

The Disposition of Hope in Teaching

By Carrie Birmingham

Hope, an important theme in poetry and literature, a central concept in Western theology, and a frequent focus in the arts, is a critical albeit largely undefined presence in the moral lives of teachers. Teachers are familiar with a range of hope, from the lighthearted hope of potential aroused by new pencils, new notebooks, and a small child on the first day of school to the activist militant kind of hope that arises, strengthens, and defies adversity. Hope can encourage, sustain, and bring comfort in hardship. Hope can grow, and hope can be lost. Hope can be nurtured, and hope can be destroyed.

Although hope for the future is a foundational motivation for education, the role of hope in teaching has not drawn much academic attention. The much-studied cognitive and behavioral activities of teaching are treated as though they operate

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independently from dispositions and other affective states. However, as Damasio explored in *Descartes' Error* (1994), the reasoning mind can operate properly only if affect (as felt in the body) is operating properly. Too much, too little, or otherwise faulty emotion impedes reason. To adapt Damasio's example of an airline pilot facing an emergency landing (p. 195), a teacher handling a classroom crisis "must not allow feelings to perturb attention to the details" that inform

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her decisions. Yet she must have feelings about her students to hold in place the larger goal of responsibility and care for their lives and learning. Reason evaluates the various courses of action available to the teacher, and emotion allows her to make a choice among them. Even in the current dialogue about dispositions, hope in teaching remains largely unexplored, and our understanding of hope is intuitive rather than explicit. This article clarifies the meaning and role of hope by examining hope analytically in the context of teaching and dispositions in teaching.

Since the ratification of *Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation Institutions* by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2001) called attention to the construct of disposition, educators have been considering how to define, measure, assess, and promote particular dispositions relevant to teaching. However, as a value laden, philosophically based, and culturally constructed concept, the term *disposition* has been taken up in a variety of ways. For a general working definition, many theorists and practitioners have taken up dispositions as “Professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors” (NCATE, 2008, pp. 89-90), or “a tendency to act in a certain way” (Richert, 2007, p. 413) and have moved forward with one of these definitions to identify particular dispositions as valuable, assess them, and promote them among teaching candidates. This fulfills the letter and the spirit of the NCATE requirement, but others have questioned more critically the nature of disposition, its qualities, and even its value in promoting good teaching and learning (Freeman, 2002; Murray, 2007).

One concern about the nature and value of disposition is rooted in the tension between a behavioral science approach to knowledge and a normative approach to knowledge. Simplistically put, in a behavioral science approach, a disposition should be not only observable in the behaviors of teachers but also empirically linked to observable results, for instance, differences in student learning. From this framework, a disposition is valuable if it and its effects can be identified and measured. A hypothetical claim from a behavioral science approach would be that students of teachers who are identified as fair achieve more than students of teachers who are identified as not fair; thus, fairness is a valuable disposition.

Others take a normative position; they may argue that teachers ought to be fair because fairness is an intrinsically valuable moral value, not because of its instrumental value, but because fairness is morally right. Ironically, even in a discussion about instrumental value, consideration of normative value is inevitable, for the value of the effects is ultimately a normative determination. For example, one effect that is commonly selected as valuable is student performance on norm-referenced tests. The deeming of this effect as valuable is a normative choice based on reasoning and values, not an empirical finding. Of course, the reality of the literature is often much more complex than this, but differences between these two perspectives on dispositions can be drawn and inferred from claims and arguments. The question that distinguishes these two approaches is, “How can we know a disposition is valuable?”

Burant, Chubbuck, and Whipp (2007) argue that the concept of disposition in teaching, indicating a tendency to behave in a certain way, has been awkwardly borrowed from behavioral sciences. They claim that it has not served educators well in the effort to understand the qualities of teachers that support pedagogical knowledge and skills and recommend that educators “unabashedly resurrect and reclaim the moral in teaching.” Likewise, Noddings (1992) advocates for the significance of a normative approach: “Attention to the quality of life in schools ought not to be paid solely in the name of learning... Reforms that should have been made for the sake of children’s lives were lost because we could not prove they produced learning.” Van Manen (2000) laments, “The most unfortunate fact about contemporary discourses and practices of education is that they have tended to become overly rationalistic, scientific, corporatist, managerial, and narrowly results-based” (p. 315).

