

Repositioning Family-Community Knowledge in Teacher Preparation

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Abstract

Preparing teacher candidates for the important work of engaging with family-community is a persistent challenge. Teacher educators should consider repositioning the role that family-community knowledge holds in teacher practice and in the teacher education curriculum. This shift in philosophical, professional, and curricular importance can be an important step toward improving practice in this area. Inspired by recent calls to advance a regard for community-based knowledge and expertise in the preparation and practice of teachers, the authors share details of teacher preparation efforts at one small, Northwest university and their exploration into the question, “What is learned by teacher candidates when they set out to engage with families and the community?” The qualitative analysis of nine teacher candidate family-community engagement reflections resulted in four themes: 1) Candidates can grow in familiarity with family-community; 2) Families-communities have knowledge they can share about learners; 3) Candidates can use family-community knowledge to impact the classroom; and 4) Candidates tend not to reflect upon what they learned about families and communities in light of their own life experiences.

***Keywords:* family, community, engagement, teacher education, curriculum**

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There is consensus in the literature that working with families and communities has a significant impact on student achievement and well-being (Beltran, 2012; Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Epstein, 2011; Harris A. & Goodall, J., 2008; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hiatt-Michael, 2010; Van Voorhis, et al., 2013; Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006). Yet, Zeichner, Payne and Brayko (2015) note that neither the traditional college teacher preparation programs nor the nontraditional early entry programs pay attention to the role of family and community-based knowledge in teacher preparation in spite of it being evident in teacher education standards. This lack of attention to preparedness results in research consistently reporting that teachers, both in-service and preservice, feel unprepared to do this aspect of their work (Casper, 2011; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Markow & Martin, 2005; Patte, 2011; Sewell, 2012; Zeichner et al., 2016). This reality in teacher preparation is a persistent and puzzling challenge (Buchanan & Buchanan, 2016). It is time for teacher educators to explore the reasons for this challenge and to begin to think differently about this aspect of teacher practice.

In an effort to turn the tide on this persistent challenge, we contend that teacher educators should consider repositioning family-community knowledge and practice as a necessary foundation in the teacher education curriculum. This shift in philosophical and curricular importance can help programs take a first step toward addressing the lack of candidate preparedness evidenced in the literature.

Theoretical Foundations for Our Work

Preparing Teachers for a Democratic Society

Historically, teacher preparation has been rooted in the importance of education to a democratic society. Dewey wrote that “Democracy has to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife” (2008, p.139). Banks (2005) talks about education for citizenry when he says,

An important aim of school curriculum should be to educate students so that they will have the knowledge,

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attitudes and skills needed to help construct and to live in a public community in which all groups can and will participate (p. 195).

Preparing individuals who will teach students in ways that prepare them to be contributing members of their communities and for the greater good is important work that requires teacher candidates to understand the communities in which they are preparing students. Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko (2015) say that “In our view, the preparation of teachers for a democratic society should be based on an epistemology that in itself is democratic and includes a respect for and interaction among practitioner, academic, and non-professional educators in communities” (p. 124). We envision the preparation of teachers who will come alongside the community, as partners, in the hopes and dreams families and communities have for their children and youth. This foundation is important to our work because it situates the central goal of educating students in direct relation to communities. This democratic lens on preparation leads us to face the reality that educating all students, with their own cultural and linguistic heritage, is a major challenge and a social justice issue.

Teacher-Family-Community Engagement as a Social Justice Issue

When reviewing the literature in this area, we were stunned and challenged by a recent comment from researchers at a large, Northwest research university. Zeichner, Bowman, Guillen, and Napolitan (2016) say “It is ironic that so little of this work goes on in teacher education programs across the United States when so many of them have claimed the mantle of social justice as the basis for their work” (p. 288). This statement caused deep reflection for us because in our program social justice is more than a professional responsibility or moral imperative, but runs much deeper into our university’s theological foundations.

The private university that we work with was founded on Quaker principles and commitments. These commitments are

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spoken of as Quaker and/or Friends testimonies, driven by beliefs that are put into practice in the community (AFSC, 2011). “Friends hold that all people are equal in the eyes of God and have access to the “inner Light” (AFSC, 2011, p. 7). This profound sense of equality leads Friends to treat each person with respect, looking for “that of God” in everyone. In practice, listening to the voices of each member of a community and valuing their perspective is important. Our theological roots have caused us to embrace social justice as a critical element of our teacher education conceptual framework and we claim that it can be found across each element of our curriculum. Zeichner et al.’s (2016) challenging statement causes us to reposition family-community knowledge as a foundation in our curriculum, much like the other strong instructional foundations that are emphasized in our work. Each of these theoretical foundations represent a lens through which we view our work as teacher educators and scholars.

