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## One Good Lesson, Community of Practice Model for Preparing Teachers of Writing

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Writing initiatives such as process writing, authentic writing, and trait-based writing have been advocated as ways to improve student writing. Process writing involves recursive processes coupled with procedural strategies for completing tasks (Pritchard and Honeycutt, 2005); authentic writing involves students writing for real audiences (Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, and Tower, 2006); while trait-based writing is concerned with the cognitive and metacognitive procedures writers use to control the production of writing (Culham, 2003). In order to prepare teachers to teach writing, teacher education programs must expose them to a variety of classroom-tested approaches, provide space to practice the approaches with supervision, and time to reflect on practice. A study that examined writing instruction found that teachers felt that their “preparation of high school English teachers for the task of teaching [was] lacking” (Read and Landon-Hayes, 2013, p.9). Teachers explained that their methods courses focused on decontextualized and contrived assignments that had “no real application in the classroom” (Read and Landon-Hayes, 2013, p. 9). In order to adequately prepare teachers for effective writing instruction, it is imperative that teacher education programs reimagine methods courses and create opportunities that are contextual, meaningful, and that includes various opportunities to implement classroom-tested approaches with students and alongside practitioners in the field.

One classroom-tested approach that utilized the structured approach (Smagorinsky, 2010) to teaching writing was designed in order to provide preservice teachers with the tools to get students to generate ideas for their writing and to engage the writing process. The classroom tested approach used in this study, the anthem essay, was structured in that it utilized and emphasized instruction and activity based on what students needed to know in order to complete the anthem essay assignment. The assignment encouraged dialogue, criteria building, analyzing, and evaluation by taking them through a series of activities. The anthem essay was created in order to connect to the lived

experiences of students as well as invite students to engage in activity that was collaborative and that focused on one of the most difficult traits of writing (Culham, 2003). The first activity invited students to define “anthem” and participate in a shared reading of two anthems, “The Star Spangled Banner” (Key, 1999) and “Lift Every Voice and Sing” (Johnson and Johnson, 2000). Then, students analyzed the lyrics of both songs in order to determine criteria for anthems. Once the list of criteria was compiled, student groups analyzed popular songs using a graphic organizer and determined if those songs were anthems according to the established criteria. The class discussed each song and added criteria to the list. Next, students selected their own anthems based on several criteria and drafted essays about why they chose their songs. The structured activities that led up to drafting the anthem essay provided students with opportunities to generate ideas for writing. The anthem essay assignment was one that resonated with students because it was relevant and it was a break from traditional writing assignments.

The anthem essay focused on one aspect of writing development, it was easy to follow and (re)deliver<sup>1</sup>, and it could be adapted for different grade levels. Preservice teachers (re)delivered one good lesson to students in order connect their learning about teaching and about teaching writing to practice.

## Introduction

A key component of teacher education programs is the inclusion of field-based opportunities where student teachers can develop their practical knowledge of the profession with regard to the theoretical knowledge they gain in their university education courses (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Glassberg and Sprinthall, 1980). What student teachers experience in the field is oftentimes inconsistent and in some cases mis-aligned with university goals and practices (Butler and Cuenca, 2012). Some teacher education programs require students to take coursework in isolation from practice and then add student teaching at the end of the program. However, there is a growing body of research that supports the idea of preservice teachers taking courses and participating in field-based teaching concurrently. As

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<sup>1</sup> The authors use (re)deliver to describe the varying interpretations and approaches preservice teachers used in order to deliver the anthem essay lesson to students. Each of their deliveries were on a continuum of (re)delivery in which some of the preservice teachers made no changes to the lesson and its components, while others changed handouts, added components, or restructured the lesson slightly as they assumed more responsibility about their instructional and pedagogical choices.

a result, preservice teachers may be better prepared to understand theories, apply concepts to coursework, and support student learning in practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Levine, 2006; Rust, 2010).

In an attempt to address the divergent perspectives that exist between our campus-based learning, field experiences, and actual classroom practice, this course was designed to facilitate professional development, provide opportunities for students to engage with knowledgeable others (in the community), and provide access to the repertoire of resources needed to be an effective teacher of writing. According to Cochran-Smith and Little (1993), “efforts to construct and codify a knowledge base for teaching have relied primarily on university based research and have ignored the significant contributions that teacher knowledge can make...” (p.2). The researchers structured the course as a community of practice in order to transform learning experiences for prospective teachers and to include teacher practice and knowledge as a part of preservice teacher learning. In order to investigate how a community of practice model that included current teachers who taught writing impacted preservice teacher identity development, the researchers addressed the following questions: How does a community of practice model contribute to preservice teacher development? And how does the community of practice model support preservice teachers’ understanding of teaching writing?