This article is an analysis of hope in the lives of teachers from a normative theoretical perspective. It will show what hope is, what it is not, how it functions in the lives of teachers, how it can be disrupted, and how it can be supported. A recurring theme in this analysis is that hope is so essentially interwoven with other moral concepts and contexts that it is often experientially indistinguishable from other moral ways of being. This could account for the invisibility of hope in the disposition literature.

The qualities that were listed as dispositions by NCATE in the original definition of dispositions are caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, social justice, a belief that all students can learn, a vision of high and challenging standards, and a commitment to a safe and supportive learning environment (NCATE, 2001, p. 53). For any of these qualities, accompanying actions are easy to imagine. Although the range of possible actions is broad, one can anticipate what a caring teacher may do, and one can anticipate what an uncaring teacher may do. Hope, on the other hand, is more difficult to operationalize. How does a hopeful teacher act? What is an example of a hopeful action? Hope is a broad stance and motivation that plays in the background of other moral ways of being and accompanying actions. Like the air we breathe for life, hope is essential for teaching. We tend not to notice it until it gets stirred up or its quality is diminished.

The Object of Hope

Hope is oriented to an object or a goal—something that is hoped for. The object may be grand, such as international peace, or it may be small, such as passing a test or winning a game. In order for something to be called hope properly, the object of hope, great or small, must meet certain conditions. The object must be possible yet difficult to attain, desirable, and in its most significant appearances, the object is a moral good.

Normally, the requirement for an object of hope to be possible implies a future

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orientation. We can hope for improved health in the future, a better job in the future, or a resolution to some problem in the future. We would not say, “I hope it won’t rain on my parade,” if the parade has passed, with or without rain. But we could say, “I hope it’s not raining on my parade,” if we are at some remote location waiting for a report on the weather during the parade. Thus, more essential than the timing is that the outcome must be unknown. We can hope for something that has already come to pass or is happening in the present as long as the outcome of the event is unknown. In this way, it makes sense to say, “I hope my students completed their homework last night,” or “I hope my students are getting along well with the substitute.”

We would not say, “I hope that three plus four will equal eight this time,” because, given the necessity of mathematics, this is simply not possible. The significance of possibility for an object of hope is suggested by the phrase “false hope.” If you believe that something is possible, and I believe it is not, I would claim that you have a false hope. My disbelief in the possibility of you attaining the object of your hope does not simply negate the object of your hope; it falsifies your hope itself.

There are times when it seems as though what we hope for will not be attained, but if there is still any possibility that it will be attained, we can yet be hopeful. If a student arrives to class in a pessimistic and irritable mood, his teacher can still hope that this student will have a good day of learning and getting along with his classmates, for hope does not require that the teacher believes the student will have a good day. As she rethinks her plans to accommodate the student’s bad humor, she can still hope that the student will feel better and make the accommodations unnecessary. To deny the possibility of hope in this situation would be to make a rhetorical point about the near-certainty that the teacher’s hope will not be fulfilled. If you say, “There is no hope that this student will have a good day,” you do not mean that the student will necessarily have a bad day; you mean, “The teacher should be prepared.” Thus, hope presupposes a measured faith—a belief that something is possible, but not a belief that something is certain or even probable.

