

“I’ll Let You Know How It Goes”:
Teaching, Learning, and Learning to Teach in an Urban Partnership High School

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Dedication

To urban high school teachers who put their hearts into every day and every student.

Abstract

Drawing heavily from narrative inquiry, arts-based research, portraiture, and fiction-based research methodologies (Barone, 2008, 2010; Barone & Eisner, 1997, 2006, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1977; Leavy, 2013; Maynard & Cahmann-Taylor, 2010; Rolling, 2013), the author has written a postmodern dissertation, told from multiple points of view, about the intersections of learning to teach, preparing urban teachers, and working between and within the worlds of theory- and research-driven teacher education and practice-based public schools. The collection combines first- and third-person narrative, poetry, fiction, and portraiture to examine complex questions about racism and urban teacher preparation, who and what makes a good teacher, and ways in which success is measured when it comes to learning to teach, teaching, and learning.

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Introduction

For more than four years, I have served as a partnership liaison between a university teacher education programs and a city high school, poised on the cusp of turnaround status, that I have given the pseudonym McKinley. My position has been co-funded as a part-time graduate assistantship through the university teacher education programs and as a part-time teacher on special assignment (T.O.S.A.) position through the McKinley staffing budget. My role has been to facilitate reciprocal collaboration between the teacher education programs at the university and McKinley. Initially, stakeholders from both the university teacher education programs and the school viewed the end result of the partnership to be the creation of a professional development school (PDS) that served to increase student learning, support practice-based teacher education for diverse, urban classrooms, and improve teaching practice at McKinley.

During this time, I have traversed the space between the university teacher education programs and McKinley's hallways and classrooms, ushering young people into the teaching profession: setting up placements; collaborating with cooperating teachers; listening to, talking with, advocating for, and co-teaching with novice and veteran teachers; as well as trouble-shooting the pedagogical conflicts between university assignments required of teacher candidates and the realities of McKinley's world. Through this experience, I began to wonder: What is happening here at McKinley High School? What is it like to learn to teach in this changing context, where teachers and administrators bend under the burden of district and state mandates and are expected to

produce dramatic and overnight improvements on pre-determined academic and behavioral markers (Cucchiara, Rooney, & Robertson-Kraft, 2013)? How do McKinley's cooperating teachers explain what it means to be a good teacher in such a high stakes context? How do cooperating teachers mentor young teachers in such an unstable environment? How does partnership grow in such a tremor-prone terrain? Has the partnership with the university teacher education programs made McKinley a better place to learn? To teach? And are we, through partnership, producing stronger young teachers for urban school contexts? I quickly came to realize that the answers to such questions depended on whom I asked, the perspective from which individuals viewed the question, and the evidence on which they based their answers. This complexity demanded a representational structure that lay beyond traditional dissertation boundaries. For that, I looked to fiction.

In 1994, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) held a symposium entitled, "Yes, But Is It Research?" (Saks, 1996). Near the closing of the discussion, two of the panelists, Elliot Eisner and Howard Gardner, had a heated exchange over whether or not a novel should count as a dissertation. Their debate continued at AERA two years later and was reproduced in the pages of *Research in the Teaching of English*. Gardner argues that novels have no place in the world of scholarly research. Dissertations serve as "a building block" to "a larger structure of knowledge," he presses; they are to be "citable" and "translatable" in order to suggest claims based on evidence and to ensure value to other genres and fields of knowledge (Saks, 1996, p. 410). Gardner asserts that dissertations, the gateway into the "cherished" world of

scholarly research for aspiring academics, are “designed to produce reliable knowledge,” something art, novels included, do not (intend to) do (Saks, 1996, p. 412).

In contrast, Eisner compares anthropologists to novelists, describing their shared efforts to “evoke the life of a whole society” (Saks, 1996, p. 413). He argues that novels offer opportunities for academic research to reach broader audiences, to evoke empathy in readers, to disclose what facts cannot reveal (Saks, 1996). Eisner further posits that the educational novel should be “as grounded theoretically and analytically in the current substance of educational scholarship” as any other dissertation or other scholarly research, but that, as a form, the novel provides ways of seeing and knowing that “other forms [of scholarly work] simply don’t have the capacity” (Saks, 1996, p. 415) to do.

At the time of Eisner and Gardner’s initial disagreement, I was teaching middle school social studies in my second teaching job. Twenty years, seven schools, and a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing later, I present you with this dissertation. Drawing heavily from narrative inquiry, arts-based research, portraiture, and fiction-based research methodologies (Barone, 2008, 2010; Barone & Eisner, 1997, 2006, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1977; Leavy, 2013; Maynard & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010; Rolling, 2013), I have written a postmodern dissertation, told from multiple points of view, about the intersections of learning to teach, preparing urban teachers, and working between and within the worlds of theory- and research-driven teacher education and practice-based public schools. The collection combines first- and third-person narrative, poetry, fiction, and portraiture to examine complex questions about racism and

urban teacher preparation, who and what makes a good teacher, and ways in which we measure success when it comes to learning to teach, teaching, and learning.

Ontology and Researcher Position

“We know what we know because of how we are positioned.”

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 17, drawing on Geertz)

At McKinley and throughout my teaching career, I have witnessed and experienced the shifting heterogeneity and wide array of perspectives and truths ever-present in the complex contexts of schools, classrooms, and the process of learning to teach. These experiences have led me to ground myself in postmodern ontologies. Lather (2007) defines postmodernism as referencing

the material and historical shifts of the global uprising of the marginalized, the revolution in communication technology, and the fissures of global multinational hypercapitalism. In art and architecture, it refers to a juxtaposition of classic and modernist elements, sliding meanings and contested boundaries in ways that challenge “uniqueness, authenticity, authority and distance” where “*this new intensity of dis/connection is postmodern*” (Foster, 1996, p. 219, 221, emphasis in the original). (p. 5)

Vickers (2010) writes that postmodernism posits that “the goal of qualitative research, however it is conducted and presented, is the seeking of many stories and many truths that can, and should, coexist” (Vickers, 2010, p. 561). I am embedded, invested, and complicit in the fragmented, fluid, and contradictory world of urban public schools that I research and represent, critique, and seek to change (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Narayan (1993) argues for “the enactment of hybridity in our texts: that is, writing that depicts authors as minimally bicultural in terms of belonging simultaneously to the world of engaged scholarship and the world of everyday life” (p. 672). Similar to the multifaceted and shifting identities of other professional development school teacher educators (Mesmer, 2006), my multiple roles demand that I attend to the hybridity of my position as I engage in this research. I am researcher and participant, teacher and observer, student, colleague, and mentor. My identity moves across, between, and within these roles. I inhabit them simultaneously. The perspectives and realities that accompany each of those identities are equally privileged (Leistyna et al., 1996). Describing these kaleidoscopic roles in greater detail demonstrates the failure of an insider/outsider binary and underscores the transitional terrain in which these stories take place.

Prior to entering graduate school, I taught social studies at McKinley High School. When I first returned to the school in my partnership liaison role, at least one-third of the teaching staff knew me as a colleague and classroom teacher. After the field of entering teacher education, I served as a university supervisor to teacher candidates placed for field experiences in my former colleagues’ classrooms at McKinley. My history with many of McKinley’s staff and teachers serves as a foundation for trust between the university and the school, allowing me to serve as a bridge and translator between the two. It enables me to better serve both the university and McKinley, by recommending specific teacher candidates for placements in McKinley, having a first-hand understanding of the cooperating teachers and their teaching styles and strengths,

and knowing the classroom and school contexts in which the teacher candidates would be learning to teach.

Principal Bell,¹ the principal with whom I collaborated to initiate the partnership between McKinley and the university teacher education programs, is also a former McKinley teacher and colleague. In keeping with the tenets of professional development schools, the principal created and has maintained my part-time position as partnership liaison to shepherd the development process toward a full professional development school (PDS) model. During the three years I collected data for my dissertation, I worked as a part-time graduate assistant at the university and, during the initial stages of this study, taught a social studies methods course for the university at McKinley. In my position as partnership liaison, I have sought to be a regular presence at the school. I walk the halls, talk to students, and offer my classroom to temporarily house disruptive teenagers for my teacher neighbors when needed. I attend staff meetings, contribute to instructional leadership meetings, and participate in department discussions of standards alignment or preparations for History Day. Students and staff recognize me, and over time I have come to be accepted in this role as part of the school community.

My extended history and braided relationships at McKinley position me between and across insider and outsider identities, as both native and non-native researcher. I am, in part, a member of McKinley and a colleague, while simultaneously I am a member of

¹ Names of characters are sometimes pseudonyms of real participants in my study; at other times they are names given to composite characters, whose identities are rooted in the experiences and stories of multiple participants in the study, myself included.

the university and a teacher educator. My work history has earned me some degree of credibility within the school and with the participant-teachers. At the inception of the partnership, the McKinley staff knew me as a McKinley teacher first and trusted that I understood and respected the context they inhabited as teachers. In these spaces in-between, I have tried to define myself and my colleagues and our respective roles in ways that do not reinforce an *us-them* binary, “working the hyphen” to dismantle the confines of the school-university dichotomy (Fine, 1998).

The context is further complicated by the multiple intersections of identities that occupy McKinley High School. Race, culture, and language of origin re-sort the contents of “insider” and “outsider” bins: The majority of the teaching staff identifies as white and does not “look like” the overwhelming majority of McKinley’s students. Most teachers at McKinley claim English as their native language, while the majority of our students speak Somali, Spanish, Arabic, or Hmong at home. At the beginning of the partnership, at least one-third of McKinley’s teaching staff graduated from the school. McKinley teachers brandish their alumni status as a medal of loyalty and credibility, a distinction that elevates their commitment to the school and deepens their insider status.

Across these intersecting identities, I am native and non-native. I graduated from a suburban high school. I identify as mixed heritage (Latina and white), but never learned Spanish at home. I have taught in the district for nearly two decades and have spent longer at McKinley than any other school, leaving to work on my doctoral studies for six years before returning as a part-time partnership liaison. In this space in-between, I see

multiple sides of the story. As hooks (1990a) describes, I “[look] both from outside in and from the inside out” (p. 149).

My multifaceted identities as partnership liaison, teacher educator, and urban public school teacher locate me within institutional structures that simultaneously oppress and educate historically marginalized young people. For this reason, among others, my dissertation study draws on tenets of complex critical, feminist, postmodern, and postcolonial epistemologies as a means of disrupting, destabilizing, and resisting alignment to singular, grand narratives and reductive othering, often present in educational research and reform literature (Anzaldúa, 1987; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Fine, 1998; Grande, 2004; Kincheloe, 2008; Lather, 1991, 2007; Trinh, 1989).

Segall (2004) explains:

Calling into question the very foundations of knowledge and its organization, critical discourses are not about constructing coherent, linear narratives about the world, but about blasting such narratives open, rupturing their silences, and highlighting their detours. (p. 160)

This is even more important because research on education and teacher education is dominated by academics, a dynamic to which both academics and teachers have contributed (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009 Nias, 1991). This boundary, ascribing authority and knowledge about children, schooling, teaching, and teacher education to academics, has essentially denied practicing teachers’ authority over their own work (Nias, 1991). Instead, teachers, schools, and children are often positioned as subjects to be studied. In academia, it is not uncommon for researchers to be described anecdotally

as “mining schools” for data. Given student demographics, schools such as McKinley High are frequently tapped for research. In fact, many of the teachers with whom I interact and engage through my work at McKinley have been *subjects* in the studies of other researchers. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) note, “Throughout their careers, teachers are expected to learn about their own profession not by studying their own experiences but by studying the findings of those who are not themselves school-based teachers” (p. 1). Further, demanding teaching schedules and school structures offer practitioners little opportunity for sharing what they know. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle write, “Those who have daily access, extensive expertise, and a clear stake in improving classroom practice have no formal ways for their knowledge of classroom teaching and learning to become part of the literature on teaching” (p. 5). Thus, the voices of practicing teachers, as creators of knowledge around what is necessary to become a good teacher, are not heard. Johnston (2006) asserts that “deafening discourses of accountability” and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have further silenced teachers and prevented them from contributing their “insider perspectives” on classrooms, teaching, and schools (p. 68). Johnston advocates for practicing teachers (and students) to add their voices to the literature through action research and self-study. Situated in the space between academic research and practitioner wisdom and grounded in the contexts of school and teacher education, my research privileges the voices of teachers and aims to “probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations” (Fine, 1998, p. 135).

Methodology

I invite the reader to read this section after reading the novel itself, as it references characters and scenes within the text. For those who would prefer to understand process before experiencing the product, read on.

Data Collection and Analysis

Upon accepting the partnership liaison position, I began keeping reflective and analytical journals. These 86 journal entries record, retell, and reflect on the initial three years of partnership between McKinley High School and the teacher preparation programs at a research-intensive Midwestern university and serve as the foundation of my data. In an attempt to capture a first-hand account of Zeichner's (2010) application of Soja's notion *thirdspace* to teacher education, my field notes record stories in the moment, reactions to an unexpected tremor, or the result of a hard-fought change in the work. Returning to them for analysis requires that I acknowledge their inherent bias and the intention that shadows the words. As Narayan (1993) writes, "Narratives are not transparent representations of what actually happened but are told for particular purposes, from particular points of view: they are thus incipiently analytical, enacting theory" (p. 681).

My data also includes 10 interviews with various individuals who teach, work, and have learned to teach at McKinley High during the period I have worked as partnership liaison. Participants spoke to their experiences as teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, novice and veteran teachers, administrators, methods instructors, and university supervisors (see Appendices A, B). One interview took place through

email, after the participant was no longer at McKinley. I interviewed each participant independently, using an active interview method (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). In an active interview, the interviewer aims to tap intellect, emotions, and depth of experience. Thus the active interviewer abandons notions of neutrality and works to establish “a climate of mutual disclosure” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 12) between the interviewer and the respondent. The active interviewer assumes responsibility for activating narrative responses from the participants. While I did not tell participants what to say during interviews, I also did not idly sit by and dispassionately read the same four questions to each individual, without veering from the “script.” I shared my own experiences to contribute to the conversation, encouraged comments about previous experiences the participants had shared with me in other settings, and asked follow-up questions in attempts to support the participants’ “constructive storytelling” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 39).

Finally, my data includes documents such as email announcements and newsletters from McKinley administration, the summative review of McKinley conducted by an external educational reform organization, my own notes from McKinley instructional leadership team meetings, and lesson plans and emails from McKinley teachers with whom I co-taught during the course of the research.

As Vickers (2010) writes, “With most creative processes, one never knows *what* thoughts, happenings, and connections the mind will make until we are in the middle of things. And we may not understand why we have done what we have done until afterwards” (p. 556). Such is the case with my dissertation work. Below, I offer an

example of my process, using a scene from data that never made it into the larger story, to demonstrate the ways in which data collection and analysis blurred across experience and writing in my dissertation study. I offer a process example here from an incident that did not make it into the story.

During the first year of partnership, the staff experienced two separate and unexpected traumas within days: the death of our principal's brother and the fatal car accident of a McKinley teacher. Sitting in a McKinley Instructional Leadership Team days after these successive losses, we attempted to make a decision in our principal's absence as to how to communicate the intersections and complementary nature of two reform initiatives, one district-mandated and the other site-initiated, concurrently underway in our turnaround school. A member of the instructional leadership team suggested that we remind the staff of our current student testing and disciplinary data, to provide a "you are here" sign, illustrating the challenges we faced and why reforms were necessary. The thought of test score data raining down on the staff in the coming days overwhelmed one teacher leader at the table, and she refused any presentation of student data. She fought hard to control tears as she spoke, insisting that the teachers just needed some good news. McKinley's teachers just couldn't handle any more bad news.

Collecting data from an event such as this began as a mechanical and qualitative process and developed into an iterative writing process. Because I did not audio- or video-record the meeting, data collection required my retelling the story of the meeting's events into an audio-recorder, as soon as I could. These field texts attempt to capture the

events of that meeting, but also my “inner feelings, doubts, uncertainties, reactions, and remembered stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 86). From there, I transcribed the story myself or had it transcribed by an external transcription service. Once transcribed, I analyzed the data using the qualitative software program Dedoose, tagging the story for themes. Upon linking stories with similar themes together, I allowed my writing process to take over, and I would re-story an excerpt of data in scene. That process provided opportunity for me to take various paths. I might zoom in on a moment, slowing time and weaving in my own personal history, the history of the school, and the external and internal pressures that layered this moment with multiple meanings and understandings. I might rewrite the story from a point of view other than my own, imagining how the teacher who cried in the meeting perceived the event differently than I had as a participant-observer. However I chose to re-story the data, I sought a structure that would allow the reader to feel the multiple and contradictory forces at work in a moment such as the above: the challenges of organizational change, personal loss and grief, the overwhelming demands placed on teachers and staff in turnaround schools, my role in that meeting and in McKinley at that moment, and the ways in which teacher education created distance from the intimacy and immediacy of the day-in, day-out practice of classroom teaching. I wanted to leave the reader with questions similar to those I had at the moment: How do our hopes, feelings, and reactions—my own as well as those of other teacher leaders around the table—coat the conversation with different levels of meaning and/or misunderstanding? How do the pressures of value-added evaluations and “data-driven decision-making” overshadow and interfere with something as intimate as

grief, much less teacher morale and acceptance of change? How are our collective histories interwoven around the tale as we try to create a future for our struggling urban school?

Story

The research in social studies teaching and teacher education is dominated by inquiries grounded in interpretive epistemologies, with case study and self-study methodologies heavily used in the field. Aside from investigations into the pedagogy of their own social studies methods courses (Conklin & Daigle, 2012; Kohlmeier & Saye, 2012; Ritter, 2010; Yeager & Wilson, 1997), many social studies education scholars employ case study methodology, examining social studies classrooms of students (Epstein, 2000; Parker & Mitchell, 2008; Serriere, Mitra, & Reed, 2011), a particular cohort of teacher candidates (Bickmore, 1999; Conklin, 2008; Hawley, 2010; Segall, 2004; Segall & Gaudelli, 2007), or individual teacher(s) or teacher candidate(s) (Hess, 2002; Johnson, 2008; Matthews & Dillworth, 2008; Obenchain, Pennington, & Orr, 2000; Saada, 2013; Salinas & Castro, 2010), sifting through data to determine how this individual or bounded set of individuals experiences a curricular reform or controversial situation in the classroom. The narrative nature of case study methodology, in particular, allows social studies researchers to tell stories through examining a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context. Case study also enables the researcher to attend to contexts in which the inquiry is set, detailing through thick description the convergence of factors that might impact the phenomena under investigation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Corcoran, Walker, & Wals, 2004; Foster, Gomm, & Hammersly, 2000).

The draw to case study methodology serves as a useful platform to share “the storied nature of teachers’ knowledge” (Carter, 1993, p. 10). As a social studies educational researcher, I feel that same pull.

The literature that speaks to the ways story is central to human experience (Bruner, 1986), to human understanding (Farrant, 2014; Hannula, 2003), to learning and teaching (Barone, 1990, 1992, 2001, 2010; Barone & Eisner, 2012; Beaton Zirps, 2014; Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Witherell & Noddings, 1991) is extensive, and many have written their own theoretical and methodological accounts to demonstrate its centrality. In teacher education, Carter (1993) writes, “Stories convey the multiplicity of ways actions and situations intertwine and thus accurately represent the complex demands of teaching” (p. 10). Teaching stories populate various media platforms such as blogs (Hagopian, n.d.; Perry, n.d.; Ravitch, n.d.; Vilson, n.d.), mass-market news organizations (*Los Angeles Times*, n.d.; *MinnPost*, n.d.; Strauss, n.d.), and memoirs (Esquith, 2007; Garon, 2013; Landsman, 1993, 2009; Logan, 1997; Ritchie, 2009; Vilson, 2014). Each of these educational connoisseurs offers a window into the “complex and subtle aspects of educational phenomena” (Eisner, 1991, p. 86) that transpire through the high-stakes, emotionally and intellectually taxing, and fast-paced work of the classroom teachers and their classroom (Kohan, 2013).

Teacher candidates long for stories about teaching and request them from veteran teachers, from their cooperating teachers, and their instructors. The closer to the “real action” and what *really* happens in schools and classrooms, the better. Connelly and Clandinin (2000) write that we learn to teach through modeling, observation, practice,

and through “narrative fragments” (p. 17). Cooperating teachers and teacher educators alike provide guidance through story about the practice of teaching. We retell the story of how we dealt with a defiant seventh grader, how we coached a reluctant reader into and through a challenging text, how we orchestrated a respectful classroom discussion about a controversial topic with a group of 15-year-olds. Stories communicate our teaching experiences, the moments that leave us with a sense of awe and accomplishment, as well as those that leave us exhausted, hurt, or baffled. Teacher educators rely on stories as well to discern our teacher candidates’ growth: We ask our teacher candidates to re-story their experiences during student teaching through reflective journals, online blogs, or in “base groups” in our methods coursework in order to spur analysis of their teaching experiences and to link theory and practice. Our teacher candidates’ journals provide insight into their developing teacher identity and dispositions for the profession. With the development and adoption of the edTPA, we assess teacher candidates’ teaching readiness through their re-storying of a lesson in detail through the eyes of two different students, pushing the teacher candidate to consider perspectives other than their own. The teacher candidates with whom I have worked savor the real, “raw” stories of teachers—in text or in person—as a way of placing themselves in and constructing meaning about their work and identity as teachers. Yet, we recognize that a critical level of safety and trust is required for stories to flow freely (Olson & Craig, 2001). Teacher candidates entrust their teacher education mentors with their stories, sharing their own doubts and concerns, wonders and accomplishments as they move toward and into the profession.

Representation

In my own study, my participants have trusted me with their stories of teaching and learning to teach at McKinley. As mentioned earlier, my extended history with McKinley, interwoven with the histories and experiences of the participants in my study, may have contributed to their willingness to share particularly honest and painful stories. There were moments during interviews when my participants re-storied events, conversations, and experiences at McKinley and literally took my breath away. Burdened with the weight of responsibility as a researcher, colleague, and mentor, I found it critical to represent my participants' stories as honestly as possible. I asked myself, how do I share these stories, in all their complexities, knowing full well that they are partial? How do I represent my participants' experiences, simultaneously demonstrating care for my colleagues and peers while conveying the challenges faced by McKinley, teacher education, and by those of us who work within and across these contexts? I further recognize my power as researcher and collector of these stories. As Lather (2007) writes,

How can writing [stories of] the other not be an act of continuing colonization? Texts that do justice to the complexity of what we try to know and understand include the tales not told, the words not written or transcribed, the words thought but not uttered, the unconscious, all that gets lost in the telling and the representing. (p. 13)

I sought a narrative structure, knowing full well that each story shared and retold must be viewed as a piece of an unknowable whole. Choosing an arts-based methodology provided me with the ability to be fluid in my representational choices. Composite in nature and limited in scope, the stories retold of McKinley's first three years of

partnership required a narrative structure that acknowledged, from the outset, that it could not fully capture all of the intricate contours experienced by those who teach, work, and learn at schools like McKinley. “Incited by the demand for voice and situatedness” (Britzman, 1997, p. 31), I chose a narrative structure and methodology that allowed the complexities of teaching and learning to teach at McKinley to emerge and simmer. I have found that, at times, my data demands that I avoid immediate analysis. To cite Lather (2007), “Exactly what does it mean for me to come in with my interpretive voice and say what things mean. . . how can that not be a sort of imposition?” (pp. 28-29). My interpretations might serve as an anesthetic to the stories told, and I do not want my explanations to lessen the sting of what has been shared.

Over the course of my doctoral program, the research that has most moved and spoken to me has been studies in which researchers cross traditional boundaries that circumscribe academic scholarship to represent their findings in new ways. Kumashiro (2002) re-stories his data through narrative poetry. Lather (1991, 1997) employs multiple narrative structures, almost performances of her findings, layering her texts across, against, and within each other. Tanaka (1997) delineates story and analysis through the use of a two-column structure. Segall (2004) engages the reader in a second-text format, enabling his participants to talk back to his analyses and lace the analysis with multiple interpretations. In all of these examples, researchers have recast their work, using strategies that link form with findings, conveying analysis through textual shape and structure, in addition to content.

Barone (2001) argues for the “persuasive power of the small narrative” (p. 101) as a counterstory to the dehumanizing and reductive master narratives that have contributed to the “mass de-skilling, of teacher-proof curricula, of narrow-eyed supervisors assessing not degrees of talent of teachers, but their demonstrated mastery of prescribed instructional techniques in the pursuit of imported goals” (p. 90). It rings true for many arts-based researchers’ work (Bequette, 2006; Intrator, as excerpted in Barone & Eisner, 2006; Pope, 2001): These works “advance . . . small, inviting, carefully observed (i.e., empirical) portraits of specific teachers [and students] not from a stance of omniscience, but, as in all good literature, from a quite obviously limited *point of view*” (Barone, 2001, p. 101). These researchers do not claim to tell the whole story, and nor should I. Instead, more humbly, they tell a partial story, and they leave it up to the reader to decide what to do with it.

I turn to Kilbourn’s (1999) description of self-conscious method as a way of holding my methodology accountable to both my epistemology and the data. Kilbourn writes, “The power of fiction is its ability to show, largely through structural corroboration, the qualities of experience that we multiplicatively recognize as poetically true of people and situations” (p. 31). Thus, I hold myself to the expectation that the narrative form and structure of my dissertation demonstrates the reasons behind my methodological moves. In choosing a fictional thesis, I must demonstrate the ways in which my role as researcher/writer/creator impacts the data and the final product. I must ensure that the ways in which I craft the narrative reinforce the content (Kilbourn, 1999).

Fiction-Based Research

“When should an anthropologist or researcher tell ethnographically informed fictional stories?” (Frank, 2000, p. 482)

Narrative, as the building block of both teaching and learning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and reconstructed with and through a fiction-based methodological framework (Leavy, 2013), provides ways to re-present the complicated and constantly shifting world of a single urban partnership high school. Fiction-based research falls under the broader umbrella of arts-based research, which includes “any social research or human inquiry that adapts the tenets of the creative arts as part of the methodology” (Jones & Leavy, 2014, p. 1). Fiction-based research blurs the boundaries between fiction and fact, merging elements of both to promote empathy, portray authentic human experience, and to connect with readers (Barone & Eisner, 1997, 2006; Leavy, 2013; Rogers, 2014; Rolling, 2013). From an ethical standpoint, fiction enables me to craft composite characters and fuse factual details in order to provide greater anonymity for my colleagues, teacher candidates, and students. Meanwhile, fiction allows me to address difficult and uncomfortable issues present in teacher education and urban schools.

As an example, the “Amber” chapter originates from field notes taken during the first year of the partnership between the university and McKinley High. The field notes re-storied a 20-minute conversation I had with “Amber,” an African-American ninth grader, after she had been removed from her math class to the hallway outside my classroom. I had no prior interaction with Amber before this day, but I regularly stood in the hallway at passing time, urged students into class, or checked on disruptions I heard while working. Following an iterative writing process, I re-storied my encounter with

Amber three different times, each time using a different point of view. For instance, the third-person objective narrator, “not omniscient but impersonal” (Burroway, 1996, p. 203), restricted knowledge to external facts observed by some unnamed individual witnessing the scene as it unfolded. If I limited the point of view to only the spoken words, actions, and gestures of Amber and the partnership liaison, my subjectivity would only be evident in my word choices and descriptions of the moment. Choosing to add the partnership liaison’s thoughts to the story (based on the analytical elements within the journal entry) increased the explicit and transparent subjectivity of the story.