### **A Review of the Literature: Perspectives on Preparing Teachers of Writing**

The literature on effective writing instruction suggests a gap between teachers’ pedagogical knowledge of writing and knowing what is best for students’ writing development (Read and Landon-Hays, 2013; Coker and Lewis, 2008). According to Read and Landon-Hays (2013), “efforts for training teachers of writing should be on helping them to bridge the divide between theory and practice and on assisting them to create environments for effective writing instruction...” (p. 13). Methods courses are sites that have the potential to align conceptual and pedagogical tools needed to assist preservice teachers in making meaningful decisions about writing instruction (Zimmerman, Morgan and Kidder-Brown, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Specifically, according to Zimmerman et. al (2014), “conceptual tools offer [preservice teachers] foundational knowledge on which to base their instructional practice” and “attention to pedagogical tools provides [preservice teachers] real-world classroom practices that they can use with students to plan writing instruction” (p. 144). In an effort to attend to the tools of teaching writing as well as the practices teachers use with students, the instructor of the university-based, summer course on teaching

writing combined community engagement with preservice teachers acting as writers and as teachers of writers. Preservice teachers not only conceptualized the teaching of writing, they used the tools as writers and as writing teachers.

Suitably, high self-efficacy in writing and teaching writing are necessary as preservice teachers prepare to teach writing. Identification as a capable writer is essential to providing excellent models for students (Colby & Stapleton, 2006), making instructional decisions that lead to student learning and achievement (Hall & Grisham-Brown, 2011), and understanding the complex nature of the conceptual and pedagogical tools of writing (Zimmerman et. al. 2014).

### **Communities of Practice: Theoretical Considerations**

The researchers have primarily taken into consideration Wenger's idea of communities of practice within the social learning systems school of theory. Essentially, communities of practice are collaborative groups of practitioners within the same field working towards a common end goal (Herbers et. al. 2011). An essential function of communities of practice is the social process of shared learning that occurs between practitioners and newcomers (Wenger, 1998). In this case, teachers, teacher educators, and preservice teachers made up a community of practice in which preservice teachers engaged in legitimate peripheral participation that provided an approximation of full exposure to actual practice with lessened intensity, lessened risk, and close supervision (Wenger, 1998). According to Wenger (1998), "to open up a practice, peripheral participation must provide access to all dimensions of practice ... [in order to] provide a sense of how the community operates" (p. 101).

Identification, or in this case the act of identifying professionally with the teaching field, is a large facet of the communities of practice theory. Wenger identifies that there are three main modes of identification: engagement, imagination, and alignment. Engagement is the most common mode of identification and is constituted by practice and direct experience; imagination is the mode of identification that involves constructing an image of the self within the world being engaged with to help define a sense of belonging; and alignment is the mode in which practice is contextualized. In addition to these modes of identification, there are three main characteristics: identity as a trajectory, identity as a nexus of multi-membership, and identity as a multi-scale. Identity as a trajectory considers the building of an identity to be a journey that is shaped by the past, present, and future. Identity as a nexus of multi-membership takes into account that individuals are members of multiple communities and their identities are shaped by all of the communities in which they participate. Identity as a multi-

scale speaks to the magnitude to which an individual identifies or dis-identifies with a community or certain aspects of a community (Wenger, 2010). Competence and accountability are hard work and would require high identification with the community of practice (Wenger, 2010). By placing preservice teachers within a community of practice from the beginning of this course, they are able to identify, or not, with the teaching community of practice, enabling higher identification which would in turn lead to striving to meet the community's definition or regime of competence and accountability.

The above theory comprises the foundation upon which the researchers designed and built this study. Below are the major tenants taken into consideration:

- Learning is a social phenomenon and learners are meaning-makers shaped by their participation in communities.
- Communities of practice are collaborative in nature and require a two-way (dynamic) conversation between participants.
- Competence and accountability within a community of practice require high identification with the community of practice to be fully accomplished.
- Identity is a journey, and in teacher education programs it should not be an unguided journey for preservice teachers.
- Preservice teachers need to go beyond engagement and imagination in their field experiences in order to more fully identify and develop their professional identities as teachers.
- Alignment is an ongoing process that involves continual realignment within the field of teaching.

