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Fostering Responsive Teaching by Preservice Teachers

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In this article, I highlight the ways in which the moral dimensions of teaching provide a relevant framework for sustaining discourse about responsive teaching. I discuss the ways in which teacher educators may nurture the capacities of teaching that are strongly associated with its moral dimensions. I share specific examples from dialogue journals to illustrate how journals can provide a meaningful vehicle for preservice teachers to focus on the ways in which they can be responsive to their students. Finally, I reflect on the ways my practice as a teacher educator has been influenced by my students' journal reflections.

Pressure on schools to produce measurable standardized learning outcomes may put at risk sustained attention to aspects of teaching and learning that cannot be measured by uniform benchmarks. This includes the capacity of teachers to pay attention to the unique characteristics of students and discover ways to motivate them, engage them, stimulate their curiosity, and help them learn in developmentally appropriate and reasonable ways. Although concentration upon these aspects of teaching seems commonsensical, it may not be common practice, particularly in the current political climate (Sherman, 2004). Paying attention to students as individuals is something that teacher education programs must emphasize, especially in early fieldwork settings when preservice teachers have what is often their first direct contact with students. They are most naïve, in a positive sense, and very receptive to ways in which they can have a strong impact on student learning.

Close attention to students, attention that aims to understand them as complete, developing human beings, is associated with moral dimensions of teaching that are richly represented in the literature.

Topical examples of teaching's moral dimensions include the following: caring (Noddings, 1984); teaching as a moral craft (Tom, 1984); human warmth and affection that help develop a child's potential (Carini, 1986); the nurturing of socially responsible citizens and aesthetically appreciative adults (Perrone, 1991); the tact of teaching (Van Manen, 2002); effective and responsible teaching (Oser, Dick, & Patry, 1992); and the intrinsic moral nature of teaching (Hansen, 1998). In a comprehensive review of scholarship about teaching as a moral activity, Hansen (2001) explains why teaching can be characterized as a moral activity:

> Teaching as an activity can be described as moral, because, in very general terms, it presupposes notions of better and worse, of good and bad. As typically understood, teaching reflects the intentional effort to influence another human being for the good rather than for the bad. Teaching presumes that it is good, rather than bad, for students to learn and for teachers to teach. It presumes that students' lives will be better as a result of teaching. (p. 828)

Certainly, not all teaching accomplishes what Hansen says should be an intentionally positive influence upon students. From his characterization, one could conclude that, at the extreme, teaching that has negative effects on students may be considered immoral. Clearly, a teacher's effort toward having a positive influence on a student's learning has moral implications, and greater attention should be given, as Fenstermacher (1990) suggests, to the moral aspects of teaching:

> Although it should require no defense to establish that teaching is a highly moral undertaking, the present controversy over the next stage in the evolution of the teaching occupation clearly shows that the moral dimensions of teaching are often ignored or forgotten. What makes teaching a moral endeavor is that it is, quite centrally, human action undertaken in regard to other human beings. Thus, matters of what is fair, right, just, and virtuous are always present. (p. 133)

The moral dimensions of teaching include engaged listening and zealous observation by teachers. Teachers who take seriously their responsibility to be "fair, right, just, and virtuous" step back literally and figuratively to reflect carefully on a student's ability to understand a concept, gauge an emotional state, or assess a frame of mind. They are patient and kind and also open-minded. Such teachers are present to the student completely—cognitively, physically, and emotionally—and the student is fully aware of this presence (cf., Noddings, 1984; Van Manen, 2002). These are all qualities of teaching's moral dimensions because they are all anchored to the teacher's desire to act in the best interests of a student in every respect. They are primarily driven by the student's needs rather than by external mandates for student achievement. Moral teaching practice requires teachers to enter a student's personal learning space and to capture the qualities and recognize the uniqueness of that space. Knowing who the student is today, including his or her strengths, interests, personal experiences, and cultural background, enables the teacher to envision more fully the possibilities for who the student may become in the future (Sherman, 2004).