Conversely, rewriting my experience with Amber in first person point of view resulted in a different narrative. In modernist fiction writing, first-person narrative point of view merges the author, narrator, and character into one voice, and through that individual set of eyes, the reader has access to the story. First-person narrative aims to get the reader desperately close to the action, hearing the inner thoughts of the narrator. Through this intimate and “reader-friendly” storytelling approach (Burroway, 1996, p. 207), the reader understands that the individual telling the story is flawed, like any person, and that the story is told with whatever biases the character holds. These biases and foibles filter the details of the story and color the lens through which the reader views the action. Thus, the reader approaches the text with skepticism, remaining suspicious of the commentary made by the character narrator (Burroway, 1996). From the very moment the character narrator opens a fictional text with *I*, the reader is aware that the story told does not have to be accepted as truth. All of that is conveyed through the work of voice, the contradictions between the choices made by the character, and the ways in

which the narrator explains those choices. With first-person narrative, the narrator's interpretive lens filters the data. In this case – where the liaison and the researcher/writer are the same person, me – that makes sense.

Yet to craft the chapter from Amber's voice and perspective requires an entirely different depth of knowledge and leads me into a potential minefield of assumptions. A writer/researcher assumes tremendous power when s/he appropriates voice from an individual/character. If the writer/researcher tells the story from the first-person point of view of a participant whose identity differs from her own, such a methodological move calls into question issues of race, class, language, sexual orientation, and gender. Lather (2007), for instance, recognizes the complexity in access to stories when it comes to race, aware of the political context of identity politics within which researchers do their work. She asserts that if researchers are to write from voices of participants whose identities differ from their own, they must “do this by learning, building trust and rapport” (p. 23). In my case with Amber, I did not have the rapport to tell her story. Thus, the narrative arc, centering a protagonist and demonstrating conflict and change, needed to center on the partnership liaison.

During my preliminary examinations, one of my committee members cautioned how arts-based research (fiction-based in my case) might domesticate the data, asking how I would ensure that didn't happen. I think about this often. Everyone has heard the old adage that truth is stranger than fiction. Indeed, crazy things happen in schools, so much so that I am hard pressed to conjure fictional events that are more bizarre. In my 20 years of experience in the public schools, my teaching stories include everything from

sexual affairs between staff members discovered in gym equipment rooms and library closets, to fist-fighting parents at conference night, to cocaine-snorting assistant principals. And that list does not touch the stories from my former students' lives.

Yet, I continue to put that question to my own work. Are there moments where I may have tamed the data, smoothing out the details so as to meet the needs of the overarching story? Have I rounded the sharp edges or touched up the ugly, hateful behavior to make the work more palatable for an implied audience? Have I sacrificed the difficult stories for structural cohesion? One way to address these questions has been to represent parts of the data through poetry, which will be described below.

That said, there are stories missing. For now, some have been left on the cutting room floor, given the confines of the dissertation format. Others have yet to be told because they run the risk of hurting participants. I struggle with both of those omissions. In some ways, the absences of these stories might be seen as parallel to the choices made by quantitative researchers, who exclude outliers so as to make a more definitive statement. But I am still plagued with the concern that I am forsaking the complexity of the experience—what I'm observing, hearing, and witnessing—by leaving these stories out.

Finally, fiction provides a powerful canvas for the telling of counterstories, a central pillar of critical race theory. Critical race theory (CRT) emerged in the mid-1970s in legal scholarship with the work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The work of critical race theorists shares certain central characteristics. First, critical race theorists assert that racism is the rule, rather than an aberration, in U.S.

society. CRT demands critically examining liberalism and delineating the limits of incremental change, referencing civil rights legislation specifically. Critical race theorists argue that the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation have been whites, rather than people of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2003). Finally, CRT relies on storytelling as a tool for survival and liberation, critiquing and denouncing “stock explanations that construct reality” (Delgado, 1989, p. 2438) to reinforce systems of oppression and those who benefit from them. Counternarratives defy hegemonic, single narratives and serve as touchstones of resistance, catalysts for solidarity, and healing elixirs for both teller and listener. Delgado (1989) writes, “To be effective, [stories and counterstories] must be or must appear to be non-coercive. They invite the reader to suspend judgment, listen for their . . . message, and then decide what measure of truth they contain” (p. 2415). Fiction-based research evokes emotion and, through verisimilitude, empathy in the reader, therein offering a particularly impactful means for the telling of counterstories (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Hannula, 2003; Leavy, 2013).

My dissertation combines three narrative structures: fictionalized narrative with footnotes, free verse poetry, and student portraiture. Each narrative structure lends support to another way of seeing teaching and learning to teach at McKinley High School. Each voice and story stand alone, offering a snapshot of teaching, learning, or learning to teach in a high-poverty, urban high school. But in combination, the collection of stories, told from multiple points of view, pieces together a larger puzzle.

Fictionalized narrative with footnotes

Roughly two-thirds of the dissertation takes the shape of fictionalized narratives with footnotes. Social scientists use footnotes to provide evidence, credibility, citations, and elaboration on their thoughts. Structurally, footnotes exist in the margins, serving as referential and extrinsic, but also “cooperative” and “critical,” in dialogue with the reader, the text, and other external texts (Benstock, 1983, p. 204).

A handful of fiction writers have intentionally manipulated the status of footnotes, “highlight[ing] the interplay between author and subject, text and reader,” giving both reader and author a chance to “speculate on self-reflective narration as an aspect of textual authority” (Benstock, 1983, p. 205). A number of postmodern novelists demonstrate this practice as self-conscious commentary on the textual boundaries of a book or novel (e.g., Wallace’s 2009, *Infinite Jest*), to challenge binaries of fact/ fiction and right/wrong on a subject and in a place where truth is slippery and facts, intangible (e.g., O’Brien’s 1994 novel, *In the Lake of the Woods*), or to call into question systems of power and their arbitrary determinations of what it is to be known, who is valued, and what counts (e.g., Díaz’s 2008 *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*). Describing his use of footnotes in an interview with *Slate Magazine*, Díaz explains,

The footnotes are there . . . primarily, to create a double narrative. The footnotes, which are in the lower frequencies, challenge the main text, which is the higher narrative. The footnotes are like the voice of the jester, contesting the proclamations of the king . . . [The book is] about . . . the dangers of the single voice. (O’Rourke, 2008)

I have chosen to use a footnote structure to convey the multiple strands of narrative that are always simultaneously occurring as I engage in the work: knowledge I carry with me as a partnership liaison, collected through my experiences, through research literature, and through my prior knowledge as a cooperating teacher, a university supervisor, and a methods instructor. At times, the footnotes try to nest the narrative in broader scholarly literature and connect the happenings at McKinley with trends in teacher education and educational policy nationwide. At other times, the footnotes aim to provide a dialectical function, engaging the reader in conversation with the text and between layers of context. While I recognize this structure disrupts the straightforward linearity of the narrative, it offers the reader access to varied interpretations of and mitigating factors within while circumscribing the fictional storyline. The footnotes further blur the boundaries of fiction and fact. It is intentionally chaotic and complicated, a textual representation of the intersecting and tangled tensions at play.

Additionally, within the footnotes at certain points in the story, the narrator reaches out from the page and pokes the reader, calling on the reader to respond to difficult moments within the text. Postmodern novelists are known to make similar moves, pivoting into an intrusive narrative voice and challenging the convention of a singular narrative perspective (Rody, 2000). In my study, these breaks in authorial voice occur when the narrator interrogates notions of “urban,” questions linear conceptions of progress, and refuses to racially identify a character. Rody (2000) explains, “Long novelistic tradition has trained us to listen for the presence called the narrator, and though postmodern variations encourage our [dis]comfort with a destabilized speaker, a voice

that addresses us as ‘you’ seems to deserve our returning the courtesy” (p. 633). This voice intentionally crosses boundaries, interloping on the reader’s freedom to comfortably frame or interpret the story without troubling assumptions stemming from hegemonic ways of knowing. What counts as progress to you, reader? What preconceptions do you have of a high school described as “urban”? When you read Principal Bell’s words, when you see him interact in the story, what race do you ascribe to him, and how does that shape the meaning you attach to the text? These moments of direct address may be jarring to the reader, as they also blur the identities of narrator and author in the storytelling voice, intentionally calling into question the subjectivity of both.

Poetry

A significant portion of my dissertation study has been represented in ethnographic poetry. Maynard and Cahnman-Taylor (2010) define ethnographic poetry as “verse written by researchers based on field study” (p. 5). Each poem is presented in a single voice, identified by its speaker’s role at McKinley and in teacher education. In some cases, a vague racial identity of the poem’s voice has been indicated, but it is the poem itself that reveals further details of the speaker’s identity. Each poem can stand alone and tell a story, a partial truth. Uninterrupted, the speaker relates complexities of teaching or learning to teach from a single lens and discrete moment in time. The poems can also be read together, and in combination with the stories retold in other narrative forms, as they challenge each other and other stories, offering counter perspectives and dimensions of emotional candor often absent in other descriptions of

urban teacher preparation and city teaching. In this quilted, woven tangle of narratives, the poems evoke an interior world that re-storying data through scene does not.

In *Troubling Education*, Kumashiro (2002) presents his data in narrative poetry. Prior to entering the Ph.D. program in education, I earned an MFA in creative writing. When I came across Kumashiro's work, I was struck by the ways in which his representational choice aligned with my ontological sensibilities. White space signaled pauses and emphasis; line breaks translated into moments of importance, hesitation, and interruption. I heard voice on those pages; the interviews and portraits of the educational activists Kumashiro featured spoke to me from the text. Moved by this option in educational research, I have followed Kumashiro's scholarly path, transcribing data from focus groups or interviews as free verse poetry, and with each pass, each time I play back an interview to ensure that I have captured a participant's words accurately, their voice, their inflections, and their hesitations marry themselves to the poetic form represented on the page.

In *Getting Lost*, Lather (2007) includes excerpts from an interview conducted with her to discuss her book, *The Trouble with Angels*, in which Lather sometimes leaves the data raw and allows her participants to speak, untouched by her own interpretation and authorial voice. In the interview, Lather second-guesses this choice, concerned that these portions of the book might give aspiring scholars poor guidance as to how to treat their data or that the data might be better off without the interference of the researcher's analysis.

I think sometimes constraining the researcher's analytical voice is a good thing to do. . . [T]here's that dance – getting in the way of the data, getting out of the way of the data. In manipulating the data, we can't not do that, there's no way. . . There's always the manipulation of data. So, whether you want to make your manipulations visible, whether you want to foreground or background that manipulation, that's the decision you have to make as the researcher. But you can't get away from manipulating the data. That's what we do! (p. 29)

Representing portions of my data through ethnographic poetry helps me do “that dance.” Some of the poems are taken verbatim from data, reshaped with line breaks and white space to capture verbal pauses and emotional reluctance communicated by participants in interviews and stories they shared. Other poems have been sculpted slightly for clarity or structural cohesion. Still, in comparison to the other narrative forms included in the larger text, the poetry comes closest to raw data.

Structurally, the poems offer, as one of my critical readers noted, a chance to breathe. Much of the footnoted fictional narrative is intentionally cacophonous, requiring the reader to juggle theory and analysis, to sift through conflicting and contradictory perceptions of truth as they move through the story. But every so often, the reader encounters a poem, a single, unbroken, unidirectional voice, and everything else—the literature, the analysis, the politics, the author—is silenced. Citing Bly, Maynard and Cahnman-Taylor (2010) write, “in many ancient works of art, a ‘floating leap’ appears at the center—a leap from the conscious to the unconscious and back again” (p. 10). I imagine my readers coming to a poem and leaping from perspective

and form, pausing to hear one voice and their version of truth about teaching or learning to teach, and then steeling themselves for the next chapter where they reenter the fray.

Finally, I made the choice to represent data as poetry, in part, as a means of allowing the reader direct access to some of the confidential confessions and unconscious anxieties, the ambivalence, pride, anger, and frustration, experienced by my participants through their work at McKinley during these three years of partnership and change. There is a moment in the larger story when the words of a teacher hit the narrator so hard a sob—unfamiliar and unexpected—escapes her, as if she has been hit in the gut. In many ways, poetry strips the noise from narrative, potentially enabling a reader to have a similar moment, when someone’s words reach into the chest and snatch away breath, and the body forces out an otherworldly moan, signaling an awareness that might otherwise be impossible.

Student portraits

Years ago when I was teaching, I chaperoned a student field trip to see a play put on by *Teatro Campesino*, a politically-minded, social justice-oriented theater group who had crafted a piece about Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence. At some point during the play, I remember becoming aware that *all* of the members of the acting troop were—at least by appearance—white, benefitting from European features. Further, the actors were dressed in “authentic costumes” and performed in front of a canvas covered with brown-skinned, stereotypically portrayed *campesinos*. I remember thinking that their

artistic choice positioned the people of color in the piece as *backdrop*, rather than centering them in the performance and the work.

This brings me to concerns about my dissertation study, in which the central characters -- teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, school administration, university supervisors and faculty -- are overwhelmingly white. The majority of teacher candidates prepared at the university and McKinley identify as European American/white. More than 80 percent of the teaching staff at McKinley is white. The university supervisors and faculty who craft and lead the university-based teacher preparation coursework are predominantly white. This stands in contrast to the highly diverse student population at McKinley High. Given these demographic contrasts, I worried about my own writing and the possibility that my research would background the students and their presence, rendering them subordinate, voiceless, and flat scenery to a multidimensional and textured story of teaching, learning, and learning to teach in an urban school. Advised to not force a representation of students that confuses the data, I have let the data and the writing lead me. Yet, in what ways might such a process reify a narrative of students of color as interchangeable and mute, further stripping students of their individuality and humanness?

With this in mind, I have included portraits of McKinley students. Because none of my participants are McKinley students, the portraits are fictionalized composites and furthest from data than either of the other narrative structures. Grounded in details culled from years of classroom experience, observation, and work with diverse groups of secondary school students in settings like the imagined McKinley High School context, I

draw on artifacts that schools like McKinley use to represent student learning performance and growth and tell a single student's story. Each student portrait contains a series of documents: a report card, a standardized test report, a WIDA (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment) language assessment score, and a narrative, written in third-person limited point of view.

I began this aspect of the dissertation by examining the ways students, particularly urban teenagers, are represented in text. I sought out and returned to research texts that narrated aspects of children's lives or that provided narrative accounts on teaching and learning to teach urban adolescents (Fine, 1991; Foote, 2008; Picower, 2011; Rubin, 2007; Rubin, Hayes, & Benson, 2009; Rubin & Silva, 2003; Valencia & Buly, 2005; Yosso, 2006). I read and returned to teacher memoirs (Blum, 2012; Garon, 2013; Landsman, 2001; Pope, 2001; Vilson, 2014) as well as journalistic and creative non-fiction accounts of students' lives and teaching in urban contexts (Freedman, 1991; Kotlowitz, 1991; Kozol, 1968). I paid close attention to how each writer portrayed individuals and groups of students, where and how students were positioned within and by the text, and the ways in which the narratives provided a complex and multidimensional portrait of students.

I also read texts focused on researcher methodology and ethics when conducting studies centered on children and schools. Research conducted in educational settings, such as McKinley, occurs within a structure that, in multiple ways, positions students as powerless. This is the norm (Barone, 2010). From early ages through late adolescence, children spend the bulk of their waking days in educational institutions, existing in

“contexts over which they have little control” (Graue & Walsh, 1998, p. 12). In daycare centers, schools, afterschool sports, and after-school “latch-key programs,” children are under constant supervision, “under the watchful eyes” of adults who “patrol the boundaries” of children’s experiences (Graue & Walsh, 1998, p. 12). In those settings, adults are the decision-makers and arbiters of power. Children may be in situations where they are unhappy, uncomfortable, stressed, or threatened, yet they don’t have the ability to remove themselves from these contexts without the permission and assistance of adults. Adults – their parents, guardians, teachers, and administrators – determine entry and exit. Educational research often takes place within these conditions. Adults make the decisions; most often, children cannot refuse to participate in research (Graue & Walsh, 1998).

Further, research texts often intentionally flatten the context in which a study takes place. In part, researchers reduce student contexts so as to provide anonymity and protection for the students, teachers, schools, and communities involved in the study. A description such as “an urban high school with a student body of 1000, located in a mid-sized Midwestern city” would not be uncommon in a scholarly article. Such portrayals convey a static and generic context, possibly deliberately so. In more traditional research texts focused on teaching, learning, and teacher education, this might focus on teacher candidates, on a particular curricular tool or instructional practice, in hopes of isolating the subject of the study. In many ways, this is a nod to positivistic epistemologies that strive for objectivity through context-free experiments that can strip a variable from the muddy waters of its surroundings (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1977).

In my dissertation study, where urban teacher education occupies the foregrounded narrative, McKinley's diverse student body is a critical element of the context. Graue and Walsh (1998) define context as "a culturally and historically situated place and time, a here and now" (p. 9). Students' identities, their academic strengths and struggles, and the behavioral challenges they present to teachers and teaching are reasons given by teacher education programs for avoiding schools like McKinley. Seeking stable and manageable contexts for their teacher candidates and research studies, teacher education programs often choose not to partner with urban schools (Breault & Breault, 2012). In urban schools, behavior proves challenging for teacher candidates (Anderson & Stillman, 2010, 2012). Frequent turnover in a teaching staff results in fewer classroom veterans willing to serve as cooperating teachers. The context of a school, its students and staff, its reputation and history serve as a determining factor in placement and partnership (Peterman, 2008). McKinley students, individually and collectively, and McKinley High School's context are mutually constitutive, constantly shaped and reshaped by and with each other, in a dynamic and unpredictable process (Graue & Walsh, 1998). The story of learning to teach at an urban high school like McKinley is entirely connected to the context of McKinley; central, relational, and co-constitutive to that context are McKinley's students. Without its students, McKinley would not exist.

Currently, many of the artifacts used by schools to represent student success, growth, struggle, and/or failure are numeric, limited to scores and percentiles on standardized tests or letter grades on report cards. Legislators and school leaders continue to base educational policy and budgetary, curricular, and instructional decisions on these

singular, standardized measurements, despite reiterated concerns of their limitations (Taubman, 2009; Valencia & Buly, 2005; Zeichner, 2006). The institutional documents produced in mainstream public schools that contain qualitative data, such as comments on report cards, continue to be standardized and generic. Documents such as these serve to place students into demographic bins, the subtext of which suggests that students and teaching and learning can be known and understood through simple, singular, and sterile representations. Graue and Walsh (1998) write, “Researchers often reduce the complex realities of children’s lives to scores on instruments and questionnaires, to counts of individual behaviors, or to behaviors in contrived settings” (p. 3). Unfortunately, these technical portraits simplify our understanding of individual children and of their collective needs. Again, to cite Graue and Walsh: “Counting how many times children poke each other is relatively easy, but it will not give an accurate description of aggression in children” (p. 3). These numeric and quantitative representations of students, more practical to produce in the short-run, are privileged as “factual” and “objective,” and assumed to be true.

This positivistic narrative has been conflated with a second narrative of school children as “indolent and insolent” (Barone, 2008, p. 32), more readily used when referring to students of color. African-American and Latino students are portrayed as disaffected, uncontrollable, and violent (Cann, 2013/2015; Taubman, 2009), “a problem” and academically, socially, and emotionally deficient (Howard, 2013), “hoodlums,” gang members, and drug users (Lopez, 2003), “criminals to fear,” “victims of their own behavior and circumstances,” and in need of “saving” (Cann, 2013/2015, p. 5). As Cann

(2013/2015) explains, to hold up such narratives as causal in producing “limited and racist” (p. 5) thinking about youth of color would be naïve and mimic the grandiosity and didactic drive for decisive, final conclusions, as master narratives are wont to do (Barone, 2008). Yet, research suggests that such narratives do inform prospective teachers and contribute to how they view teaching and their future students (Cann, 2013/2015).

Graue and Walsh (1998) write, “As enticing as the phrase ‘through children’s eyes’ is, we will never see the world through another’s, particularly a child’s eyes. Instead we will see it through multiple layers of experience, theirs and ours, and multiple layers of theory” (p. 37). As an example, the portrait of Alex began with my own son’s positioning as a highly gifted and challenging child in an urban school with limited, if any, resources devoted to gifted education. Through his short-lived school experience, my son has already labeled himself as a “troublemaker,” an identity co-constructed through his frequent visits to the principal’s office and countless hours spent at the time-out table. Straddling my own multiple identities as parent, teacher, teacher educator, and critical researcher, I recognize that unlike many of the students I have taught, my son benefits from European features and white skin. While as parents we have fought off suggestions that his behavior and outlier status might be attributed to some sort of diagnosable deviance, we have not felt the additional and surreptitious stab of institutional racism that so many parents of color face when advocating for their children’s educational opportunities. Thus, my son’s story merges with the stories of a gifted African-American male student, whom I call Dante. Dante showed up in my social studies classroom nearly a decade ago. At 14, Dante was angry, cynical, and traumatized

by the way school, as a system, had marginalized his intelligence and racialized his behaviors, so much so that it drove him to a psychotic break. In Alex's student portrait, Dante's story dovetails with assertions made by researchers Dutton and Bien (2013), who argue for the benefits of trauma studies as a framework for better understanding students and learning. They argue that the trauma experienced by students includes "accumulating marginalization within specific school and classroom locations as well as the larger structural and institutional inequities of education in the United States" (p. 12). Years of educational experiences that structurally and individually perpetuate racist, sexist, heterosexist, and classist injustices on students *is* a form of trauma. I further braid these narrative threads with stories of bright male students of color who have emotionally and intellectually checked out in classrooms where I have observed and taught.

The portrait of Alex, just like those of the other students, is not intended to represent the experiences of all African-American males in a school like McKinley. Alex does not stand for all high school boys, nor does he symbolize the experiences of all gifted children of color in public schools. Instead, the portrait seeks to reveal a single student's school experience, complicated and textured, interactive with, and embedded in, multiple contexts. Richardson (1990) describes synecdoche as a

rhetorical technique through which a part comes to stand for the whole, such as an individual for a class . . . [s]ynecdoches are ways in which we construct our understanding of the whole, although we only have access to the part (p. 17).

As synecdoche, the portrait of Alex with its intersecting subjectivities offer the reader insight into the broader stories of gifted students, of African-American males, of gifted

students of color, of students who fall outside the norm as they move through a school system that privileges a standardized, linear, one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and learning and criminalizes the behavior of Black and brown students of color (Barone, 2010; Taubman, 2009).

The characters of the five students whose portraits I include are more than “components of [the] larger text” (Barone, 2010, p. 119) of urban teacher education and urban teaching. Collectively, these fictionalized student portraits serve as a larger depiction of McKinley High School, as well as of teaching and schools. Again, referencing synecdoche as a conceptual framework, I insert the student portraits at different parts of the larger work, so that the reader encounters a “student file,” set apart and still connected to the larger story of urban teacher preparation and partnership at McKinley. At other times, these students wave at the reader from the back of a classroom in another chapter or sneak into a teacher’s classroom to avoid a hall sweep. Ultimately, the presence of these fictional students serves to tug the reader by the shirt, to tap them on the shoulder as a way of saying, “Don’t forget: I’m here.”

Postmodern Temporality and Narrative Gaps

As mentioned earlier, I knew early on that this story needed to be told from multiple vantage points and lenses, each offering its own glimmer into teaching and learning to teach amidst changes occurring in the high-stakes, turnaround environment at McKinley High School. From an early stage in the dissertation study, I looked to novels, written from multiple characters’ points of view, as a structural guide. For example, I considered Fleischman’s (1997) *Seedfolks*, a novel for kids, written in multiple voices,

describing the transformation of a vacant lot into a community garden. Set in urban Cleveland, each chapter of *Seedfolks* is written from the voice and perspective of a different community member. Each character contributes a story that supports the overarching narrative arc: how the space of a misused and abused vacant lot can be transformed in the face of bureaucracy, racism, classism, crime, poverty, and distrust. I was drawn to the structure of *Seedfolks* in its ability to take an ecological perspective on the community transformation that occurs in the story. Depicting school change requires knowledge, description, and analysis of the complex web of interactions and players within the social ecologies of the school, neighborhood, community, and district.

Through my analysis and writing, I unsuccessfully worked to determine how each character's story contributed to some central conflict, pulling the reader along a central and unified plotline. In *Seedfolks*, as with many multi-vocal novels, the sequencing of the chapters is linear and clean. The transformation of the vacant lot is linked between different characters' stories, and one voice leads to the next. Fleischman crafts a tidy narrative arc as each character faces their own minor challenge. The reader watches the cast of characters overcome their own particular obstacles, merging into a singular path toward the novel's resolution. In contrast, my data demonstrates that teaching, learning, and learning to teach are not linear processes. Nor is school transformation. Each of my participants portrayed "progress" differently; each assessed the challenges facing McKinley or learning to teach in schools such as McKinley according to their own set of criteria. Thus, the data called for a textual representation that was messy, contradictory, and gap-filled, leaving spaces for the reader to imagine, question, and interpret.

I turned to postmodern novels, alternatively seeking narrative models that challenged notions of linearity through structure. Ermarth (1992) argues postmodern literature is

among the most highly achieved, most economical exercises of discursive engagement; they take up and improve the forms of discourse we inhabit every day in sloppier, less visible versions. . . . Postmodern narrative language engages pulse and intellect simultaneously and consequently permits no easy escape from practical problems. (pp. 11-12)

Postmodern literary texts explode a lone, orderly, and linear chronology, refusing the master narrative mandate. They offer up multiple simultaneous histories, disorderly and contradicting, and demonstrate the uneven and inconsistent pace of change (Ermarth, 1992; Winders, 1993). The paratactic narrative strategies employed by postmodern novelists contribute to the unpredictable and rhythmic nature of postmodern temporality. Ermarth (1992) likens these strategies to improvisational jazz:

First, its rhythms are chiefly a basis for experiment, but experiment without any obligation to produce results; within the constraints arbitrarily established and temporarily accepted, what happens is what happens. Second improvisation is primarily a collective activity, a collective invention, completely dependent on the collaboration of more than one and not a model given to hierarchy. Third, this collective activity, with its “common breathing,” is specific, concrete and rooted in particular configurations, not universally or infinitely extendable; its time is not

a rationalized, neutral, homogenous history extending to infinity but at a time that is rhythmic and finite. (p. 51)

Winders (1993) notes the ways in which paratactic narrative strategies “shift the reader around among simultaneously unfolding spheres of experiences” (p. 31). Parataxis unlocks spaces that “become available for brief habitation, and then recede according to no absolute sense of chronology” (Winders, 1993, p. 31). In the epistolary novel *The Mixquiahuala Letters*, Castillo (1986) offers readers multiple chronologies to tell a dialectical story of a 20-year friendship between two women. Cortázar’s *Hopscotch* (1966) encourages readers to select the sequence in which to read the novel. In the case of each of these novels, the reader is invited to dispense with the linearity of the plot and “subvert the traditional sequence of the act of reading” (Winders, 1993, p. 31). The choice of the order in which to read the chapters – and the direction by which to experience the story – lies with the reader, derailing linear temporality and its assumed neutrality. Again, to quote Ermarth:

Postmodern narrative denies the disassociation of art from life, making the act of reading and interpretation the subject of the book. . . . Acts of reading and interpretation take on new meaning. Readers must continuously recognize that when they read, as when they do other things, their consciousness is active, not passive; that reading time is not a separate arrangement where one brackets or neutralizes life but instead a full exercise of that life. To read any text, whether or not it is a printed book, is to participate; it is to continue to undergo the warps and deformations that never-neutral life always entails. As we read and decipher, we

co-invent; and this active attention to reader awareness belongs to a broad redefinition of what constitutes a “text.” (pp. 22-23)

When Castillo (1986) offers the reader three options (“for the Conformist, the Cynic, and the Quixotic”), each with its own sequence of stories and its own narrative arc, she offers a chronology that emphasizes interpretation, rather than a fixed way to understand what is read.