### **Contextualizing This Study**

Within the context of this study, the preservice teachers participants, students on a southern university campus, were working towards their Secondary Education, English Language Arts (ELA) certification, which requires that they complete a total of 154 hours in their early clinical placements, or field experiences, before they begin a full-time internship that lasts for a semester

(approximately 15 weeks). These field experiences are broken into three parts--initial placement constitutes 34 hours and teaching one mini-lesson and passing an entrance interview to be admitted to the teacher education program; second placement occurs during the methods block and requires 120 hours of field experiences and three supervised teaching lessons; the third and final placement is the full-time internship that lasts one semester and requires two weeks of consecutive teaching. Preservice teachers are placed in local middle and high school classrooms at varying grade levels at each stage of field experiences to ensure that they receive exposure to diverse (city and county) classroom settings.

The preservice teachers' interactions with their assigned school teacher vary, with some preservice teachers acting as teachers' assistants and others developing mentor-apprentice dynamics. In some cases, teacher educators from the university supervise student teaching in the final internship. However, most of the preservice teachers are supervised by retired teachers and clinical faculty hired by the university. ELA preservice teachers take foundational courses concerning teaching writing, grammar, and reading but currently these classes have no field experience component, but simply the expectation that material is to be transferable knowledge for clinical placements, internship, and full-time teaching after graduation, thus isolating theory from practice.

### **Methods: Revising the Model to Align Theory and Practice**

The researchers used case-study methodology in order to examine how a community of practice model for field experiences would contribute to preservice teachers' identity development and support their understanding of teaching writing. The researchers were able to conduct empirical inquiry "that investigate[d] a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Merriam, 2009). For this study, a summer teaching writing course, which is usually offered on a southern university's campus with no field experience requirement, was offered at a neighboring high school, Eastern High School, and included a reimagined field experience as a community of practice. Because innovative and effective teacher education programs prepare preservice teachers to work with students from diverse populations (Darling-Hammond, 2006), Eastern High School was specifically chosen for its student and teacher demographic. Eastern is a neighborhood school that serves a predominantly African American population (approximately 99%) in a community that is perceived as a "space of pathology" (Hymes, 1995) on the margins of a college town. Using a community of practice model with Eastern students and teachers would provide preservice teachers with an opportunity to not only understand the



relationship between teaching theory and practice but also an opportunity to address linguistic and cultural differences in classrooms that resemble the ones in which they are likely to teach.

As a part of a larger effort to align what preservice teachers learned in their methods courses and what they experienced in schools during their clinical placements, the instructor of the teaching writing course decided to create a partnership with Eastern High School. The principal, Dr. Clark, was interested in university partnerships that would improve teacher practice and student achievement, especially in writing instruction and achievement. The instructor's role as Professor in Residence allowed her to offer courses at the high school usually offered on the university's campus. The instructor invited teachers at Eastern to enroll in courses in order to spark dialogue between preservice teachers entering the field and practitioners. Such a unique position allowed the instructor to think about how to align theory and practice more effectively.

Previously, the teaching writing course did not include a component focused on implementing the material as praxis. Instead it surveyed approaches to teaching writing and provided preservice teachers with opportunities to explore different genres of writing. The instructor decided to redesign the course with a focus on implementation and praxis that invited preservice teachers to work with Eastern High School teachers and students in tandem to their learning. This added component more closely aligned theory and practice, while exposing the preservice teachers to the teaching writing practice that was currently happening in classrooms. In addition to the seven preservice teachers enrolled in a teaching writing course, the community of practice included two teachers at Eastern High, both African American females. They had over 20 years of teaching English/Language Arts in middle and high school. Their approach to teaching writing was admittedly assigning prompts and offering feedback about grammar and mechanics. Both were interested in improving their writing instruction and had been assigned as "partners" to the professor in residence as an effort by the school's principals to implement effective writing instruction school-wide.



The course met four days per week over the course of six weeks and focused on using the structured approach to teaching writing (Smagorinsky et. al., 2010) and writing instruction in culturally relevant classrooms (Winn & Johnson, 2011). Seven preservice teachers (See Figure 1) were enrolled in the course.

At the beginning of the course, the professor modeled the anthem essay

Figure 1

### **Preservice Teacher Profiles**

*Amy* is an upper level student in the undergraduate Secondary Education, English Language Arts program. Amy previously pursued undergraduate studies in Music Education before deciding that she wanted to teach ELA. Before this course, Amy had never done a clinical placement with middle or high school students and this was subsequently her first ELA teaching experience.

*Matthew* is an upper level student in the undergraduate Secondary Education, English Language Arts program. Matthew has an extensive theatre background and hopes to teach theatre as well as English at the middle or high school level. Matthew has not yet completed his first clinical placement. This was Matthew's first experience teaching ELA to middle or high school students.

*Cory* is a master's student seeking masters level certification in the Secondary Education, English Language Arts program. Cory already has an ELA certification from his undergraduate career and has been teaching middle school ELA in the local public school systems for the two years preceding this course.

