

Becoming a Professional Educator in an Urban School-University Partnership: A Case Study Analysis of Preservice Teacher Learning

By Andrea J. Stairs

Introduction

A primary purpose of teacher education is to prepare and induct candidates into the teaching profession. What does it mean to be a professional educator? Is deep content knowledge really enough as the federal government and others suggest? Does professionalism look different in urban contexts? How do teachers learn to navigate the multiple opportunities and challenges they are faced with day-by-day, hour-by-hour, minute-by-minute in today's high-stakes accountability climate? What happens when teachers don't learn how to successfully navigate the realities? This article examines notions of professionalism and how one preservice teacher learned to become a professional educator in the context of an urban school-university partnership.

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Some may argue that a large inner-city high school is not a suitable learning environment for preparing new teachers to become professional educators, yet if we believe that there is specialized knowledge for teaching in the urban context, the urban school at the center of this study provides opportunities for preservice teachers to integrate themselves into classrooms

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with professional educators who model negotiation of the realities teachers face today. Through the school-university partnership, many preservice teachers learn first-hand what professionalism looks like in practice and begin “combining parts of their past, including their own experiences in school and in teacher preparation, with pieces of the present in their current school context, with images of the kind of teacher and colleague they want to become” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1029).

In this article, the concept of professionalism is considered from multiple perspectives, including from the perspective of scholars who contend a specialized knowledge base is necessary for successful urban teaching and that school-university and professional development school partnerships may provide contexts for developing this knowledge base. Then, a collective case study is described and one typical case from the study illuminates the possibilities and challenges of becoming a professional educator in an urban school-university partnership.

Deconstructing “Professionalism”

Viewing teaching as a profession has been evident in educational literature for decades (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) suggest we are in an age of “postmodern professionalism” at the beginning 21st century, “where teachers deal with a diverse clientele and increasing moral uncertainty, where many approaches are possible and more and more groups have an influence” on teachers’ professional lives (p. 52). Before considering one case of a preservice teacher learning about professionalism, it is important to conceptualize and deconstruct notions of professionalism that inform this paper. First, a distinction must be drawn between professionalism and professionalization:

Professionalism refers to the internal workings of a profession and the concern of a profession’s members to do the best possible job for their clients; *professionalization* refers to external criteria such as status, salary, specialization, and control. (Noddings, 2001, p. 102)

It seems that these two terms, though distinct in meaning, are intricately connected theoretically. It is by drawing attention to teacher education reform through professionalization (and deregulation) that many definitions of professionalism have arisen. Next, various definitions of professionalism are discussed, followed by an examination of professionalism in terms of the urban context.

Professionalism Conceptualized

The federal government (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) legislated a definition of professionalism in teaching by defining a highly qualified teacher as one who has obtained full state certification through a traditional or alternate route or passed the State teacher licensing examination. Those who instruct core academic subjects must either hold a degree in each subject taught or pass a rigorous academic subject test for each subject taught. Of course, content knowledge is an extremely

important aspect of being a professional educator, but many would argue that knowing *how* to teach that content is as important as knowing the content, and that mentored practica in schools provide novices with valuable experiences to combine content and pedagogy to develop pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). The federal government questions the importance of teacher preparation, claiming there is no convincing research that teacher preparation makes a difference in student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2004), a notion disputed by numerous scholars (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Wilson & Youngs, 2005). The federal government legislated a definition of professionalism in teaching that privileges “book learning” over applications of that learning.

Though the federal government’s definition of professionalism represents the deregulation agenda, which is concerned with removing what they consider to be barriers to teaching, other organizations have defined professionalism with the interests of the professionalization agenda front and center. For example, The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (Wise & Leibbrand, 2001) stated that teacher candidates must “demonstrate the content, pedagogical, and professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn” (p. 254). What might this blend of content, pedagogy, and professional knowledge look like? The Interstate New Teacher Assessment Consortium (2003) created standards for effective teaching through collaboration among state education agencies, higher education, and national education organizations. The assumption underlying their standards is that an “effective teacher must be able to integrate content knowledge with pedagogical understanding to assure that all students learn and perform at high levels (p. 1). The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) (2003) based its definition of “the effectiveness, knowledge, skills, dispositions, and commitments of the accomplished teacher” on five core propositions: teachers commit to students and their learning, possess knowledge of both content and pedagogy, manage and monitor student learning, think systematically about their practice and learn from their experiences, and participate in learning communities (p. 1). What is common among these definitions of professionalism is the notion that content and pedagogy are inextricably linked, and that professional teachers will reflect and act upon what their students need based on teacher decision-making.