In this article, I highlight the ways in which the moral dimensions of teaching provide a relevant framework for sustaining discourse about responsive teaching. I discuss the ways in which teacher educators may nurture the capacities of teaching that are strongly associated with its moral dimensions. I share specific examples from dialogue journals to illustrate how journals can provide a meaningful vehicle for preservice teachers to focus on the ways in which they can be responsive to their students. Finally, I consider the ways my practice as a teacher educator has been influenced by the reflections of my students in their dialogue journals.

An Imperative to Focus on the Individual Child

Teachers make moral decisions every day. In this sense, teaching acts that consider the student's welfare first are morally justifiable teaching acts. Moral teaching practice is embedded with a dimension that transcends effective teaching practice, as effectiveness has been described in the literature (see, for example, Oser, Dick, &

Patry, 1992; Tom, 1997). Teacher effectiveness was one of the first areas of focus for empirical-analytical educational research (Medley, 1982) and the scientific study to codify teaching knowledge is still embraced by many who seek to define the elements of effective teaching (Fenstermacher, 1994). This formal “knowledge-for-practice depends upon the assumption that the knowledge teachers need to teach well is produced primarily by university-based researchers and scholars in various disciplines” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 255). But much of the literature related to the moral dimensions of teaching, referenced earlier, suggests that knowledge about teaching students well emerges from the situationally-specific interactions that teachers have with students. Contextual understanding of person, time, and place are embedded in such an epistemology of teaching, which is interpretive by its very nature and derives from personal experience (Clandinin, 1985; Elbaz, 1983; Polanyi, 1962). It requires a communicative understanding (see Schubert, 1986, p. 182) that is shaped by careful listening, observation, and reflection. These activities, when undergirded by moral aspects of teaching such as care, respect, fairness, responsibility, compassion, and honesty and supported by dispositions such as open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and reflection (Dewey, 1997), provide traction for teachers to act responsively to students.

What teachers teach already receives a great deal of attention, both within the teaching community and outside of it. Standardized tests not only determine whether students are learning certain things but also dictate what those things should be and at what level they should be mastered. But the way in which teachers go about teaching receives far less scrutiny and is seldom part of the public discourse about teacher quality. The moral dimensions of teaching that are closely associated with the *how* of teaching and who the child is as a unique human being are the focus of my emphasis here.

Building Capacities to be Responsive

Just as teachers must come to know the unique capacities of individual students in order to help them develop as complete human beings, so must teacher educators pay close attention to preservice teachers as individuals and the ways they think about the students with

whom they work. By entering the reflective worlds of preservice teachers, teacher educators may come to understand better and nurture more effectively those capacities that can support responsive teaching (Sherman, 2003). Teacher educators can create environments that nurture the capacity for preservice teachers to be reflective and journals can be used to promote such reflection (Sherman, 2000, 2001). Much of the research on the use of journals has focused on how they promote reflective practice (Barkhuizen, 1995; Dieker & Monda-Amaya, 1995; Francis, 1995). It is not only how reflection may be encouraged but also what preservice teachers are reflecting about that has been of great interest to me in my own practice as a teacher educator because of the ways in which this reflection may lead new teachers to better address the needs of the particular students they teach.

Practices that encourage reflection have had a strong presence in teacher education programs for some time (Adler, 1991; Calderhead, 1989; Mueller, 2003; Pasch, 1995; Richardson, 1990; Sanders & Carignan, 2003; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). Components of teacher education programs that promote reflection include developmental portfolios, journals, lesson plan reflection, on-line discussions, and seminars that encourage dialogue among preservice teachers and teacher educators. Such activities help distinguish teaching as a multifaceted, highly intellectual activity, rather than something that is straightforward and formulaic. Reflection helps underscore what Lampert (1985) has described as the "dilemmas" of teaching, which require teachers to consider context and recognize the "limitations of taking any single-minded view of such complicated processes as teaching and learning in schools" (p. 193). The need and the benefits of reflection are clarified for prospective teachers when they participate in field experiences; here they experience how rapidly events can unfold in classrooms. If they do not step back, sort out, unravel, and look beyond the surface of everyday occurrences, the subtleties and nuances of teaching and learning may be obscured.