*Phoebe* is an upper level student in the undergraduate Secondary Education, English Language Arts program and is pursuing her undergraduate ELA certification. Before taking the teaching writing course, Phoebe had already completed her initial clinical placement, totaling 34 hours, in the local public schools.

*Stephanie* is an upper level student in the undergraduate Secondary Education, English Language Arts program and is pursuing her undergraduate ELA certification. Before taking the teaching writing course, Stephanie had already completed her initial clinical placement, totaling 34 hours, in the local public schools. In addition, Stephanie has maintained a part time job working in a local preschool/daycare facility.

*Claire* is a graduate student pursuing her masters level certification through the Secondary Education, English Language Arts, Alternative Certification program. This will be her first certification. Claire's background consists of an undergraduate degree in journalism and creative writing, and multiple years as a reporter in the journalism field. Prior to taking the teaching writing course, Claire completed her initial clinical placement, totaling 34 hours, in the local public schools.

*Brooke* is an upper level student in the undergraduate Secondary Education, English Language Arts program and is pursuing her undergraduate ELA certification. Before taking the teaching writing course, Brooke had already completed her initial clinical placement, totaling 34 hours, in the local public schools.

lesson to preservice teachers and explained that they would be (re)delivering it to the students attending the summer bridge program. The anthem essay was both structured and culturally relevant (Smagorinsky et. al., 2010, Winn & Johnson, 2011). The remaining class time was devoted to class and community discussions, planning time for preservice teachers to practice and prepare for their supervised teaching sessions, and time to reflect and engage in dialogue after teaching.

During supervised teaching, each preservice teacher had a group of at least four Eastern students and (re)delivered the anthem essay lesson over the course of four meetings. During the (re)delivery, or supervised teaching sessions, preservice teachers were observed by practitioners, the professor, and/or the graduate research assistant--knowing members of the community--who offered assistance, redirection, and/or facilitated identity re-alignment. After each of the sessions, preservice teachers returned to the class to discuss--with the other members of the community--their instruction, management, and student work.

From 2008-2012, approximately three fourths of regular classroom teachers prepared in the US were female and about two-thirds were white (TEA, 2012). The preservice teachers prepared at the researchers' university reflect this fact. In addition, many of their clinical experiences are in schools that serve large white populations with white teachers. By placing primarily white teacher candidates in a school that served primarily African American students, stereotypes, prejudices, or misconceptions of African American students that often stem from deficit perspectives, were mediated by the community of practice model. Further, community of practice discussions illuminated how understandings of students who are different (e.g. race, class, gender) can shift from deficit-oriented ideologies to the alternatives that value difference.

Preservice teachers worked with students enrolled in a summer bridge program that served approximately thirty rising 9th graders from feeder middle schools who would be attending Eastern in the fall. The school's administration and teachers wanted to create opportunities for rising 9th graders to get acquainted with the school and receive extra instruction in English, Mathematics, and Physical Education (PE)<sup>2</sup>.

## Data Sources

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<sup>2</sup> As an incentive, students who attended the Summer Bridge Program were provided instruction in Physical Education (PE) and were able to earn their PE credit toward graduation.

The researchers attempted to document the context in which a community of learners came to understand themselves as teachers and as teachers of writing specifically. The researchers took field notes during each class meeting, observed preservice teachers during each closely supervised teaching session, conducted interviews with preservice teachers, and collected course artifacts from preservice teachers and students. First, Merriam (2009) suggests that field notes be highly descriptive and include descriptions of people, settings, and activities as well as include direct quotations and observer comments. The graduate research assistant took field notes that were handwritten in a journal during each class meeting. After each day, field notes were transferred on to an Internet-based document so that both researchers could have access and include missed perspectives and other notes as needed.

The researchers and practitioners also conducted observations of each preservice teacher during their supervised teaching sessions with students. The researchers used an observation instrument in order to record observations of the preservice teachers' (re)delivery of the activities associated with the anthem essay lesson. Practitioner-observers, when present, did not use the observation tool, but kept notes on paper and sent them to the professor via email.

In addition, the preservice teachers were asked to complete pre-surveys at the beginning of the course that focused on their teaching background, their progress in their degree programs, and their level of comfort with teaching writing. At the end of the course, the preservice teachers were given a post-survey with questions focusing on their development throughout the course and their experience within the community of practice and their small group sessions.

In order to further examine how preservice teachers developed their understanding as teachers and as teachers of writing as a result of participating in a community of practice, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant. Interviews were recorded and questions focused on the experience of learning within a community of practice. Participants were asked open-ended questions that encouraged them to explain their unique perspectives on the community of practice model used for the teaching writing course. Interviews were later transcribed for analysis.