These complex and comprehensive definitions of professionalism are further problematized by urban education scholars. For example, Oakes and her colleagues (2002) have clearly stated that urban teachers need more than generic teacher preparation suggested by the NBPTS, for instance:

They need to understand local urban cultures, the urban political economy, the bureaucratic structure of urban schools, and the community and social service support networks serving urban centers. They need skills to draw on and develop in urban youth literacies across the academic content areas, promote college access for first-generation college goers, build social capital across schools and

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community organizations, and create alliances and engage in joint work with other reform-minded teachers. (p. 228-229)

This definition of professionalism transcends content and pedagogy to include a specific stance toward teaching that encompasses teaching as a political act for social justice. Ladson-Billings (1995, 2000), Haberman (1994, 1995a), and Weiner (1993, 1999) are other scholars who believe that specialized preparation for issues of race, poverty, bureaucracy, and other elements of the social, historical, and institutional context of urban teaching is essential to become a professional urban educator.

Donnell (2007) extends the knowledge of context argument by suggesting that successful urban teachers develop a transformative teaching practice, meaning they view students as the primary resource for their learning about teaching, what she calls “getting to we.” This orientation de-centers the teacher and re-centers the students in professional decision-making about teaching.

[C]ritical to a beginning teacher’s growth and confidence is the development of a teaching practice in which the teacher focuses on “we,” highlighting the mutual learning between teacher and pupils. The teacher learns about teaching with and from the pupils....As teachers move toward getting to we, pupils are not seen as blank slates or empty vessels; they are active agents in their own learning and in the teacher’s learning about teaching. (pp. 224-5)

Becoming a professional urban educator, then, requires knowledge of context as Oakes et al. suggest and knowledge of students as Donnell suggests. It is this complex definition that informs the school-university partnership and teacher preparation experience at the center of this study.

Professionalism and Partnerships

School-university partnerships (SUPs) and professional development schools (PDSs) provide opportunities to prepare professional educators. Research on teacher preparation in SUPs and PDSs has indicated various elements of professionalism noted above as an outcome for teachers prepared in partnership. Abdal-Haqq’s (1998) synthesis reported that preservice teachers prepared in PDS settings utilized more varied pedagogical methods and practices, were more reflective, knew more about school routines and activities beyond the classroom, felt more confident and experienced less “culture shock” when beginning teaching, and were more likely to seek employment in inner-city schools when their PDS setting was urban, among other findings (p. 15). Rock and Levin (2002) considered the role and outcomes of inquiry activities for preservice teachers in partnership and found they clarified personal teaching theories, gained a better awareness of themselves as teachers, acquired knowledge about teaching, curriculum, and inquiry, and gained a general appreciation for the inquiry process. Thompson and Ross (2000) and Reynolds (2000) noted the link between theory and practice in partnership teacher preparation as key to preparing successful teaching professionals. Thompson and Ross’s

(2000) beginning teachers who learned to teach in a PDS felt well prepared to begin teaching: they understood the day-to-day activities of a classroom and school, they felt prepared to collaborate and be reflective, and they felt confident and knowledgeable. Reynolds' (2000) study found that "professional partnerships are an excellent way to prepare prospective teachers" (p. 13).

Despite the positive findings about professionalism in SUP and PDS research, more studies must state the school context in which they were conducted (urban, suburban, rural) in order to determine how effective partnership preparation is for developing professional educators for urban schools, for instance. A few SUP and PDS studies have considered urban teacher preparation. Groulx's (2001) study found that urban professional development school candidates in elementary schools "had changed their minds about the challenges of working with minority children, not denying the difficulties but clearly feeling more positive and efficacious" (p. 86-6). Similarly, Wong and Glass's (2005) research into a network of urban PDSs revealed that PDS-prepared graduates were initially more committed to teaching in low-income, culturally and linguistically diverse schools than were the non-PDS graduates. Finally, Beardsley and Teitel's (2004) evaluation of one university's reformed, urban-focused teacher education program conducted in two professional development schools resulted in not only more interns of color in the program, but also interns who learned to see color in teaching and learning, recognized their capacity to lead, and became change agents. Nevertheless, Boyle-Baise and McIntyre (2008) suggest "attention to equity, diversity, family, and community needs to become an integral part of PDS principles, perspectives, and practices" (p. 326) more so than in the past.

