them more conscious about why they were doing what they were doing when they were navigating moments of pedagogical uncertainty. However, the students' conceptions of "experience" proved problematic for these goals. We suspect this isn't just an issue for us and our students, but for teacher educators in general. For instance, Zuidema (Whitney, Zuidema, &

Fredricksen, in press) taught students in a writing workshop for prospective teachers across grade levels and subject areas, in which one assignment was to draft a professional article of the kind found in educational practitioner journals. These students found themselves stalled in writing because they felt they had too little experience to have anything to offer their peers. To address this problem, Zuidema engaged them in rhetorical analysis of teachers' published discourse. Looking together at journal articles published by experienced teachers, the class found that, even though those authors did possess classroom experience, they actually drew from a wide range of other bases as well in their writing. For instance, some recalled their own memories as students; others synthesized findings from published research and brought them to bear on a classroom situation; others observed a single student closely and reported on those observations. As students discovered this, they found ways to draw on these rhetorical moves themselves, freeing themselves from dependence on a narrow sense of "experience" that they did not possess (Whitney, Zuidema, & Fredricksen, in press).

Or we might engage preservice teachers in serious consideration of the sources of knowledge in general and especially sources of knowledge for teaching, pointing out that this question has engaged educational thinkers since the Ancient Greeks and into the present (Eisner, 2002). They might read and consider Lortie's (1975) ideas about the "apprenticeship of observation," consciously deriving lessons from their own time as students and generating working lists of other potentially rich forms of "apprenticeship" for their work as teachers. Or they might interview experienced teachers about knowledge sources that have influenced their development as teachers (for whatever those teachers say, they are likely to say more than "time passed").

Or we might follow the example of McDonald (2010), who engages preservice science teachers in detailed analyses of classroom videos, both their own and other teachers'. Thus they learn to be deliberate in making arguments about classroom practice and to ground such arguments carefully in practice, not relying on ethos but instead constructing from evidence through logic. Similarly, while many of us do already engage preservice teachers in teacher-research studies or other inquiry-in-action, we might stretch further in asking students to consider how what they and other teachers might gain over time from firsthand experience could be enriched by considering that experience as it intersects or even conflicts with the themes already alive in the scholarship of our field. Just as they understand the data they collect in part through its juxtaposition with the findings of others in the scholarly literature of our field, so do collected experiences thicken with meaning as they are considered alongside the experiences of others. We note with more

than a little irony that, as we have reviewed the transcripts of students' online discussions while preparing this essay, we have more than once wondered why we didn't simply ask them to review the transcript themselves. Our students, as future English teachers, are attentive and skillful close readers of texts; we don't doubt they would themselves have seen many of the same things we've pointed out here in their own review.

Ultimately, we want preservice teachers to be able to envision how they might draw from the range of knowledge they have (subject matter, learning and learners, teaching practices, contextual), and we want them to do so in principled ways. One goal for our work as teacher educators is to help students articulate principles that guide their practice as educators and to help students build heuristics that will help them make connections from the variety of experiences they bring to the decisions they make as teachers. In other words, we want them to be able to use heuristics that help them "read" experiences they have in their preservice methods classes, in their observations and participation in classrooms, in their initial attempts designing instruction and assessing learning, and we want them to be able to build on all of this as they begin the induction phase of their careers. Bringing the full range of experiences to the table is an important precondition for these developments, and we suspect that much of the frustration we have sometimes felt when students' reflective work has seemed thin or less thoughtful than we have hoped has been born not of inability to think critically or to analyze or reflect, but more fundamentally as a result of mismatched expectations about what exactly is worth reflecting on.

Finally, we can help preservice teachers loosen their grip on the promise of authority-with-experience by helping them engage honestly with some of the emotions that cause them to grip it so tightly. Preservice teachers are often frightened, walking as they are into new roles in which their own authority (as beginners, and usually young beginners) is unestablished and the authority of the role itself (of teachers more generally) is equally contested. For that matter, experienced teachers often feel this way as well. For every feeling of enthusiasm, hopefulness, or call to service that arises for a preservice teacher, there is potential for an accompanying feeling of fear—fear of failing to teach well, fear of the transition from college student to professional, fear of losing oneself in the seemingly bottomless time-demands and energy-demands of life in schools. Yet as teacher educators, we do not always offer space for these emotions to be aired and analyzed, and thus instead of acknowledging these emotions as reasonable and even typical responses to a challenging situation, we leave students simply hoping that the feelings will diminish with time.

Instead, we can help preservice teachers deal honestly with their uncertainties as beginners—and the fears of failure and isolation that accompany those uncertainties—by encouraging them to let go of this obsession with "experience" as a sole source of expertise that will, with each passing year, make teaching more certain and more manageable. That obsession undermines their development of expertise in the here and now, encouraging them instead to simply try to survive until the required time passes—"sticking it out"—and, in the meantime, to defer to more experienced others rather than think through challenging educational questions on their own. We can help them instead to understand that while they may not have long in-the-classroom experience to draw upon, the things they do have—their memories of their years in the classroom as students, analytical abilities that they might deploy to understand those memories, and resources in the research and professional literature of their field—are experiences, too. That is, reading articles, or reflecting on memories, or observing other teachers at work are experiences upon which they can draw in thinking and speaking about teaching and that enrich whatever might be learned from time in the classroom. Not only physical but also intellectual experiences count when it comes to learning to teach.

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TYCA Fame Award Nominations

The Two-Year College English Association is accepting nominations for the 2013 TYCA Fame Award. Nominations should be representations of two-year students and faculty that reflect truthfully on the community college at its best. The mentions or portrayals of two-year colleges must have been made publicly between March 2012 and March 2013 in verifiable form—a news story, magazine reference, movie scene, or TV remark. The winner for the 2013 award will be decided during the 2013 CCCC Convention, to be held in March in Las Vegas. Submit nominations online **by March 6, 2013,** at http://www.ncte.org/tyca/awards/fame, or by mail to Sterling Warner, TYCA Fame Award, Evergreen Valley College, 3095 Yerba Buena Road, San Jose, CA 95135.

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