My dissertation study captures multiple histories: the histories of change at McKinley for the three years after its designation as a turnaround school; the histories of partnership between McKinley and the university teacher education programs; the histories of a handful of young teachers as they learn to teach in McKinley’s churning and unstable environment; and the history of the partnership liaison position at McKinley, in the district, and within the university teacher education programs. Each of these histories can be told in countless, contradictory ways. As Winders (1993) writes,

Any period the historian chooses to study will prove to be replete with the myriad orientations toward past, present, and future time that generally complicate its temporal character through the multiple narratives competing within it. The dominant, residual, and emergent groups all tell themselves different stories about themselves [and] produce competing myths. (p. 28)

Thus, employing the tools of a postmodern novelist enabled me to demonstrate that those histories were anything but static, linear, and orderly. “I’ll Let You Know How It Goes” is written in present tense, heightening the immediacy of scene and reinforcing the notion that “reader time is the only time that elapses” (Ermarth, 1992, p. 49). The

only exception is the chapter “The Good Story,” in which the reader steps outside of the story world to encounter metanarrative about the creation of the dissertation itself. “The Good Story” shifts from present to past tense and from a first-person narrator to the voice of a third-person narrator, the closest version of an omniscient narrator in the novel. The reader still moves between narrative and footnotes, contemplating what constitutes “good” results and “progress” when it comes to school change and learning to teach, as well as how time is represented in the chapter and in the larger text.

Further, the primary narrative of the fictional narrative is stripped of any chronological signifiers – dates, times, years. This move is intentional, to muddy the temporal character of the text and disconnect it from historical time. While there are moments in individual stories/chapters that describe weather conditions or signal the school academic calendar, these are not in chronological order (fall preceding winter, which precedes spring). Any metaphor equating seasonal change with progress is left to the reader to determine. The first story opens as the narrator/partnership liaison enters the school, and the book closes with the partnership liaison attempting to leave McKinley. A reader might interpret this as happening within the same week or year or over the course of many years. The order in which the reader sequences these experiences takes a back seat to the phenomenological happenings within the text – of teaching, of learning to teach, of school change, of working between school- and campus-based teacher education – and the experience of reading the work itself. As Ermarth (1992) writes,

Such experience can be shared but only *as* experience, not as a knowledge or truth. There is no such thing as capturing in excellent summary the essential

“story.” The postmodern reading experience does not turn into knowledge or information or, in other words, into capital. . . . What the postmodern reader does instead is to keep fragile contradictions in play for a certain duration and to conjugate in that Tender Interval whatever immortality it is possible to know. (p. 72,)

Barone (2010) writes that “good art can be said to enhance *uncertainty*; it works to promote doubt about the desirability of the values and interests associated with knowledge in a particular setting, cultural framework, or personal world view” (p. 116). My intention has been to create a story that raises questions, rather than provides answers. For example, the student portraits are deliberately “constrained and partial, and determined by the discourses and histories that prefigure, even as they might promise, representation” (Britzman, 2006, p. 232). Each student’s “file” includes a set of artifacts together composing a contradictory and complicated portrait. Partial stories of home and neighborhood sit beside generic teacher comments such as “absent too often” and “good student.” The reader has access to moments of educational and family history and language assessment scores usually reserved for school personnel. The reader is left uncertain about each student’s future success at McKinley, the quality of the education they will receive, and what it means to be a “good” teacher or student. By “carefully positioning blanks or gaps in the text” the reader is required to engage their own “personal experiences outside the text” in order to construct meaning (Iser, 1974 as cited in Barone, 2010, p. 120). Narrative gaps convey the ambiguity and complexity of schools, learning, and teaching. As Lawrence-Lightfoot (1977) writes, “What gets left out

is often as important as what gets included; the blank spaces and the silences also shape the form of the story” (p. 12).

Identifying with the work of socially committed researchers (Barone, 2008), I sought to create a counterstory (Delgado, 1989), subverting the dominant narrative of teacher-blaming and school failure that rains down on teachers, schools, and students. Counterstories demonstrate the farce and harm caused by the realities we believe to be true (Delgado, 1989). Ultimately I want this work to present another narrative, allowing readers to examine the lenses through which teaching, teacher education, and schools have been viewed for some time. Delgado (1989) writes that counterstories are generative; they “can open new windows into reality. . . . [Stories] can quicken and engage conscience . . . [and] stir imagination in ways more conventional discourse cannot” (pp. 2414-2415). The stories of McKinley, its teachers, students, and students of teaching leave us with nagging questions. Will Alex keep coming to school? And if he doesn’t, is that a better choice for him? Does compliance make a good student? Do test scores? What kind of support do young teachers need in order to commit to and stay in struggling schools? Should race inform the ways in which we prepare young people to teach in diverse schools? I hope this writing spurs teachers to add their own stories to this one, incites rich discussion, and raises important questions. I offer up no neat and tidy answers.

The story is not all mine, nor told by me alone. Indeed I am not sure whose story it is; you can judge better. But it is all one, and if at moments the facts seem to alter with an altered voice, why then you can choose the fact you like best; yet none of them are false, and it is all one story. (Le Guin, 1969, p. 1)

The Walkthrough

The walkthrough is today.

In response to district demands for “data” demonstrating changes occurring (or not) in our “turnaround” school, three members of our leadership team have chosen to conduct their own “walkthrough” today at McKinley. They crafted their own rubrics over the weekend, between meetings, unbeknownst to the rest of us on the team. They argue the walkthrough is a way to meet the “objective,” data-based decision-making protocols required of all schools by our district. They’ve invited Marci, the woman assigned by the district to monitor our leadership team meetings, to take part.

A few years back, our superintendent hired an international, school-improvement consulting firm to conduct educational audits on each school in the district. The high-stakes process was intensive for all staff, involving curricular inspection, interviews with teachers, staff, and administration, and “walkthroughs” whereby the consultants would make roughly a hundred spontaneous, brief observations, capturing multiple “snapshots” of school culture and learning in a single day. McKinley teachers dubbed this particular aspect of the audit “the drive-by,” referencing the tactic used by gang members to assassinate rival associates while never leaving their moving vehicles. These walkthrough observations,² teachers argued, conducted by pricey consultants and district officials,

² I found little empirical work about the three-minute walkthrough in educational research. Also called “management by wandering around, The Learning Walk, drive-bys, and the three-minute walks” (Keruskin, 2005, p. 28), walkthroughs are used as a tool for supervision of teachers, assessment of classroom instruction, and/or school improvement in professional development and educational leadership journals (Bushman, 2006; Keruskin, 2005; Protheroe, 2009; Rossi, 2007; Skretta, 2008). Protocols for

reduced a teacher's "effectiveness" down to a decontextualized three-minute window, negating the relevance of the complexity, the situatedness³ of any "data" acquired during the process.

The leadership team members involved in today's walkthrough wave their hands at this concern. They argue that the process will be low-stakes, conducted by teachers and administrators. *Colleagues*, they assure the rest of us, *teammates*. They're looking for evidence of higher order thinking and student engagement and have created their own rubric to standardize what a "3" looks like for engagement or how they'll know a "1" when they see it. The rubric has not been shared with the staff. Nor is it clear what will come of the data collected from the walkthrough process.

walkthroughs are readily available for purchase on the Internet through educational consulting firms (see the Marzano Research Lab, as a well-known and respected example) and district websites.

³ Complex critical pedagogy elevates the importance of the multiple and complicated influences of social, economic, historical, and political context on classrooms, teachers, students, and schools. Kincheloe (2008) writes that "problems of teacher education and teaching are multidimensional and are always embedded in a context" (p. 32). Garrison (1997) describes the fluid and unpredictable nature of teaching and classrooms:

The context of teaching is always vague, inexact, and changing. The classroom is not the same in the fall as it is in the spring, or in the morning as it is in the afternoon. Students' and teachers' moods change throughout the day. Students become and cease being discipline problems, but exactly when it is sometimes difficult to say. The effect of our teaching frequently cannot be determined. We may have taught well, but the results will not reveal themselves until next year in (another teacher's) class. (p. 5)

Contextual factors, absent from many walkthrough protocols, have significant impact on both process and product of schools and on teaching and learning to teach.

I think about my own daily walks through the school as a partnership liaison, how my fleeting observations register judgment, compassion, or assessment of teachers' strengths, students' needs, and the quality of instruction as a whole that occurs at McKinley. My observations are multiple and cumulative, constantly in conversation with each other and situated in my own roots in the school and district.

I come in the back door.⁴ It doesn't look like much. Steel, painted black with a magnetized lock that requires keyed entry and exit; the door is tucked between the gym and the auto-shop, beside a garden of wrecked cars behind a chain-link fence. Today at least a dozen cars sit waiting, each one crusted with three inches of snow. Some balance on cinderblocks. A few others lean, mid-lurch, parked silently on a flat tire or a broken axle until their turn for attention.

Today I arrive with the special education busses. I pull up right around the same time they do. The door is open, and kids are wheeled and escorted in by a handful of patient McKinley paraprofessionals and support staff. For years, McKinley housed all of the DCD⁵ and Autism programs, as well as programs for physically disabled students.

⁴ In postcolonial, postmodern, feminist, and critical scholarship, the voice of the researcher/author often enters the narrative. The researcher walks within their text, mingling vignettes of autobiography and memory with cited evidence from other scholarly writings. These moves counter the scholarly voices of positivistic ontologies that call for researcher objectivity, neutrality, and distance. By inserting the *I* into scholarly work, these researchers trouble binaries, refusing to be either insider or outsider, "us" or "them." In such texts, the researcher is *both* author *and* subject, implicated in the research as privileged *and* connected to the research as subject.

⁵ Developmentally Cognitively Delayed

Lee,⁶ who never wears long pants unless he has to, waits to greet the bus and his students. His optimism is boundless and enduring. Today, Lee and I walk in together. Lee ushers in Abdifatah, a helmet-wearing, Somali boy who is non-verbal. Lee gently guides Abdifatah by the elbow and celebrates the sunshine, despite the 20-degree weather.

The back door doubles as the loading dock. Food, furniture, equipment, supplies, and teachers all enter the building through this door. The building engineers line the corridor with paint-chipped dollies and flatbed carts. Along with the teachers' lounge and the custodial storage areas, this back hallway is one of the few spaces in the school that feels undressed and raw. Diesel fumes mix with the funk that somehow seeps through the cinderblock walls separating this space from the locker rooms next door. The long mat that leads 40 feet from the door sounds perpetually wet under our feet. It's passing time for the students, and the two-minute warning bell has just sounded. At the end of the corridor, I wave to two teachers who stand at the far end of the hallway. Then I turn the corner.⁷

⁶ "Lee," along with all of the other characters in this story, does not exist in real life as represented here.

The actions taken and decisions made by characters in this story are rooted in qualitative data systematically collected through field notes and journals. They are also composites, compilations of characteristics taken from multiple people with whom I've crossed paths over more than 20 years of experience in public schools. Vickers (2010) argues such constructions are *fictive imaginings*, images and perspectives influenced by years of experience and/or research. They are fictive creations of truth, real and imagined.

⁷ While the insertion of the *I* in the text is central to self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001), my voice carries with it my biases, blind spots, and agendas. This elevates possibilities of reflexive writing, agency,

McKinley houses one of the few remaining industrial tech programs in the city. The automotive and construction programs allow students to earn a mechanic's certificate by graduation, which tips our school's gender balance to heavily male. When I first came to McKinley 14 years ago, I occupied one of the two classrooms nestled between the auto-shop garage and small electronics workshop. Those early months, I taught with constant headaches, which I attributed to a combination of the car emissions and my own stress from trying to figure out how to adjust to the developmental needs of a civics class full of ninth graders. Enrollment stood at 1600 back then, and kids filled every classroom. Because I was new to the building, the administration placed me in a room with three walls of windows that began at my waist. Two sides of the room peered into an antiquated computer lab. The other provided a constant view of the hallway. Mr. Reinheart, the junior varsity wrestling coach who taught economics in the room next door, advised me to cover every window with paper and posters, to keep my students from being distracted by their friends, who might be in the lab, and skippers, who might be in the halls on their way out the door. Kids still pressed their noses to the glass, sneaking a look at a friend or attempting to lure someone out of class and the building for a smoke.

and powerful examination of my positionality. I am a researcher with tremendous intimacy in this study. Simultaneously colleague, teacher, researcher, insider, and outsider, I have to critically examine and re-examine the various ways my position, and how I am perceived by others, affords me access to stories and experiences others may not have. As a researcher, my epistemological stance compels me to take up those discussions. As self-study centers me and my thinking in the work, the use of first-person narrative point of view further aligns and reinforces that centering.

Today the three walkthrough evaluators from the leadership team head into Mr. Abbot's auto-body classroom. Each of them has their arms folded around an iPad. I glance into the classroom as I pass. Each of McKinley's automotive and construction workshops sits beside a more traditional lecture space, where teachers can give instruction about the day's lesson. A half-dozen kids sit idle in the classroom, waiting for their turn to be told what to do. Two girls talk quietly. An African-American boy has his head down on the table, eyes closed. Another looks up from his cell phone as I pass, his ear buds waiting to be inserted. Another young man stares past me into the hallway while he finishes his breakfast. Mr. Abbot, their teacher, instructs a small group around a car in the lab area on the other side of the glass. It's unclear to me how this divide happens, but every day, Mr. Abbot's classroom has a similar split of students. I don't know the kids, nor do I have a sense of what students are expected to do. The walkthrough observers begin to tap on their iPads.⁸

I pass the physical education (P.E.) teachers. The two of them will retire this year. I get cynical smiles of greeting from both of them. They are in perpetual wait mode. They wait for their students to head to class, for their students to change into their gym clothes, for the next district initiative to pass, for the current superintendent to leave, for the final 40 days of their teaching careers to end. With the push for reading and writing, and in

⁸ In their study of 13 turnaround schools, Cucchiara, Rooney, and Robertson-Kraft (2013) found that administrator walkthroughs "were rarely accompanied by constructive or positive feedback," "focused largely on superficial issues" such as whether or not mandated displays hung from classroom walls, and were punitive in nature, "focused on ensuring compliance with arbitrary mandates rather than on real instructional improvement" (p. 17).

response to state-mandated tests, P.E. classes number between 30 and 40 students. Over the years, district and state funding focus on reading and math has reduced emphasis on the requirements for P.E. Other high schools in our district only offer “on-line” P.E., which allows a student who plays hockey or tennis for school teams or who has a membership to an athletic club to have those programs count for their P.E. credits. They fill out the requisite forms through the on-line course. At McKinley, many of our students work or have family responsibilities after school, limiting their ability to participate in team sports. But the reduction of district support for P.E. has widened the gap between “the haves and have-nots.” We have fewer P.E. teachers—only two full-time positions—and fewer P.E. elective opportunities.

The halls are busy this morning, especially the main link between the larger building and this back section. The art teacher, Ms. Giovanni, announced that she has started a mural with a visiting community artist. “Hopes” and “Dreams” face each other in floor to ceiling letters, the initial design outlined in dark blues and purples. Shadows of struggle lurk in the deep black background: a syringe, a smoking gun, a foreclosure sign, a skull. These images contrast with those of promise and possibility in the foreground: a diploma, a cap and gown.

When I turn the corner, I stop short.

Annika, the new ninth-grade girl who has Down syndrome, sits straddled on the floor of the central corridor between the main building and the Career and Tech Ed classrooms. Another paraprofessional, Marilyn, squats beside her and coaches her, trying to get Annika to follow her toward the DCD classrooms. “Annika, we don’t sit on the

floor. Up please!” Marilyn looks at me and smiles. “Good morning, Jehanne.” McKinley students step gingerly around Annika. Some flatten themselves against the walls in order to pass by.

“Morning Marilyn,” I smile. Marilyn crocheted a baby blanket for me when I was pregnant with my first son.⁹ At the time, she came into my classroom daily, assisting the two severely impaired students who were mainstreamed into my history classes. At McKinley, social studies classes have been the classes least likely to be tracked and most likely to include the greatest heterogeneity in student ability and achievement. As a social studies teacher, I was expected to teach the kids who were assigned to my class. End of

⁹ Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss the primacy of relationship in narrative research. They go as far as to say that the narrative inquirer “must ‘fall in love’ with their participants, yet . . . step back and see their own stories in the inquiry, the stories of the participants, as well as the larger landscape on which they all live” (p. 81). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) write of the challenges of insider research, where participants and researcher are bound together by relationships, co-investment, and history. My relationships and history with the participants and colleagues, upon whom McKinley’s characters are based, and my vested interest in urban school transformation both call for discussion of researcher positionality within a traditional research paper. The storied data here is my own, fraught with opinion, emotion, reaction, and bias; thus I claim no objectivity. Rather the opposite: This work is “unabashedly subjective” (Narayan, 1993, p. 682), and “perspectivist . . . reflect[ing] an external reality but only an aspect of it, the one visible from the particular spot, social and individual” (Maquet, 1964, p. 54, as cited in Narayan, 1993, p. 679) that I inhabit. I have attempted to create these composite characters out of love and honesty, as multidimensional and flawed. But they are my constructs, imagined and shaped by my lenses and perspectives on school, research, and teacher education.

story. Special education identification, level of English acquisition did not matter. Some of the teachers in my department argued against this. “Who in the hell thought it was a good idea to put a Pathways¹⁰ kid in my classroom? How do they expect me to teach the Magna Carta to a kid who can’t read?” But the general consensus at the time was that, of all courses, high school social studies should be a microcosm of the intellectual, ethnic, racial, socio-economic, and linguistic diversity of the school and the country.

That has changed. Our urban¹¹ district is in its third decade since abandoning forced integration and moving toward a model that embraced market forces as a means to

¹⁰ The Pathways program is a fictionalized name for a school-based program that provides academic, social, vocational, and life skills to high school students identified with special needs such as having an autism spectrum disorder or moderate developmental or cognitive or emotional impairments. Students might spend the majority of their time at school in a self-contained classroom and be mainstreamed, with the support of a paraprofessional, for a small portion of the school day. Such programs are common in public schools across the country.

¹¹ I almost hate to use the word “urban.” Weiner (2000) posits how “urban” became synonymous with ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity in research from the 1990s. Milner (2012) asserts that the term “urban” is defined in different ways across and among groups of educational researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. Anderson and Stillman (2013) acknowledge the “elusiveness of inter-subjectivity” in different interpretations and meanings of urban, but assume the term denotes conditions such as “resource shortages and demographic shifts in enrollment leading to increased numbers of students from non-dominant groups” (p. 7). In an attempt to sift out differences in demographics, geographies, and contextual complexities, Milner (2012) identifies three categories of “urban” schools: *urban intensive*, *urban emergent*, and *urban characteristic*. Milner’s categorization suggests a rubric of “urban school-ness,” a convenient way of checking mental boxes in order to associate an imagined, maybe stereotypical, human and geographic context with that being rendered by the text. We do this in multiple ways in education and

minimize racially segregated schools in the city.¹² First, the district created citywide magnet programs – schools within a school.¹³ They closed two or three high schools and

have for decades (Weiner, 1993, 2000). If I describe McKinley as urban, does the reader understand that as an indication of the city's size? Does it provide an image of the demographic and cultural soup that stirs within McKinley's walls? Does such a description offer an indication of how long or to what degree McKinley's 'problems' as a school can be linked to similar challenges that have faced U.S. city schools for half a century? In the case of McKinley High, urban is setting and context. Urban at McKinley embodies the educational landscape, the terrain, topography, and texture of the student body and school. Yet it is ultimately up to the reader to interpret the degree of "urbanness" embodied by my rendering of McKinley High. Can the reader see "urban" in panoramic view, with depth and dimension? Or will s/he see "urban" as a code word for African American, Latino, and poor? Will it mis/communicate the ways in which poverty and violence permeate the educational culture of the school? What notions of urban do you bring with you?

¹² In her comprehensive literature review, examining 37 years of research on the preparation of teachers for urban schools, Weiner (1993) identifies the late 1970s and early 1980s as decades in which school integration efforts were defeated and districts turned to competition as a means by which to convince district residents to continue voluntary desegregation and bring excellence and equity to historically underserved communities.

¹³ Saporito (2003) examines school choice data for the magnet high school programs in the School District of Philadelphia, a program that sought "to integrate schools racially by drawing students from 'white' parts of the city and also from private schools" (p. 187). The study found that white students were significantly more likely to apply to a public magnet school program if the percentage of non-white students in their neighborhood school increased or to remain in a neighborhood school if the percentage of white students increased or remained stable. While the author acknowledges that Philadelphia public magnet high schools became more integrated, the increased segregation in neighborhood high schools offset this gain, resulting in greater segregation districtwide.

placed high-powered, college-prep programs in predominately poor, African-American neighborhoods. Many in the district saw this as an attempt to keep white families in the district. A neighboring high school had a highly competitive program, collecting 300 applications from students across the district for 100 seats. When fuel costs made busing students across the city too pricey, district leaders split the city in two, enabling students to attend certain programs within their half of the city.

Some would argue that applying market forces to schooling means you create “winners and losers”:¹⁴ winner and loser schools and winner and loser *kids*. Residential

¹⁴ Scanning various state policies and mainstream media articles demonstrates the extent to which the language of competition and privatization has been normalized in discourse around schools. As an example, one writer explains their state’s funding formula as determined by the average daily membership of each “school corporation” (Indiana Public Media, n.d.) Critical scholars urge researchers to examine the role of capitalism in educational policy and knowledge production (Daniels & Porfilio, 2013; Grande, 2004; Ross, Gibson, Queen, & Vinson, 2013). Postcolonial theorists argue that capitalism and material wealth are inextricably intertwined with the history of how formerly colonized peoples have been educated (Coloma, Means, & Kim, 2009; Viruru, 2009). Writing from a disability studies perspective, Brantlinger (2006) argues that wealthy, white children and their families continue to benefit from the paradigm of meritocracy, particularly manifested through standardized testing, that grounds school policy and structures, while children of color, poor children, and children with disabilities lose out. Corporations, Taubman (2009) reminds his readers, “are *legally bound* to ‘pursue relentlessly and without exception, [their] own self-interest, regardless of the harmful consequences (they) might cause to others’” (p. 98). While economic principles, language, and paradigms have been used to describe and design systems, schools and teaching, students and learning since the creation of the Hampton Institute and the social efficiency movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Kliebard, 2004; Watkins, 2001), critical scholars call for detailed examination of educational policies and practices, giving careful attention to who

segregation in combination with economic privilege enabled certain students, many of them white, to attend high-powered, college-bound programs, and left other students, many of them poor, immigrant and students of color, “stuck” with their second or third choice program or their neighborhood school. Race and poverty continued to be concentrated in certain pockets of the city, which translated into racially isolated schools,¹⁵ segregated by class and race. McKinley was among them.

I walk past the walls of trophy cases. Photos of past McKinley football and basketball teams show how much the school’s student body has changed. Photos through the late eighties show seas of white-faced teenagers in McKinley uniforms when the school drew from the surrounding white, working-class neighborhood.¹⁶ I often wonder

benefits, who is harmed, and in what ways (Grande, 2004; Kincheloe, 2008; Taubman, 2009; Viruru, 2009; Watkins, 2001).

¹⁵ The term racial isolation as a descriptor for school demographics can be traced back as far as 1967, to a report produced by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR, 1967). Since then, the term has been used in various ways, often to justify or challenge desegregation policy decisions (Noguera, 2002; Thernstrom, 2005). School districts, policymakers, and researchers have used the term to describe schools where more than 75% of enrolled students identify as students of color. In some cases, the term connotes the population of a school as being overwhelmingly populated by students of a single non-white race, particularly African American or Latino. For the past two decades, more than 90% of McKinley’s student body has identified as non-white. A similar percentage of McKinley students have qualified for free and reduced-price lunch over that same period of time.

¹⁶ It’s not just the trophy cases. McKinley has a deep and generous alumni organization that continues to be involved with the school. I have served countless pancakes to McKinley alums at fundraiser breakfasts and listened to them sing the school rouser at basketball games. Overwhelmingly, the alumni who show up for

what McKinley students think when they look into the glass cases at so many photos of McKinley's formerly white student body. The contrast could not be starker. Today, McKinley boasts of students originating from 17 international countries, speaking 24 home languages. More than 40% of McKinley's students identify as Latino. Another 40% identify as African American or of African-Immigrant descent. Roughly 10% of our students identify as Asian American or as American Indian. The remaining number, give or take a few depending on the year, identify as white.

I pass by room 140, where one of the university teacher candidates, George Murphy-Coopman, stands silently, his hands plunked sheepishly in his pockets, as his cooperating teacher, Mr. Olson, stands at the whiteboard and outlines the directions for an assignment. I remind myself to schedule an observation with George. He is just weeks away from moving to his next school for his second practicum.

The bell rings just as I step into the stairwell and rattles me. I head for the second floor. The baritone of Mr. Boyd, our lead dean, comes over the schoolwide intercom. "Teachers, please lock your doors." A Latina student lets out a soft shriek and races down the stairs past me. Hall sweep. Doors close, and voices of the hall monitors and deans, transmitting to each other over in-house walkie-talkies, echo in the empty halls. As I turn

our cafeteria line pancakes appear to be white. They tell stories of hopping the freight cars in the winter in order to stay warm to and from school, or of the year they added the new addition to the back of the school, or of the year the football team won the state championship. Take a deep dive into the stacks of dusty yearbooks, tucked away in the storage area behind the copy room, and you are faced with pages and pages of light skin and European features, staring back at you in black and white.

the corner, I see Ms. Altoonian, who teaches Human Geography, glance in both directions before quickly letting a student into her classroom.

The next decade saw a string of superintendents come and go. Some in the district viewed this as opportunistic. They argued our district had become a stepping stone to larger, more high profile urban areas such as Chicago or Newark. One after another, each superintendent initiated new district policies and institutional decrees to tackle inequity, in many ways further edifying the “trust-the-market” model of schooling within the district. These policies occurred during a period of continuous drop in district enrollment.¹⁷ First, they eliminated essays as an application element into magnet programs. Then they removed test scores. Another policy required all magnet programs to accept the first applicants received, regardless of neighborhood or sibling preference. Another policy reinstated citywide entrance application to well-respected programs, but denied district bus service to students who lived outside of pre-determined zones. Each amended policy promised to create increased access for students who had been formerly marginalized by the test-driven application process. Some teachers and parents scoffed at these efforts, believing that at the end of the day, affluent families would always end up at the stronger schools. At one point a colleague cynically commented that you could tell which high school had the best college entrance rate by how many cars were parked in

¹⁷ Without disclosing the exact location of the school upon which McKinley is based, the National Center for Educational Statistics (2012) shows decreased school district enrollment every year between 1971 and 1984, mirroring a steady decline in the numbers of school-aged children during the same time period. A similar but smaller dip in enrollment occurred during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

the student parking lot. A middle school parent touring McKinley during orientation night explained that her son's first choice was a sister school in a wealthier part of the city, but she didn't know how she'd get him there, even if he got in.