Urban Immersion (UI) is a teacher preparation experience for secondary teacher candidates at a large, northeastern research university offered in collaboration with a local urban high school. The university has a long-standing relationship with the high school. Traditionally, City High School (a pseudonym) served as the field experience site for the small number of prepracticum and practicum student teachers who began their teacher preparation program with an interest in urban education each year. University professors had provided professional development opportunities for CHS faculty, served on school-site committees, and prepared CHS students for college through a College Bound program, while CHS teachers and administrators enrolled in university courses and even co-taught some courses with university faculty. Urban Immersion arose from a meeting called by the high school's administrators asking for further classroom-level support from their university partner. To address this need, the collaborators determined that all secondary teacher candidates would complete course and fieldwork one day per week at CHS. The dramatic increase in numbers of preservice teachers in the building would support teachers and students operating in overcrowded classrooms, and the experience would provide the mostly White, privileged preservice teachers an opportunity to become part of an urban school culture, with which few were familiar.

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As stated earlier, the Urban Immersion program was conceptualized around the complex definition of professionalism cited by urban education scholars (Donnell, 2007; Haberman, 1994, 1995b; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000; Oakes, et al., 2002; Weiner, 1993, 1999). The school and university partners believe that there is specialized knowledge new teachers to the urban context must develop to successfully teach urban students, including identifying the resources and challenges urban teachers face. They determined that through their coursework and experiences in classrooms, participants should develop their knowledge of content and pedagogy, but more importantly, develop their knowledge of the urban context and how to balance the multiple demands so that all students might learn and improve their life chances. This definition of professionalism is in keeping with the five themes of the teacher education department at the university, which include promoting social justice, constructing knowledge, inquiring into practice, accommodating diversity, and collaborating with others. These themes are based on the assumption that educators have a responsibility to challenge the status quo and effect social change as America's public schools grow increasingly diverse and inequitable.

Method

Recognizing how complex and debatable any definition of professionalism is in the current era, for the purpose of this study, general research questions were posed in order to examine which of the many aspects of professionalism participants exhibited by the conclusion of the Urban Immersion experience. The main research question framing this study was, "What do preservice teachers learn in an integrated course and field experience in an urban school-university partnership?" Primary interest was placed on what participants learned about becoming a professional educator in the urban context. Subquestions included, "What do preservice teachers learn about secondary curriculum and instruction and urban teaching?" and "In what ways is their learning evident?" Collective, interpretive case study methodology (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 2000) was employed. The collective case study allowed for an examination of each case of preservice teacher learning as well as cross-case analysis. An interpretive lens applied to the methodology afforded going beyond simple description of the phenomenon to explanation and analysis. This paper examines one typical case of preservice teacher learning from the collective case study.

Setting

City High School served as the research site for this collective, interpretive case study. The school is located in a working to middle-class section of a large, metropolitan area, though the vast majority of students (somewhere around 80-85%) come from other more impoverished neighborhoods in the city because of a high school choice policy. Of the 1,200 students attending the high school at the time of this study, 46.3% were Black, 39.7% were Hispanic, 8.3% were White, and

5.4% were Asian. About half were English language learners, 20% received special education services, and 75% received free or reduced-price lunch.

Several features of the Urban Immersion experience distinguished it from traditional teacher preparation at the university. First, preservice teachers were members of a cohort of 22-36 preservice teachers at CHS from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. every Thursday rather than scattered with a few others across multiple prepracticum school sites. Coursework related to secondary teaching and inquiry was completed on-site rather than at the university, and courses were co-taught by university and high school faculty. Course meetings occurred in bookend design: meeting to discuss theory in the morning before field experiences and meeting to inquire into the intersections of theory and practice in the afternoon after field experiences. Finally, preservice teachers were partnered for field experiences rather than placed in a traditional student teaching dyad with one cooperating teacher and one student teacher. All of these elements contributed to the collaborative and collegial culture of Urban Immersion.