Finally, course artifacts were collected and logged using an Internet-based drive. Artifacts included the course syllabus, course handouts, preservice teacher-made handouts, student and teacher journals, and photographs. In particular, in their reflection journals, preservice teachers were asked to reflect on the teaching and learning process as they learned about teaching writing while teaching writing to students. The reflections were based on the notion of learning and practice in

collaborative spaces and interaction within a community of practice (Wenger & Lave, 2001) while also enacting Freire's (1968) conceptualization of effective praxis as reflective action. To protect the anonymity of all participants, all identifying information was removed from each artifact before logging and analyzing.

### **Coding process**

For analytic purposes, the researchers initially used "collaborative coding" (Smagorinsky, 2008) in which both researchers collaborated in order to generate initial codes. Together, using grounded theory, the researchers conducted line-by-line analysis of the logged field notes and interview transcripts to generate the initial codes for each set of data and created a list of codes on a shared Internet-based document. Individually, the researchers analyzed other data sources in order to see where there was evidence of identity trajectory as a result of participation in the community of practice.

Codes were pre-established to help illuminate data pertaining to the theoretical considerations and the guiding research questions. Throughout the data analysis process, codes were also created as necessary. Codes with the highest occurrences were influential in determining the results of the analysis by identifying four major themes: collaborative learning, reflective "practice," participation, accountability and supervision in the field, and developing teaching repertoires through identity development and re-alignment.

### **Results**

In an effort to contribute to the body of work that describes alternative forms of teacher education and field experiences where preservice teachers can work with communities and be supported by them (Kinloch and Smagorinsky, 2014), the following sections illustrate how the preservice teachers benefited from the community of practice model while learning to teach writing.

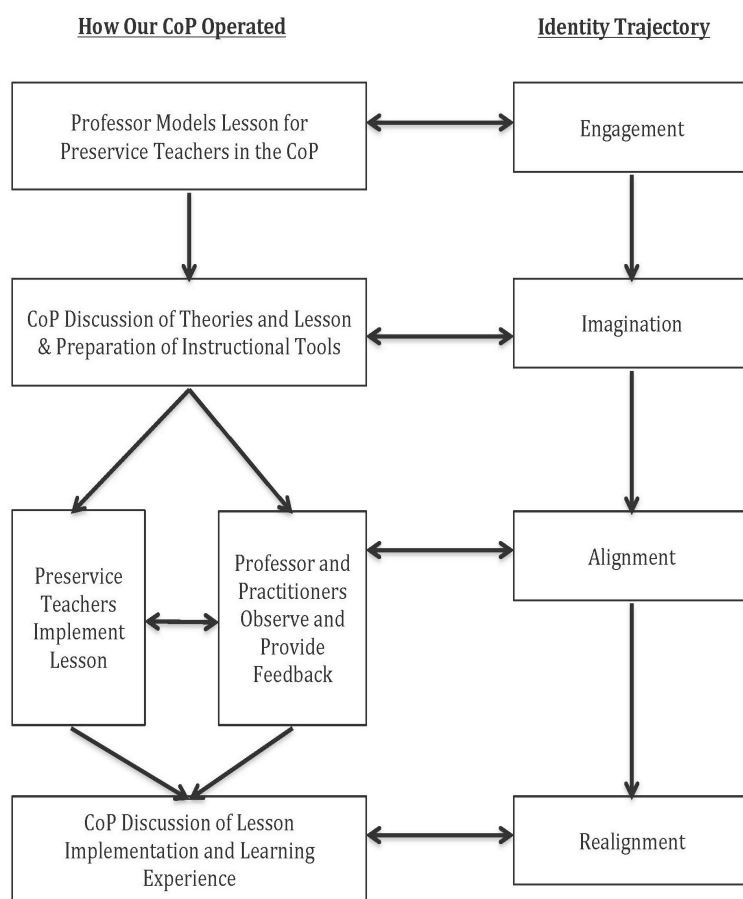
### **Meaning-making together: Collaboration and Reflection**

Implementing and cultivating a community of practice required that researchers attend to space, activity, and time while keeping in mind the shifting roles of teacher and learner for each member of the community. See Figure 2 for an illustration of how the community of practice functioned in relation to preservice teachers' identity trajectories. Before facilitating the anthem essay assignment for their students, preservice teachers experienced the lesson as learners: engaging in dialogue, analyzing anthems, creating criteria, and

composing their own anthem essays. As a community constructing together what it meant to be a teacher of writing, preservice teachers negotiated their identities as teachers of writing while they located themselves in the histories of the practice. As teachers they discussed theory, critiqued practice, practiced teaching with students present, and reflected on their own teaching with the community present. They moved along the identity continuum, shaping and reshaping what it meant to be a writer and a teacher of writing.