Literature Review

This brief literature review begins by summarizing a typology for teacher-family-community work. We then share the literature around engagement as it is related to teacher candidate development.

Exploring a Typology for Teacher-Family-Community Work within Teacher Education

Zeichner et al. in their 2016 article entitled *Engaging and Working in Solidarity with Local Communities in Preparing the Teachers of Their Children*, share a three-tiered typology created to organize efforts around teacher-family-community work in teacher education. Each approach is distinguished by its epistemological grounding, educational purposes, and its implementation requirements. This work can be a helpful framework as teacher educators consider how to best position and deliver family-community curriculum. The typology, briefly summarized below, includes three classifications of how teachers work with family-community: *involvement*, *engagement*, and *solidarity*.

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Teacher-family-community involvement. The teacher-family-community involvement paradigm is rooted in traditional modes of *involving* families and community-based organizations; things like teacher newsletters, parent volunteer efforts, parent-teacher conferences, involvement in the PTA, curriculum nights, back to school events, and family homework assignments. Zeichner et al. (2016) say that “These involvement activities create opportunities for school staff to share their knowledge and expertise with families and community providers about school expectations, specific school curriculum, ways to support children’s learning outside of the school, effective communication with teachers, and ways that families and community-based organizations (CBO) can support teachers and the school as a whole” (p. 278).

Teacher-family-community engagement. The engagement approach comes at this work from a completely different perspective. “Instead of teachers and school staff as the knowledgeable participants, this approach stresses the knowledge that families, CBO staff, and community mentors can impart to teachers” (Zeichner, et al, 2016, p. 279). This perspective has teacher candidates hungry to learn from family and community partners; the knowledge gained ultimately drives instructional decisions on behalf of student growth.

Teacher-family-community solidarity. This approach appears to hinge on sustained engagement with family and/or community members. “Underlying the *solidarity* approach is an understanding that educational inequalities (e.g., opportunity and/or achievement gaps) are part and parcel of broad, deep, and racialized structural inequalities in housing, health, employment, and intergenerational transfers of wealth (Zeichner, et al., 2016, p. 279). This approach might include families, teacher educators, in-service teachers, and community activists joining together to create some type of educational or social reform.

As we examined the type of instructional work being delivered in our program, we believe that the lion’s share of content delivered and assessed is “involvement” oriented. We seek to embrace an engagement paradigm. Eventually, we hope that sustained

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engagement will lead to more solidarity efforts. We now focus our attention on recent literature around teacher-family-community engagement.

Power of Parent and Community Engagement

Miller, Lines, Sullivan, & Hermanutz (2013) note that there has been a shift in the ways in which teachers and schools partner with families. “This shift involves a move from a traditional focus on parent involvement to a strategic emphasis on family partnering where educational success is viewed as a shared responsibility with families playing a critical role” (p. 150). This shift requires that families are engaged in the educative process. However, teachers must bear the responsibility for taking the lead by building relationships where collaborative work, on behalf of students, can occur (Amatea, 2009; Boethel, 2003; Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Ferguson, 2007; Hiatt-Michael, 2007; Kearney et al., 2014). Therefore, teacher educators must prepare candidates to engage with the families and communities of their learners. This work can be incredibly complex when the teacher and family come from different socioeconomic and/or cultural perspectives. The literature focused on working with families of diverse and/or learners living in poverty offers teacher educators a window into new conceptualizations that hold potential for the preparation of teacher candidates.

The Challenge of Working with Diverse Families and Communities

The current teaching force, who serve as mentors for our teacher candidates, most often craft engagement strategies that tend to be middle class, white, and emblematic of European-American values, assumptions and experiences (Tran, 2014). Calabrese Barton et al. (2004), in their study of high-poverty urban families, contend that schools often portray the ideals and beliefs of a capitalist culture and that they view the culture of poor, minority, and linguistically diverse families as subordinate. Much of the literature in this area talks about a power differential between school and family that

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impact their ability to understand one another and work together. Schools and classrooms can only be inclusive for families that live within differing systems when they are intentional about working at the intersection of the school's perspective and the family's perspective (Calabrese Barton et al, 2004; Kearney et al., 2014). Harris and Goodall state it this way: "parental engagement is going to be possible with certain groups only if major efforts are made to understand the local community, and if the relationship is perceived to be genuinely two-way" (2008, p. 286).