Participants

Study participants included all Urban Immersion preservice teachers during fall 2004 and spring 2005 pursuing secondary licensure. All 55 were undergraduates majoring in a content area (primarily English and history) with a double major or minor in education. Of the 55 participants, 34 were women and 21 were men, and most were middle- to upper-middle-class and White. Seven of the 55 participants identified themselves as students of color: three Asian Americans, two African Americans, one Ethiopian American, and one Latino American.

The participant discussed in this article was part of the larger study of 55 preservice teachers. Laura (a pseudonym) has been selected from the larger pool of participants as she represents a typical case of preservice teachers' learning about professionalism in this school-university partnership. Data collection and analysis procedures for the larger study are shared here to contextualize the process by which Laura's case was identified as typical.

Data Collection and Analysis

Multiple qualitative data sources were analyzed in this study, including open-ended pre- and post-surveys, coursework, lesson observations, interviews, and artifacts. The anonymous surveys asked the same questions on the first and last days of class to learn about students' prior educational experiences, their teacher preparation to that point (if any), their immediate plans upon graduating, and their prior knowledge of secondary curriculum and instruction, cultural diversity, and urban teaching. These anonymous surveys were matched by numerical identifiers to see individual participants' changes from the beginning to the end of the semester. Therefore, these surveys provided a view across cases of participants' growth without being identifiable to individual participants. The bulk of the data

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collected were identifiable to individual participants, including all course papers and prepracticum reflections collected to examine participants' learning and experiences over time. Conceptually-driven sequential sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was employed to select a representative sample of preservice teachers to observe teaching lessons. A total of 14 solo or co-taught lesson observations were conducted to examine students' practices in relation to their learning (23 students observed solo or co-teaching). Semi-structured interviews lasting 30-45 minutes were conducted shortly after lesson observations to better understand participants' impressions of their teaching. Two Urban Immersion collaborators (high school co-teacher of coursework and university teacher education department chair) were also interviewed to provide further insight into the context and conditions of UI. Finally, relevant artifacts were collected, such as instructors' course syllabi, course evaluations, and prepracticum materials to further understand the context and conditions.

Inductive data analysis procedures were utilized to make sense of the numerous data sources. Data were read chronologically (at the time of collection), by source (e.g. interview transcripts), and by participant (e.g., all data collected from Laura). After reading the data chronologically, a start list of codes was created with both descriptive and interpretive codes. Readings by data source led to pattern codes being identified, which aided in the identification of trends in the data during the third reading by participant. Memos were written throughout each step of the coding process, and data were displayed in tables and diagrams to visually represent trends and clarify emerging themes.

At the conclusion of data analysis, it became evident that some participants typified the experiences of the majority of study participants. Laura was one of these cases. An examination of her developing professionalism and the sources of her learning are discussed in the next section.

Findings and Discussion

Analysis of anonymous pre-survey responses yielded evidence that participants' prior knowledge of secondary teaching revealed an area for potential growth as most seemed uninformed about the professional aspects of teaching. Their conceptions of teaching were that teachers decide what to teach and how to teach it based on their own interest in the subject area. As one participant stated, "If you don't enjoy it, the people who are attempting to learn from you certainly will not" (UI student, fall 2004). They thought that urban teaching was different from teaching in other contexts primarily because the students and families are different, and these differences embodied negative connotations and revealed deficit-thinking about these "others." However, by the end of the semester, participants had begun developing their conceptions of what it means to be a professional educator in an urban context. They noted the multiple demands on urban teachers and the challenging conditions of the urban high school in which they completed course and fieldwork. Notably,

in looking across participants' anonymous survey responses, it became evident that they no longer placed the teacher at the center of effective curricular and instructional decisions but instead placed the students at the center. Laura serves as an example of the typical development of preservice teachers in Urban Immersion, and her case is further examined here to illustrate the move toward professionalism evident with most preservice teachers by the conclusion of the semester.

The Case of Laura

Laura, a double major in English and education pursuing a secondary teaching license, matches the profile of the majority of college students in teacher preparation programs: White, middle-class, educated in public, suburban schools (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). Laura had not considered a career in urban teaching when she began the Urban Immersion experience. Participants were introduced to the school in two afterschool meetings with course instructors, prepracticum supervisors, high school administrators, teachers, and students before they began working in classrooms. After this two week orientation, Laura noted in her journal entry that she hoped her first prepracticum would confirm her love for teaching.