Simultaneously, state and federal education funding continued to diminish. The Reagan administration moved to block grants for educational funding and decentralized educational decisions to states and communities.¹⁸ States changed educational funding formulas and legislated that school districts become more efficient with taxpayer dollars, squeezing budgets and pushing for eliminating excess personnel and programs from "bloated" district bureaucracies. Class sizes increased. Support positions were eliminated.

Different communities within the district voiced their concerns, depending on the policy implemented. Parents whose children attended the college-prep programs complained that accepting "just anyone" meant teachers had to "water down" curriculum, making it less rigorous for the students who "deserved" a challenging high school

¹⁸ Weiner (1993) argues the paradigmatic shift in educational funding during the Reagan years had a disproportionate effect on urban schools. Compensatory education saw a 25% drop in funding (p. 61). Dramatic cuts were made to schools, impacting working and learning conditions for students and teachers and furthering the deterioration of school facilities. Further, federal grants were left in the hands of state and local governments, allowing local politics, imbued with their own biases around race and class, to set school funding agendas. This trend was further exacerbated by funding formula changes by local policymakers, who implemented policies requiring districts to "cut the fat" and apply for funding through block grants, based on per-pupil membership, regardless of community context or need (p. 61).

education.¹⁹ Other parents decried the closing of their neighborhood schools,²⁰ pointing to the 45-minute bus rides their kindergartners were forced to endure or the lack of safety

¹⁹ Aligning with generations of research on white flight, Renzulli and Evans (2005) found that “nonwhite enrollment in public schools is perceived as a threat to the status of whites in the same schools and that whites will escape the threat by retreating to white schooling options” (p. 412) whether they be within-district white enclave schools, charter schools, or schools outside of the district. White families’ perceptions of school quality correlates inversely with the school’s enrollment of students of color, particularly African-American students (Goyette, Farrie, & Freely, 2012; Renzulli & Evans, 2005).

²⁰ hooks (1990b) writes, “An effective means of white subjugation of black people globally has been the perpetual construction of economic and social structures that deprive many folks of the means to make *homeplace*” (p. 46). She describes *homeplace* as a place of resistance, of memory and safety, a private refuge “from daily encounter(s with) white racist aggression” (p. 47). When local governments and school boards close schools and ship children from their own neighborhoods to distant and different others for their education, it is imperative to apply a critical lens and examine how factors of race and socioeconomic status weave into the decisions. More recently, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel announced the closure of some 50 schools, many of which are located in predominately African-American and Latino communities, communities that claim high numbers of low-income housing and have experienced high rates of foreclosure over the past decade (Ahmed-Ullah, Chase, & Sector, 2013; Chicago Teachers Union, n.d.; Fitzpatrick & Golab, 2013; Strauss, 2013). While neither as dramatic nor rapid, McKinley’s parent district has made similar moves, closing “feeder” schools with a history of poor performance on high-stakes tests or with high rates of student and teacher turnover, especially as enrollment declined. Applying hooks’s conceptualization of *homeplace*, it is possible to extrapolate the damage that occurs in the community at large. School closings shutter community cultural fixtures, often elementary schools that draw volunteers and children from the neighborhood, that sit just a short walk from home, and that connect families and children through classrooms, schoolwide celebrations, and festivals. School closings eliminate critical

on city bus routes for students who wanted to attend a school across the district but didn't have the means to get there on their own. In highly sought-after programs, students were over-enrolled. Students and parents complained of decreased lab time in science and classrooms bursting with students. Students were forced to sit on the floor or on countertops because there weren't enough desks to seat them all.

* * *

Mr. Lor, one of our World History teachers, unlocks the door to the second floor teachers' lounge and darts in without making eye contact. I hurry to catch the door behind him, so that I can put my lunch in the shared refrigerator. The room is stale, with two single, locking bathrooms for staff use, a fraying and sunken couch, and an inset countertop and sink, with a drying rack for the remnant silverware and CorningWare dishes staff use, left over from sets formerly used in the Home Economics classrooms. Two bulky vending machines stand sentry on either side of the couch, and an outdated television set is perched on a rolling cart, underneath a 30-year-old wall clock, tick-ticking in the silence. On the shelf below the television, a laser printer spews out papers. Mr. Lor stands in front of it, watching.

“Good morning, Mr. Lor,” I start. “How did first hour go for you?”

He grimaced. “Half my class was absent. I was giving a 300-point test.” He looks down at the papers he collects, then hurries from the lounge as quickly as he arrived.

community institutions that knit families together to create a collective sense of safety, familiarity, and *homeplace*.

Mr. Lor was placed here by the district last summer. Our school had two full-time teaching positions open up in social studies, something almost unheard of in the past 10 years of declining enrollment. Our principal was able to hire one new teacher, Ms. Altoonian, and in exchange, was required by Human Resources to “take” Mr. Lor. He teaches in another of the converted Home Economics rooms, large and boxy, but still fitted with multiple cooking stations, each with countertops, sinks, and cabinets. At least the ovens have been removed.

As political leadership at the district, state, and federal levels changed, teachers held daily discussions in the lounge, debating the impact these decisions had on their classrooms and school. Some teachers utilized the ability to move laterally, according to the district contract, in order to teach in college-bound programs in other schools.²¹ Others stayed put for various reasons: inertia, loyalty to their high school alma mater, a classroom with windows. And some stayed because they truly cared for McKinley students and couldn’t imagine teaching anywhere else. “McKinley kids. . . this school: It gets under your skin and into your heart,” Mr. Reinheart once told me. “How could I ever leave?”

²¹ Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2006) cite a half dozen empirical studies, ranging from 1955 to 2002, that show teachers “switch schools within a district, move from one district to another, or quit altogether if their original school has a higher percentage of low-achieving, low-income, or minority students” (p. 4). In a study of the effect of North Carolina’s teacher accountability policy on teacher retention in high-need schools, Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, and Diaz (2004) found that a classification of a school as “low performing,” as per state policy, intensified teachers’ exodus from struggling schools.

Once district policy allowed all eighth graders to rank their top three high school choices, high school administrators and teacher leaders began to spend tremendous time and resources on soliciting potential students. This process continues today.

Representatives from each school spend the month of November advertising their programs to 13-year-olds and their parents, in hopes of acquiring any possible future student they can find. Alternately some programs aren't looking for just "any" student. In some ways, high school programs are positioned to compete against each other for "the best" kids: kids with good attendance, with good grades, with active and involved parents. Kids who do their homework. Kids who return their textbooks at the end of the year, who apply for college. Kids who want to learn. Kids who stay the whole year. Kids who take band and choir and played sports. While certainly such a profile was not exclusively so, overwhelmingly the students that school magnet programs seek are privileged, middle and upper-middle class, and white.²²

²² Challenging the rhetoric of "fixing failure" that has driven countless reform measures in urban schools, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) argue that urban schools succeed at exactly what they are designed to do, which – in a paradigm that requires winners and losers – is fail. They write, "Perpetual urban school failure is tolerated because deep down our nation subscribes to the belief that *someone* has to fail in school" (p. 2, emphasis mine). Further justified by "racist and classist pseudo-scientific theories" that blame school failure on the inherent deficits of the students who attend, decades of budget shortfall, and structural inequities ensure that schools like McKinley will finish last (p. 2). Unless systemic change occurs in schools and districts that serve the nation's poorest and most disenfranchised communities, schools like McKinley will always lose.

McKinley responded to the period of competing magnet programs by initiating its own, one after another, each promising academic rigor and “21st century skills for the workplace” in an attempt to draw college-bound students and students from the neighborhood who had fled to private, Catholic, and other magnet programs across the city. The BizTech Program, promising students computer graphics training and mastery of programming skills, lasted five years. An attempt at a Humanities program was unable to fill its enrollment quota and was told to fold its students into McKinley’s standing programs after only a year and a half. McKinley couldn’t erase the narrative that cast it as a dangerous, low-performing school.²³ An anonymous comment on a school review website warned parents new to the area, “If you have a high schooler and you want your kid to stay alive, make sure she doesn’t go to McKinley. That school is a breeding ground

²³ Yon (2000) applies the concept of a “spoiled identity” to describe the struggle facing “Maple Heights,” a diverse, urban Canadian high school. His study highlights the discrepancy between the normalized discourse of racialized violence woven into the school’s reputation, as described by neighbors and students alike, and the predominately non-violent and calm reality of everyday life at the school. Goyette, Farrie, and Freely (2012) write,

A school’s reputation may be founded on “good” information gained from intimate knowledge of the school’s culture and practices that families who have children attending them may know and provide. It may be gained from test scores and other statistics published in local newspapers or other media. It may be acquired by researching particular neighborhood schools on the Internet. Or, it could be that changes in a school’s demographics indicate to white neighborhood residents that school quality is changing. (pp. 156-7)

Perception and identity become synonymous, regardless of the factual basis of the claims.

for gang activity.’²⁴ Those of us who staffed McKinley at the time recognized the stew of fiction and fact that made up such statements. While true that, for a while, we had a string of fights in the school, most of them were extensions of neighborhood power grabs and often involved non-McKinley students. Somali and African-American conflicts that started two miles away, on a soccer field or basketball court, spilled over into our hallways. Aspiring gang members tired of tagging alleyways and corner markets in

²⁴ A footnote is a funny thing. Textual form signals the reader to come at a text with a certain set of understandings. As a reader, you make an unspoken contract with the text, based on how the text presents itself, the form it takes. Structure and shape cue the green light for the reader to carry with them a set of assumptions about truth and authority, fact and fiction. For social scientists, the footnote is a time-honored tool signaling the reliability of a textual claim. It suggests the science behind the statement, asserts that claims have not been conjured from the writer’s imagination and subjectivity. It provides narrative authority (Bowerstock, 1983-1984). Fiction-based research muddies these waters. Data is reconstructed, reshaped and molded to serve the narrative arc of the story. Understanding the complexity of McKinley’s story requires historical, sociocultural, and political context. It is a multi-layered context that cannot be reduced to a rubric descriptor or a set of graphs and data points. The decisions and judgments made by people who inhabit and experience, teach and learn in schools like McKinley are informed by and in dialogue with a cacophony of competing and conflicting narratives on teaching, urban schools, and students. If I were to link you to this blogger’s site to prove its veracity, it would reveal the location of my research and strip McKinley High of its anonymity. Is it enough to know that such stories exist? That neighbors and community members render judgments on schools like McKinley from up close and from afar, with sometimes little to no personal experience within the school itself? Yet those stories shape our conceptualization of high schools like McKinley. They inform our decisions of whether or not to send our children there. They help us determine if a school like McKinley is a safe place to teach or work.

neighboring communities attempted to prove their allegiance by jumping a potential enemy in McKinley's cafeteria, surrounded by quick-acting staff. On the rare occasion that a student fight required police intervention, news media – eavesdropping on police radio networks – rushed to McKinley and parked outside to get a sensational clip for the local news at six, each rebroadcast further reinforcing McKinley's reputation as a troubled and unsafe school.²⁵ Mr. Reinheart joked that if a McKinley student had a nosebleed, WTCK-TV reporters would get it on film.

I walk by Ms. Washington's class, a student favorite. She is perched on her stool, students seated in rows, and she reads aloud from *Catcher in the Rye*. The students are rapt. She is one of a handful of McKinley language arts teachers who reads the assigned texts to her students. The entire book. "We'd never get through the required texts, otherwise," she has explained to me, rolling her eyes. I wonder whether I should interpret her eye roll as a reflection on her assessment of her students' ability or on the unrealistic

²⁵ Coloma, Means, and Kim (2009) define *palimpsest* as a process of re-inscription of text on top of text, overlaying other texts. Stemming from a time when parchment was used and re-used for the creation of texts, *palimpsest* describes the tracings of previous (multiple) texts that remain visible and present beneath and betwixt the new text that is created on the parchment. Considering McKinley and its attempts to redefine its identity, no matter how many teachers and students have left, no matter that we are constantly trying to revise and rethink how we transform the school, the previous discourses and narratives of what our school was, not just two years but decades ago, remain visible. Further, the interplay between and the cumulative effect of these multiple narratives of McKinley as a place of dysfunction and violence have an impact on how teachers perceive the school, how students perceive the school, and how school culture is shaped. Past inscriptions of gang fights, failing programs, and out-of-control classrooms continue to be present in the discourse that shapes current decisions – both on institutional and individual levels.

expectations required by the school and district. Still, to a kid, her students love her, and it's always been that way. She knows each and every one. She lives in the neighborhood and is on a first-name basis with their families, as she reminds them. News reports never showed Ms. Washington, nor other McKinley teachers, at the funeral of Tavian Lee, the 10th grader who was shot while walking home from school last winter. Nor did reports mention that teachers, led by Ms. Washington's efforts, raised nearly \$2000 for the Lee family, so that they could pay for funeral expenses. She works late daily; her classroom is a refuge for students who don't want to go home, who need a ride, who have nowhere to study when they leave school. None of that will be observable in today's walkthrough though. Based on their criteria, their definition of successful teaching, Ms. Washington will score low. Students will be observed as passive listeners. Those who conduct the walkthrough will think Ms. Washington is the show.

Outside the classrooms, new banners hang from the ceilings in the hallways that run east-west on each floor. Each displays a small but diverse group of students, heads down, textbooks in hand, posed uncomfortably against windows or on the hallway floor, somewhere students would never be permitted to hang out during the school day. The footer reads: McKinley High: High Standards for All. Our current superintendent has established a vision for the district high schools premised on the notion that uniformity will guarantee equality.²⁶ Abandoning efforts to combat residential segregation and

²⁶ Taubman (2009) writes that the move to standardization and accountability has had a radical impact on public schools and is based on a complete misunderstanding of what it is to teach. He argues that "the choices reduce teaching to skills and techniques, a one-size-fits-all approach that is perfectly consistent with the focus on testing" (p. 46).

continuing to face unfunded mandates from the federal government along with astronomically growing special education costs, the district has returned all students to their neighborhood schools. To enroll a child in a district high school other than her assigned neighborhood school requires political capital, time for phone calls and meetings, and stamina. The district's response is that it will ensure equal educational quality by creating a policy of standardization across high schools.²⁷ All neighborhood schools, regardless of the demographics of their attendees or of the neighborhood where they sit, are to house an International Baccalaureate (IB) program,²⁸ open to all students who choose to enroll. A select few magnets remain open district-wide, McKinley's automotive program among them, enabling any student to attend regardless of residence, without meeting any application requirements. The IB program is not required of all students but is open to them, thereby creating internal tracks in each school. With standardized programs sharing the same scope and sequence, learner objectives, and performance assessments across high schools, the district argues, there is no need for students to be bused across town for a better education. Another high school in our half

²⁷ Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) write that "the stratified nature of our society creates a social pyramid that has no room at the top for the masses. This structure requires people to be sorted" (p. 3). Schools serve as a critical mechanism in this sorting process. When one urban school shakes off its apron of failure and produces improvements, they argue, a different school, serving a similarly disenfranchised community, replaces them at the bottom of the heap, thus maintaining society's racist and classist taxonomy.

²⁸ The IB program is an international curricular program that encourages critical and intercultural thinking (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2005-2016b).

of the city, located in a more affluent community, graduates hundreds of students with the IB diploma, thereby branding students with a prestigious graduation certificate. Last year at McKinley, our first year as an IB-certified school, we had four students begin all of the elements required to meet the IB diploma. No one finished. A top-notch student explained to me when he abandoned one of the more intensive requirements of the diploma process: “It’s not that I don’t want to do it. I just can’t. I have to work.” Requirements for the IB Diploma track demand a seven-period schedule, shortening class periods to 48 minutes. McKinley teachers must regularly attend official trainings, offered in Palm Springs or Indianapolis, starting at \$2500 per teacher, in order to maintain our certification, and must prepare students for assessments designed by external “experts” who have no knowledge of our students or their communities.

I reach the partnership classroom, where we hold methods classes, focus groups, and meetings related to the university-school partnership development work.²⁹ As I come

²⁹ Decades ago, teacher education researchers and policymakers called for the creation of professional development schools (PDS) to catalyze school improvement and close the gap between school- and university-based teacher preparation (Breault & Breault, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2005; The Holmes Group, 1986; Snyder, 1999; Teitel, 2003). Teacher preparation programs set about the complex business of partnering with P-12 districts, sometimes in wholesale fashion (Wong & Glass, 2009), other times more selectively with individual schools (Bondy, 1999; Bullough, Kaychak, Crow, Hobbs, & Stokes, 1997; Bullough, et al., 1999; Walters & Pritchard, 1999; Winitzky, Stoddart, & O’Keefe, 1982). Engaged in research as these organizational changes ensued, educational researchers began to identify challenges as well as successes with the PDS model. “When they ‘work,’” Snyder (1999) writes, “they improve the efforts of experienced K-12 educators, experienced college-based teacher educators, and credential candidates (see, e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1994; Levine & Trachtman, 1997; Petrie, 1995; Pugach &

to the door, the classroom behind me erupts with a long, loud, and taunting “Whoa!” A quick glance behind me and I spot Ms. Alvaro bent over the corner of her desk, finishing a referral form for a lanky African-American boy standing, empty-handed, in front of her. His pants sag and he grins at the verbal support he’s getting from his peers. By the time I’ve unlocked the room, the boy saunters out of Ms. Alvaro’s class and hollers to the dean at his post down the hall, “Yo, Markus! She kicked me out again!” I hear a burst of laughter from the class. Ms. Alvaro quietly shuts the door, her lips pursed and white. I

Johnson, 1995; Winitzky, Stoddart, & O’Keefe, 1992; Zimpher, 1990)” (p. 37). Challenges include an increased demand on university-based faculty to be in schools conflicting with tenure requirements for research (Bullough, et al., 1999; Snyder, 1999); ideological and bureaucratic constraints on academic freedom as well as in teacher education and practical pedagogies, particularly when partnering with districts and schools with high populations of students in poverty (Winitzky, Stoddart, & O’Keefe, 1982; Wong & Glass, 2009); scant attention paid to equity through the PDS model (Breault & Lack, 2009; Murrell, 1998); significant expense to schools and teacher education colleges in terms of time and financial resources (Bullough, et al., 1997; Chase & Merryfield, 2000; Dickens, 2000; Hayes, 2009; Snyder, 1999); and little decision-making power afforded anyone outside the school-university binary, such as community stakeholders, students, or parents, something particularly needed in urban school-university partnerships (Murrell, 1998, 2008; Peterman & Sweigard, 2008). Those working within professional development schools, as clinical teacher educators (Cornbleth & Elsworth, 1994; Dailey-Dickinson, 2000) and school liaisons (Teitel, 2003), discuss the precarious footing of the roles (Mesmer, 1998) and the relationship-dependent work of bridging school- and campus-based teacher preparation (Graham, 2006; Martin, Snow, & Torres, 2011; Teitel, 2003; Wong & Glass, 2009). As funding for professional development schools diminished, teacher preparation programs have shifted emphasis toward partnership (CAEP, 2013; NCATE, 2001, 2008).

remind myself to offer her help again, to see if there's a chance she might let me help a bit and co-teach a lesson or provide her with some coaching. Previous offers have been politely refused. Even with her door closed, I feel the tension in the room, the students seemingly ready to wrestle her to submission. Maybe they already have.

I settle into my empty classroom and open my laptop. Second period is well underway, and the halls are quiet. As I fire off an email to George's university supervisor, I see the three walkthrough observers pass by my door. Marci, the district-appointed instructional evaluator participating in today's walkthrough, stops in the doorway and simultaneously pushes her glasses back up the bridge of her nose. "We're heading to the math wing. Only about a dozen more observations to go. Care to join us? We can get you an iPad so that you have your own rubric."

"Sorry. I can't," I lie. "I have a mess of emails to respond to and a meeting to attend in 15 minutes."

"Okay," she says and then points her finger at me. "But next time, you're coming with."

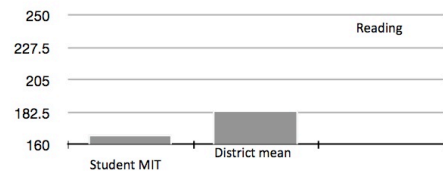
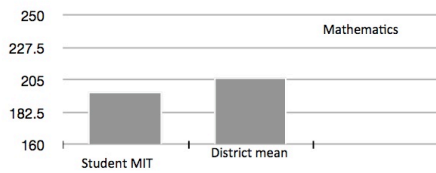
Juan, Look at Me

Name: Juan [REDACTED]		Date administered: 02-22-2015
Grade: 11		Home Language: Spanish
Language Domain	Scale Score (Possible 100-600)	Proficiency Level (possible 1.0-6.0)
Speaking	357	3.1
Listening	438	6
Writing	388	3.5
Reading	400	5.5
Oral Language ^A	397	4.6
Literacy ^B	394	4
Overall Score ^C (Composite)	394	4.2
A – Oral Language = 50% Listening + 50% Speaking B – Literacy = 50% Reading + 50% Writing C – Overall Score = 35% Reading + 35% Writing + 15% Listening + 15% Speaking		

First Quarter Report Card McKinley High School					
Name: Juan [REDACTED]					Grade: 11
					Date: [REDACTED]
Course	Per	Teacher	Grade	Comment 1	Comment 2
English 11	1	Sandstrom	F	13 – Missing assignments	41- Frequently absent
U.S. History	2	Altoonian	D	41 – Frequently absent	36 – Low participation
Physics	3	Mercer	D	16 – Improve work habits	
Auto Mechanics II	4	Abbot	A		
Algebra II	5	Flores	F	32 – Contact Teacher	43 – Absent on test days
Art	6	Giovanni	C+	27 – Very creative	
Health	7	Anderson	D	84 – Attendance concerns	

Student's Name: [REDACTED], Juan Student ID: [REDACTED] Grade: 11

Term/ Year	Grade	MIT (+/- Std Err)	Percentile Range	Term/ Year	Grade	MIT (+/- Std Err)	Percentile Range
FA13	11	194-197-202	44-45-47	FA 13	11	163-167-172	37-42-48



Problem solving	High	Measurement and geometry	Low
Number sense	Mid	Statistics and probability	Low
Computation	Low	Algebra	Low

Vocabulary	Low	Grammar	Low
Comprehension of literature	Low	Analysis and evaluation of language and writing	Low
Comprehension of informational texts	Low		

Juan walks with his hands in his pockets; the deflated black backpack slung low looks too small for his broad shoulders. He keeps his hair cut short and shaves every day, but his wide feet have split the leather on the outsides of his too-narrow sneakers. He sits in the back of the classroom whenever he can. He leaves the assignments his teachers distribute in the metal basket under his desk, nameless. He draws elaborate scenes of imagined forests and futuristic cities. Black-penned branches, birch trunks, and brittle skyscrapers line the edges of his folders, the inside cover of the textbook he's handed, the boundaries of his desks and lab table.

When he arrives late, he avoids the front door, the security check, and the I.D. scan. Instead, he circles the building, around the block, past the football field and the student parking lot, and up past the teachers' cars. He scans the littered cars in the auto shop parking lot, waiting their turn, and he pulls open the unlocked shop door. Jay Abbot, the auto mechanics teacher, looks up and nods at him as he walks in, and then returns to the supervision of three other students at work under the hood of a rusting-red 1994 Miata. Juan waits in the classroom, adjacent to the body shop and, through the window, watches one cluster of students, looking up at the chassis of a Corolla, elevated above them. Juan sits with his jacket still on, hands in his pockets, until the bell rings and he can filter into the rest of the crowd in the hallway and head toward Physics class.

Even in the hallways, he keeps to himself. He walks along the wall, his shoulder skimming the painted cinderblock, his eyes fixed on the next step. He looks up only to avoid contact. He looks away to avoid it as well.

Juan's teachers complain. *He never turns in his work. Doesn't care. When he's in class, his head is always down. His parents were no-shows at conferences. I tried the number the office gave us: disconnected.* The art teacher, Ms. Giovanni, credits his work, even the pieces that have only been started, the ones he leaves in his art file in the back of her classroom. She told him this once, quietly complimented the skeletal skylines and fragile forests, ghostly gracing so much of his work. *You have real talent, Juan,* and she described the sophistication of the lines, the depth and texture his drawings conveyed. *Thanks Miss,* he answered but he never looked up. Never met her eyes. He didn't come to class the next day.

Some days he makes it to health class and slides into a desk against the back wall. Other days, he skips class and heads to the auto-shop after art, moving slowly through the halls, to the back corner of the school. It's quiet, with the exception of a spluttering engine or the clank of a dropped wrench. Mr. Abbot, who tells his students to call him Jay, waves Juan over to help Lenny, another junior, dismantle the engine of a snowmobile that some kid's dad brought in. Lenny talks enough for the both of them, which allows Juan to disappear into the metalwork. Juan familiarizes his hands with the stripped threads around the motor mount, the stained rubber of the gaskets, the mottled metal cowling. He sees their interactions, the fitting together of tooth and groove. *Dude, slow down*, Lenny complains and watches in silence as Juan sets each piece down, system and function communicated through its placement on the cement floor.

The bell rings to mark the end of the day, and the hours pass. At 8 pm, Mr. Abbot tells Juan he's got to close the shop. He has to go home. Juan has buffed each part of the dismantled engine and cleaned the power valves. Mr. Abbot asks, *you want to work on the fuel pump tomorrow?*

Juan stands. *Yeah. Thanks.*

No problem, and they shake hands.

See you tomorrow, then. Juan slips on his jacket and backpack and heads out into the night.

Veteran Teacher: *When I First Got Here*

McKinley was probably about
25% White,
Maybe another
Forty or so Black,
and
Asian, a
Large Hmong population.

It was
The traditional high school
That I had always imagined
I would be teaching in:

It was diverse.
It was vibrant.
It had a lot of
Extracurricular activities.

There were just
So many different aspects
Of my traditional high school
That I saw at McKinley.

That changed dramatically
With the advent of
White flight.

Within two to three years
McKinley became majority African American and East African,
And the Whites and the Hmong
Left the school.
Someone actually jokingly said
In a staff meeting

*We should add an R
To McKinley's name,
So we can be
MRHS.*

The R
Stood for “remediation”

Yeah.

And to be honest,
That is exactly what happened.

By 2000
We became focused on state testing.

All the elective courses
Were basically
Dropped for reading courses.
We even experimented
With two-hour blocks
For math and reading and English.

The school felt more like a place
Of remediation,
Strict curriculum,

All from a deficit perspective:

We don't measure up,
And somehow we have to get
"These type" of kids
To measure up.

And it was. . .
I wouldn't say
Joyless
But it was far different
Than what
I had set out to do
As a teacher.

And
I never,
Not once,
Thought it was necessary

That those students
Who came to us in
2000
2001
2003

Should have been subjected
To the educational experiences
That they had.

They should never have
Come to school
With these fecund minds,
Hearts open,
And be told
From the jump
That they were crap
By state measures.

Told that,
Somehow,
If we're lucky
We'll get them
To measure up,
By the time they graduate,
Or they can
Go to summer school
After their twelfth year.

To this day
I think about those kids who graduated
In that time period
And I feel ashamed.

I feel so bad
For what we did to them
Those last four years
Of secondary education.

To this day.

Things loosened up
Once we started getting rid of NCLB
But that's been slow.
Really slow.
And our demographics changed again.

We were
African American,
Working class Whites

– not girls though. . .
There was a period of six years
Where I taught
One white girl.