Preservice Teacher Development for Engagement

Preservice teacher development for engagement begins with teacher candidates gaining knowledge of the child, their family, and the community. In Evans' (2013) comprehensive review of literature on teacher educators' efforts to prepare candidates to successfully engage with families-communities, he cites direct experience with family and/or community members as the common denominator across all findings that led to positive results for candidates. Having direct contact, an authentic experience, appears to be quite different from reading in texts about families and communities. Zeichner's research team (2016) reports on teacher candidate interviews following direct contact experiences with families and community members. Researchers identified a shift in candidates' perspective on the family's role in a child's education. "We identify this learning outcome as "re-positioning families" (p. 283). Teacher educators should consider crafting curricular assignments that open the door for engagement with families where candidates come as learners in pursuit of knowledge. Home visits are one strategy that provide the teacher with a rich source of information about the child and family (Hiatt-Michael & Purrington, 2007). Ramos (2007) suggests another potential strategy, community-based literacy walks. With this approach, the teacher ventures into the community where the students live and has the opportunity to become familiar with and even engage with community resources. Zeichner et al. (2016) engaged candidates with community panel discussions and debriefs.

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These authentic experiences lead to increased candidate confidence in their ability to work with families. Evans (2013) reports that the experiences working directly with families was at the heart of candidates' increased confidence in their preparedness. Blasi (2002) notes that teacher educators' efforts to come alongside candidates' direct engagement and reframe "at-risk" families, as families with positive assets, helped curb preconceived notions that candidates brought to the experience.

Engagement experiences with family-community often lead teacher candidates to use the knowledge that they have gained from that experience to improve classroom instruction. "The adaptation of pedagogy based on these encounters not only denotes the potential for improved instruction, but also indicates a fundamental shift in how new teachers perceive family and school relationships" (Evans, 2013, p. 129). Results from Zeichner and his team's research align with Evans' findings. They write that results "...indicate that some teacher candidates translated their re-positioning of families and their re-positioning of their own vision of teaching into actions in their classroom and/or in their school" (2016, p. 284). These promising results provide inspiration to create similar experiences for all teacher candidates.

The project that follows was designed to facilitate direct engagement with family and community members as an initial step to encourage teacher candidates' re-positioning of their notions of family-community engagement.

The Family-Community Engagement Project

Recently, we have become more strongly convinced that families and communities hold knowledge that teachers need to tap into if they are to support the healthy development of all learners. Though we were quite familiar with the literature in the area of family-community engagement, we had experienced what Zeichner (2016) refers to as a "re-positioning" of the role of family-community in the development of teachers. The strength of this conviction motivated us to action. We began to craft a project that would immediately and actively engage teacher candidates in the

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construct that family-community knowledge is essential.

Thus, we developed a Family-Community Engagement Project to be completed by preservice teacher candidates in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program at our small Northwest university. We approached the project with several things in mind. We wanted to be able to implement a meaningful project immediately, so it needed to be simple, but significant. We wanted the project to be something that could be accomplished in both elementary and secondary clinical practice settings. We wanted the project to clearly present how one might go about tapping into family-community knowledge, but we also wanted there to be choices that would provide for varied circumstances and support candidate investment in the process. Most importantly, we wanted each teacher candidate to be engaged in the idea that families and communities hold important knowledge for the teachers of their children, and we wanted them to consider how they might use that knowledge on behalf of the learners. Recent conference presentations and the research literature revealed several informed ideas for how candidates could explore family-community knowledge. Three of these ideas were selected, adapted to fit our particular needs, and formulated into the Family-Community Engagement Project as community knowledge activities.

After developing project materials and placing them in the university online learning environment, the details of each assignment in the Family-Community Engagement Project was presented early in the spring semester, by cohort leaders, to more than fifty candidates across five cohorts in three different MAT formats. While most of these emergent teachers were in a multiple-subjects clinical practice setting, about one third of the candidates were placed in secondary, single-subject classrooms. The Family-Community Engagement Project was presented to these candidates in the form of two related assignments: the *Engagement Plan* and the *Engagement Report*. In the assignment guidelines, we shared with candidates that these two assignments were designed to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for a relational approach to teaching and that such an approach values and utilizes

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the knowledge that resides in families and communities and is essential to fully meet the needs of all learners. By the end of that spring semester the candidates had successfully completed the course-required project.