I have always been interested in teaching for as long as I can remember. I was very impressed with my teachers in high school and developed such close relationships with them that I wanted to give back to students of my own all the caring and compassion they showed me...I love to learn...I love working with kids... Teaching is about making a difference, and I want to help make a difference in someone's life. (Journal 1, p. 1)

Laura, like most Urban Immersion participants, had positive schooling experiences which influenced her commitment to pursue a teaching career. Though Laura understood that she would be in a school context unfamiliar to her, she did not mention the possibility of becoming an urban teacher at the beginning of the semester. She did, however, express her excitement about the opportunity and noted she hoped she could teach the high school students "as much as they have the potential to teach me" (Journal 1, p. 2).

Beginning the Journey

Laura and her field experience partner Cara were assigned to a ninth-grade classroom and a twelfth-grade classroom. Two long blocks were spent with a strong ninth-grade teacher who was also co-instructor for the university course held on-site and a graduate of the university's teacher preparation program. A third long block was spent with another mentor teacher in his twelfth-grade classroom. Reflecting on her first day, Laura focused on her cooperating teachers' dedication to their students. Laura noted, "The teachers care very much about the progress of their students. They encourage kids to take academic risks and ask lots of questions" (Journal 2, p. 2). She explained that the ninth-grade English teacher had surveyed the class

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to find out about the authors and readings students particularly liked in the past so that she could adapt curriculum and instruction based on students' interests, which is why they were studying Langston Hughes's poetry. The twelfth-grade English teacher seemed to be struggling to get the students involved with reading *Beowulf*. Recognizing this, he approached Laura and Cara after the lesson and asked that they brainstorm together about ways to improve the class, and Laura noted her excitement to do so.

On that first day of observations and individual work with students, Laura noticed not only her cooperating teachers' dedication to students, but also their classroom management strategies. Laura described the ninth-grade teacher as one who does not accept poor behavior: "I was impressed at the control she had over her class. This is a sign of a good teacher. Furthermore, her students respect her and her opinion" (Journal 2, p. 2). She explained that the twelfth-grade class "was a whole different atmosphere" (Journal 2, p. 2). Students did not appear to want to be there and either fell asleep or talked the whole time they worked on *Beowulf*. She asked her cooperating teacher about this, and he said that the students were bored with the curriculum. As stated above, the teacher invited the university students to help him find ways to improve the class in the future, but Laura did not note that he did anything about the off-task behavior during class that day.

Finally, Laura noticed the classroom conditions on the first day in classrooms. She described the environment in this way:

The class was very crowded with not an empty chair and the temperature was so hot. This is a downfall of CHS. The conditions, though not bad, are not as comfortable as my high school. (Journal 2, p. 2)

It was evident that Laura was keenly aware of the teachers, the students, and the classroom climate created by some controllable and some relatively uncontrollable conditions in the urban high school classrooms early in her field experience. At this point, it seems that Laura's concerns center around the teachers' roles in the classroom, particularly noting the "control" one teacher had over her class as a sign of a "good teacher." However, it also seems that Laura is beginning to notice the classroom conditions, an important noticing for learning about the urban context.

The role of the teacher and the learning conditions created in the school context were competing for Laura's attention early in the semester as she further explored both ideas. In another reflection, Laura highlighted how her ninth-grade cooperating teacher accommodates for English language learners (ELLs), who made up about half of the school's population, as well as what she described as the absurdity of the state's English-only legislation. Laura stated her cooperating teacher visits with ELL students after the class begins an activity to clarify the directions and check for their understanding. She also pairs ELLs with an accomplished English student to practice their English skills rather than have ELLs work in groups of three or four where they may not have to speak. The teacher has the ELLs sit near

the front during whole class instruction to observe their reactions/expressions and limit distractions. Laura's stance on the teaching of English language learners in mainstream classes in English only was very pointed.