The object of hope is something that is difficult to attain; it is not a sure bet. Medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas names hope as one of eleven “passions” or motivations. He includes hope as an “irascible passion” that occurs in situations where it is difficult to attain something that is desired. The motivation of hope arises more from the difficulty than from the object of hope itself (Aquinas, trans. 1920, II, 40). Thus, a teacher may say in September, “I hope I can teach my below-grade-level writers to write cohesive and detailed paragraphs,” knowing the challenges that are before him. It would not make sense for a teacher to say; “I hope I can teach my most talented and advanced writers to write cohesive and detailed paragraphs.” In this way, the concept of hope is not entirely symmetrical. We understand what it means to hold out hope for something that is nearly certain to fail, as in the irritable student example above. However, it is confusing to say we hope for something that is nearly certain to be attained because we understand that hope includes difficulty.

The object of hope is something desirable. Under normal circumstances no one would hope to fail a test or have a paper rejected by a journal. In its most significant form, the object of hope is not only desirable but morally desirable. We understand what it means to hope for something immoral, for instance, when a student hopes to succeed at plagiarizing a research paper, but this kind of hope has been removed from a moral context and, given the moral context of this discussion, is more accurately considered a desire than a hope. When hope is situated in a moral context in which attitudes and actions are integrated toward the promotion of good, the object of hope must be a moral good itself or at least consistent with other moral goods. Borrowing Aristotle's (trans. 1999) terminology, the object of hope is something that promotes *eudaimonia*, happiness, or human flourishing. (Aristotle's work on ethics focuses on the flourishing of the self, not on promoting the flourishing of others. Aristotle would agree that a teacher should develop virtue to promote his own well-being, and students should develop virtue to promote their own well-being. To be true to Aristotle's intent, then, the value of helping others achieve well-being can only be inferred from his writing.) In the context of teaching, the moral object of hope can be conceived of as the flourishing of students (Noddings, 2004). We may include the flourishing of adults in the school setting as well, for teachers must have hope in themselves to promote the flourishing of students. In fact, in the lived experience of teaching, hope for oneself is essentially tied to hope for one's students. However, the moral focus of teachers' work is not their own flourishing but that of their students.

Motivation, Orientation, and Disposition

The experience of hope is complex. At times we have optimistic, hopeful feelings, for example, when things are moving along nicely toward a happy ending. At other times, we may feel disappointed or discouraged with the way things are going but when pressed realize that we have not altogether given up hope. Some kinds of hope come and go depending on circumstances; some are deeply held and more stable.

One reason why hope is complex is that it plays two major roles in our experience. First, hope can be experienced as an orientation toward moral goodness. Hope for the flourishing of students orients a teacher toward students' flourishing and organizes her thinking and acting to anticipate and promote students' flourishing. Hope as an orientation toward moral goodness can be conceived of as a virtue, which is a habitual, stable way of being, an enduring quality of a person. Although it can change over time, it does not change quickly, as a feeling, an opinion, or a skill can. As a virtue, hope is in the same category as love, courage, and wisdom. The virtue of hope, "like love, is one of the very simple, primordial dispositions of the living person" (Pieper, 1997, p. 100).

Another experience of hope is as a motivation, or, as Aquinas names it, a pas-

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sion. A teacher is motivated by the passion of hope to do what it takes to attain the object of hope. Hope as a virtue includes an element of moral choice, but passion is more something that happens to a person, hence the etymological proximity of the word *passion* to the word *passive*. A passion can be a flippant reaction or a powerful and enduring motivation. As a passion, hope is in the same category as desire, fear, hatred, and joy. Estola (2003) describes hope in its role as a passion as “a driving force in life that enables one to keep his or her eyes on the future while in practice acting in the ‘here and now’” (p. 184), and “a motivating power within uncertain and demanding situations” (p. 199).

Hope as an orientation and hope as a motivation are interdependent: orientation provides direction for motivation, and motivation provides the movement toward an orientation. If hope as an orienting virtue is a well-worn path, hope as a motivating passion is the movement along the path. Although the two can be distinguished analytically, in experience the two live together, and it is impossible to separate the orientation of hope from the motivation of hope.