Description of the Project

The Family-Community Engagement Project involved two assignments. The first assignment, the *Engagement Plan*, required each candidate to submit a brief document (150-300 words) describing a “community knowledge activity” in which they would engage while in their clinical practice. This is an activity where the candidate obtains knowledge from families of learners or the school neighborhood that can be used to support classroom learning. The criteria for a community knowledge activity included:

- An opportunity for a teacher candidate to engage with the family and/or community of the learners in their classroom;
- An opportunity for the candidate to reflect on the knowledge gained from families and/or the community, and on how that knowledge can be used to support learning in the classroom;
- Encouragement to particularly consider aspects of the community that represents diverse, minority, and/or underprivileged populations.

Descriptions of three suggested community knowledge activities were provided.

- *Community Conversations* (Sleeter, 2017): The candidate visits with several members of the community asking recommended questions, such as, “What do you see as the main assets of this community?” and “Describe how you would like to see the community ten years from now”.
- *Neighborhood Walk* (Sleeter, 2017): The candidate spends time in the neighborhood of the school observing, listening, and paying attention to things (e.g. geometric shapes in buildings, kinds of plant life/rocks, styles of music, games children/teens play) and tries to identify at least twelve things they can draw on to help learners better understand concepts taught and

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learned in the classroom.

- *Family Conversations* (Amatea, 2009): The candidate arranges for conversations with parents of learners in their classroom. They listen to parents share about the specific strengths and talents they have observed in their child and ask the caregiver about other helpful things they may like to share about working with their child or their family.

Candidates were invited to adapt the above *Community Knowledge Activities*, or propose their own using the above criteria.

The second assignment, the *Engagement Report*, required candidates to submit a document (600 to 900 words) reporting and reflecting on the implementation of their Community Knowledge Activity. Each of these assignments was to be posted to the university online learning environment and they were reviewed and assessed against the criteria as “met” or “not met” by the candidate’s cohort leader.

Methodology

The present investigation applied scholarly inquiry to the implementation of a new pedagogical practice with teacher candidates during one semester of clinical practice at a small, private Northwest university. This inquiry was designed as a pilot study that would allow us to explore a small subset of teacher candidates’ experiences engaging with family and community. It proceeded around thoughtful questions about the development of new teachers, and also the learning of the students in their classrooms. As such, this study can be said to fall solidly into a current professional definition of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Simmons & Marquis, 2017).

In the early spring of 2017, over fifty teacher candidates were asked, in newly structured but flexible assignments, to engage with the family-community of the students in their clinical practice classrooms. More specifically, they were asked to obtain and reflect upon knowledge from families of students or the school neighborhood that might be used to support classroom learning. Candidates

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were provided with the suggestion of three specific activities for how this might be accomplished and asked to post both their *Engagement Plan* and their *Engagement Report Reflection* online.

This pilot study utilized a convenience sample of nine teacher candidate reflections that were selected for a thorough, qualitative inquiry. These nine candidates were all from one cohort. The initial research question was, “What is learned by teacher candidates when they set out to learn from families and the community? The reflections were initially analyzed for reoccurring constructs, recognizing also the absence of constructs one might reasonably expect, and these were grouped into initial themes.

Following a careful initial pass through each reflection, the investigators revisited the related literature in light of the initial findings. The result of this interaction with the literature was the selection of four more specific research questions to be explored:

1. Is there evidence in the reflection data from the Community and Family engagement assignment that candidates are being given an opportunity to grow in familiarity with the families and communities in which they are teaching?
2. Are candidates considering what they learn about families and communities in light of their own life experiences?
3. Is there evidence that a growth in familiarity with family-community shapes classroom practice?
4. Is there evidence in the reflection data of “re-positioning families”: a shift in the candidates understanding about the role of families in the education of children (Zeichner et. al, 2016)?

These questions were used to guide several additional passes through each of the nine reflections. This analysis resulted in four themes that can be used to shape future iterations of the Family-Community Engagement Project and guide instruction on seeking knowledge from families and communities to inform the education of children.

Findings

The qualitative analysis of nine teacher candidate

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family-community engagement reflections resulted in four themes: 1) Candidates can grow in familiarity with family-community; 2) Families-communities have knowledge they can share about learners; 3) Candidates can use family-community knowledge to impact the classroom; 4) Candidates tend not to reflect upon what they learned about families and communities in light of their own life experiences. Each of these themes are discussed below.