Yeah.

But I'm from
The South
And I already know how that works:
With segregation,
Whether it's
De facto segregation or not,

They'll send their sons
But they won't send their daughters.
And so all the white girls
Went to Central.
They would not send their daughters to us
When the alpha males are
African American.

And
I knew that our school
Would change
Its philosophy,
Its way of doing things
Once white girls showed back up.

So in 2011
I taught two –
But they were your working class white girls,
So I knew
We hadn't really turned a corner.

2012
I think I had three.
And then 2013
I had probably eight,
And I said,
Oh
We have arrived!

I am saying this sarcastically

But you know,
When
The neighborhood
Decides
That it's okay for their kids
To show up,

And I'm not talking about
Your neglected,
Your foster kids,
The kids of parents who
By default
Let their children end up at McKinley,

But the neighborhood kids enroll. . .

Then we would change
The way we approached
Teaching ALL of the students,

Because our society's most precious resources
Had finally shown up.

Is there a direct correlation?
Was there causation?

(Shrugs).

I know what I know.
I know what I know.

Sugar Cane

Deidre Ellis waits years before she takes on a student teacher.³⁰ Fourteen years, to be exact. She is a decent social studies teacher. One of McKinley's better ones for a long time, she believes. But she isn't sure what she has to offer a student teacher. Even now, looking at Noah as he leans over a cluster of four students, she still isn't sure what guidance she has to offer him.

The teachers' union provides a visual for salary advancement, a stair-step graphic filled with various numbers, years, and degrees. Ms. Ellis thinks about that tippy-top step and all it signifies. Top dollar, a doctorate. She certainly isn't there on the salary scale by virtue of her seniority in the district, but she wouldn't place herself on that tippy-top step in terms of her practice either. Even so, past principals have called her teaching *solid*. Some things Ms. Ellis does well.

1. Her classroom is organized. She has a plastic bin for each class perched on the windowsill. Ms. Ellis labels each bin, uniform in color (blue), according to the class period and subject. Students submit work to be graded in the appropriate bin. If a student tries to put a completed assignment in her hand, she points to the bins.

³⁰ Typically, after a string of university-based courses on theory and subject matter, countless teacher candidates venture forth across the border between theory and practice and into schools to learn under the supervision of a massive army of practicing teachers. Yet voices from this widespread force of cooperating teachers are conspicuously underrepresented in teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

2. She has never lost a student paper. Student work moves from the appropriately labeled bin to a corresponding manila envelope, sealed before it enters her bag if she carries it home. Otherwise, work stays in the bin until it is graded. Systems are key.³¹
3. When it comes to grading, she is all about boundaries. She keeps an egg timer in her bag, one at her desk in the classroom, and one at home, not far from her kitchen table. She allots two prep hours per week for grading, two nights at home, and four hours on Sunday afternoon. When it is time to grade the occasional essay she has assigned her students, out comes the egg timer. If she is at school, she locks the door. At home, her children know she is not to be interrupted. She twists the plastic face and allocates each paper six minutes. Years before, when her class sizes dropped to 18 and 20 students, she upped the essay grading time to seven. If her numbers exceed 30 per class, she reduces it to five minutes.
4. She makes every class minute count. Ms. Ellis refuses to give up instructional time to pass back papers, and she informs her students on the first day of school that any returned papers can be found in bins, another set (red),

³¹ Cooperating teachers see one of their roles in working with teacher candidates as transmitting the practical processes of teaching: how to grade, how to organize your classroom, and of course, classroom management. Teacher preparation programs expect cooperating teachers to model and teacher candidates to mimic practical teaching strategies and routines. Cooperating teachers view this work as a counterbalance to overly-theoretical campus-based coursework (Clark, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2013).

corresponding to their class period and located on the other side of the room, near the door.

5. The behavior problems Ms. Ellis faces are few and far between. (A few cusswords early in the semester. Maybe a fight, if the hallways spill into the classroom on a tough day. But otherwise, the kids are mostly fine. They might not do the work, but they don't cross her much.)
6. Ms. Ellis is kind. Some of her kids have crazy, chaotic lives. Some of them live in situations she cannot imagine. She knows she cannot save them from their circumstances, but the least she can do is be compassionate. She pins photos and thank you notes from past students on the bulletin board beside her desk, each card and note recognizing Ms. Ellis for "being there for them" and "all the times she cared." Each summer, the photos are gently placed in a shoebox in her locking cabinet, the only one in the classroom, and then re-hung the next fall, the process fueling her for the coming year.
7. She accepts the students for who they are as students. If kids don't do the work, there isn't much Ms. Ellis can do to force them. So long as they are not disruptive in her classroom when she is trying to teach the kids who care to learn, she is fine with it. And she tells them that regularly. "If you don't care about your own learning, that's your business. As soon as you interfere with someone else's learning, you've entered into my territory. That's my business." She figures you can only lead a horse to water so many times. Maybe they need a different kind of school or a different kind of teacher. Or

they just aren't in a place where they can handle it, right now. Some of her colleagues at McKinley take that kind of student behavior, the not-trying, personally. Ms. Ellis believes that is simply a waste of psychic energy.

8. Not every day in her classroom is the same-old, same-old. Mondays she leads class with a lecture. Tuesdays, students sit in groups of four and pour through primary documents. Wednesday and Thursday might involve textbook work or a documentary video or a test. Every Friday, the students sit face-to-face in mini-mock debates of current issues, each required to defend a side of a controversy, without knowing which side to prepare for until the moment they enter the classroom. Ms. Ellis reckons it pushes them to step outside their comfort zones to try and speak to a perspective they might not know well. For the hard workers like Amina and Tou, Rudolfo and Jayden, it is their favorite day of the week, and Ms. Ellis regularly groups them together so that, at least on that day, they feel challenged.

If there is more to her teaching that is worthy of imitation,³² Ms. Ellis isn't conscious of it. Or that's what she has told the partnership liaison when asked to host Noah for his student teaching practicum. Taking on a student teacher would require that she explain herself, verbalize what she did in the classroom. She isn't so sure she is up to the task.

³² One of the most critical roles of the cooperating teacher is that of modeling. Cooperating teachers provide a live model for what it means to teach in practice (Clark, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2013). Research shows that cooperating teachers emphasize their role as practical models in response to their concern that campus-based teacher preparation programs are "too theoretical" and out of touch with the day-to-day work of the classroom (Clark, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2013; Evans & Abbot, 1997).

Take last Friday. A crazy day. At 3:15, once she survived it, Ms. Ellis stood in the hallway, comparing notes with three other teachers on her floor. Kids had bounced off the walls, shouting obscenities so loudly during second hour that one of the teachers joked about lining the ceilings with mattresses. (Ms. Ellis had simply closed her door). She had sent three students out during third hour, another one from fourth, and three more after lunch. There had been a fight at lunch, evident from the frenzied voices climbing the stairwells as they came up for fifth hour. *Something in the air?* the teachers wonder. *Maybe the moon is full? Or end of the month and not much in the fridge at home for some of them,* they remind each other. Whatever it was, they all agree: The day was nuts.

“I totally had to switch up what I was doing with my students, because it just wasn’t working,” Ms. Ellis flattens the fronts of her maroon slacks. She grimaces at the thought of Noah, leaning placidly against the heating unit as she led the class earlier in the day. “Noah was here this morning. He watched it happen, but I didn’t really explain it to him. I should have talked to him, afterwards maybe. Just to try and tell him what I switched up and why. I’m sure he had no idea it was happening. How could he? I didn’t know I was going to change gears until I saw what was going on in the room with the kids and I was like, okay. Time out. We’re going to do something different here.”

The other teachers confirm her assessment. One comments, “When admin came in to observe me last week, I changed up my lesson, 20 minutes in. They couldn’t tell. You just know how to do it when it’s needed.”

“Exactly,” Ms. Ellis continues, “You just know. It’s like when somebody forgets their line on stage and improvises. Just comes up with something similar, something that

works in the moment. The audience is none the wiser. They think the play went on just like it was supposed to. It's like that here. But I've got to explain all of that to Noah. I don't think he even sees when I change things up, right on the spot. I don't think he sees much, honestly." And yet, somehow, she'd been convinced to serve as a cooperating teacher with this new university partnership McKinley had forged.

So far, he was a bit of a disaster. Noah liked the kids. That, she could tell. But he gave off this arrogance, a know-it-all, I-listen-to-rap-music-too vibe that turned her students off. On top of that, Noah continued to talk over the heads of the kids, both cognitively and literally; Tou being one of them. And he was one of the top kids in the 12th grade. Noah towered over their desks and preached his radical, hippy-take on the recession when they were required to read an article on the housing market crash. Noah would get stuck there, in all of his professing, talking at them, thinking he was connected and focused on this one conversation and that they were with him. Meanwhile the rest of the kids were just on their own, lost without directions, without him to help them through the assignment. While Noah stood and talked, Tou caught Ms. Ellis's eye and shook his head. "How long is he gonna be here?" Tou asked later, after Noah had left for the university for his afternoon classes.

"Not too long," Ms. Ellis replied.³³

³³ Anything that takes teachers away from their students is seen as problematic, and that includes hosting a teacher candidate (Clark, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2013; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Teachers are focused on their students, supporting their learning, seeing the proverbial light bulb go off. "I'm here to teach," one McKinley physics teacher told me. "I'm not going to take some student teacher on and then sit back and watch them mess it up. That's no fun." The thought of turning over the classroom, giving up teaching and

With Noah, Ms. Ellis doesn't know what to say, even though she had so much to tell him. On good days, he shows up late, just before the bell, sometimes well into first hour on the bad ones. He dresses like he has, only moments before, rolled out of his sleeping bag at the Occupy Wall Street camp that has been set up in One City Plaza for the past month. She never sees his lesson plans before class starts, though she has asked for them multiple times.

"I'm still working on them," Noah offers sheepishly, rewrapping his blonde dreadlocks with a thick, beige utility rubber band. "My computer has been giving me trouble. I'm heading to campus later today."

She emails the supervisor from the university. He promises to observe within the week and assures Ms. Ellis that Noah's lesson plans would be completed in a more timely fashion. "Remember this is Noah's first field experience. Mistakes are part of the territory," the supervisor writes. "Just let him teach one class."

Ms. Ellis doesn't blame Noah entirely. Another part of the problem is that there simply is no time to talk to him. Her schedule has her teaching four sections of government straight: one sheltered, one IB, the other two, sandwiched in between, regular run-of-the-mill. All the other cooperating teachers at McKinley have the luxury of time to sit down and talk, maybe even co-plan with their student teachers. Ms. Ellis has none of that. Even when Noah shows up on time, the students arrive soon after, and then they teach for four straight hours. Ms. Ellis sees 100-plus students before she has more than

the care of students to a novice dissuades many talented teachers from taking on a teacher candidate (Bacharach, Heck, & Dahlgren, 2010; Clark, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2013).

four minutes of passing time to actually have a conversation with the young man. Then he hurries back to the university for his methods courses. “If we’re going to do this right,” she tells the partnership liaison, “that schedule has to change, either on his end or mine. There has to be time for me to just talk to him, to debrief what has happened. Or to plan for the next day! If I am ever going to do this again, I need a prep hour so that I can co-plan with my student teacher. You tell Ms. Sanchez that they need to free me up for this. All of us who are serving as cooperating teachers need an extra prep, so that we can do it right.”

Without time to talk to Noah, she sought help from her McKinley colleagues. “Does your student teacher behave like this?” Ms. Ellis asks Mr. Arnold, who has also taken on a candidate from the same university.

“It sounds like you just got a bad one.” Mr. Arnold punches the diet coke button on the vending machine in the teachers’ lounge. The bottle sticks somewhere in the machine’s innards. “C’mon, ya stupid thing!” and Mr. Arnold slams his giant self into it. The machine rocks backward. He looks back at Ms. Ellis and gives the metal box a second body check. “Just tell the university how bad it really is. They need to know.” The diet coke comes tumbling out.

And so she does. When the supervisor shows up to check in after observing another teacher candidate at McKinley, Ms. Ellis describes Noah’s lack of organization, his lack of awareness around the students, her concerns. The supervisor nods, then shrugs, “I’ve seen worse.”

And so, Ms. Ellis lets Noah take the reins of her first and second hour government classes, because she believes that's what she is supposed to do. "He deserves a chance to fall on his face," Mr. Arnold coaches her. "Sink or swim. That's what we all had to do, remember?"

She gives Noah the Revolutionary War period, the Constitutional Convention, and the Bill of Rights. "Be sure to get the kids to see the war from an economic standpoint, how the slave trade impacted the decisions made about state and federal rights," she reminds him. "The section of the textbook that covers it is right here. It's not bad, you know. It gives the kids a baseline."

"I love this period of American history!" Noah beams. "I totally have got this! It's going to be killer!"

Ms. Ellis breathes deeply and enjoys her fall weekend, free of lesson planning. She rakes leaves on Friday afternoon and then watches her son's high school lacrosse team beat a team from a neighboring suburb on a freshly-sod, lighted field. The next morning, she takes her mother out to breakfast and then to the nursery for fall flowers. On Sunday it's church and the Bears game with her husband and sons. Throughout the weekend she checks her school email, waiting for the lesson plans to come. Her husband scolds her, "My god, Dee. You can never just leave work at work, can you?" By Sunday evening she has heard nothing from Noah, and she is worried.³⁴

³⁴ For many cooperating teachers, the decision to host a teacher candidate during student teaching translates into a complex and emotional undertaking (Clark, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2013). Metaphors such as "arranged marriage" and "match-making" to describe the partnering between cooperating teacher and teacher candidate do not veer far from reality (Clodfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2006; Levin & He, 2008): two adults,

Turns out, rightly so. Monday morning, Noah carries in a grocery bag of raw sugar cane and distributes it to the students. Then he starts talking, meandering, mentally wandering through colorful, inconsequential historical tales and facts. She tries to give him the benefit of the doubt: Maybe he wants to give the kids a concrete sense of the Triangle Trade and the sugar plantations that emerged, how the slave and sugar trades in the Caribbean had impacted the larger political decisions of wealthy Whites in the colonies. Maybe his passion for the content will transfer to the kids. But after ten minutes, she can no longer watch. These are 12th graders! They don't need to pass around sticks of sugar cane like it was show-and-tell! Where is his learning target? Where is the exit slip? What is the point? McKinley's new administration had been explicit: learning targets and exit tickets, every day. Learning targets had to be posted, explained, and assessed. Every. Day. With Noah's lesson, there is nothing there. Some kids are in disbelief at the lesson in front of them. Many students simply stare. Two boys fall asleep. Johnna, dubbed a challenging student by nearly every McKinley teacher who knew her as

most often unknown to each other at the start of the student teaching experience, must enter into an intellectually- and emotionally-demanding collaboration, for an extended number of weeks. The cooperating teacher shoulders the critical work of overseeing the preparation of the novice teacher before they're to be trusted with a classroom of their own. All the while, the cooperating teacher must also attend to the academic and social progress of the children under their care. Given the potential for difficulty, both teacher candidates and cooperating teachers err on the side of being overly polite and avoiding conflict during student teaching placements, so that they can continue to co-habitate the classroom and share students and space (Haggarty, 1995).

well as by her own mother, openly laughs in Noah's face. Ms. Ellis turns her desk chair away from the train wreck that is her government class.

And then, of course, all three administrators enter the room to observe. This day, of all days. The day Noah attempts to teach, all on his own and without her input, handing out sugar cane, and in walks Principal Bell, Assistant Principal Sanchez, and Elliot Roddy, the new administrative intern. In single file, they slide between the rows of students and take seats in the back of the room. They stay for 15 minutes.

Ms. Ellis's classroom phone rings during her fifth hour prep, after Noah has headed out, and she hears the shrill voice of Coreen, the lead secretary: "Mr. Bell would like to see you in his office."

Before she heads there, Ms. Ellis calls the partnership liaison.³⁵ She lets it ring eight times before hanging up and leaving her classroom. Once Ms. Ellis arrives at the

³⁵ Though poorly delineated initially, the role of the partnership liaison, a co-funded and co-located position, supported connections in practice between the "real world" knowledge of McKinley teachers and staff and the "academic" and "theoretical" knowledge of campus-based teacher education courses and faculty at the university (Beaton & Mayo, 2015). "With a foot on either side of the school/university divide, the partnership served as the primary boundary crosser" between university-teacher preparation and McKinley (Beaton & Mayo, 2015, p. 228). The partnership liaison role mirrors that of Murrell's (2001) description of a community teacher:

Community teachers draw on richly contextualized knowledge of culture, community, and identity in their professional work with children and families in diverse urban communities. Their competence is evidenced by effective pedagogy in diverse community settings, student achievement, and community affirmation and acknowledgement of their performance. (p. 4)

The community views community teachers as belonging to, if not from, the community and adept at the

main office, Coreen doesn't even look up from her work. All three administrators sit around the circular table, papers strewn about, and they invite her to sit in the stuffy office space. "Tell us about this student teacher you've got," Mr. Bell says. "What is his deal?"

Ms. Ellis doesn't remember how she explained Noah's practicum, his teaching, what she had asked him to do. Neither can she recall much of what they say. Only a few sentences echo in her ears as she returns to the classroom:

What the hell kind of lesson was that?

There is no way I would consider hiring him. No way. Someone who dresses like that has no respect for himself, as far as I'm concerned.

I don't care what you do, but do not let him teach again.

Ms. Ellis opens up her email and crafts a note to the supervisor at the university. She copies the partnership liaison and her principal, just to cover her bases.

I understand that teacher candidates have to learn and that this is his first real experience in the classroom. But I see no other option here, except to end Noah's practicum, the sooner, the better. No one has informed me as to what exactly I am supposed to do when this happens. I need more guidance from you, his supervisor, through this process. When you came to observe him teach a more prescribed lesson two weeks ago and I raised my concerns, you told me, "I've seen worse." How does that help me? How does that help my students here at McKinley? I need more direction than that

contextualized cultural practices needed for good teaching (Murrell, 2001; Zeichner & Payne, 2013).

from the university. You encouraged me to let him teach a single class, completely of his own design and making. That's what I've done, and it clearly did not work. Even worse, my students suffered for it. If he doesn't have a concrete lesson plan that conforms to our school's lesson structure and that he can show me before the school week starts, why would I let him teach even one class?

I suggest that we rethink this partnership at McKinley. Maybe right now, our school is just not a site where we can place student teachers. We simply cannot take weak teacher candidates. Our students cannot afford it. Maybe we need to say that the teacher candidates have to be stronger before they get to our school. If there is no way of knowing that before they walk through McKinley's doors, then I would rather not serve as a cooperating teacher. I will finish out this practicum with Noah if I have to, but I will not take another teacher candidate until these concerns have been addressed. I don't want to be part of something that isn't good for our students.

Sincerely,

Deidre Ellis

Veteran Teacher: *Originally*

I was
Supposed to student teach with
Ham Archibald
Over at Central High
Back in '87.

They were doing
The required
Junior Achievement
Curriculum,
You know
Where kids would,
As Ham used to say,
*Develop their
Entrepreneurial muscles.*

My student teaching supervisor said,
*You won't get what you need
With just one of the guys
So we split you between two people.*

A guy named Roger Mason
Who was very traditional.
You could open the lower right hand desk drawer
And
Everything was copied
Color-coded
Boom
Boom
BoomBoomBoom
Every I was dotted,
Every T crossed.

That was my morning.

Then in the afternoon
I was in the dropout prevention
Program with a guy named
Dan Amundson
Who was just
Unbelievable

A wild man
Not a lot of academic rigor
But he could get the kids in
Get 'em focused
He'd stand on tables and pontificate.
He'd say to me,
Hey just
Keep 'em under control
Celebrate
The fact that they're here.
We're just trying to get them through.

I had both extremes,
Polar opposites.
Worked with some at risk kids.
Worked with some normal kids.

My cooperating teachers
Were more examples
Rather than
Really truly mentors

Roger Mason was like,
Hey
If you ever need anything
Give me a holler
Feel free to take
Anything you want out of the file

Dan Amundson sat there every day
For a week
And watched what I did.
Then he said,
What have you got planned for next week?
He said,
You know what you're doing.
You can handle this.
I'm going to leave you alone.
Here's the phone number for the lounge.
Six doors down.
I mean,
I could literally be on the house phone
Poke my head out the door
And see him

And wave.

I was on my own
But I was never abandoned.
Always
He'd check in and see,
You need anything?
Never abandonment.

It was a completely different era.
These were guys who
Started teaching
In the 1950s and '60s.

It was just kind of old fashioned.
The old guy helps out the young guy.
Help the new guy,
Help him get a file started,
Show him how to navigate the system.

They passed my resume around.
The whole department was very helpful.
Most of those guys
Are retired now.
It was a good department
Back in those days.

Rupture

“There is a cancer in this school.” George strides across the empty classroom in front of me. Blotches of red climb his neck and jaw and strands of blonde hair have escaped the rubber band at the back of his neck. His hands ball into fists. Tears moisten the corners of his eyes, and a bubble of mucus catches his voice. “I am watching these individuals, these teachers who are nice and good people, get poisoned by it.” He turns at me full on, his arms rigid at his sides: “I don’t want to be one of them.”

My heart races and I am frozen in my seat.

I was not required to observe George. It isn’t written in my job description, though not much is during these initial years as partnership liaison. Both my supervisor at the university and my principal essentially define my job as “anything that supports the partnership” between the teacher education programs and our school. Sometimes that involves meetings on campus and at McKinley and at district headquarters, or, literally, a morning of emails, connecting people from McKinley to the university. Other days it involves face-to-face networking, informal meetings with administration, potential cooperating teachers, and hosts for college student volunteers. George wasn’t required to have me observe him either. He has a student teaching supervisor from the university. Mr. Olson, his cooperating teacher, will complete his evaluation without my input. It was all voluntary.

I offered.

He accepted.

I watched him teach.

He exploded.

My computer is open to the notes I've taken during his observation. I scan them quickly, trying to figure out what I've said to set him off.

55 min observation.

Topic: Neolithic revolution, transition to agricultural societies³⁶

21 students: 14 male, 7 female. 6 African immigrant, 2 African American. 6 Latino. 2 European American. 2 Asian American. 3 other students of color. Not sure what ethnicity.

Teacher-led discussion. Seminar structure set up. Highly controlled.

George's voice echoes in the room. "I'm defensive. I know I'm being defensive. But I haven't learned anything, *anything*, except what I *shouldn't* do. That's what I've learned, how NOT to teach.³⁷ I could have learned that anywhere."³⁸

³⁶ George did not make this curricular choice. Mr. Olson, George's cooperating teacher, follows the IB textbook to the letter. He is more flexible in his willingness to let his teacher candidates veer from the textbook occasionally than other cooperating teachers in our building. Even still, I have heard Mr. Olson say, "The district spent a whole lot of money to send me to San Diego in order to learn this curriculum. It's an equity issue, right? We give the kids the same thing they get over at Markham, where the kids all drive to school in their hand-me-down BMWs and Audis. The only right thing to do is to stick with it."

³⁷ Student teaching is often described as the most influential and valuable aspect of teacher preparation programs (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; He & Levin, 2008; Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008; Zeichner, 1981). Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) state that many preservice teachers view it as "the definitive test of the relevance and practicality of (campus-based) preparation" (p. 63). Yet student teaching, as the "capstone" to learning to teach, is fraught with complexity and contradiction. The situated nature of student teaching, like teaching in general (Putnam & Borko, 2000), renders each student teaching placement unique

and specific, co-constructed by the complex identities, experiences, and interactions between students, teachers, administrators, as well as the surrounding social, economic, political, and cultural forces at play. An individual student teacher may be placed in a classroom with a culture that is completely foreign or comfortably reminiscent to that of her own educational upbringing. Each informed by identity and experience, instructional competencies and struggles, the student teacher may be partnered with a cooperating teacher, who may or may not be well suited to mentor. At the secondary level, a student teacher will come into contact with as many as 180 students daily, each carrying his/her own stories, experiences, languages, cultures, interests, and abilities. Additionally, research suggests that student teaching “tends to perpetuate the status quo” (Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008, p. 42) and contradicts the reform agenda promoted in preparatory programs (Britzman, 2003; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987; Wideen et al., 1998). Anderson and Stillman (2012) reference a number of scholars who recognize the ways in which student teaching experiences have the potential to “perpetuate stereotypes and confirm rather than interrupt deficit thinking among” (p. 4) teacher candidates placed in urban classrooms.

³⁸I was there when the decision was made to place George at McKinley for his initial practicum. I sat at the table with Holly and Karen, the methods instructor and the placement officer respectively, reviewing admissions essays and talking through reflections from members of the social studies licensure program cohort. As liaison in a developing partnership site, I argued for “first dibs” on strong teacher candidates whom I thought would fit well in McKinley’s transitioning context. Which of the teacher candidates had requested an urban placement? Which of the teacher candidates had previous experience working in a city school or with diverse groups of students? Which candidate seemed reflective enough to examine her/his own biases and assumptions when pushed in a classroom setting different from the one s/he experienced growing up? Neither Holly nor Karen had worked in a school like McKinley, nor did they have a strong sense of the potential cooperating teachers. For that, they relied on me. Based on their description, George seemed a good fit.

“Mr. Olson kept telling me that he was giving me the good kids.” George³⁹ picks up his backpack as though he intends to leave, and then sets it down again. “‘Don’t worry,’ Mr. Olson says to me, ‘you’re going to get the IB kids. The *good* kids. I’m giving you the good kids to start with.’

“I assumed he meant that I’d get students who were capable . . . talented. Kids who were academically gifted. I mean, in my high school, if you were in an advanced or an honors class, you at least knew how to write. You had good grades. You did your homework every night.

“No,” George presses his palms flat against the sides of his face with both hands in a way that pushes the blood away from his nose and eyes, further graying his pale,

³⁹ The overwhelming majority of research on teacher education focuses on white women (Lowenstein, 2009), as they represent the bulk of who sits in teacher preparation classrooms and fills K-12 (particularly K-6) teaching jobs (Anderson & Stillman, 2012; Hollins & Torres-Guzman 2005 as cited in Flores, 2007; Lortie, 1975; Sleeter, 2001). This holds true for the research on student teaching as part of urban teacher preparation (Anderson & Stillman, 2012; Sleeter, 2001). Yet, high school social studies is the most male-dominated of the teaching positions in K-12 schools, as 65% of all high school social studies teachers are men (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Additionally, 86% of all high school social studies teachers are white (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Anecdotally, I have been introduced to and worked with five years of secondary social studies initial licensure candidates as part of my doctoral assistantship work. On average, these cohorts have been 56% male. Of the male social studies teacher candidates in the past five years of our program, 94% of them have identified as European American or white.

winter skin. “That’s not the case here. The ‘good’ kids,” George⁴⁰ stabs quotation marks in the air with his fingers, “according to my dear cooperating teacher, are the kids who aren’t rude. They’re the kids who keep their mouths shut and don’t talk back. Being ‘good’ has nothing to do with how smart you are in this school. It has everything to do with how little trouble you give your teachers. None – not one – of these kids would make it in an IB class in any other school.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ George is a good kid himself. Holly, the other graduate assistant who is teaching the methods course this term, says he is one of the younger members of the cohort – just turned 23. In some ways, he’s the kind of young man I would hope my own sons would grow up to be. I imagine his parents are proud of his choices, even if they wouldn’t have chosen teaching for him themselves. In the teaching philosophy statement that came attached to his resume, he talked about wanting to work hard and give back to the world. None of it seemed to come from a savior mentality, thinking about teaching as a means to “rescue brown children” (Castro, 2012, p. 13) from their schools, families, or environment. Just a desire to contribute, though it’s hard to tell what’s true from a page or two of writing.