Early field experiences provide an especially fruitful opportunity for preservice teachers to build understandings about responsive teaching (Sherman, 2001, 2004). During early field experiences, preservice teachers generally have fewer responsibilities for managing the classroom, planning instruction, and implementing lesson plans. Once they begin to student teach, intensified demands

and a preoccupation on effective classroom management make it more difficult for new teachers to focus on individual students and upon the learning process (Dewey, 1964). Concrete experiences before student teaching provide opportunities to examine choices preservice teachers make as they interact with students. These experiences can be recorded in dialogue journals, which provide an opportunity for preservice teachers to reflect upon and write about specific experiences they are having in classrooms and allow teacher educators to respond and promote further inquiry about these experiences. Dialogue journals enable preservice teachers to unpack these experiences and understand how responsive teaching is or is not being enacted (Sherman, 2000, 2001). Dialogue journals, suggest Roderick and Berman (1984), "can also provide a means for gaining new information, for suggesting different courses of action, and for providing support as persons seek to enhance the quality of living and teaching" (p. 687).

Below are brief excerpts from the dialogue journals of three preservice elementary education teachers I supervised during early field experience preservice internships in a culturally diverse urban setting. They worked in classrooms five mornings a week, for about three hours a day for one semester. Although these preservice teachers were not required to have a particular focus for their journals, I did informally encourage them to write about observations of and interactions with individual students, especially those who seemed to be struggling. They were free to choose the specific content. I have isolated three possible "topics" in these excerpts that are related to the moral dimensions of teaching, as I have already characterized them. I suggest below each excerpt how dialogue about teaching responsiveness might be generated.

Concretizing Responsive Teaching Using Dialogue Journals

In the first journal excerpt, Janet discusses her negative feelings toward a student. In the second excerpt, Marie describes a student in her class who is unengaged in class activities. Lara, in the third excerpt, comments on the troubling self-isolating behavior of a particular student. In all cases, pseudonyms are used to preserve the anonymity of the preservice teachers, students, and mentor teachers.

Janet's Negative Feelings Toward a Student

> *Today was Mark's last day—he's moving to Atlanta. He was pretty good today, but I don't think I'll miss him. He gave me more grief than happiness. It's often hard to like all kids equally. I give them all a fair chance, but Mark and I just never got off on the right foot.*

It is not unusual for preservice teachers to have strong personal feelings about students. What is important here is that Janet recognizes and expresses these feelings. By sharing her thoughts, the intern is providing an opening for a conversation, either written or in person with the teacher educator, about how teachers confront their feelings, manage their own negativity, and work in ways that are in the best interests of a particular student (Sherman, 2003). What kind of dialogue might be generated based on this journal entry? First, Janet says that she will not miss Mark and shares frankly her belief that teachers cannot feel the same way about all students. This comment provides an entry point into the issue of how teachers feel about their students as persons in general versus how they feel about and interact with them as students. Objectively, Janet probably understands her obligation as a teacher to help Mark learn but finds him annoying. How can she move beyond her focus on the personal qualities and dispositions that challenge her (and may even make it difficult for her to teach other children) to discover ways that she can be effective as a teacher with this student? How could she also recognize that his conduct may not just be annoying to her, but, more importantly, have a negative impact on Mark's capacity to learn?

Janet also speaks about giving all the students a fair chance. More explanation might be requested here by the teacher educator. What does she mean by "fair chance"? What kinds of expectations have been established for the class as a whole? For individual students? Should there be any differences? If so, why, and under what circumstances? After reading Janet's journal entry, the teacher educator might want to investigate what Janet believes generally characterizes fair treatment for all students and how she might learn why Mark, particularly, does not respond in the ways Janet expects and desires.