Candidates Can Grow in Familiarity with Family-Community

When assigned a family-community engagement activity, most teacher candidates grew in familiarity with the families and communities of learners in their classroom. Candidates learned varied information about the family-community, such as:

- a parent's college aspirations for their child;
- that Spanish was the language used at home;
- that there may be a new skate park coming to town;
- that both parents worked "to make ends meet" (TC Reflections, Spring 2017).

Some candidates grew in their understanding of the vision that people had for their neighborhood. For example, a teacher candidate shared this quote from an interview with a community member: "I'd like to see the price of living decrease and remodeling of the library would always be nice. Maybe a community garden in our newer park across the street for families to access and work on together (spring 2017). Another candidate documented a parent's understanding of the vision of their child's school:

In response to the question on the vision of (this small private school) she said she thinks the vision for the school is to be able to grow the student body and, as a result, expand the curriculum that is offered to the students to take the academics to another level (spring 2017).

Parents sometimes had suggestions for the school, such as better addressing bullying behavior. In one example a candidate notes, "This guardian felt the school should discipline each child for their

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own actions and not the class as a whole for the actions of a few” (spring 2017). In our analysis of reflections from candidates who were asked to engage with family-community, it is evident that most candidates grew in their familiarity with the community in which they were teaching.

Most often, however, candidates were able to gain a better understanding of the vision that parents had for their own child’s education. One candidate shared this detailed account of a mother’s aspirations for her daughter:

In talking to the mom of the first student, I noticed that her biggest concern was whether or not her daughter was a good person and was helpful and kind to other students. She did not seem too concerned with academics. Although her daughter qualifies for an enrichment math group, she opted her daughter out so that she can “just be a kid”. In talking to her about ways to support her student, she mentioned having time to talk about emotions and teaching skills (like dealing with anxiety, or stress, or friend conflict) that they can use in other areas of life. She was very concerned with her daughter’s level of anxiety and how she deals with stressful situations. The mom was very confident in her daughter’s academic ability and was not worried about middle school and beyond academically. She said “I just hope that I have raised a good kid who is kind to others and stands up for what she believes.” She quickly added, “now if I see her grades start to slip I might be singing a different tune” (spring 2017).

Note that in the above account, the caregiver not only shares their hopes for their child’s education, but also specific details about the child. The next finding in our analysis reports that parents share specific knowledge about their child.

Families-Communities Have Knowledge They Can Share About Learners

Almost all candidates expressed that they learned something

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specific about one or more of the learners in their classroom. Some examples include:

- “She has been reading a lot more at home, by choice!”
- “He tells (his mom) more about lessons that he finds interesting, which always involve hands-on activities. In terms of discipline, she finds that a direct, authoritative tone works best. Her final comment was that anything related to basketball would be of interest to him.”
- “He responded by saying that (his daughter) has a talent for memorizing, has a musical gift for singing, and is very compassionate towards other students, especially those with special needs” (spring 2017).

Many of the candidates reflected upon how they were able to use this knowledge about the learners in their classroom in their teaching, particularly in the area of learner engagement.

Candidates Can Use Family-Community Knowledge to Impact the Classroom

Over half of the reflections analyzed included specific ways that knowledge was shared by caregivers about their children and was used by teacher candidates in their teaching. We were impressed by how, in some instances, teacher candidates took a suggestion by a parent regarding their child’s area of interest, and applied a substantial amount of thought, effort and creativity, as can be clearly seen in the following articulate reflection by an emergent secondary science teacher:

I took (the mom’s) advice and thought of a way to incorporate basketball into my lesson for the week. We were studying microscopes, so this took some creativity. I presented it this way to the students: How many of you like basketball? (many kids raised their hands) What kinds of things do you know about your favorite players? (students shared various answers like: rebounds, shots averaged per game, height of player, where they went to school). Then I talked about how sometimes we know a lot about a few

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star players, but we know that it is a team sport. I related this to science, saying that usually the history books mention a few key “players,” but, it is the work of many scientists contributing to our advances in scientific knowledge and discovery. This was a segue into talking about the scientist credited with the first microscope, but also I talked about other lesser known scientists who added to the invention of the first microscope and how the work of scientists has continued to build on that knowledge and given us greater technology like electron microscopy. I also talked about African American scientists who used microscopes in their study, such as Charles Drew who developed the first blood banks in the U.S. What I noticed is that the focus student immediately perked up at the mention of basketball and seemed much more engaged in the dialogue about this topic. He also turned in his drawings from the microscope work done in class, which is not typical behavior for him—he usually does not complete assignments or turn them in. Through this interview and experience I learned about a passion of a student that helped me to better connect the lesson to something he would find interesting. It also reminded me to think creatively! (spring, 2017).