How can these students possibly be receiving a maximum education if they do not know what is going on? The state law is absurd....In my high school the ESL students as we called them had two classes in learning to speak/write/read English in the morning and then came into the regular classrooms to incorporate what they had learned. They also had interpreters in the school if they were needed, but the kids were greatly encouraged to use only English in the classroom....Granted, the CHS students pick up English quickly by interacting with English students, but they are not receiving the top grades that they could be in a Spanish setting. Is this fair?... CHS, but mostly the state law, must address this problem in a different way. They claim to give all students equal education but how can that be justified if one student does not even know what is going on in the classroom? (Journal 3, p. 3)

Though Laura witnessed her cooperating teacher making accommodations for ELLs, she expressed outrage over implementation of the state law—a larger policy issue—showing her developing ability to reflect on policy and practice issues in the urban classroom. Laura noticed the uncomfortable and crowded learning conditions earlier in her prepracticum, but she did not strongly critique this situation. Laura's critique of how ELLs are educated in an English-only state shows a move toward viewing teaching as a political act, mentioned earlier as a department goal for education students' learning and a cornerstone of social justice education (Cochran-Smith, 1999). Taking this nascent knowledge of urban schooling and applying it to classroom practice was the next step for Laura on her journey.

Urban Professionalism in Action

Laura's developing professionalism for urban teaching was most evident in an observation of her teaching and follow-up interview. In co-teaching a whole class lesson several weeks into the semester, she and her partner focused on issues of race and class with both blocks of ninth-grade students. The lesson they designed fit into their cooperating teacher's unit on the Harlem Renaissance; as mentioned earlier, this unit came about after a survey of students' interests. Laura and Cara used rap lyrics to discuss figurative language, played jazz and blues music to create a mood in the classroom, and asked students to imitate Hughes's style by writing a poem about their own struggles. Among the many culturally responsive classroom activities, two stood out.

First, early in the lesson, Laura and Cara spent some time sharing how the Harlem real estate market was restricted to Whites at the turn of the twentieth century—a surprising revelation for the students who had just completed a word association activity for "Harlem" that included *Walter Dean Myers*, *gangs*, and *African Americans*. They told the students about a developer who made home ownership a reality for Blacks in Harlem after World War I, which led to the influx

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of African Americans to this section of New York and, consequently, the rebirth of African American culture in the United States known as the “Harlem Renaissance.” Here, Laura and Cara connected social issues with English literature, what Ladson-Billings (1994) had in mind when she explained “culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 18)

Second, Laura and Cara selected two of Hughes’s poems for their lesson that express the struggles of African Americans to achieve the American Dream: “Deferred” and “I, Too, Sing America.” These poems were not part of the required curriculum at the school, but the beginning teachers selected them after getting to know their students. Laura and Cara used these poems not only to teach the literary elements of metaphor and simile, but also to underscore how literature from the time period reflects the difficult situations faced by African Americans. As Laura said in our post-observation interview about what her students learned,

I think they learned about the Harlem Renaissance and what was going on through the poetry...They saw the prejudice and racism that was shown through the literature and they wrote about that in their responses to the questions. (Interview 12/16/05, p. 8)

Laura and Cara made conscious decisions to teach students about the inequities of the time period by sharing some history and sharing some poetry. It also is evident that the partners used knowledge of their students to make curricular and instructional decisions. Some teachers prefer not to address racism and discrimination, choosing to strictly follow the prescribed curricular content, but Laura (and her partner) were beginning to see the power of engaging in difficult content and conversations that were relevant to their audience—primarily African American and Latino students living in poverty in a large, U.S. city—as an important aspect of *how* professional educators teach the content.

Oakes and her colleagues (2002) suggest:

In urban schools, competence cannot be parsed into teacher skills and social action. An effective urban teacher cannot be skilled in the classroom but lack skills and commitment to equity, access, and democratic participation. Likewise, if one is to be a teacher, a deep caring and democratic commitment must be accompanied by highly developed subject matter and pedagogical skills. (p. 229)

Evidence from Laura’s classroom observation reveals her professionalism in action, the type of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994) that accounts for knowledge of content, pedagogy, students, and inequities.

Concluding (the Beginning of) the Journey

At the conclusion of the semester, Laura expressed the most important things she learned during her Urban Immersion experience. She noted the importance of knowing your content and effectively managing your classroom, but she cited

knowing your students well, their learning styles and interests, as the greatest thing she learned throughout the semester.