If hope is conceptualized as a virtue, then it fits nicely within the definition of disposition put forth by NCATE. However, to consider hope as “an orientation to moral goodness” is both too vague and too potentially troublesome to be useful for teacher preparation accreditation purposes, especially if its presence must be empirically documented in the work of a teaching candidate. Although one can observe actions that are instantiations of the virtue of hope or motivated by the passion of hope, these actions cannot be distinguished from actions that can be taken as evidence of other dispositions. Actions characterized by hope have their own moral flavors that obscure the working of hope. As NCATE suggests, hope-filled actions may also be caring, fair, honest, or responsible; a teacher motivated by hope may be dedicated to social justice, believe that all students can learn, hold a vision of high and challenging standards and a commitment to a safe and supportive learning environment. Once again, hope plays in the background as the motivation behind many other virtues, beliefs, and dispositions.

Hope Disrupted

A moral virtue is often thought of as a mean between two extremes. For instance, a deficiency of courage is cowardice, and an excess of courage is foolhardiness. Instead of thinking of the extremes of hope quantitatively as too little hope and too much hope, it is more fruitful to think of them qualitatively as distortions of hope. Recall that the object of hope in its most significant sense is a moral good that is possible yet difficult to attain. Invalidating any of these three qualities in the object of hope distorts hope into other states—despair, hopelessness, and presumption.

One kind of disruption of hope is despair, a paradoxical turning away from a desired object that is difficult to attain. In a nonmoral sense, despair is simply a movement away from something desirable, for instance, giving up on an amusement

park ride because the line is too long. In a moral sense, despair is movement away from a desired moral good, such as a student's development and academic progress. For Aquinas, the moral value of the goal is more significant than its desirability; so he would say that any action that could be judged as immoral would be an action of despair, as it is a turning away from moral goodness. A teacher covering up a student's failure would be an action of despair if it is a result of giving up on the student's ability to learn, for the immorality of turning away from promoting the student's development is more salient than the teacher's desire for the student's failure to go unnoticed.

The motivation of hope may reverse into despair when overwhelmed by challenge. Pieper (1997) describes this experience as "a kind of anxious vertigo" (p. 119), when a person realizes that the heights of moral excellence require more than he or she is ready to take on. Although we often experience a variable tension between hope and despair, a full turning of hope into despair is normally a gradual process over time. It illustrates a path on which the energized idealism of a hope-filled teacher distorts into the jaded cynicism of a teacher defeated. When an idealistic teacher pursuing moral excellence in her work encounters an overwhelmingly challenging situation, she toys with the idea that perhaps she's not cut out to be a super-teacher, and she considers that some of her colleagues, whom she previously rejected as moral role models, may not be so bad after all. After some time, she rejects the possibility of moral greatness in teaching, citing difficulties such as administrative constraints and lack of parental support. She becomes less concerned with the well-being of her students and focuses instead on self-interested goals, such as self-promotion, personal convenience, or survival. Eventually, she scoffs at the idealism of novice teachers and even discourages them from hopeful attitudes and actions. Finally she becomes a living caricature who hates teaching, hates children, and seems to hate goodness itself. This process exemplifies how hope as a passion, vulnerable to defeat by overwhelming circumstances, can diminish and eventually devastate the strength of the more stable virtue of hope as well.

When the object of hope is irrefutably lost, the response is sorrow for the loss. The second kind of disruption of hope—hopelessness—is experienced as sorrow but actually occurs when the object of hope is mistakenly deemed irrefutably lost or impossible to attain. When a teacher wrongly judges that a student is unable to grasp a certain concept or develop a certain skill, his hope for the student's learning slips into hopelessness. Since hopelessness is caused by misinformation or lack of information, hopelessness may be "repaired" with a more accurate understanding or interpretation of a situation. Thus, the teacher's hopelessness may readily turn back into hope when he discovers a new way to approach this situation that enables the student to grasp the concept or develop the skill. In experience, the distinctions between sorrow, hopelessness, and despair are not clear; whether a disruption of hope is caused by true loss, an inaccurate appraisal of a situation, or rejection of a moral good may not be distinguishable. An analytical distinction can be made,

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however, and this may be helpful in the identification of ways to strengthen and maintain hope.