Janet complains that Mark "gave her more grief than happiness." Mark was making her life difficult. The notion that she sees the student as being in a position to "give her" something—either positive or negative—is a topic worth further inquiry. Do students have some responsibility to ensure a teacher's happiness or comfort? What, if any, obligation would a student have in this regard and are teachers responsible for helping students to understand such obligation? How can teachers develop a classroom ethos (see Hansen, 1992) that nurtures communal responsibility and respect for the good of all participants, including that of the teacher? How can a teacher be responsive to students as developing human beings who need to understand personal responsibility in a democratic society? How can teachers help create classroom communities that model democratic societies?

Finally, Janet laments that perhaps she and Mark "never got off on the right foot." Her reference to this ill-fated beginning of their relationship suggests a particular interaction or tone that started things moving in the wrong direction. Janet and the teacher educator could explore what made her think about earlier aspects of the relationship that established this negative tone.

So we see how one short section of a journal entry provides a context for robust dialogue that may help the intern grapple with the complexity of teaching in very real ways as he or she reflects and engages in dialogue with the teacher educator. The insight gained not only helps clarify a situation that already has occurred (and about which there is little one can do), thus encouraging reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983), but also informs future practice and, potentially, may help Janet while she is in the throes of a novel situation, a process that Schön (1983) distinguishes as reflection-in-action. The journal provides insight for the teacher educator, too, about the ways in which Janet may be thinking about a unique problem and how she approaches classroom dilemmas (Lampert, 1985). Such knowledge may enable the teacher educator herself to be more responsive and more capably assist Janet as she navigates other complexities of teaching.

Marie's Unengaged Student

> *Carl cannot stand to be in his desk doing work. He has more unfinished projects and work in his desk than anyone. He is an extremely slow worker. He doesn't seem to enjoy school. Organization is certainly not his thing. He loses things often, doesn't pay attention so he misses directions and gets lost and falls behind. He loves to go to the bathroom, and do what I don't know, but it sure takes him a long time in there! He is a challenge. I try to push him to get going. Probably constantly telling him to do something is not the best way to get him to do it, but I can't just let him sit there and bother the students sitting next to him. Any suggestions?*

This entry is representative of many others I have read in the sense that the intern is speaking about a student who does not color within the lines. The following questions could be posed by the teacher educator: I'd like to know more about Carl. What do you know about him? His strengths? Interests? Does he respond positively to any activities? Have you observed him on the playground? In the media center? In music class? When you say you try to push him, what do you mean? Have you asked him why he doesn't finish the work? Have you listened to him read? Have you considered the possibility of psychological or medical issues? These are just some of the questions that might be asked to begin dialogue about the ways in which the teacher may promote success for Carl. Additionally, however, this entry provides the opportunity to discuss not only the ways in which the intern may be responsive to Carl, but also how classrooms and learning experiences may be structured in ways that meet the needs of many types of students.

In many instances, preservice teachers who relate stories about students like Carl are working in classrooms in which mentors may be engaged in some or all of the following practices: maintaining a highly structured environment; not allowing a great deal of interaction among students; providing minimal opportunities for students to get up and move around; requiring students to complete many worksheets or repetitive assignments—busy work; having the same expectations for

all students regardless of instructional point of need; and providing few opportunities for exploration and individual creativity. Although students like Carl may have specific difficulties, academic or emotional challenges, for example, they also may simply be bored by a monotonous classroom routine and a pronounced lack of imagination in the curriculum. In this regard, Carini (1986) suggests certain practices "push uniformity and conformity in the mastery of relatively low-level skills at the expense of responding creatively to children's questions and their innate sense of wonder" (pp. 21-22). Carini is concerned about an "emphasis on time-on-task and 'efficiency' in instruction, and to the lockstep progression dictated by mandated curriculum, as an increasing threat to education as a human enterprise" (p. 21).