In these excerpts, the teacher candidate reflects specifically upon an increase in learner engagement due to their thoughtful classroom application of knowledge about a learner that was shared by a parent.

There was also one finding that resulted from an element that was missing from most of the candidate reflections: *Candidates tend not to reflect upon what they learned about families and communities in light of their own life experiences.* Only three of the nine reflections analyzed included this type of reflection. One of the early childhood candidates, for example, stated:

If I were to answer the question, “What do I see as the main assets of the community?” it would initially be that

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they are a caring group of people. They care about the children, the families and most definitely what is going on in the school and the classrooms. A majority of the teachers comment that our particular community is lacking in parent help and support. This is only what I am hearing in a staff room (repeatedly), this could be a perspective which is true, partially true, completely incorrect or teachers being negative. I am choosing to be positive regardless (spring, 2017).

This kind of consideration of how engagement with parent-community might converge or diverge from previous experience or perspectives was not evident in most of the reflections. As discussed in the implications below, this is a finding that will cause us to make changes in future.

Implications

There is power in asking teacher candidates to engage with family-community. Each of the findings above indicates that a relatively simple project which includes direct experience (Evans, 2013) and that supports a shift in the way candidates view the place of family-community knowledge in the classroom can result in meaningful outcomes, both for the development of teacher candidates and for the learners in their classrooms. Zeicher et. al (2016) states:

Given the demographic profile of teachers and of the students who attend public schools, the big challenge before us is to learn how to better prepare and support teachers who are committed to the families and communities of their students as they go in to teach “other people’s children” in communities that are often unfamiliar to their own life experiences (p.288).

It is important that we grasp that candidates can grow in familiarity with family-community if they set out to do so. Candidate reflections expressed an understanding of the value of such

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initiative. For example, one candidate reflects:

In talking to the parents...I gained valuable insight into their lives and what they want for their children and what they value.... From this experience, I saw the great benefit of talking to parents and finding out as much information on each child as possible (spring 2017).

This aspect of engagement with family-community is particularly important to the support of a justice stance in teacher preparation.

Consistent with the literature on teacher educators' efforts to prepare candidates to successfully engage with families-communities (Evans, 2013), over half of the candidates we studied were able to use knowledge that they learned from communities to improve their teaching. This seems to be particularly evident in the way that candidates used information that they learned from parents to improve the classroom engagement of their children, both in elementary and secondary settings.

We have wrestled with why participating candidates tended not to reflect upon what they learned about families and communities in light of their own life experiences. The literature indicates that this is not always the case (Evans, 2013). For example, Baumgartner & Buchanan (2010) found that "when preservice teachers were forced to listen, rather than talk, to parents, they uncovered their own hidden assumptions, biases, and unconscious expectations about families" (p. 280). Though many have stressed the need for emergent teachers to grow in their awareness of their own preconceptions about family-community (Amatea, Cholewa, Mixon, 2012; Lea, 2004, Sleeter, 2001), the pilot group results indicate that the Family-Community Engagement Project did not lead most candidates to reflect on such aspects of their growth. One way to address this, in the next phase of this project work, will be to create scaffolding within the assignment guidelines that specifically asks candidates to document reflection upon how their engagement with families-communities may have increased their awareness of different ways of thinking, misconceptions, and

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personal prejudices. We will encourage candidates to explore their own personal assumptions about the community, and the culture of families, and how engaging with families has shaped those assumptions.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates support for the re-positioning of family-community knowledge in the professional thinking and practice of teacher candidates. It documents that even a relatively small effort to facilitate candidate engagement with family-community can be powerful in both the development of teachers, and in the learning of their students. Perhaps the most important aspect of this study into the outcomes of the teacher engagement project is the shift in our thinking that made the project possible in the first place. If we, as education professors, had not found ourselves re-positioning families, it would not have been possible for us to begin to facilitate that shift in emergent teachers. This is a shift of both philosophical and curricular importance. Teacher educators should consider re-positioning family-community knowledge so that it holds a foundational place in the development of teachers.

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