The third kind of disruption of hope is presumption, caused by a denial of the difficulty of attaining the object of hope. If I underestimate the challenge or overestimate my ability, I am presuming, rather than hoping, to attain the desired object. Hope serves as a motivation to action (Bovens, 1999), but presumption promotes passivity. The fable of the tortoise and the hare is a well known warning against presumption. Arrogance is often a partner with presumption, as humility is a partner with hope.

Van Manen (1977) critiques “technical rationality,” a way of approaching teaching that promotes presumption by considering the most efficient means to achieve given goals without considering the worthwhileness of the goals. From a technical perspective, teachers are technicians who take on prescribed goals, follow directions, and deliberate only on the most efficient way to achieve these goals. Thus, reliance on technical rationality presumptuously denies the arduousness of teaching. When a teacher delivers a “scientifically based” standardized curriculum just as the teacher’s guide tells him to, he can only presume that his students will learn worthwhile content in appropriate ways. A teacher who diligently prepares her students for a high-stakes test is encouraged to presume that the resulting test scores indicate an accurate description of worthwhile learning.

Technical approaches to teaching eliminate the need for professional judgment about best goals and means for specific students and rely instead on the promises of distantly produced standards, curriculum, and technology. Attention to the technical aspects of teaching does not absolutely prevent hope, but when teachers hand over (or are required to hand over) the responsibility of decision making to policymakers and curriculum developers, hope is tainted by presumption, and the role of hope is diminished in daily teaching practice. In a time when political and business interests are eager to direct what happens in the classroom, an overwhelmed teacher can all too easily hand over his or her responsibility to others who would take it and presume that these powers will best promote the flourishing of children. From a technical perspective, the compliance of accountability is more valued than the responsibility of hope.

Hope becomes visible in its absence. Like a fish out of water, a teacher without hope is subject to frustration, burn-out, and attrition. Despair, hopelessness, and presumption indicate the absence of hope like a burglar alarm indicates that something valuable is missing. When hope is diminished, other more observable dispositions weaken as well. A teacher with little hope may not have the moral strength to do the challenging moral work required to be caring, fair, honest, and responsible, much less to promote social justice, maintain high standards, and commit to a safe and supportive learning environment. These more easily observed dispositions rest on a foundation of hope, and when the foundation gives way, other dispositions will not remain.

Hope Supported

Hope not only supports many important dispositions, it is in turn supported by other affective and cognitive qualities. A complex network of knowledge, skills, orientations, and values, built in communities of practice, nurture and maintain hope in the lives of teachers. One particular disposition that NCATE currently requires teacher preparation institutions to assess is “belief that all students can learn.” This disposition can be thought of as an instantiation of hope, and while hope itself is previously unexamined in the disposition literature, “belief that all students can learn” has been analyzed rather closely, and its examination suggests several ways that hope in teaching can be supported.

When the NCATE standards first required teacher preparation programs to assess candidates’ dispositions, several dispositions were suggested, but none were explicitly mandatory. After some controversy about social justice (Villegas, 2007), one of the suggested dispositions, the entire suggestion list was dropped. Current standards from NCATE (2008) name two required dispositions: fairness and the belief that all students can learn. Though not as polarizing as social justice, the implications of “belief that all students can learn,” undefined by NCATE, has produced its own controversy. Critical educators caution that this phrase can be appropriated as a slogan for a precarious approach to schooling that promotes presumption instead of hope. “All students can learn” could but should not indicate that all students can learn the same content at the same pace in the same way evidenced by the same assessments and regardless of disparities in school conditions, teacher qualifications, health care and nutrition, and other contexts that affect learning. Thomas and Bainbridge (2000) warn that “‘all children can learn’ is a deterrent to differentiating standards, teaching methodology, and assessment measures. It creates a ‘one size fits all’ mentality.” Noddings (1992) argues that “all students can learn” promotes equality in education, but equality is an inadequate goal. She prefers instead a goal of excellence in education, the enactment of which would provide students with choices and subsequent success in learning more than the narrow range of curriculum currently valued in schools.