In short, Marie's journal enables the teacher educator to focus on both the specific situation of the student who is not succeeding as well as broader concerns about sterile classroom environments that are generally not responsive to students in ways that Carini and others suggest. This includes the classroom's physical organization, the kinds of learning experiences that teachers make available for students, the range of materials that are provided, and, of paramount importance, how teachers interact with each student in a responsive manner to address weaknesses and build upon strengths.

Troubling Self-Isolation of Lara's Student

> *I've noticed that a girl named Susan often doesn't want to play the game or plays by herself at recess. This is the girl who Ms. Gordon [intern's mentor] said puts her head on her desk "for attention." I hope that she's not sad. I encourage her to participate, but don't want to push her.*

In this excerpt, Lara is sharing observations about a student during the early part of the field experience. She has not yet seen Susan put her head on her desk but has been told about this behavior by her mentor teacher. The preservice teacher, Lara, is expressing concerns that indicate a desire to be responsive to Susan, but she is confused about the way in which to approach her. The difficulty in encouraging Lara to follow her instinct and pursue the matter is that the teacher's

interpretation of what deserves attention may be different from Lara's. A question for Lara might relate to the idea that even if Susan intended to seek attention, might that not be the very response required by the teacher? Is the student giving the teacher a cue that requires attention? What kind of additional information might Lara want to solicit from a parent or from the student herself? Should students who seem to seek attention be purposefully ignored? Should attention-seeking behavior be responded to in the same way in all situations? How does paying attention help us better understand an individual student's dispositions for learning and for interacting in classroom communities?

Lara's entry touches on another issue faced by teacher educators when they respond to preservice teachers' journals. Mentors may have strong beliefs and values about teaching that differ from those of the preservice teacher and/or the university teacher educator. Although field experiences have been considered to be the vehicle by which the theory of the university teacher education program and the practice of the classroom may be fused, research indicates otherwise (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). Knowledge that is constructed by preservice teachers about responsiveness to students in university coursework may be inconsistent with the teaching they observe in field experiences. The resulting tension between the preservice teacher, teacher educator/university supervisor, and mentor may be difficult, if not impossible to resolve. But this dissonance should be a part of the dialogue between the teacher educator and the preservice teacher. Such dialogue, centering on disagreements about teaching practice between preservice teachers and mentors, differs in its orientation from the model of "critical dissonance" in teacher education programs discussed by Cochran-Smith (1991); she cautions that programs in which preservice teachers criticize classroom teachers may "set up" (p. 282) the unsuspecting teacher and seek to establish the hegemony of the university as the producer of knowledge about teaching. Her point is well taken. But dialogue about dissonance that does not seek to contrast the "bad teaching" of classroom teachers with the "good teaching" that is promoted in university courses can be productive; dissonance is bound to occur even in the most philosophically harmonious matches between classroom teachers and teacher education programs. According to Kagan (1992), "Student [Preservice] teachers need to understand the benefits that may accrue from immediate discomfort; cooperating [mentor] teachers need to be

prepared to discuss opposing beliefs rather than demand blind conformity" (p. 163). Although it is desirable for mentors to be open to opposing beliefs, not all mentors are so inclined. This is where the teacher educator may, through responses in dialogue journals and during individual conferences, help preservice teachers understand their discomfort, reflect on the reasons for it, and encourage an articulation of values and beliefs about teaching that contribute to the development of personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1985).

It is my sense that this last excerpt reveals Lara's emerging qualities of responsiveness. These qualities include attentiveness to the conduct of an individual student—Lara notices something is amiss. She also expresses a desire to act in a way that responds to the student's needs. Her attentiveness and concern are the beginning of her capacity to be responsive. Her reflection about the situation and her willingness to engage in dialogue with the teacher educator provide an avenue for exploring ways to act upon her knowledge and concern in a manner that will be in the best interests of the student. Intentionality for responsiveness is the beginning of a developmental process in preservice teachers that can slowly evolve into an enactment of responsiveness.