The key to successful urban teaching is getting to know the lives of each individual student and appreciating the differences he/she possesses, having confidence in one's own abilities, and reflecting on the best ways to teach the students so that every child has an effective learning experience. (Urban Teaching Course Paper, p. 1)

Laura said that lessons she and her partner taught earlier in the semester were not as effective because they didn't know the students well, even their names: "We were kind of like, 'Alright, go ahead. You, answer.'" (Interview 12/16/05, p. 7). However, Laura equated knowing the students with the success of the lesson I observed them teaching about the Harlem Renaissance. She wrote about this in her final journal reflection:

As I got to know the needs and personalities of my students, I knew which methods of teaching were effective or ineffective. In addition, since I had made an effort to know each student, they knew that I cared about their education and how well they did in school. When a student knows that his teacher cares, he is more willing to cooperate and learn because someone has an interest in his life and actions. If I take the time to respect my students and their needs and desires, they will respect me and the lesson I am trying to teach them....A two-way relationship based on mutual respect is important, as is consideration and accommodation for all students' abilities and needs. (Final Journal, pp. 4-5)

This excerpt reveals Laura's ability to recognize the connection between knowing students and successfully teaching them.

Laura's experience typifies the way preservice teachers in Urban Immersion began to develop a we-oriented vision of teaching as conceptualized by Donnell (2007). They began to see a direct connection between relationships with students and effective teaching of these students. Participants in Donnell's study similarly "learned about teaching with and from their pupils" (p. 241). She argues,

They developed relationships with pupils that were respectful, trusting, and caring. Through these relationships, teachers learned about how to adjust their teaching to respond to their pupils rather than to prescribed instructional techniques and curriculum. (p. 242)

Neither Laura nor her peers developed to the point of transformative urban teaching practice as Donnell has conceptualized it (teachers and students learning from one another as a matter of course), but they did begin to view students as a resource for planning curriculum and instruction, a first step in becoming a transformative urban teacher.

Laura concluded the beginning her journey to become a professional educator by expressing an interest in urban teaching: "I am glad that I had the opportunity to work at CHS. The experience was so great that I could actually see myself teaching in an urban setting in the future" (Final Journal, p. 5). This shift toward viewing

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urban teaching as a possibility was typical for about two-thirds of participants, and an outcome that the school and university partners hoped for when requiring Urban Immersion at the beginning of the teacher education program. If preservice teachers can envision themselves working in a context different from what they experienced in school, perhaps they will be more willing to pursue a career in that context.

The Process of Developing Urban Professionalism

This case study analysis suggests that there were four perspectives from which preservice teachers operated during their semester in an urban school-university partnership: (1) Noticing, (2) Critiquing, (3) Enacting, and (4) Reflecting. These four perspectives served to scaffold preservice teachers' learning about professionalism in urban teaching from merely observing the context and conditions to critiquing them, to enacting urban teaching knowledge, all the while reflecting upon their perspectives. Evidence from this study suggests Laura engaged in these four perspectives over the course of the semester, representing the typical experience for most participants. Laura began the semester by *noticing* teachers' roles in classrooms, their interactions with students, and the crowded conditions. Then, Laura began *critiquing* what she noticed, such as the implications of English-only policy for ELL students' learning. Next, Laura began *enacting* culturally relevant pedagogy and student-centered, getting to we practices to address inequities. Throughout this process, Laura was *reflecting* upon elements of one's developing transformative teaching practice and commitment to urban teaching.

This is not to suggest that all beginning urban teachers would neatly assume each perspective in a linear fashion, as it is quite possible that one might enact appropriate pedagogies without critiquing inequities or reflecting deeply upon one's own assumptions and beliefs. However, Laura was developing her knowledge base for urban professionalism as she assumed each perspective, sometimes in a synergistic, cyclical fashion, and addressed head-on the complex nature of teaching in urban schools. Laura moved from noticing to critiquing the status quo of the context and conditions urban students are expected to endure in school. She showed she was beginning to enact practices that challenge the status quo and make teaching a political act for expanding opportunities and life chances for urban students. Like her peers, Laura was beginning to tackle difficult concepts, but these moments were just that—moments over the course of one semester. It remains to be seen if Laura will continue using what she knows about urban culture to teach her students and engage in professional teaching and learning. Some developed as professional educators more or less than Laura, but the majority of participants' experiences looked similar to Laura's. One purpose of Urban Immersion is for preservice teachers to learn about their students and consider students' needs when planning curriculum and instruction, which the majority did, and the case of Laura typified.