⁴¹ Much has been written about the disconnects, “wobbles,” and “ruptures” experienced by teacher candidates and novice teachers when transitioning from teacher preparation programs to urban classrooms (Britzman, 2003; Fecho, Graham, & Hudson-Ross, 2005; Flores, 2007). Teacher candidates struggle in urban student teaching experiences, entering unprepared for the challenges of the context and its students (Sleeter, 2001). Another body of research describes pressures experienced by young teachers upon entering school contexts where narrow, scripted curriculum and high-stakes testing prevent social justice learning and/or culturally relevant pedagogies from surviving the shift from theory-based teacher preparation to the highly regulated, practical world of the urban classroom (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Flores, 2007; Milner, 2013; Weiner, 1993). Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) describe the *two-worlds pitfall* of student teaching, where teacher candidates succumb to the pressure to adapt to status quo practices they observe and are embedded in during practical teaching experiences. This chasm impacts educational research as

I glance at my notes again, struggling to listen while simultaneously searching for a way to coach George through this post-observation meltdown.

14 students spoke. Mostly boys. Two boys did most of the talking. Three girls did not speak at all. White student with head down. Latina checked cell phone multiple times during discussion.

Teacher candidate seemed unaware.

“I thought it went fairly well, George,” I start. I cautiously retrace my earlier comments. “You had a significant number of students participating in the discussion. I thought it was very brave of you to try a seminar structure so early in your student teaching.⁴² Most teacher candidates I’ve worked with shy away from that until they feel more confident in front of the class. I’ll give you a copy of my notes.”

well. Zeichner (1995) argues that the existence of the gulf between the two worlds renders educational researchers and practitioners almost inconsequential, if not invisible, to one another. He writes

Despite isolated examples of instances where teacher research and academic research have crossed the borders that divide them, they have essentially been irrelevant to each other. For the most part, educational researchers ignore teachers and teachers ignore the researchers right back. (p.154)

⁴² The young teachers with whom I’ve worked are terribly afraid of losing control. And that fear is shared by many veteran teachers as well. Research shows many novice teachers and teacher candidates view the central work of teaching in an urban school classroom as having control over a classroom and students, being an authoritative teacher, and having a firm grasp on discipline, regardless of instruction (Anderson & Stillman, 2012; Rushton, 2000; Valenzuela, 1999). Taubman (2009) asserts that this fear, held by many teachers, is grounded in conflated fears of classroom chaos and *black* violence, “reinforced by the media, in terms of procedures that are presented as helping kids” (p. 132) but increase the monitoring, control, and surveillance of students, particularly students of color.

I shuffle my papers to show him the diagram of the classroom I've drawn, my record of how the conversation tracked between students and across the room. Square-shaped drawings denoting individual desks form a circle, with demographic descriptors to identify which student sits where. At some desks, I've been able to include a student's name, when George called on them or another student addressed them directly. Lines track the discussion, moving between desks with questions and responses. A flurry of lines converges at three desks: one labeled Malik, one labeled as Latino male, and one that says George.

"This is how I tracked the conversation," I hand him the page. "You were in control of the discussion. You ran a tight ship. Most kids were with you, and responded once or twice. It's worth thinking about how what you did today is different from an interactive lecture, besides having the desks in a circle. You might think about how you could turn over more control to the students next time. What if you were to have Malik facilitate the discussion, for example? Would more kids participate? How would that change things up for you and for the kids?"

George scoffs and shakes his head at me. He drops into a student desk and pounds it with the side of his fist. "They didn't know what they were talking about! Our kids"⁴³ . . .

⁴³ George sees McKinley's students as different from him. He's learned that from his cooperating teacher. When Mr. Olson talks about "our kids," he says it in a way that other people say "those kids," as in those *other* kids, those brown and black and non-English speaking *other* kids. Our *different* kids. Our *less than* kids. Ms. Sanchez, our assistant principal, seethes every time she hears it from Mr. Olson. "Paternalistic motherfucker," she railed against him in my classroom, with the door closed, just two weeks ago after a

when I first asked the question, no one answered at all! No one even spoke. The four smartest kids in the class who did answer, *got it wrong*.” His voice lowers to a growl and his words slow, “The only reason it went as well as it did is because I scaffolded it *so much*. I made it so that would happen. They couldn’t have done it without my help. They wouldn’t have been able to get to the right answer without me!” He yanks his backpack towards him and pulls out his cell phone, turning it over to check the screen.

I backpedal. “I am so sorry. I just figured this was an informal observation. I should have started my feedback with the good stuff, George. Let’s look at that again.” I kick myself for not having been more playful in how I structured our conversation, at my lack of forethought in choosing to position myself⁴⁴ in a desk beside him rather than

particularly heated staff meeting, where Mr. Olson, among others, challenged the administration on their demand for more rigorous writing assessments in all classes. I didn’t know what to say that day either.

⁴⁴ More than the physical positioning of our conversation, the lack of clarity in my position as partnership liaison contributes to my missteps. Because I am not George’s supervisor, I am hesitant to engage in a formal observation of him, lest I overstep or contradict his supervisor’s advice. Because I am not George’s cooperating teacher, I am unable to watch his professional growth day-in, day-out, and coach by his side. Because George teaches in my colleague’s classroom, and because I need Mr. Olson to agree to take on teacher candidates in years to come, I am uneasy about crossing boundaries in ways that somehow suggest Mr. Olson is less than proficient as a social studies teacher or cooperating teacher. And yet, all of McKinley’s cooperating teachers regularly request that I observe their teacher candidates. Mr. Olson, a 17-year veteran in the classroom, shrugs and tells me, “I don’t know what to say to George. I mean, I can show him what I do. But especially when it comes to classroom management. . . . I don’t know how they can evaluate him on management; there are days when I can hardly control the kids myself.”

across the room. “I thought it was a solid first observation. The fact that you had so many kids listening and cooperating with you says something. Since I didn’t have the text in front of me, I didn’t know what the kids were or weren’t doing right. I assumed, based on what I saw, that they were thinking and interpreting the documents in a thoughtful manner. Many of them were engaged, at least at face value.”

George⁴⁵ will have none of my futile attempts. “Mr. Olson says they need to know the causes for civilization’s change to agriculture and the reasons for nomadic communities becoming more sedentary. It’s required on the IB test. *Required*

⁴⁵ Maybe I shouldn’t have placed him at McKinley for his student teaching. I trusted Holly and her judgment of his potential, based on what she’d seen last summer. It was an attempt at salvaging the placement after last year, as our licensure program has faced three years of shortage when it comes to trustworthy student teaching placements – so bad, our placement officer Karen resorted to cold-calling schools in search of cooperating teachers willing to host a social studies teacher candidate.

Last year, one of McKinley’s placements backfired. After instructing the summer methods course, I opted to place Kara, an outspoken mixed-race woman, in Mr. Olson’s classroom, thinking she would be . . . I don’t know . . . more immune to his racism? Able to be true to herself, despite the way he circumscribed his students’ possibilities? Better suited to make connections and negotiate the diverse McKinley student-body (Sleeter, 2001)? After a couple of attempts at politely challenging his self-identified “they’re all just our kids to me” color-blindness, she put up a wall and taught his curriculum his way. And she stopped talking to me. Holly let me know that Kara’s commentary in methods class dripped with sarcasm and anger. I know every teacher candidate brings his/her own set of dispositions, strengths, and blind spots, and some question the value of matching a teacher candidate to a cooperating teacher (Leslie, 1971). Yet we still do our best, based on our collective assessments of the incoming candidates and potential cooperating teachers, in hopes of mitigating conflict and improving opportunities for reciprocal growth when we can.

information! They can't just take a guess. They have to know it." He slaps his phone down and wedges himself out of the desk. He paces as he talks. "The only way that was going to happen was for me to lead them by their damn noses and get them there."⁴⁶ He fans the air, almost as if to push my words out of the room. "Our kids," he points through the closed classroom door and into McKinley's halls, "don't know how to unpack a primary document. They don't know how to write or answer a direct question. They don't listen. They don't care. They don't trust Mr. Olson, and they sure as hell don't trust me."

George squares himself towards me. "You're right, though. You should have done this differently." He directs his anger at me. "How can I *not* take this as a formal observation? You're the McKinley liaison! I need to get a job when I'm done with this, remember? Isn't this just one more piece of this frickin' year-long interview?"

George slaps his backpack closed. "I have to go. We have advanced methods on campus at one o'clock, and I need to eat." He pauses for a moment and studies the backpack fabric as he speaks. "I'm not made for teaching in an urban school anyway. It's not what I thought it would be. Nothing like it." He hoists his backpack to a shoulder and

⁴⁶ Zeichner and Tabachnik (1981) question whether the experience of student teaching "washed out" progressive pedagogies learned during on-campus teacher education courses, propelling teacher candidates back decades to teacher-centered, traditional instructional strategies and away from innovative, ambitious teaching. Other researchers challenge this claim, arguing that stronger university-school partnerships (Costigan, 2013) and continued induction support through the first year of teaching (Thompson, Windschitl, & Braaten, 2013) might preserve ambitious teaching practices, even if only in compartmentalized ways.

quickly wipes his cheeks, his eyes, the moisture from around his mouth. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Cooperating Teacher: *We've Had a Few Bumps*

My teacher candidate and I,
But we're getting there.

After the co-teaching training,
I expected
These teacher candidates
Were going to be ready
To jump right in.

That's how it was for me
When I student taught.

I had been through all these
Clinical experiences
And then they put me
Into the classroom.
I think it was maybe three days in
Maybe as much as a week,

Then I was on my own.

I got thrown out there.
I even did conferences on my own.

My cooperating teacher left me
With some of her curriculum and stuff,
But basically she left me
With the full load,
Minus her honors class.

It was a ton of work.
A *ton* of work.
She was just like:
Here. Go.
She wasn't in the room.
She wasn't there.

I took it as a compliment, though.
She thought I could handle it.
There were some things that went wrong,
Of course.
Some things didn't go well.

But I came away feeling
Like I was ready
To teach.

After the training,
I expected
My teacher candidate
To walk in
And be ready to go.
That wasn't the case.
I'm realizing more and more,
All of these teacher candidates
Are the same way.
They're not ready.
They need more time.

So, we're working on it.
My teacher candidate
Has started to take initiative
And really come alive
With the students.
At the start, she sat back
And waited.
Maybe in the last couple of weeks,
She has started to fire off
Directions to the kids, you know?
She lets the kids know
What is expected
And does it without being asked.
Like yesterday, the kids come in –
And our classes are huge!
I mean, this isn't the smallest room in the school
But it's pretty tiny!
And we're just packed in here.
Wall to wall.
Doing stations and groups can be tough.
And the range in ability is amazing!
I've got some ninth graders reading at college-level!
We did feedback forms the other day and
75 percent of the kids are like,
Oh my gosh, you give so much homework
I'm learning so much
Then about 5 percent said,
When are we going to start getting homework?

*When is the work going to get harder?
What do you do with that?*

So we've been splitting the kids up,
My teacher candidate and I.
She takes a handful of them
Over to that room in the attendance support office
And works in a small group with them.
Usually I'm the one to say when and who should go.
But yesterday, she's like:
*This person is behind.
This person, this person, this person
Are all behind
And we need to get them caught up.*

And so, because of my background in special ed,
I'm pretty good at getting kids caught up
If they are below grade level.
So I took them
And she led the rest of the class.
She realized she could totally handle it.

The size of the class is hard,
But even harder
Is that the kids need so much.
Once a week I have this other guy,
A volunteer from the university,
An undergraduate student.
There are three of us in the room
On those days.
Between the three of us,
I don't think any of us sits
Unoccupied
For less than 30 seconds.
All these hands are constantly up.
All these kids need our help.

I try to picture what it would be like
Not to have my teacher candidate in the room
With me.

My teacher candidate and I
Look at each other
All the time and say

Out loud,
What if one of us wasn't here?
How would I check notebooks?
How would I work individually with students?
Our students are definitely benefitting
Because there are two of us.
I'm still the lead teacher most of the time.
The level of pressure here at our school this year is high,
You know?
I had a student teacher before this,
And the climate was different.
Then, I didn't have any problem letting him swim
On his own
And make mistakes.
He wasn't great,
But he learned.

But this year,
When I've got 30-plus rowdy ninth graders,
Every hour,
And they're trying to finish essays,
And we're trying to get them to pass the writing test,
I don't feel as free as maybe I did in the past.
I just can't let a student teacher flounder
While my kids just sit there
And wait
For that young person to learn
How to teach.

But this year,
My teacher candidate and I
Have taken it slow.
And I changed my expectations
Since that first training.
I just don't assume
That she's going to be
That lead person
Right away.
The way we have it now
Is that I teach periods
1, 2, 4, and 6.
Third hour is hers.
But I don't leave.
I help out.

I'm there.
The kids need that.
That's really good for the kids right now.
That's when we're probably most useful,
When we're both in the room
And on the same page,
Working together for the students.

I mean,
They would not have learned
As well if it wasn't both of us
In the room.
There's only so much I can do
As one teacher
With all those kids
Struggling.

And to be honest,
I get to a point
Where I've had it with some of them.
Sometimes you get to that point.

Every teacher does.

But in those moments,
The kids can turn to her.
My teacher candidate
Is able to come at them
In a little bit different way
And they get
Another chance.

For sure, it's what's best for kids.
There is absolutely no doubt about it.

Finding Footing

I'm leaving McKinley High School, and I am frustrated. The new administration implemented their first Extended-Learning Day. Once a month they put the kids on a block schedule, and all the teachers implement an interest-driven class, ranging from remediation/bone-up-on-your-math-skills, to Latin dance or hip-hop crew, to History Day, to Bollywood and basketball. Admin says the idea is to have teachers build relationships with kids in a non-academic setting, to mix up the schedule and provide more variety in what's going on, for teachers and kids to get to know each other in a different way. It's the first Extended-Learning Day, the first time they're doing this, ever.

The kids show up, willing to give it a go. The teachers arrive kicking and screaming, hoping it will fail.

I sit in on a class that walks students through the requirements for earning an IB Diploma.⁴⁷ Kids fill the room and, for 90 minutes, sit silently. The teacher lectures nearly

⁴⁷ McKinley adopted the IB program prior to the initiation of this study. To be considered an IB School, a school must enter into a lengthy and prescriptive authorization process, involving mandated teacher development at official IB workshops, financial commitments from the school and/or district, and a series of inspection-like visits to ensure the school has adopted and is in alignment with the IB philosophy and program requirements (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2010). The IB Program costs the school roughly \$20,000 in fees annually during its candidacy and once authorized (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2005-2016a). Additionally, the school pays for consultation fees, for a full-time staff member to coordinate adherence to IB requirements, and for every teacher who attends an IB professional development workshop.

To earn an IB Diploma, a student must complete a set body of courses, as outlined by the IB Program, and complete a series of IB-designated assessments, which are sent out to external scorers.

the entire time. He is lucky he has kids who care about learning, because I am bored out of my head. I can only imagine how the kids feel.

After the class ends, I chat with Deidre Ellis. “What’s the story with this group of kids? Didn’t some of them do really well in History Day last year?”

“Oh yes,” she says. “These kids were assigned this block because they’ve all done well as sophomores. But they are all undocumented. Maybe all but one or two. My guess is they don’t see the point of doing the diploma. It’s a lot of work, you know.”

McKinley pays additional fees each year for every student enrolled in IB courses, for every student who completes an external assessment, and for every subject it teaches that is deemed an IB course (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2005-2016a).

As I finalize this dissertation study, not a single McKinley student has earned an IB Diploma. McKinley’s administration and staff struggle to explain this statistic. Some explanations fall into the low expectations bin, as teachers blame it on the student body – arguing the coursework is too rigorous for McKinley students. Others argue that the curriculum does not serve the students because it is not culturally relevant. Still others slough off the lack of diplomas earned, arguing that the IB distinction only serves to brand the school for the purposes of drawing white and middle-class families, who equate the IB moniker to evidence of rigorous curriculum. Regardless, thousands and thousands of dollars have been pumped into a program that has not produced the kind of results it, the district, and our administration promised our school it would. McKinley staff are not blind to this and question whether the branding is worth the financial cost – as well as the cost it exacts from staff in time for professional development and adherence to lesson and unit planning structures and the impact it has on student schedules in terms of course offerings and number of classes per day. McKinley’s administration argues that without the IB Program, McKinley will not be able to compete with other high schools in the area and will return to its place, academically, as the bottom-rung school in the city.

She and I consider a class we might hold on the next Extended-Learning Day, featuring a panel to discuss how to get to college without papers. I am unsure of the exact statistic, but I know it is a large number.⁴⁸

Before the day's end, I share this idea with Mr. Olson, the social studies department chair. He's lukewarm about it, starting a rant about immigration and what he understands the students' real problem to be: They don't care about going to college. They think they can get paid better to work as a roofer or by bussing tables. Then, far be it for him to dissuade me, he says, "You should probably talk to the counselors. They might already do that."

I take a deep breath, and I find my way to the counseling office. The counselor puffs himself up, sitting behind his desk, all day, all-knowing: "Look, they can go to college, but what does that do for them? Even if they go, and most of them can't afford it without aid, they basically can't get a job if they graduate. They don't have a social

⁴⁸ During the first year of the partnership between McKinley and the university, roughly 35% of McKinley's students were undocumented. The educational ramifications of undocumented status are significant for students, particularly since this story is set prior to the implementation of President Obama's Executive Order, referred to as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (D.A.C.A.). Under its terms, federal officials would consider delaying the deportation of people who came to the United States through extra-legal means before they were 16 years old. Other stipulations had to be met as well, including how long a child had lived in the United States and whether or not they kept themselves out of trouble. Prior to D.A.C.A., many of McKinley's students saw few post-secondary options that were not out of reach financially or that didn't threaten their parents' and/or their own exposure as an undocumented immigrant and thus potential deportation.

security number. Nobody's gonna hire them. They can't even get a driver's license."⁴⁹ He punctuates it all, making sure I don't think he doesn't care. "I feel bad for them. Of course I do. The worst part of my job is when I have to tell a kid that they can't take Driver's Ed because they're illegal. I can't tell you how many of them have cried when I tell them that."

I'm new to the liaison position and new to this counselor. I say, "I don't wanna step on toes." Yet, at the same time, I'm watching kids in this IB-prep class, being asked to write essays, complete service learning hours and extensive research projects, all for an IB diploma which will, supposedly, help them get into college. One-third of the students in the room are undocumented. As the teacher rattles off all that's expected of them for the diploma, it's evident that kids in front of him are pissed. Seething. What's the point of

⁴⁹ Undocumented students fear deportation and the potential separation from family and loved ones were immigration status to be exposed (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). But students also live with other difficult limitations due to being undocumented. Many of McKinley's undocumented students refuse see a doctor until they absolutely have to, and then they head to the hospital for care because they won't be turned away from the emergency room. Many students carry their documentation status as a heavy secret. Years prior to this study but also at McKinley, I had a student share her documentation status with my classroom during a seminar discussion. Trusting the class and me, she spilled her secret, and it was as though a dam of shame had burst inside her. With it came a flood of anger. Two years old when her parents carried her across the desert to Southern California, she described the thump of helicopters overhead as a first learning memory, understanding that she did not belong, that she should be ever vigilant and afraid, that at any moment, she could be sent home.

all the work if a kid can't go to college, because she can't get financial aid, because she doesn't have papers?

The counselor looks at his computer, maybe his watch. He's already bored with me and our conversation. He tells me, "You should talk to the person who's up in the college and career center, and see what she says because she may already host something like that." I smile and thank him to his face, curse him after I've left his office. I chase down the college and career center coordinator, days later, and ask her the same question. What kinds of models and strategies do we offer our undocumented students to get to college? What do we have in place to show them that, because there are ways to get to college, an IB diploma is a worthwhile consideration? Would a panel of undocumented college students be a good idea?

She pinches her mouth like she's just eaten a lemon. "I'll see what I can do."

"Can I help?" I ask her.

"No. I got it."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ As McKinley's partnership liaison, my status as insider or outsider varied, depending on the day and which McKinley staff member I was talking to, what the momentary political context was, and how central or tangential the staff member saw teacher education as being to the school. As an outsider, I had little credibility with teachers who saw me as a temporary distraction (or nuisance) to the more pressing school and teaching matters at hand. If my McKinley colleagues read my presence as part of academia, that positioning garnered another set of meanings. Thus, especially early on in my role as partnership liaison, I found that many of my McKinley colleagues had no interest in my opinion, my suggestions, or my input. I was superfluous, unnecessary, and even out of bounds. When I spoke, their eyes glazed, they smiled politely, and went about their work.

* * *

I can never get in to see the principal. He is insanely busy. I know that comes with being a turnaround school and the school's challenges.⁵¹ The district lead is in the process of developing rubrics for what it means to be a professional development school.⁵² And

⁵¹ Cuchiarrá, Rooney, and Robertson-Kraft (2013) describe the "intense demands" placed on teachers in turnaround schools: "extremely rigorous, emphasizing long hours and multiple demands (for raising test scores, addressing students' emotional needs, and implementing new programs)" (p. 8). At McKinley, school administration shared an elevated workload and level of stress. Within two years, McKinley saw significant turnover among staff and administrators. Weeks before the end of the second year of the partnership, Principal Bell pulled me into his office to let me know that he had applied for a principal's position in a nearby suburban district. Unsure he could maintain his own work-life balance, remain married, and sustain the district-desired pace of operational and instructional change at McKinley, he sought employment in a school that might demand less of him.

⁵² Standards for Professional Development Schools elevate the importance of a learning community, recognizing the multiple types of learners (P-12 students, practicing teachers, teacher candidates) supported by their mission. Professional Development Schools must establish systems of accountability, to ensure quality learning experiences for all learners, as well as create structures and delineate roles that ensure collaboration between P-12 and higher education institutions (Teitel, 2003; Tunks & Neapolitan, 2007). The standards also call on schools to ensure equitable teaching practices to support the diversity of their learners, though researchers have noted the lack of emphasis and success with this particular standard (Breault & Lack, 2009; Murrell, 1998).

the university supervisors gave the impression that enrollment has dropped in the teacher licensure programs.⁵³

It makes the work that much more untenable. I can't get word from people who are in power at the school or the district or the university. I need assurance this is a commitment they are making to the other institution for the sake of bettering the school. If they're going to really forge a partnership, the school needs to know that partnership will stay and that there are people at the university whom they can count on. I itch every time I think about how long this hybrid teacher educator job will last.⁵⁴

⁵³ During the three-year period I collected data for this study, the university teacher licensure programs saw a decrease in applications and subsequent enrollment, statistics that mirrored national trends (Sawchuk, 2014).

⁵⁴ Early on in my role as partnership liaison, I found that many of my McKinley colleagues saw me as temporary and transient. Anzaldúa (1999) writes,

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. (p. 25)

For those of us who inhabit the shifting and tumultuous space in-between, we recognize that we balance and travel between two sovereign spaces, each with its own churning and changing political and economic contexts. Because borderlands sit between two separate, distinct, and constantly changing sovereign entities, each with its own internal political tensions and fluctuations, borderlands ripple with impact. Territory changes. Boundaries sharpen or soften, becoming more porous or rigid. The core inquiry here captures a context where boundaries between university- and school-based teacher education are in continuous flux.

I hear from the cooperating teachers, “We expect better candidates than this. We want more say in what they learn and how long they’re here.” I take that back to the university, and it falls on deaf ears. I am out here in the in-between: not university, not school, floating and nebulous.

It would be nice to get grounded.

Then I get a phone call from Josie, a candidate from last year who student taught at McKinley, before the partnership. She went out into the world and took a job at a challenging charter school. Everything this school asks Josie to do runs counter to what the university pushes as best practice.⁵⁵ Josie was in her charter school classroom for a

My role as partnership liaison, as well as much of the collaborative work under construction between the university and McKinley during the years of data collection for this study, existed while the professional and institutional terrain shifted and flexed, ruptured and collided. As leadership structure and vision and budget changed within each of the worlds of the university and McKinley (both school and district), the borderlands of partnership work became contested territory. I came into the position with a new administration at McKinley who set about implementing one reform initiative after another. The teacher education programs entered their third year of restructuring when I began in the role. Thus, the tumultuous changes occurring in each independent institution underscored the perpetual transition underway both within and across boundaries.

⁵⁵ In a 1998 study, Crocco wrote that many teachers who come out of her preparation programs enter classrooms where they are forced to use “formulaic, monotonous lesson plans” (p. 127) that do not allow for innovation or culturally responsive practice. In a later collaborative study, Crocco and Costigan (2007) found that the frenetic pace schools demand young teachers keep, the de-skilling of their work, and the disconnection from teaching practices tailored to their students’ needs resulted in greater teacher attrition either out of urban systems or out of the profession entirely. Defining neoliberalism as a paradigm where individualism, competition, and market forces are believed to best support human endeavors and success,

hot minute and then walked away. She's a teacher of color, I think, and great in the classroom, I know, and I am just – I want us as a community of teacher educators to say: Here is a young, talented, capable teacher of color, first generation immigrant teacher. Let's band together and nurture this young teacher so that she doesn't walk away from the profession altogether.

But I can't get anybody to sit down with me. I can't get the time. I can't navigate through the bureaucracy to get somebody to say, "We're going to pull together and find a way to circumvent the system so that we can get this person in."

On the flip side, I've got these three teacher candidates in the current cohort who are terrible. I wouldn't want my own children in their classrooms. The cooperating teachers don't understand why they're still in the program. And the university supervisor says to me, "You know, they're going to get their license. That's what we do in our program. That's just how we do it."

How do I communicate that to these cooperating teachers who say to my face, "Are you kidding me? These teacher candidates are not good enough." They asked me the other day, "What are the filters?" There are none. Is that what I tell them?

* * *

Josie is three weeks into the long-call substitute teacher job at McKinley. Teaching Econ to newcomers, between ages 14 and 23. Four sections. The kids come from everywhere: Liberia, Ecuador, Mexico, Guatemala, Kenya, Somalia, Togo, Egypt,

Sleeter (2012) argues that neoliberal educational reforms invalidate teacher preparation and professional development and deny the importance of situated and contextual factors in education.

Turkey, Tibet, Belize, Vietnam, Colombia. Some of the kids have been in the country as many as a few years. One kid just arrived from Homs, Syria, last week. I go into Josie's classroom twice a week, and I help out. I'm only in there for an hour, maybe an hour and a half, maybe as much as two periods.⁵⁶ Not in a supervisory role at all, but sitting in with the kids to help them, and Josie, out. I tiptoe along a line between overstepping and further squashing her confidence and full-blown mentoring, extending her preparation from the university.⁵⁷

Josie hands the kids' economics assignments that come straight out of the textbook that the regular classroom teacher uses. She doesn't want to stray too much,

⁵⁶ In connection with and implemented by teacher preparation programs and P-12 districts, supportive programs for beginning teachers range in formality, length, and structure (Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko, 1999; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Regardless of their make-up, induction programs aim to strengthen and sustain the teaching performance of young teachers in schools, therein bettering learning opportunities for P-12 students (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Crocco and Costigan (2007) argue that mentoring work through teacher education and induction has taken on a more strategic purpose, so as to help young teachers carve out a space for curricular autonomy and creativity and identity development in an environment that deprofessionalizes teaching.