From this final example, we can see what one preservice teacher, Lara, can glean from the experience she describes in this journal entry. At the same time, the situation she has described carries meaning for the preparation of teachers in a more general sense. Isolation and loneliness in schools, and, indeed, in life in general, are not uncommon. And yet, teachers may not always see it as part of their responsibility to assist students who feel lonely or isolated. This entry underscores the need for teacher educators to help preservice teachers try to understand every student as a whole person whose emotional frame of mind is never divorced from his or her potential to be a successful learner and fully actualized adult.

The Value of Journals for Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators

I have found that by guiding preservice teachers toward a re-examination of real situations they have experienced in classrooms

they can begin to see the powerful impact a teacher might have on an individual student. In this way, I have attempted to help preservice teachers get in touch with their own developing sense of what constitutes the moral dimensions of teaching. I have tried to call their attention to specific aspects of these situations that will help them understand the relationship between a student's success and the conditions in the classroom that are, in large part, constructed by the teacher. In doing so, it becomes more likely that their tacit knowledge about teaching's moral dimensions will become explicit (cf., Kessels & Korthagen, 1996). I can often sense a preservice teacher's struggle as he or she observes what is and ponders what ought to be. This struggle needs to be articulated and resolved with the assistance of the teacher educator. The stories preservice teachers tell in their journals can provide the content to illuminate the moral significance of teaching. Questions and comments by the teacher educator enable the preservice teacher to develop insight based on personal experience—insight that may lead to more intentionally developed responsive practice in the future.

I have used dialogue journals for many years in early fieldwork settings and my students, preservice teachers, discuss a range of topics in these journals. They describe successfully implemented lesson plans, discuss their mentor's style and teaching methodology, share titles of wonderful curriculum resources they have discovered, and agonize over minutiae that deal with relatively mundane aspects of classroom life. But the most compelling reflections have revolved around particular students in their classrooms. This was a serendipitous discovery for me because it did not come from a deliberate assigned focus I had required. I quickly realized, however, that these reflections about specific students in classrooms could generate powerful insights about responsive teaching. Consequently, for a period of several weeks, I now ask the preservice teachers I supervise in early fieldwork preservice internships to focus their observations, reflections, and writing on just a few students each week. Although I strongly sensed that providing such a focus could have a strong impact on my students, I wanted to hear what they had to say about it. So I asked them to reflect on what they think they had learned from these focused observation assignments. I share a few of their responses here:

<u>Stephanie</u>:

From the focused reflections, I learned that there are needs that the children have that are beyond academic supplements. … I learned the importance of looking at the child as a student and as an individual to assess what they need to help them achieve academically and personally grow. Learning this will help me in the future because I know now that I have to take time to observe the children in several situations and notice patterns. Also, I must figure out what I can do to help those children. I did not focus on that a lot in my reflection, and I needed to. I have, since then, tried to figure out what I can do to help those children, and I have determined that I have to spend more one-on-one time with the students when they have time to work on writing and morning work.

<u>Alice</u>:

I think that the focused reflections were very beneficial. I realized how important it is to pay attention to detail. I learned a lot about student motivation. By zeroing in on specific student comments, actions, and reactions I really got to see patterns of behaviors. Through these detailed reflections, I was also able to think about new ways of engaging students. … To do these observations, I really had to sit and listen. Actually, I had to walk around. But I had to focus. In my own classroom, I will have to do the same so that I can give students the tools to make personal connections.

<u>Linda</u>:

In focusing on specific students during class instruction and with their peers I learned to develop a keen eye to observing students' attitudes. Not only did I learn more about the students but I learned more about myself. What I mean by this is learning to monitor and pay close attention. Oftentimes I found myself consumed with many responsibilities during the day. The observation of these students made me slow down and not only observe but reflect on these students' behaviors both in and out of the classroom.