Taken in a more benign form, this same phrase expresses a belief that places the learning of all students as an object of hope by recognizing that the learning of all students is indeed a morally desirable, possible, yet challenging goal. Given this interpretation, “belief that all students can learn” is an instantiation of hope. A teacher who has hope in children rejects the presumptuous ease of one-size-fits-all curriculum and is motivated to take on the arduous work of professional judgment and the effort that follows. A current of social justice lies just under the surface, for a teacher who believes all students can learn holds in particular “that children of all minority and oppressed groups can learn as well as those of the privileged and dominant classes” (Noddings, 1992). Hope in teaching takes up the learning of all students as part of the moral purpose of schooling.

In a review of Johnston’s (2002) autobiographical account of his work in Mis-

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Mississippi with Teach for America, Richert (2007) wonders how Johnston maintained his hopeful idealism despite many defeats. Lacking a repertoire of teaching skills, knowledge about the context of his school, and knowledge about the possibilities of teaching and learning, Johnston was vulnerable to despair, hopelessness, and presumption. He believed all his students could learn, but he did not know how to help that happen. Sheer determination and perseverance (forms of courage) kept Johnston going. Richert concludes that “the disposition to serve is not sufficient” (p. 417) for effective practice and argues that professional knowledge and skills support hope when teachers face the challenges inherent in teaching. Developing novice teachers’ professional knowledge and skills has been the standard business of teacher preparation programs long before the official recognition of dispositions. The knowledge and skills of the teaching profession stand against hopelessness by making less likely the possibility that a teacher will mistakenly conclude that an object of hope—students’ flourishing and learning—has been lost.

Another professional orientation that supports hope is disciplined inquiry. Since hope is normally future-oriented and considers objects that are possible, novice teachers naturally have high hopes for their students and for themselves, simply because they have so much future ahead of them and so many open possibilities. Richert (2007) cautions, however, that novice teachers’ idealism and hopefulness must be “developed during teacher preparation and nurtured over time.” She recommends, “One way to build on a novice teacher’s hopeful idealism is to help them recognize the inherent uncertainty of working in a social context such as a school and learn that there are multiple ways to encounter the challenges that they face there” (p. 412). An orientation toward disciplined inquiry supports hope by seeking new possibilities and standing against the mistaken belief that existing school practices and conditions are given and unchangeable.

Knowledge, skills, and inquiry sustain hope by contributing to practical wisdom, an intellectual virtue which enables a person to make good judgments in particular lived situations (Zagzebski, 1996). Practical wisdom is especially supportive of hope in the context of teaching, for the judgments that are called for in teaching are always situated in specific times, places, circumstances, and people (Birmingham, 2004). Hope informed by practical wisdom attends to the particularities and complexities of children, the details of their daily lives, and their intrinsic value as persons (Elbaz, 1992). Supported by practical wisdom and hope, teachers do the difficult work required by professional judgment. They identify and judge the worth of explicit and implicit educational goals, consider and build on students’ prior knowledge, interests, and cultural embeddedness, and help students in important ways that are not measured on standardized tests or dictated by standardized curriculum. Attention to the complex context of teaching stands against the presumption of technical, standardized, and predetermined approaches to teaching.

It has been said that courage is the form that all virtue takes in the face of adversity. As such, hope persevering through adversity requires courage and appears

as courage. Conversely, hope enables courage; hope for an arduous good creates the need for courage in the first place. Teachers motivated by hope for their students have been known to be exceptionally courageous in the face of challenges and risks to their careers, reputations, and even their safety. Persistence, patience, longsuffering, and daring are forms of courage that keep hope alive. Recall Johnston's (2002) sheer determination that kept him hopeful for his students' progress despite his own lack of preparation and frequent setbacks (Richert, 2007).