Conclusion

After analyzing Laura's learning, questions remain, including, "Whose definition of professionalism counts?" and "Who decides?" Haberman (1994), in his critique of mainstream notions about the professional knowledge base for teaching, argues "The assumption that there is one knowledge base is nonsense. It is not true that 'teaching is teaching,' 'learning is learning,' and 'kids are kids'" (p. 163). Therefore, context matters, and we need to appropriately theorize and conceptualize the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for teaching in various educational contexts. For the urban context, Haberman (1995b) suggests that the best urban teachers are a bit older and wiser, live in the city, and are non-White. Though his formula for selecting successful urban teachers presents opportunities for recruiting and retaining successful teachers for city schools, I would argue that universities in urban areas have a responsibility and an obligation to recruit and retain their traditional teacher education students who may not have considered urban teaching prior to enrolling in their preparation program. Oakes et al. (2002) contend that young, high-achieving university students are interested in meeting the social justice challenges of urban teaching, "even in the face of realistic portrayals of the political and economic realities that make urban schools so challenging" (p. 231). Likewise, Sleeter (2001) suggests that while it is essential to develop mechanisms for recruiting a more diverse teaching force, "working with White prospective teachers is also essential" (p. 102). As Laura rightly contended, "The complexities of the teaching role are quite numerous in any setting, but more so in an urban school" (Urban Teaching Course Paper, p. 1).

Spirited debates about what it means to be a professional educator will continue within and without the education community, likely leading to further debates, little consensus, and no one "right" answer. While acknowledging and participating in the debates, teacher educators in urban communities need to focus their attention on the possibilities for urban teacher recruitment and retention at the doorstep of the ivory tower. Many urban schools and districts are in desperate need, not for teachers with only strong content knowledge and little to no preparation on how to make meaning of the content with students, but for teachers with strong content knowledge, strong pedagogical knowledge, and strong urban culture knowledge. Teachers alone cannot transform urban education, but they can certainly make a difference in the current teaching and learning opportunities of their students, as well as their students' future life chances.

Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) have argued that it is very difficult to alter assumptions and beliefs that preservice teachers bring with them to teacher preparation experiences. Nevertheless, Laura learned the importance of teachers' making professional decisions about secondary curriculum and instruction, especially balancing curriculum requirements with engaging lessons that emerge from students' cultures, interests, and needs. This outcome is typical of preservice teachers prepared in school-university and professional development school partnerships.

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In fact, Walling and Lewis (2000) found that PDS preservice teachers showed a significant difference in their development as professional educators. They found that PDS preparation “may indeed foster beliefs and attitudes that represent a more mature professionalism than that of traditional preservice teachers” (p. 71). PDS preservice teachers in other studies also exhibited greater professionalism (Kroll, Bowyer, Rutherford, & Hauben, 1997; Sandholtz & Dadlez, 2000). However, these prior studies do not problematize the context of the PDS, an important note in the debatable definitions of “professionalism.” This study aimed to address the gap between evidence of preservice teachers’ learning to become professional educators and making explicit the context in which the learning takes place.

In light of this analysis, one might argue that authentic collaboration in teacher preparation presents opportunities that cannot be replicated when coursework is viewed as the domain of the university and fieldwork is viewed as the domain of the schools. In Urban Immersion, high school and university faculty assumed joint and equal responsibility for preservice teachers’ experiences. The local knowledge high school teachers’ possessed about what to teach and how to teach it in their urban setting was shared with novices through immediate interaction with urban students in classroom settings. Rather than observing and reflecting on observations of classrooms, typical of early field experiences, the UI participants were expected to get involved with teachers’ lessons from day one. Participants taught individuals, small groups, and whole classes of high school students throughout the semester, often modeling their practices after their cooperating teachers’ pedagogy. On course evaluations, participants reported spending the majority of their time in CHS classrooms working directly with students every Thursday. This is the kind of support the administration was in search of when first inviting the university to become more involved with teacher preparation at their site, underscoring the symbiotic nature of this partnership encouraging “simultaneous renewal of both schooling and the education of educators” (Goodlad, 1993, p. 25).

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