Figure 2

*Community of Practice and Identity Development*



During the process of (re)delivering the anthem essay lesson to students, preservice teachers were invited to critique the lesson using information from the course reading and discussions. Here, preservice teachers were able to revise handouts, create new ones, and discuss pedagogical choices and changes within the community of practice--acts that allowed them to negotiate their identities as teachers and as teachers of writing as they decided which parts of the anthem essay lesson were most important to teach and learn, while also deciding on the delivery method and curriculum presentation that they were most comfortable with as emerging teachers. All seven preservice teachers in the community of practice changed or modified the anthem essay lesson in some way--many simply redesigned the handouts or graphic organizers, while others decided to not include whole activities based on the needs of their students, time constraints, and their own teaching personalities.

Stephanie, one of the preservice teacher participants, added a component to the entire process by creating a bell-ringer that had the students journaling and reflecting on who they were, the things they enjoyed, and what they felt defined them. Stephanie then had the students reflect on these journal entries as they were trying to select their own anthems, thus giving them a way to negotiate how a song could be their particular anthem (while the criteria discussed in the session would determine if it would qualify as an anthem). Adding this activity was an effective tool for thinking about writing for Stephanie's students, and its inclusion and benefits were a result of her thinking about being a teacher of writing. The structure of the community of practice enabled preservice teachers to be a part of the meaning-making which shaped their participation and practice within the community. In other words, preservice teachers' participation in the community of practice required that they learn in practice through collaboration, reflection, and dialogue.

The act of reflecting, be it through interviews or journals or community of practice discussions, prompted preservice teachers to evaluate their practice and realign their own professional identities with the needs of their students, the constraints of their classroom, and their desire to be effective teachers. Reflection was directly linked to identity alignment and realignment that was initiated by the preservice teacher themselves. Often, this identity realignment was a result of reflection on the interaction between the preservice teachers' expectations of their teaching sessions and the realities that they encountered while teaching.

**Collaborative learning.** The community of practice was collaborative and encouraged all participants to collaborate to solve problems and further identity development for the preservice teachers. One preservice teacher, Claire, was

having trouble getting her students to analyze the lyrics of “The Star-Spangled Banner” and “Lift Every Voice and Sing” to determine what type of criteria each anthem invoked. Ms. Lincoln, who was helping observe this particular session, suggested in the following community of practice discussion that students be prompted to analyze the lyrics via their senses--what types of sounds, sights, smells, and feelings did each song evoke that could be one of its defining features as an anthem. Through community of practice discussion and collaboration, a new way of presenting the information and analyzing the songs was created and then used by several other preservice teachers as they reached that section of the anthem essay lesson and its delivery. In addition, preservice teachers were able to learn from one another’s experiences immediately following each session--permitting the preservice teachers to adjust for their own sessions and issues that they may encounter as they contributed to one another’s expectations, adaptations, and learning. These moments of collaboration were essential in helping the preservice teachers approach their teaching writing sessions with ideas and activities that engaged their students, while also helping them do analysis and approach writing activities. In the community of practice, learning was public and personal, which according to Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) are necessary for reflective practice.

**Reflective “practice.”** Providing preservice teachers with the space to practice their craft alongside practitioners in the field and under close supervision allowed them to thoughtfully reflect about their abilities and identities as teachers, and more specifically as teachers of writing. Preservice teachers were involved in collaborative learning processes and experiential learning situated in a relevant, contextual environment. According to Osterman and Kottkamp (1993), reflection is “essential to linking theory and practice, thought and action” (p. 3). Because this class offered concrete experiences, it was possible for preservice teachers to be reflective about their “practice” with students.

Cory reflects on his teaching part of the anthem essay lesson. He writes:

...I did make a mistake. Instead of letting my students choose and create their own criteria for their anthem essays like I got to do for my own anthem essay, I created the criteria for them, which I felt limited their selection of their anthem.

Cory brought a unique perspective to the preservice teacher population within the community of practice in that he had at the time of the study already been teaching in his own classroom for two years. His reflections often focused on insight gained during the course that could help him in improving his own pedagogical approaches. Cory’s ability to be at once a student in the methods



course as well as a practicing teacher, along with the inclusion of current practitioners in the field, provided the entire group a new avenue of discussion that interrupted top-down discussion frameworks consistent with banking models of education.