⁵⁷ Little research examines the experiences of novice teacher educators, and studies that do seem to misunderstand their experiences (Murray & Male, 2005; Williams, 2014). In such settings, the professional socialization (Murray & Male, 2005) and identity development of aspiring teacher educators happens by default (Margolin, 2011), in isolation (Cuenca, 2010; Hadar & Brody, 2010; Williams, 2014), or independently, through self-study, whereby teacher educators systematically examine their own practices (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Cuenca, 2010; Loughran, 2014; Margolin, 2011)" (as cited in Beaton, Schornack, Tobin, & Kim, 2015, unpublished).

since it's a long-call position, and she's already frustrated by how different this teaching reality is from what she expected it to be. "I attended this school," she tells me soon after she's hired. "My story is just like theirs. We had nothing when we came here. We worked hard. My dad, he didn't play. We didn't eat until our homework was done."

Every day she gets in there, looks at her kaleidoscope of students, and beseeches them, "Tell me about supply and demand," and they can't. Or they won't. They sit there, silent. Blank stares. And every day, their behavior gets worse. More of them do less. They talk, in Spanish or Somali, Arabic or French, through her explanations at the whiteboard. "Speak English," Josie orders.

I wince.

The students roll their eyes and laugh.

Today, the worksheet Josie uses centers on a supply and demand table and describes a farmer's yield of zucchini and the price of the vegetable over the same time period. That week, Josie complains about how little the students retain. "They don't do their homework," she tells me. "They don't have that immigrant work ethic that I had. I'm gonna have to start giving them detention. I'll quiz them every single day if I have to. If that's what it takes. . ."

And I think, "That's a little harsh. . ." but then I remind myself to tread carefully, that it's her classroom and not mine. I'm only here to help. Plus, I worry that if I push too hard, she'll have none of my help at all. She'll get defensive and ask me not to return to her classroom. She doesn't have to let me in. I'm not an official observer of the

university, not an instructional leader for the school. I'm not an administrator. I am an invited guest. At any time, she can tell me to leave.⁵⁸

I circulate as the students bend over the demand schedules for zucchini, expected to graph the numbers and explain their meaning. An Eritrean student, maybe 17, calls me to his desk. "What *is* this, Miss?" And he points to the word, zucchini. And I try to explain it, but I know his not understanding stems not just from a vegetable he may or may not have ever seen or eaten, but about this disembodied, decontextualized way of teaching concepts that provides no relevance for him.

⁵⁸ The notion of a third or hybrid space is rooted in postcolonial studies that recognize the dialectical nature of how individuals make sense of the world. Bhabha (1990) explains that in the process of shaping identity, individuals draw on competing and contradictory historical and cultural narratives. Rather than view these as polarities, Bhabha describes hybridity as "the 'third space,' enabling other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives" (p. 211). Bhabha continues to explain that these third spaces "bear the traces of those feelings and practices which inform it" (p. 211), even referencing the histories and cultures that partially edify its existence. Yet third spaces are original, constituted anew, and demand a translation, reexamination, and extension of principles.

Intentionally, I inhabit the space between mentor and friend, supervisor and colleague. I refuse to get certified as an official district evaluator, which McKinley's administration requests that I do during the initial years of our district rollout of teacher evaluation, as mandated by new state legislation. This space in between certainly gives Josie more authority to invite me to – and exclude me from – her classroom. Josie has a district mentor to whom she must respond, provide access, and report on her progress. In contrast, my positional disconnect from district mandates renders the feedback I offer as a choice that Josie makes. Josie requests it of her own volition, motivated by her own desire to strengthen her teaching, to better her practice.

When class is over, I cross the line.⁵⁹ I turn to Josie and ask, “Why are you teaching that way? If it’s not working, then why are you doing it?”

⁵⁹ Many university supervisors sit in classrooms and watch young and aspiring teachers struggle. Most often, the paradigm is to sit back, observe silently, and then disentangle the concerning practices and address one or another after the class has ended and the students have left. The classroom is not their domain, and out of professional courtesy for the cooperating teacher, they honor that boundary even while they watch students lose opportunities to learn. Conversely, in co-taught student teaching placements, cooperating teachers have countless opportunities to coach on the fly, to witness patterns in a young teacher’s or teacher candidate’s practices and step in to offer a word or two of advice in the moment. A cooperating teacher can raise a question, in front of students and in the middle of a lesson, that pushes the teacher candidate’s pedagogy and supports the students in the room. They share first-hand knowledge of the students, the curriculum, and context, thus enabling them to model how to respond to a student’s disrespectful outburst or how to rework a lesson midstream once it’s evident that it hasn’t worked.

Our district mentoring program is well-respected throughout the state. Every first-year teacher in our urban district receives a district mentor who makes monthly visits, ushers them through their initial encounters with school and district bureaucratic requirements, and serves as another set of eyes for school administrators to keep tabs on the novice teacher’s progress. That said, it’s an imperfect system. Our district mentors have high case-loads (sometimes upwards of 25 new teachers) in various schools, each with its own unique context, throughout the district. Sometimes district mentors are assigned new teachers who teach different subjects or age groups than that of the mentor. And district mentors are still seen as guests and strangers to students in the new teacher’s classroom.

I somehow found myself in a spot between cooperating teacher and mentor. The students come to know me and appreciate my presence. Josie asked for honest help, maybe because she knew me well and trusted that I believed in her potential as well as that of her students. Maybe because she was desperate to succeed. But she gave me permission to return feedback that was just as honest. So I crossed the line and became her co-teacher that semester. Not every day and not for every class period. To this day, Josie

“I don’t know,” she tells me.

“How about we try something else?”

* * *

Maybe it’s that Josie knows me, that I taught two of her methods courses and her student teaching seminar the year she earned her license. Or that she finds me among the teacher pages in old McKinley yearbooks, when she wasn’t far from her own newcomer status as a McKinley student. Maybe she checks with her friends, high school friends who were students of mine, who testify to my competence in this particular school context. Maybe it’s those weeks I spend in her classroom, interacting with her students, helping them out. “They like you better than they like me,” Josie says.

But Josie trusts me enough to sit down the following Sunday afternoon, and, together, we design a new unit on supply and demand. We center it on the supply of and demand for water, crafting a story that places the students as protagonists facing an authentic, real-world dilemma. We work backward as we plan, each day building conceptually until Josie’s students, as the economic experts, are required to advise an imagined community in an unnamed country, maybe their country of origin, as to whether or not to sell their community well to a corporate multinational. I provide a skeletal draft, and she fills it out with details. She owns it.

continues to invite me in to co-teach and, when necessary – which hardly ever happens any more – to call her on her pedagogical choices. Years later, when she hosted her first student teacher, she called me and said, “Can you help me figure out how to tell my teacher candidate the truth about his teaching?”

They are doing so much better since the start of this new assignment, Josie emails me. When she readies them for the summative assessment, she sends me a draft. They seem to really get the concepts now, so they will do well.

The students write letters, steeped in economic understanding and vocabulary, advocating for the preservation or sale of the community well. Their letters plaster the hallway and Josie's students, arms draped over each other's shoulders or linked at the elbow, usher their friends over to show off their work.

Josie tells me, "This is good stuff. Their work is really good."

The next email she sends says, *You know what I realized today and that I'm going to need help with – I am struggling with my Latino students. Today was rough. I don't know what I'm doing or what I'm not doing. Do you have time to talk for a little bit? I would like some advice.*

*Sure thing, I write back. I'll come tomorrow.*⁶⁰

⁶⁰ The more time I am able to spend in Josie's classroom, informally mentoring her in these early years, the more likely it is that she will grow in confidence and competence. And it's more likely that she'll stay put and continue at McKinley. Feiman-Nemser et al. (1999) argue, "When induction is defined as short-term support to help teachers survive their first year on the job, its role in fostering teaching and learning is diminished" (p. 6).

University Supervisor: *Once*

When I was
Coming to McKinley
Towards the end of the day
To observe
A teacher candidate,
I got my car stuck
In an ice rut.
I was
Trying to turn around
In the church parking lot
Down the street
So that I could find
A place to park
That wasn't too far
From the school.
I remember it being
Ridiculously cold
That day.
No one was just out and about.
The kind of cold
That made people walk faster
Even jog
To get
Into a heated building.

I pulled into the church driveway,
Intending to turn around
When I got stuck.
My wheels
Spun and spun
On this tire-sized groove in the ice.
My car engine was screaming
Because I'm flooring it
Trying to get my car to move.
I even got out
Once or twice
And tried to rock the car
Up and out of the ice groove.
(It's a small car,
Graduate-student cheap,
But who was I kidding?
I'm in my heels and slacks,

Leather gloves.
My hands were freezing!
I wasn't even
Wearing a hat.)
I must have pushed on the car
A couple of times
Before
This Somali woman
Jumps out of her car
Which is parked behind me, across the street,
And runs over
To me and my car.
She didn't try to speak English
Or anything,
Between the two of us
There was
Just a lot of pointing,
Me back into the driver's seat
And her leaning against the hood
Of my car
Flinging the ends of her bright orange
Hijab
Over her shoulders
And pushing, pushing
Trying to help me get my car free.
As we're doing this,
This Mexican man
(I probably shouldn't make
The assumption he was Mexican,
But he appeared to be
Latino or
Maybe an immigrant.
He didn't speak to me at all
Much less, Spanish,
Now that I think on it.)
He also gets out of his car
And joins the Somali woman
At the hood of my car.
They push
And I press the gas pedal
Gently
Gently
And
Between the three of us

My car moves
Out of the icy
Rut
Out of this place I'm stuck
And my car rolls backward
Into the street.

I get out to thank
Them both.
In English
Because that's
All I can do
And the Somali woman
Smiles at me,
Waves
(Bare handed,
I realize,
All this time)
And she runs back to her car.
The Mexican man
Nods
And shoves
His hands
Back into the front pockets of his jeans.
And slips back into his car
Still running.
I climb back into
The driver's seat and
I wave at them both,
And each of them
In their own cars
Sit waiting
For the school day
To end
And their kids
To come out.
The heat is blasting from my dashboard,
And I drive
Around the block
To park.
Before I run
Into the building
(Because
At this point

I'm late)
I check my tires
And the place I've chosen
To park
To make sure
I'm not
Stuck again.

Loyalties

On the third floor of the building, tucked away and windowless, the math department occupies a book room with its own printer and copy machine. Stale air billows out the door when you enter, and decades of dust particles escape dingy textbook pages when you break the vacuum seal of the industrial door. Now that I am teaching my methods class here, on McKinley's third floor, one of the math teachers invites me to share the copier, rather than having to make the trek to the first floor, where the only copier I've ever known about sits and serves the rest of the school. I'm given the code, with a whisper that I not let the school secretary know, lest I'm willing to undergo a "how-to-use-the-copy-machine" training. "A total waste of time," the algebra teacher tells me.

My social studies teacher candidates show up once weekly, overlapping their three hours of methods instruction with McKinley's students' schedules. A couple of them will do their student teaching here, come spring, but for now, their discomfort with McKinley and its students is evident through an insistence that I open up the staff bathroom for them and their grimaced looks when they shut the door quietly, shutting out the student noise from the hallway and adjacent classrooms.

Other licensure programs from our university place their candidates here and have for some time. One of the special education teachers hosts a practicum student every quarter. The speech clinician introduces me to a tall African-American teacher candidate, who will shadow her for four weeks before moving on to an elementary site. Two science teacher candidates share a practicum classroom with a gifted and National Board

Certified physics teacher who refuses to leave McKinley, despite numerous attempts by suburban districts to recruit her to their schools. And fall semester, the math program has placed a teacher candidate with Ernie Johnson. “She’s a shaky one,” the methods instructor tells me. “Ernie’s great with that type of teacher candidate. He’ll call it like he sees it, which is exactly what you need.”

Ernie Johnson came to McKinley several years ago, but after I had left the school to be home with my babies. Once I returned, I came to know Ernie Johnson and quickly. Though neither is officially assigned, Ernie has his own seat during staff meetings (at the front of the auditorium) and his own parking space (right outside door H). Ernie is the first to arrive at staff meetings, a good 15 minutes before the rest of us, and fills his thermos with black coffee, no sugar, no cream. He’s a big man, more than 6’4” and heavysset. In the winter, once his asthma-turned-COPD fires up, Ernie pulls an oxygen tank behind him and parks it at his right knee during meetings, thus making the seat beside him unusable. When the weather, and his breathing, improves, Ernie forgoes the oxygen and lumbers to the front row, but the seat to his right remains empty. Ernie’s new teacher candidate sits one seat over.

Ernie’s classroom sits across the hall from the book (and clandestine) copy room. Every day, all six members of the math department hustle into Ernie’s room for lunch. “These team lunches have bonded us like nothing else,” another math teacher tells me. “And that’s all because of Ernie. Each spring, when school administrators build the master schedule, Ernie makes sure we all share the same lunch period. He even brought in that microwave oven that sits in the book room, so that we wouldn’t have to race

around the building just to heat up our lunches. He can be an old ornery dude, but he has done a lot for our team.”

From my classroom, where I teach methods, I can hear Ernie’s coarse bass calling out trigonometric formulas or the day’s instructions to the half-dozen advanced math students in his classroom, four doors down. Sometimes I can hear Ernie, even when his door is shut. And though I’ve never stepped foot in Ernie’s room, rumor has it that Ernie has worked a deal with the building engineers to rig an air conditioning unit up during summer school, which he takes on every year, so long as he can be in his own classroom. Sitting at my own industrial teacher desk, I scan the giant oak frames of the windows beside me and wonder at the thought. Fall and spring, the west-facing classrooms swelter with teenagers and humidity. Ernie’s is one of those. I can’t imagine how hot Ernie’s room must get in the high summer.

On trips to the book room to make copies, if Ernie’s classroom door is open, I see him perched on a stool beside an overhead projector, working out equations in blue and red on the screen behind him and coughing between directives to students. Once, during his prep hour, he shuffled across the hall while I was copying an article for my class. “Goddamn waste of money with these Promethean boards. What am I going to do on that thing that I can’t do on an overhead transparency?” He looked at me, “How much more you gotta make?”

“I should be done soon,” I tell him. “No more than five minutes.”

He nods and heads back to his classroom.

Kids tell me Mr. Johnson's door has an automatic lock, which I know can't be true. But I regularly watch late arriving students knock politely, especially early in the year, in hopes that Mr. Johnson will admit them to class. By October, those few who continue to try, race to the door just after it closes and pound with tight fists, "C'mon Mr. Johnson, I'm only 30 seconds late! The bell just rang! Oh my God, what is your problem!?" According to Ms. Alvaro, who shares during a staff meeting break-out discussion, entitled *What to do about tardies? Consistency matters*, kids aren't late to Ernie's classes. Ms. Alvaro, whose students spill out of her classroom every hour, all hour long, every day, informs us, "Mr. Johnson doesn't give out tardies. The kids are there before he shuts the door or they miss class and the assignments, tests, or whatever. Period."⁶¹ She adds, "If admin wants 'consistency,'" and Ms. Alvaro makes air quotes, exposing fingernails bit to the quick, "Every one of us is going to have to do what Ernie does. At least until Ernie retires. When is that? Two more years?"

Then this happens on Wednesday.

I am in a hurry. I have two articles and three other handouts to copy before my class arrives. I spent the morning with a feverish four-year old, and I am yoked with leaded guilt, having asked my mother-in-law to care for my son so that I can teach. After arranging the classroom desks in a circle, I race to the math book room to have a chance

⁶¹ The professional environment of schools plays a powerful role in the socialization of teacher candidates and young teachers (Lortie, 1973; Weiner, 1993). The ways in which young teachers discuss, imitate, and reflect on their veteran colleagues' pedagogical and disciplinary choices, responses to bureaucratic mandates and professional development opportunities influence their perceptions of the profession, the work, and of themselves as teachers.

at the copy machine. The door is open, and Ernie Johnson sits at the desk facing the hallway. Red pen in hand, he slashes errors on one student assignment after another in a way that makes me wonder if he's actually reading the students' work. The stack of papers in front of him sits two inches thick. Behind him, the copier chugs and clunks, spitting out math packets. The screen reads "17 of 225 complete."

"If it isn't the U-Lady," Ernie says to me. "How ya doin', Professor? Need to make copies?"

*I'm not a professor, I want to say. I work here. I worked here before you did.*⁶²

But I don't say any of that. All of those words bump into each other in my head, behind my clenched teeth, my closed mouth. I mumble something like, "Yeah, I need to make copies for my class. Just 25 or so."

⁶² Teacher educator identity development is a process that takes years (Murray & Male, 2005). It is a process fraught with complexity, ambiguity, and discomfort (Martin, Snow, & Torrez, 2001; Murray & Male, 2005; Williams, 2014). Cultivating identity as a school-based teacher educator entails the navigation of a web of relationships, of which those with mentor teachers may be most difficult (Martin, Snow, & Torrez, 2001). Three university-liaisons describe these tensions in a collaborative self-study:

On one hand, we had a vested power (or a sense of power) from our university in roles as teacher educators and professional developers. On the other hand, they were our colleagues: Each of us was once a classroom teacher. We had lived the norms of teacher interactions in school settings. We continued to tread lightly as we worked with mentor teachers in their settings. Within these relationships, dealing with power issues required a sensitive balancing act. (Martin, Snow, & Torrez, 2001, p. 304)

Ernie tucks his pen behind his right ear and places a meaty palm flat on the desk, to help leverage himself up. With a slight push of air from his nostrils, Ernie hoists himself to his feet and schlumps to the copier. He pauses his copying job, and collects the 19 packets that the machine has neatly stacked. “You go ahead,” he tells me. “I’m making copies for all of the Algebra 2 teachers, but my student teacher is leading class, so I’m here all night.” He wiggles his pen up and down by his cheek, like it’s a cigar, and moves back to sit down.

“Thank you so much,” I smile, and I quickly feed the articles I need into the machine. I’m pushing buttons, setting the output, the staple position, requesting that the machine copy the pages back to back, when Ernie starts talking.

I don’t remember what he said first. Maybe I mentioned that I’d taught here before. Or he said something about how long he’d been in the district and when he came to McKinley. Somehow we got talking about the article in the paper that said McKinley might house the newcomer program for new immigrants in the city. *Half McKinley’s classrooms sit empty*, a district official was quoted. *Their enrollment is down and we have a growing population of students from Central and South America, East Africa and South Asia who are entitled to an education when they come to our country.*

“It makes sense,” I say. “We’ve always been a home for kids from all over the world. We’re the most diverse school in the city. It’s part of what makes us who we are.”

“Oh, so you drank the Kool-Aid, did ya? No thank you,” Ernie snorts. “Not me. Here at McKinley, all the time I been here, we always get the leftovers. We don’t get what other high schools get. Not when it comes to money or books or computers.

Programs too. We get the leftovers.” Ernie coughs into his fist, then pulls a well-worn handkerchief from his pants pocket. “You’ll never see us getting the primo-academic programs. Nope. Now this. Now we get the kids who’ve just landed, who’ve never been to school. Once again we’re getting the leftovers.”⁶³

It’s not the first time I’ve heard this complaint, and so I start in with what I always say: “That’s why we need to have the very best teachers here, why we need to teach smarter than they do over on the other side of town, where more of their students come school ready. . .”

But Ernie keeps going. He’s looking past me as he talks, like he’d be saying this even if I wasn’t in the room. “You know, I think we ought to start telling these kids that if they don’t act right, if they screw around, we’re going to send them home. And I don’t mean home to their apartments in Parkview Towers. I mean back home to Mexico, and back home to Somalia, or wherever they came from before they got here and got dropped

⁶³ In her small-scale, exploratory study, Pollack (2013) finds that in their informal conversations, teachers’ stories often take a “tell it like it is” tone in their description of working conditions, students, and schools; when the focus of such stories is students and families of color, these stories betray a deficit-based approach, grounded in low expectations and harmful assumptions. Pollack further finds that such stories are used instructionally with teacher candidates and young teachers, passed along by more senior teachers, and viewed by novices as guideposts to the profession. She writes, “Eager to be accepted and respected—while feeling overwhelmed by the difficulty and enormity of the job—beginning teachers may be inclined to receive such talk as friendly, helpful advice” (p. 878).

in our school. How would they like that if we sent them home to Mexico? We could say to them, how would you like to be in Somalia rather than in a math class in America?"

I stay pretty quiet, because I don't know what to say, because I'm still trying to get my bearings here, still trying to build relationships and get teachers to trust that I'm on their side, that I'm one of them.

Ernie reads my silence and starts to backpedal. This time he looks at me when he speaks. "You know, I've had kids tell me that somebody, their brother or their cousin, is being sent back to their grandma's house in Mexico because they've been bad, because they're not doing what they're supposed to."

"Yeah," I offer, "I had a former student whose parents threatened as much. I don't think they ever followed through. . ."

"Wouldn't that scare the piss out of a kid, though? Wouldn't it scare you? Having to go back to El Salvador, back to some hellish refugee camp in Kenya? Those countries are in serious chaos, you know? Those places are unfit for people to live." Ernie's red pen points my way, the cap off, laying on the pile of tests he's grading. "Something like that might make them act more like human beings."

The copier has chunked to a stop, and my articles wait to be collected. I don't know what to say, how to respond, because it's been a long time since I've been face-to-face with such ugly, hateful words. I know people say such things. I know more people think them, silently, in their heads, but at least have enough sense to keep them to themselves. But it's been a long time since someone has been this comfortable with their own racism.

Maybe it's because I can hear the social studies teacher candidates collecting in the hallway, waiting for me to unlock the classroom door, or because I haven't got a tight, sharp comeback to give to Ernie's words.

Maybe it's because I'm afraid to confront him and at the same time, I'm ashamed of my own timidity.

Because part of me thinks he must be joking, that he can't really mean what he just said.

Because I don't want to believe that I've convinced the university teacher licensure programs to partner with a school where teachers would speak such violence about their students to their colleagues.

Because I know that if Ernie will say this to me, his students, Somali and Mexican and every other kid that passes through his classroom door, sense his feelings about them just by the way he assigns their homework, the way he locks them out when they're late, the red markings on their papers, and the way he says their names.

Maybe I say nothing because it feels as though I have swallowed a peach pit, its coarse exterior scraping my throat as I swallow, its cyanide patiently waiting to be released inside me.

I say, "I gotta go. Thanks for letting me make these before class," and I scoop the articles into my arms and head down the hall.

On my way out, I see Ernie's teacher candidate. The teacher candidate stands stiff at the screen, pointing at numbers illuminated by the overhead. His khaki pants are ironed and a bright red tie adorns his blue button-down shirt. He faces the numbers, the screen as

he talks, but it's clear that he knows the kids are there, he feels their presence. I can't see the students as I pass, but I catch the teacher candidate's eye for a second. I think, *What is Ernie Johnson teaching you?* Our eyes break from each other's, and the candidate returns his attention to the problem at hand. I greet the teacher candidates waiting at my door.

University Supervisor: *I feel sick*

Telling you this story.

I came to McKinley
For an observation
You know
Sometime in February.

The teacher candidate
I was observing
Was managing.
That's the best
I could say.

By the end of
February,
Which is the middle of
Student teaching,
They are so tired.
The teacher candidate.
The cooperating teacher.
The students.
Everyone is.
The whole state is tired.
The ground is frozen hard.
The leftover snow
Is filthy
From car exhaust
And dirt.
Everything
Has this gray-brown feel to it,
And in schools
Everyone just needs a break.
The teacher candidates
Can't see the end of
Their student teaching
And
You can feel
Their exhaustion.
It's not their school,
Not their classroom,
And yet they still have a while longer

To endure
The oversight of their
Cooperating teachers
And supervisors
And instructors.

The observation was fine,
I think.
Honestly
That's not what I remember.

I stayed to debrief the observation
After the school day ended
And we must have talked
For a while.
Because when I headed
Out to the street
Where my car was parked,
It was late
Like dusk
And the sky was dark gray and
Cloudy.
At least that's how
I seem to remember it.
I had about two blocks to walk
To get to my car
And
There were these two boys
Two McKinley students
Hispanic
Walking behind me
Pretty much the whole way.

I don't know
Why it stirred
So much fear in me.
And I hate
That I assumed
They were up to no good
Or that
For whatever reason
They were planning to
Attack me
Or whatever

Irrational
Feelings
I was having that caused me
To behave the way
I did.

Sure,
Like everybody else
I watch the news
And even when you don't want them to
Those messages
About who to fear
Who should be afraid
They worm
Their way
Into your thoughts,
Even when you don't want them to.

And there had been this string
Of crime alerts
On campus
Every time
Someone was assaulted
Or raped
Or robbed
On campus
Or near campus,
The college
Put out an alert
Through email accounts
And up pops this text
On my phone
Safety Alert!!
And I swear
Every time
The text read,
The suspect
Is dark skinned
Male
5'9"
Or
The suspects
Were described as
African-American males

Or
Hispanic males
And they tell you
Their supposed heights
Or a description of their clothes
Or whatever.
I know that the college
Is just covering its ass
Doing what it has to do,
And protecting itself
And its students.
You know,
With messages like
Be sure
To walk in pairs
Call for a security escort.
I get that
They're trying to keep us informed.
I mean
It is a city
And crime happens.
But that stuff
Gets in your head.
Even when you don't want it to.

So I was walking
Rather briskly
Those two blocks or so
From the school to my car
And I could feel these McKinley
Boys behind me
Just paces
Behind me
And I couldn't really hear them talking
They didn't seem to be saying
Anything.
Just walking
Right behind me.

Well I just freaked.

I unlocked my car
As fast as I could
And threw my bag

In the passenger seat,

And they kept walking right towards
My car
Towards the driver's side
Not on the sidewalk
Like they didn't even notice me there
But at an angle
Towards my car
Where I'd just gotten in.
So, in a panic,
I just started the car
As fast as I could
And peeled away
Right as they were about to pass by
My side window.
I mean
I was so close to them,
My car was so close to them
I may have brushed
The coat sleeve
Of one of them
With my side mirror
As I drove away.

I never looked back
To see if they cursed me out
To see if they got hurt.

I just raced away
My fear completely got the best of me.

I know the year before
A teacher candidate
Student teaching at McKinley
Had a student
Threaten to put a brick
To her head
Because she kept him
Afterschool to do homework.
Rumor was,
The kid said it in this cold,
Mocking way
Intentionally

Wanting
To frighten her
So that she would
Let him leave
And let him off the hook from
Whatever assignment he hadn't finished.
The cooperating teacher
Blew it off,
And the supervisor
Had to make a stink
To get a consequence imposed
On the kid.
The deans at the school
Acted like
It was the teacher candidate's fault.
Like because she wasn't strong
In the classroom,
Because she had a high voice
Or thin skin
It was her fault.
I think the professors were
Moments away
From pulling her from the placement.
She stuck it out though
And the kid
Was removed from her class.

I'm not so Pollyanna
To think that
All of McKinley's students
Are angels,
And I'm not so stupid
To think that
They're all thugs.
Statistics will tell you
Shit like that
Happens everywhere.
I know that.
It happened in my
Lily white
Suburban school
When I went to high school.
Violence happens everywhere.

Do I believe
Those two boys
Were actually
Going to hurt me?

No.

Looking back on it
I think
They were just two
Kids
Walking to their car
Leaving high school
Like any other day
Probably deep
In a conversation
That I couldn't hear.

But
I didn't act out of logic.
I didn't behave
From a rational
Thoughtful
Intelligent place.
Not anywhere
Even close to that.