For teachers—both those who teach young children and those who teach preservice teachers—recognizing the unique qualities of every student is the beginning of responsive practice that is closely associated with teaching's moral dimensions. In my own work, I continually wrestle with ways to use this knowledge to inform my practices with my students. How can I use what I know about each preservice teacher to develop his or her own understanding of what constitutes responsive teaching? How can I help them use similar knowledge about the students in their classrooms? Can reflection in dialogue journals strengthen the relatively small impact of preservice teacher education programs on teacher beliefs and practice that is described in the literature (Britzman, Dippo, Searle, & Pitt, 1997; Graber, 1996; Lortie, 1975; Zeichner & Gore, 1990)?

These questions deserve more investigation. Dialogue journals provide a vehicle for helping preservice teachers see alternatives to existing assumptions (including perceptions of what constitutes learning and how it is assessed) and discover ways to improve their own teaching, if not the environment of schooling in general, in significant ways.

Questions posed to preservice teachers and responses to journal entries by teacher educators require sensitivity and attention to nuance. Written text can be easily misinterpreted. Sometimes I refrain from responding, preferring instead to speak to my student about a situation discussed in a journal. Face-to-face meetings with preservice teachers provide a different kind of communicative space and one that is surely important in fostering responsive teaching. In fact, many types of activities in teacher education may foster responsiveness, and further research to explore their potential to do so is warranted. But writing enables us to reflect in a unique and quite useful way. As Kottkamp (1990) suggests, "Writing is self-produced feedback, available for immediate review and re-evaluation, and, because of its slower and self-regulating pace, it allows for a moving back and forth among past, present, and future" (pp. 184-185).

Conclusion

The context of early field experiences can provide opportunities for teacher educators to help preservice teachers understand the moral

dimensions of teaching in ways that are associated directly with what they are doing with students. The goal here is to help preservice teachers develop a grounded vision for responsiveness and to understand better the consequences of its absence. Teachers must be reflective in order to understand how teaching is inherently moral; reflection can help them recognize the implications of their actions and the potential good or harm that can come as a result of them.

Teacher educators can help preservice teachers learn to weigh alternatives; the moral dimensions of teaching include the selection of courses of action that advance the welfare of the student. That there are alternatives, and that a focus on students may enable the teacher to choose wisely from them, is something that can be emphasized in teacher education programs. The goal of teacher education is not to indoctrinate or train teachers to behave in prescribed ways but to educate them to reason soundly (Shulman, 1987).

The notion that reflection should be an integral component of teacher education is well established in the literature. I have tried here to illuminate how scaffolding can enhance the reflective capacity of preservice teachers to focus on responsive teaching practice. Teacher educators must continue to investigate the multiple purposes and focuses for reflection that build understanding about the complexity of responsive teaching practice especially in the face of political mandates that represent oversimplified perspectives of teaching that are quite the opposite (Cochran-Smith, 2003).

Dialogue journals provide openings for productive discourse about the ways in which teachers may come to understand their students better as complete human beings with unique strengths, weaknesses, aspirations, and interests. Such understanding can only be possible as teachers attempt to enter the learning spaces of their students and, as Van Manen (2002) suggests, "cross the street in order to go to the child's side" (p. 155). It is the responsibility of teacher educators to cross the street, too, in order to go to the side of the street on which the preservice teacher stands (Sherman, 2001). Dialogue journals enable teacher educators to understand where preservice teachers are situated, how they may or may not be manifesting emerging qualities of responsiveness, and how to help them become better at doing it.

Current accountability measures and what Darling-Hammond (2001) has called a "morass of teaching standards" (p. 754) mirror society's desire to come up with a method to neatly and simply describe what good teaching should look like. As committed, thoughtful teachers know, however, the variables that contribute to good teaching are contextually bound and can best be identified by ongoing reflective practices. Such practices can begin in teacher preparation programs, where, with the kind of coaching I have suggested here, candidates may become increasingly reflective about the moral dimensions of teaching. The aim, too, is to help new teachers develop capacities that sustain this focus as they move forward into their teaching careers.

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