Other preservice teachers' reflections mirror these types of insights about their practice. Phoebe reflected that she didn't realize how fast she was talking and that she needed to allow more time for her students to write. Several lessons later, Phoebe also noted that she needed to model thesis writing for her students by writing a formula on the board or writing her own thesis on the board while talking them through the process, instead of just generally stating what a thesis is and how it is written. Brooke noted after her first teaching session that she did not feel very well prepared and intended on making agendas for future sessions and coming more prepared. Amy also reflects that she would like to concentrate on improving her time management skills to be a more effective teacher. These realizations range from challenges to being a teacher generally to more specific realizations surrounding being a teacher of writing. In particular, Phoebe's realization that she should model thesis writing and Cory's realization about how he had accidentally narrowed the availability of criteria (or tools for thinking about writing) are very specific to their identities as teachers of writing.

### **Participation, Accountability, and Supervision in the Field**

The community of practice model for field experiences reified preservice teachers' participation in and accountability to the teaching writing field. During each closely supervised teaching session with students, preservice teachers were observed by the instructor or research assistant and the practitioner-observers, Ms. Lincoln and Ms. Phillips. Preservice teachers would teach in Ms. Lincoln's classroom. Based on what was witnessed during the observation, observers exercised the freedom to speak up during lesson (re)delivery to make corrections, add information, give praise, address students, or ask clarifying questions. Although observations were not graded, and on many occasions, feedback was shared verbally with participants during informal conversations walking back to the community of practice's classroom, preservice teachers were exposed to the "regime of competence" within the teaching writing field and held accountable (vertically and horizontally) to that level of competence by fellow members of the community. Preservice teachers shared their experiences with the community and engaged in dialogue about what went well and what did not. Preservice teachers made instructional decisions, revised lessons, and conducted further research as a

result of their shared learning, engaging in peripheral participation that approximated full exposure.

Through examining the data, it became apparent that simply by being in classrooms with students, preservice teachers were having to adjust their imagined interactions in the field to align with the realities of teaching in a classroom. Obstacles that occurred for different preservice teachers in these teaching experiences included many that current practitioners currently encounter--interruptions, class time being cut short, intermittent attendance and preparedness by students, among other common challenges. Thus, experiences of being in a classroom as the primary teacher enabled preservice teachers to align their imagined interactions with those realities of teaching. However, an important part of how this community of practice functioned was the presence of supervisors that could provide immediate feedback and help preservice teacher identity realignment as preservice teachers negotiated implementing the planned curriculum in a real space, with real students, while also adjusting for unplanned or unforeseen challenges. Often, the presence of a supervisor or the feedback of a supervisor enabled the preservice teachers to adjust aspects of their teaching that they had not taken into consideration or realized. Supervisors' observations often reappeared in preservice teachers' reflections, their interviews, and their discussions as adjustments that they would implement in their next session or teaching experience. This helped all of the preservice teachers identify more fully with the mode of being a teacher of writing. For example, after Phoebe realized that she should have modeled a thesis for her student while they were writing, she was able to suggest thesis modeling to her fellow community of practice members who then implemented it as necessary in their own teaching sessions--intensifying their identification with and thinking about being a teacher of writing.

One of the preservice teachers, Brooke, unexpectedly had a student with learning disabilities and an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Brooke acknowledged in her community of practice discussions, her interview, and her reflections that she was not expecting to encounter this type of challenge during a summer bridge program and was unsure of how to proceed and incorporate the needs and the IEP of the student into her planned curriculum. In her interview, Brooke states: "Well, I wasn't ready for that, like the first day, at all. But I think once [the supervisors] came in and helped with [that particular student], it was a lot easier. But today was the first time I had [the student] for just a minute by myself and I felt like I did okay." The supervisors helped Brooke deal with having diverse students with diverse learning capabilities by modeling interactions, providing feedback on adjustments, and then allowing time for Brooke to interact

on her own with the student and realign her own ideas with the realities of teaching.

Matthew's first teaching session did not go according to his planned curriculum and he wrote in his journal: "There are a few parts where I could use work, like having parts of my lesson more rehearsed." After this initial session, the supervisors suggested to Matthew that he try making agendas beyond the lesson plan that had time allotments, progressions, and details about the activities to help him adjust to teaching, time constraints, and being in front of a group of students as the teacher for the first time. For his next session, Matthew brought an agenda, which helped him stay on task. He reflected after teaching that session: "I actually think I'm getting better with my nerves and getting [the students] involved in my lesson." Matthew acknowledged in a community of practice discussion that the idea of creating an agenda for himself beyond the lesson plan was not something he felt he would have thought of himself, and that he was glad that the supervisors had observed him and given him a useful tool for him to utilize as part of his practice that would help his progress to becoming an effective teacher and a teacher of writing.