Because teaching is so challenging, teachers must hold hope not only in their students but in themselves as well. A teacher lives with complexities and paradoxes that are not easily resolved, uncertainty that their hard work will yield adequate results, and awareness that what is hoped for may be lost (Van Manen, 2000). Teachers "acknowledge that certainty is unavailable, but they are morally bound to act anyhow according to their best understanding of children's interests" (Elbaz, 1992, p. 427). When teachers give up hope and turn to despair, often they have given up hope not in children but in themselves, having been overcome by attacks on their power to promote the flourishing of children (Elbaz, 1992), such as bureaucratic impediments, inadequate system support, and lack of collegiality among faculty and administrators (Futernick, 2007). Thus, accompanying a belief that all students can learn is a belief that "I can play an important part in the learning of all students," in other words, hope in oneself as a teacher.

In a study of student teachers' reflections and narratives, Estola (2003) found that her student teachers were worried less about the technical achievements of teaching than the moral challenges of teaching. They had heard the social, political, academic, financial, and educational voices that constrain hope, and their primary fear was that "over time, they may lose their sense of hope as a result of the difficulty and vulnerability of teachers' work" (p. 199). These young teachers expressed high hopes for themselves and for their future students, yet, knowing how challenging the real world of teaching can be, they actually apologized for their optimistic and hopeful expectations. Their hope was fueled by their newness and youth along with awareness that hope is morally essential yet difficult to maintain, placing hope itself as an object of hope. The value that these student teachers placed on hope exemplified their dedication to moral goodness in professional practice, a stance characterized by the virtue of hope and accompanied by courage, wisdom, fairness, the belief that all students can learn, and a constellation of additional moral dispositions, as well as professional knowledge and skills.

Aristotle acknowledges the importance of a community of practice in the development of virtue or dispositions. The way to become virtuous, Aristotle (trans. 1999) writes, is to observe a person who is virtuous, emulate this person's actions, and simply practice living virtuously. Further support is provided by feedback, encouragement, and belonging to a virtuous community of practice. Because teacher preparation programs are primary communities of practice for novice teachers, teacher educators in the university and in the school setting must reflect on their

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own dispositions, shore up their own moral orientations, make their moral practices visible to novice teachers, and provide novice teachers scaffolded opportunities to practice moral dispositions in professional contexts.

The old adage may be true that the most important things in life cannot be seen or counted. Including dispositions in the goals of a teacher preparation program is a step in the direction of recognizing some of these most important things. In the work of teacher preparation programs to choose, document, and evaluate teaching candidates' attainment of dispositions, a likely starting point is a list of dispositions, much like a list of content standards, which can be observed and measured in some way. However, as this examination of hope shows, some important moral qualities in teaching cannot be separated out in teachers' lived experience, and some of the most complexly connected dispositions, such as hope, are not easily observed at all. Regardless, the impact of hope on the lives of teachers is profound and should be explored further: how hope develops, strengthens, persists, and wanes in the lives of teachers; how hope intersects with teachers' professional judgment; and how hope is impacted by contexts of professional preparation, professional development, and educational policy. The conceptual work of this article has shown that an undercurrent of general and specific hope motivates the work of teachers, and the quality of hope constantly directs the content and the manner of teachers' work. Studies of hope in the work of specific teachers and situations will enhance understanding of how hope motivates, directs, and impacts teacher thinking and practice.

Hope lives in the pleasure of optimism, the determined defiance of adversity, comfort in loss, and persistence in hardship. Hope can grow and diminish, and many seasoned teachers have felt from time to time that sustaining hope is simply too difficult and have chosen a lesser yet easier path, at least for a while. However, the essence of teaching and learning requires hope. As long as there are teachers and students, there will be hope: teachers' hope in students and teachers' hope in themselves to meet the challenges of their work.

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