### **Developing Teaching Repertoires: Identity Development and Re-alignment**

An analysis of field notes and preservice teachers' reflections revealed that high identification was a closely guided trajectory where realignment was an ongoing process through which preservice teachers acquired habits of effective practice. With alignment, according to Wenger (1998), members within communities of practice "learn to have effects and contribute to tasks that are defined beyond engagement" (p. 239). For the teaching enterprise, this could mean understanding a common focus, standard, or vision for teaching and teaching writing writ large. Doing so is certainly important in a time when teachers and teachers of writing must serve students whose literacy and language backgrounds may be at odds with literacy practices valued in schools and on standardized tests. Teachers who remain at the alignment mode of identification engage in challenging standards, shared infrastructures, or centers of authorities. Realignment, however, compels members of communities of practice to challenge or interrupt deficit perspectives, solve problems, and use affirming language that envisions a better enterprise and how that enterprise can serve its community.

Further, through analysis of the data, it became apparent that identity realignment is a process that can be initiated through experiences in the classroom, supervisors providing direct and immediate feedback, collaborative

discussions regarding practice and classroom experiences, and personal reflection that negotiated expectations and realities. All of these means of realigning professional identities as teachers are highly reflective and teacher-centric, focusing on how preservice teachers can adapt to meet the needs of the students, the classroom, or the field as a whole. Identity realignment thus coincides with Freire's (1968) notion of effective praxis being a reflective process.

### **Cultivating Habits of Effective Writing Teaching Practice**

Teacher education programs are criticized for having few relevant activities that relate to teachers' post graduation activities; for clinical placements that are too short; for little supervision during preservice teacher fieldwork; for sites that are more about faculty convenience than promoting learning; and, for inadequately preparing teachers for the realities of teaching that include diversity, disability, and low English proficiency (Rust, 2010). Further, Rust (2010) claims that educators struggle with the process of bringing research and practice together in a way that results in "mutual interaction and a qualitative upgrading of practice" (p. 6). Levine (2006) warns that "America's teacher education programs must demonstrate their relevance and their graduates' impact on student achievement--or face the very real danger that they will disappear" (p. 3). Levine (2006) suggests that programs preparing future teachers should focus on school practice and be grounded in the types of schools in which teachers serve throughout their careers, comparing the job of teacher education programs to that of medical and law schools. Current models of teacher education focus on theory in isolation from practice and seldom align field experiences with university goals and standards (Butler and Cuenca, 2012). Teacher educators have the ability to change how teacher education is implemented and practiced, which results in a change in the way that teachers teach.

Enacting and cultivating community of practice models for field-based teaching is the first step to embracing the work of schools of education as professional schools that "work on the world of practice and practitioners" (Levine, 2006). Teacher education programs have the opportunity to reimagine and cultivate field experiences that focus on developing preservice teacher identities as practitioners; immersing preservice teachers in the field with as close to full exposure as possible; providing closely supervised teaching experiences with an emphasis on critical feedback and reflection; increasing the amount of fieldwork required of preservice teachers; and developing closer relationships with the communities in which and the practitioners with which preservice teachers will begin their initial development and journey of becoming a teacher.

Supervising teachers should strive to align theory and practice by providing “one good lesson” for preservice teachers to bridge the gap between knowing and doing, teaching and learning--creating experiences for preservice teachers to be the student of a lesson, and then teach the same lesson. Further, supervising teachers should take part of the conversation and curriculum delivery when observing preservice teachers, moving beyond simple observation and focusing instead on the ongoing process of alignment and realignment that preservice teachers need to identify with the field of teaching and its regime of competence and accountability.

This research illuminates the positive outcomes and experiences for preservice teachers that worked alongside current practitioners and teacher educators, received and implemented a series of effective lessons, and that received valuable, immediate feedback within a community of practice. As the education field continues to address issues of literacy, teacher retention and dropout, student success rates, and standardization, communities of practice models offer ways to address issues within education at the teacher preparation level systematically, collaboratively, and with schools.

Cultivating habits of effective practice requires concrete experiences, exposure to theory and practice, as well as an exchange of knowledge that is public and personal. In the community of practice at Eastern High School, preservice teachers were guided through an identity trajectory that included activity, space, dialogue, collaboration, reflection and practice and that moved them beyond engagement and imagination in their field experiences to more fully realizing their identities as teachers. Preservice teachers (re)delivered one good lesson, developed classroom management techniques, and positioned themselves as teachers and as teachers of writing with students--participating in the world of practice as practitioners.

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