Whenever I think about it
I am
Ashamed.

I had to return to McKinley
Later in the spring
For another observation
And I was entirely distracted
By the possibility
That I'd be sitting in the same classroom
With one of those two boys
Who I was so afraid of that day.
I wondered if one of them
Would recognize me
In the hallway
Heading for an observation
Where I'm off to

Supposedly
Help some
Teacher candidate
Learn how to teach
Kids like them
At a school like McKinley.
I wondered if they'd
Recognize me
And see me
As one more
Racist white woman
In their school.

Amber

I am sitting in the third-floor classroom McKinley has assigned to the university-partnership. The room is empty, and I've done little to decorate it. I have hung a university banner and maybe a dozen laminated images from old calendars of political posters along the cinderblock walls. Postcard-sized portraits of peacemakers such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Aung San Suu Kyi rest along the top edge of the chalkboards. The tops of the posters have already started to curl away from the wall. In one image, a woman scales a vertical rock face against a cloudless blue sky; on either side of her sit a black and white photograph of Amelia Earhart and a photograph of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia. Ghostly words from a brainstorming session during the social studies methods course blotch the black chalkboard on two walls of the classroom, weeks after the class discussion ended, the words mottled and blurred by someone's back or shoulder, when the preservice teachers huddled in groups during break times.

I remind myself to clean the chalkboards at some point, but I don't have a bucket or a washcloth. I make a note to bring one of each from home. Although I could use the school's crispy utility brown paper towels and water from the drinking fountain outside the classroom, I don't feel like doing it right now. The blinds are clipped together with large, black binder clips, to stop the flap-and-rattle noise as the cool fall air pushes in through the open window. I am convinced the room has the ugliest student desks in the school. Pressboard tabletops glued to steel, imbalanced legs partner with a plastic chairs, which also wobble. Every day, I come in and straighten them, placing them in a

makeshift horseshoe arrangement, like I did when I taught years ago at McKinley. The room continues to ache for the electricity of McKinley's students, the energy of the learning I once knew in this building. Or maybe it's me who pines for that.

I can hear the math classroom across the hall. The students erupt in taunting *oohs* and *awwws*, while a single female student's curses pierce the din. Within seconds, the student's voice echoes in the hall and the third-year math teacher closes the classroom door. The young woman continues to vent her frustrations loudly, "I hate your stupid class. You don't know how to teach."

Without even thinking, I get up from my desk where my laptop sits open and I peek into the hall. "You okay?"⁶⁴

"No, I am *not* okay," the young woman responds. She presses back the wisps of black hair that splay from her head. "That stupid teacher just kicked me out for nothing. I told her I didn't get what she was saying."

I clutch the doorframe of my classroom for a few minutes longer and lean out. The girl continues to pace, and slams her foot against a locker. The rest of the classrooms at this end of the hallway have their doors closed, the 4" x 36" rectangular windows

⁶⁴ I could ignore her. She's not my student, and I don't know her name. Her teacher, Ms. Alvaro, has not asked for my help, not today and not ever. And I've only been back at McKinley for a short while. I am still finding my bearings, coming to understand how the school – the kids, the teachers – have changed since I left. No one would question me if I, too, were to close my door and let the girl continue to curse at the top of her lungs in the hallways. As one of the biology teachers barks at staff meetings, "That's not my job. My job is to teach kids who want to learn," and he's met with a dozen nodding heads and a small round of applause.

blocked by cardboard and construction paper. No one can see into their closed rooms, and they are shielded from whatever goes on in the hallways. The girl's metal anger clangs against the lockers in the empty hall. I ask her, "That's why she kicked you out?"

She still hasn't looked me in the face. "She said I was talking when I was supposed to be doing the warm-up." The girl walks toward me and stops just on the other side of the water fountain. Something switches and my teacher-self, the years of conversations with and comforting of my former adolescent students, takes over and I breathe into the moment. The girl must feel it too, because something in her releases, and she slides down the wall to the cement floor. Her legs flop out in front of her.

I look across the hall to the math classroom. The door remains closed and the teacher, Ms. Alvaro, hasn't come to retrieve the girl. I step out of my room and sit down on the hallway floor beside the girl. "What's your name?"

"Amber," She says.

"So what happened?" I ask.

I don't know this girl, Amber. Maybe I have seen her in a social studies classroom weeks ago, when I observed a teacher candidate, but I'm not sure. Some of McKinley's students who pass by the open door of the university classroom pop their heads into my room while I'm teaching. Sometimes they do this even during methods class, wanting to check out the mostly white college students who come here once a week during school. We are strangers, and students remind us of this with their unscheduled visits and their furrowed looks. When I'm alone in the room, grading papers or waiting to meet with cooperating teachers or teacher candidates, I get visitors too. A brave ninth grader,

Isxaaq, who has set about learning the inner workings of the school, has seen me standing at my classroom door during passing time, like all the other teachers, but he recognizes that no kids ever seem to come into my room. Kids like Isxaaq make my business their business. Those few bold ones, I have come to know by name. The students with whom I've engaged in conversation, even if only to introduce myself and talk about the university, about "teaching teachers" here at McKinley and the teacher candidates who come every Thursday, those kids nod to me in the hallways. Sometimes they reply to my "Good morning" and smile back. Amber is not one of them.

But it's evident that things are not going well for Ms. Alvaro across the hall. She's young, reportedly in her third year, and struggling to maintain control. Earlier in the fall, I told another math teacher, someone I worked with years ago at McKinley, that "there's no joy" in Ms. Alvaro's classroom.

"Damn," he said as he looked up from his computer. "That's harsh."

"But I hear her classroom every day," I tell him. "It's not good."

Today, apparently, I have decided to get involved.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Making the transition from classroom teacher to teacher-educator takes upward of three years (Murray & Male, 2005). Davey (2013) contends that being a teacher educator involves "an ongoing negotiation or dialogue among one's past history and experiences, one's values and ideologies, and one's current socio-cultural and politico-historical context" (p. 143). As teacher educators engage in professional practice in the thirdspace, they are often stimulated to reflect on what teaching and learning can and should be for student teachers, and on what constitutes their role in this learning:

The different perspectives that teacher educators encountered in the thirdspace clearly had an impact on their views of themselves and encouraged deep reflection on their pedagogy and its

Amber tells me about Ms. Alvaro's teaching, about her inability to explain the problems or the process for solving them. "I hate the stupid warm-ups she gives. I hate how she makes me sit in the back of the room. I can't see from back there, and there's this boy who bothers me, always poking me and shit. I told her and everything, but she doesn't listen. Ooh I hate her so much."

Amber keeps talking. "She goes through the problems too fast. I can't write down what she's saying and when I ask my friend who sits next to me, she yells at me for talking or moves me. And by then I'm just too mad."

While Amber talks, I can feel the anger release in her. The joints in her elbows and wrists seem to soften, and one of her feet stops rocking. "And oh my god she is so boring. I already learned this math in my old school."

"Where did you go?"

underlying beliefs and assumptions and on their contribution to student teacher learning. This learning and reflection sometimes occurs in complex situations that necessitate carefully constructed dialogue and professional conversations that acknowledge and value the range of perspectives and experiences brought to the discussion. (Williams, 2014, p. 325)

Korthagen, Loughran, and Russell (2006) highlight the complex and relational nature of work in the thirdspace by suggesting that teacher educators working in this space hold "three different perspectives simultaneously: the perspective of the individual learning to teach, the perspective of the teacher in a school, and the perspective of the teacher educator in the university setting" (p. 1034).

“Montgomery Middle,” and she looks me in the eye.

“Who was your math teacher?”

“Mr. Delahoy. He said I was real good at math.”

“I’ve been to Montgomery a few times, but I don’t know him. I have never taught there. What made him such a good teacher?”

“I got all As in his class,” Amber says and her mocha brown finger wags the air.

“All As, and now, because of her,” Amber points to Ms. Alvaro’s classroom, “I’m failing. This is the only class I’m failing. The only one.”

Amber talks about her other classes and the other ninth grade teachers. I listen and ask questions when I don’t fully follow. I’m just waiting for Ms. Alvaro to come out and take care of her student. “Have you talked to a dean? Maybe Mr. Boyd can come with you and meet with Ms. Alvaro. It sounds like you just need to explain why you’re frustrated. Sometimes teachers have a hard time listening to frustrations when they’re trying to conduct class. I bet if you scheduled a meeting with her during one of her prep hours, and bring Mr. Boyd with you, she’d be much more receptive to what you have to say.”

Amber shrugs off the suggestion, “It doesn’t matter anyway.”

I must have given her a puzzled look, because she explains further, right away.

“My mom wants us to move,” Amber tells me. She stares at the metal lockers across from us. “I don’t want to go though.”

“Where would you move?” I ask blithely. “Are you thinking you’ll switch high schools?”

“To Florida.” Amber looks at me. “My mom doesn’t want me to raise my baby here.”

We’ve been talking for 15 minutes, and here I am, thinking I have a good read on this girl. And then she hits me with this. “You have a baby?”

“Yeah. She just turned a year old.” Amber smiles.

I quickly do the math. One-year-old baby in ninth grade. Gives birth in eighth grade. Pregnant in seventh. I pull the next set of questions from my experiences with my own kids, from my walks through the neighborhood when my children were small enough to be stroller-bound. “What’s your baby’s name? Is she walking? Are you getting good sleep at night?”

Amber smiles again and tells me about her little girl, how funny she is, how her mom helps out with the baby while she’s at school. The math class and Ms. Alvaro drop away, and it’s just Amber and me, talking about babies. I think about how tired she must be, how hard those first years with a baby can be, how challenged I was by pregnancy and childbirth and that first year of my son’s life. I was in my thirties. I was not 15.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ When I first wrote this story, I was uneasy with how Amber was positioned in the text. I wondered if my depiction of her dehumanized her, rendered her “garnish and condiment” (Lather, 1991, p. 92) to my own story. In the re-storying of the data, I sought to remain fixed on the making and remaking of knowledge around my own position as partnership liaison. Yet even in a rendering with those methodological parameters, I am aware that my role as researcher bestows me with power of language in my representation of Amber, in the situation I select, and the words I give her in the text. I feel my own resistance to stepping into her shoes and centering her as the character/narrator when it might mean making determinations about when to have her switch into African American Vernacular English or how my interpretation of her words

In that moment, I want every teacher educator at my university to be in this very spot, sitting on the floor with a student, listening and trying to understand the stories they bring to school, how each and every last one of them has stories and situations that impact their academic success. It has been seven years since I left the classroom and the visceral complexity of the work has faded. Abstract, conceptual understanding does not suffice. The thick taste of hostility that hangs in the air after a fight between students, the sick guttural weight of knowing you can't take back something you've said in the classroom, and the heaviness of knowing it will take weeks of work to fix it and even then, you might not get them all back. The resignation, the exhaustion, the beauty, and the joy: You have to feel it, intimate and up close. Sitting here with Amber brings all of that rushing at me full force.

Ms. Alvaro steps out of the classroom to hand Amber the referral. The young teacher doesn't acknowledge me. Circles shadow her caramel eyes and the referral slip hangs limp from her outstretched hand. Amber snatches the triplicate document and slaps it against the cement floor. Ms. Alvaro quietly closes her classroom door as Amber brushes off the back of her jeans. She snarls and sucks her teeth as she gets up. "I gotta go," she tells me without a second glance, and heads downstairs to the assistant principal's office.

and behaviors might reinforce racist stereotypes of African-American young women. The best I can do is to constantly and transparently reflect within and through the text on my own privileged position as researcher/author and how hegemonic systems of power impact my work.

Veteran Teacher: *Being from the Neighborhood*

Helps.

But, you know,

After a while,
It's not about that.

Somebody came into my room the other day,
Came into one of my classes,

And this person was surprised
That there were no
White kids.
I had no white kids in that particular class.

They asked me about it.

I hadn't noticed it.
They're just kids.

I mean,
Yes.
There's colors;
You'd be blind
If you didn't notice them.

But I guess,
Maybe I've been here
So long
That it's just that
They're my kids.
This is who I've got.

My kids come in all
Sizes
Shapes
Flavors
Colors
Whatever.

You teach them.
You be fair.

You be firm.
You be consistent.
And you be open to listening.

And if you have to discipline them
You say,
When they're calmed down,
"Hey,
Look,
We gotta talk."

And that's what's nice
About the job:
To be able to take a kid out in the hall
One-on-one,
Talk to them and say,
"Look, I know you're having a bad day.
There's just certain things I can't have in here
If I'm going to manage."

And they get it.
Most of them get it.
Some of them are out of control.
So it's like,

"You know what?
Tell you what,
You're going to have to go today.
Come on back tomorrow."

When I teach ninth grade
I always start at the point of,
Okay,
My ninth graders are
Physiologically and psychologically
A mess.

I don't care what color they are.
I don't care what gender they are.
They're a mess.

This is our starting point.

In ninth grade

The kids are just
Upfront and in-your-face,
And there's just some kids
That I deal with
Every single day
Who have such massive distrust issues
That it requires real . . .
I don't know even.

But frankly I can't –
You know,
As a teacher,
You can't fix everything.
You can't do everything.

So I hold onto this:

We,
My students and I,
Have to have an environment that,
(You know,
Honestly
I don't care if we ever get to the three branches of government)
But do we have an environment where,
All of us
Are safe.

That's the beginning.
It starts
With creating a community
Where everyone is safe,
And then we work towards
Building a community
Where empathy is valued,
Where the context where you come from matters,
That who you are as a person
And the forces that have been at work in your life are valid,
You know,
That you validate those things that you're gifted in
In ways that maybe you don't understand yet,
That maybe you don't know
Or you're not sure how to show.

Part of my job as a teacher is to help

My kids unpack that and to ask questions and
Help you find your gift.

It's a creative journey that we're on
Together.

And I don't have all the answers;
I'm still trying to figure them out for myself.

Alex, Bridled

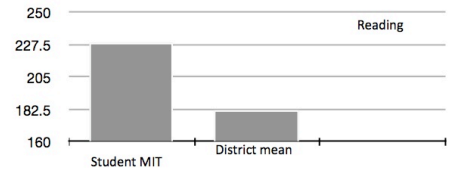
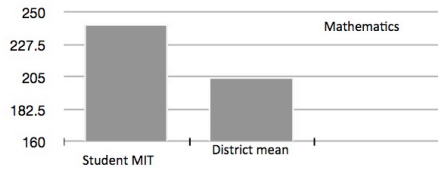
First Quarter Report Card McKinley High School					
Name: Alex [REDACTED]					Grade: 10
					Date: [REDACTED]
Course	Per	Teacher	Grade	Comment 1	Comment 2
Health	1	Johnson	F	41 – Frequently absent	
World History	2	Altoonian	D	83 – Poor work habits	31 – Not up to potential
English 10	3	Jamison	D	83 – Poor work habits	
Welding	4	Standish	F	41 – Frequently absent	40 – Often tardy
Debate	5	Cruz	A	08 – Outstanding student	27 – Very creative
Geometry	6	Robins	C-	05 – High test scores	83 – Poor work habits
Chemistry	7	Stephenson	F	42 – Unexcused absences	

Student's Name: █████, Alex

Student ID: █████

Grade: 10

Term/ Year	Grade	MIT (+/- Std Err)	Percentile Range	Term/ Year	Grade	MIT (+/- Std Err)	Percentile Range
FA13	10	237-242-247	99-99-99	FA 13	10	224-229-230	99-99-99



Problem solving	High	Measurement and geometry	High
Number sense	High	Statistics and probability	High
Computation	High	Algebra	High

Vocabulary	High	Grammar	High
Comprehension of literature	High	Analysis and evaluation of language and writing	High
Comprehension of informational texts	High		

Alex hates school. He bides his time. Watches the clock. Counts down to lunch, to the end of second hour, third, the end of the day. He shows up because his Nana Berta wants him to go. He sits there, as he has learned to do from years of sitting in desks, in line, on the wall, hands folded, mouth closed. He contains himself. Silent, Alex keeps himself shut, sealed, stoic. He slides into his assigned desk in one room after another. He listens to them talk. Sometimes he hears them: *Get your notebook out. Essay due by Friday. Listen up.* Other times, he imagines their imperatives bouncing off of him like raindrops off a metal roof. Impenetrable.

He remembers racing into Ms. Bunstadt's classroom, hoping to be the first one in the kindergarten classroom. Like boxes of candy, cartons of books lined the window ledges, each with its own leveled number and colored binding. Nana Berta had taught him to read before he ever got there. He pressed her hand in his, pleading again and again to walk to the library, even if it was seven blocks from their apartment. They stopped to rest twice, three times on the way home, setting the overloaded bags of books on the sidewalk, so that Nana could rest her hands. Alex pulled the top book from the bag and sat, cross-legged on the sidewalk, and read.

The bridling started early. *No blurting out your answers, Alex. Other children want a chance to answer questions too. Please wait for the other children in your group. Don't read ahead. Not so fast, the teacher would say. Yes, that's the right answer; now go back and show your work.*

He remembers how much it hurt, the throb in his temple, the churn in his gut from waiting, trying to contain his ideas and questions inside. His thinking mutated, like electricity in his body, searching for release. He bounced in his seat, kicked the bottom of the chair in front of him, again and again, until the kid near him called out, *Alex is bothering me*. Hopping to the pencil sharpener. Dancing on his way to the little bathroom in the corner of the kindergarten room. *In your seat, Alex. Keep your hands to yourself, Alex. You need to be quiet. Get yourself in line.*

At some point, the teachers lost patience. The words and questions that flew from his mouth before he was called on sent him out of the circle, to *time out*, on the wall at recess, into the desk facing the corner, away from the other kids. His electrified body

propelled him out the door to *isolation* in the teacher's classroom next door or for a *break* in the principal's office. Somewhere during that stretch, there was a social worker and some other woman who sat in his classroom, watching him, noting his kicks and wiggles, making hash marks for his blurts and bursts. There was a hot afternoon in a small office with lots of questions about being distracted and television and home.

I am a troublemaker, Alex told Nana when he came home from school. He buried himself in the stack of library books from their most recent trip, immersing himself in imagined basketball courts and space stations and superhero strategy sessions. *I don't feel so good*, he told his mom on Monday mornings, and he stayed on the couch with Nana, keeping one eye on CNN or Montel, the other on the book in his lap. Then the moving started. Moving from one teacher to another, from one school to the next. Some were better than others -- fewer worksheets and lines. The writhing electricity burned at the lining of his stomach, and he lay his head down on his desk. *He's not engaged. He works maybe 10 % of the time. He doesn't listen. He doesn't care.*

Then he took the tests. His third grade teacher called Nana Berta first, then called his mom at work. *We want him to take them again. Sometimes the scores can be a fluke.* Nana Berta hugged him hard, and they walked to the Dairy Queen for the biggest ice cream he had ever had. The next day, he took the tests again. No DQ this time. Instead, the third grade teacher gave him more to do. A thick math book with pages of problems to do at home. Twenty spelling words instead of ten, plus he had to write all the definitions. In fourth grade, the teacher presented him with word finds and crossword puzzles. *Challenge work*, he explained. And timeouts. *Please don't correct me Alex.* If

his work wasn't done, no recess. *There's no excuse for you not having it done, unless you're just lazy.*

He learned to keep his thoughts to himself around the other kids first. When Rafique and Cy and Eddie were talking about Pokémon and Nintendo and football at lunch, he found ways to contribute to their conversations without using words like *hypothetically* or *paucity* or *carcass*, words that crystalized meaning in books. It only took one, *Quit using big words ya know-it-all*, and Alex left the words on the page. In elementary school he rattled off stats for Kobe Bryant and Kevin Garnett. By middle school, it was Kung Fu movies, *Grand Theft Auto*, and cigarettes.

Nana Berta was sick then, and his mom bit at her lip every time she thought about what it would mean to have a teenage boy in the house by herself, a boy whose teachers called him *impulsive* and *spacey* and *noncompliant*. She enrolled him in a new charter school when Alex was in seventh grade. Its brochures promised a no-excuses college preparation program and structure in a 7-5 school day. She borrowed a car from her girlfriend and drove him to a suburban mall for the required uniform of khaki pants and navy shirts. Alex lasted three months. The teachers marched them in lines from class to class, insisted on silent hand signals to leave their desks, to sharpen their pencils, to throw away trash, to return a book to the cupboard. Alex received detention again and again for slouching, for not tracking the reading teacher, for untucking his shirt. At some point, it was a game. What rule could he violate and how long would it take them to catch him. Then, Alex stopped talking altogether. His mother only heard his voice when he read out

loud to Nana Berta as she lay in bed. *Your son is angry*, his teachers said at his exit conference. *You might look into getting a diagnosis.*

Alex skipped across three different middle schools during eighth grade, finally landing at McKinley as a freshman. At that point, he had been in truancy court twice and a thick file followed him to school.

But Alex shows up at McKinley because Nana Berta wants him to. He slides into his assigned desk in one class after another, and he stays silent. At home he reads and rereads DuBois, Mumia Abu Jamal, and Malcolm X. Sometimes he even brings a copy to school and reads it in class, while the teachers lecture. They mostly don't care so long as he's quiet. Sometimes he does the work they ask him to. Other times not. Pretty much any kid will ask him for a smoke in the hallway, and he will always oblige, behind a locker or in a still back stairwell.

But in debate, his fourth hour class, he can run. Two weeks into the semester, Ms. Altoonian handed him a book on the prison industrial complex and told him he could take it home. *Just return it when you're done.* He finished it within the week. After that it was a graphic novel about race and the school-to-prison pipeline. He scanned her classroom, looking for a catch, a sign that she wasn't for real. *What do you think?* She asked him one day, when he showed up a few minutes early and the room was still empty. *Good*, he said and he set the book on her desk. *What's next?* he asked.

You tell me.

New Teacher: *There's Nobody There.*

Like
If you're a quarterback in the NFL
You have a quarterback coach.

In any other profession,
When you are new,
You are assigned to
Someone
Who looks after you,
24/7.
That person
Makes sure you're alright.

Teachers don't have that.

The person next door to me
He can continue doing what he's been doing,
The same thing for 10 years.
Nobody checks in.
Nobody coaches him.

Observations don't work
Because he knows it's coming
He's putting on a show.

So for that teacher next door to me
There's nobody there
To help him
Develop.

There isn't a principal.
(I think it should be the principal's job.)
But they can't do it.
They're too busy
Doing whatever it is
They do.
And when they try
To coach you,

Some of them
Don't know good instruction
When they see it.

My last observation,
The principal told me
“Good job.
You’re doing great.”
She didn’t offer anything
That would stretch me,
Nothing that would
Push me
To change
To better
What I do.
It’s only my first year.
You can’t tell me
I don’t have room to grow.

I honestly don’t think
The principal
Knew what to say.
Makes me wonder
What he taught
And what kind of teacher he was
When he was in the classroom.
If
He was ever in the classroom.

If
He taught kids . . .

If he taught
Kids like our kids at McKinley
Himself
Ever.

There’s nobody
There to help a teacher
Truly develop
Once they’ve hit the classroom.
You’ve got all kinds of support
In your teacher prep program
Methods instructors
Supervisors
A cooperating teacher,
And even if they’re not master teachers,

In theory
They are there for you
They talk you through your mistakes,
The kids who cuss you out,
The moments you freeze,
Or when your lesson plan flops.

But then
You get a job
And you are

On
Your
Own.

There is
Nobody.

Carolyn,
My first district assigned mentor,
Was good
But
I had to go out of my way
To get her to be here.
I had to email
And call
Multiple times
I had to say,
Hey can you come see this?
Can you come see me teach?

And then
She'd come.
She'd be here for an hour.
But then she'd have to go.
She had to see how many other new teachers?
How many more of us
Were calling her,
Emailing her,
Asking her to come help us with
This lesson plan
Or that kid
Or that colleague.
I'm sure she had other young teachers

Who were in crisis
More often
More immediate
Than me.

She'd call me later.
She never forgot.
She'd call me and
Talk with me on the phone at night,
Hours after class was over
After I'd taught
Another three sections
And countless other things had happened.
I'd made eight thousand
Additional split-second decisions
Since she had observed my teaching.

And whatever I'd struggled with
Had been downgraded,
Archived,
Unanswered,
In some unnamed folder
In my head and heart.
I had already moved on
To tomorrow's lesson
To the stack of student papers
I needed to return
The next day.

My mentor helped.
Don't get me wrong.
I mean she was one of the best.

But
Who else is there
If you want to get better?
If you want to be the teacher
You believed in,
The kind that made you choose
Teaching
In the first place?

Nobody.

Tensions⁶⁷

In the past, Mr. Arnold could tell his teacher candidates, “This is what I want for the unit’s essential question. This is where I would like to see the unit go. Here are my objectives as far as comprehension and vocabulary strategies.” And the teacher candidate would run! He would come back that afternoon, the next day, the following Monday, and say, “Here’s the unit. What do you think?” And, when Mr. Arnold was honest with himself, the resulting lesson plan would outdo something he could create. It would be holistic and integrated and creative, dipped in new technologies and hip to the lingo his students appreciated so much. He gave the teacher candidate whatever space, whatever freedom needed, within reason of course, and all kinds of possible would happen. The teacher candidate would understand how to fit the unit into the requirements specified by

⁶⁷ Little research has focused on the pressures faced by cooperating teachers, the responsibilities of serving as a cooperating teacher, how they view themselves as mentors, or the ways in which they assess and coach their teacher candidates as they develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for teaching (Goodfellow, 2000, as cited in Clark, Triggs, & Nielson, 2013). The general lack of understanding of what it means to be a cooperating teacher, from the perspective of cooperating teachers themselves, inhibits teacher educators and cooperating teachers in their efforts to support teacher candidates. Without greater support, cooperating teachers “are left to rely on their intuitive sense of what it means to supervise student teachers—often by drawing on their own practicum experiences when they were student teachers” (Knowles & Cole, 1996, as cited in Clark, Triggs, & Nielson, 2013, p. 2).

the university licensure program and how to meet the expectations of his professors. He might even explain specific ideas, required by the university program, and how they might play out in class with the kids at McKinley. But most of the teacher candidates Mr. Arnold had worked with in the past also figured out, real quick, that there were things needed at McKinley, because of the unique culture at the school, the kids, what they carried with them to school, their baggage. Most of those past teacher candidates could figure out how to take the requirements of the university and the needs of Mr. Arnold's classroom and merge the two.

Not this year. This year, Mr. Arnold's teacher candidate, Heidi, just doesn't know what to do. She has struggled to put Mr. Arnold's unit expectations into the university framework.

Take this week. Mr. Arnold tells her, "We're doing a big push around the concept of neighborhood as a way to introduce some of the basic geographic ideas. You know, start local and go to global." Mr. Arnold rubs his palm against the stubble on his mostly-bald head. "I want the summative assessment to be a five-paragraph essay, sort of a first step in their preparation for the writing test." He looks at Heidi. Her blonde head bends down over her notes, and she scribbles quickly to keep up. He continues, "The students should have to use their research and the data generated from that research to back up their position in the paper." Heidi scribbles down Mr. Arnold's instructions, looking up once he stops speaking.

"Any questions for me?"

She shakes her head. "I think I'm good."

Well, it seems like she's not so good and that what Mr. Arnold and McKinley students need isn't acceptable. Two days later, after she's met with her university supervisor on campus, away from McKinley, Heidi starts gently pushing back. "Erik says the unit isn't ummm . . . interactive enough," she relays to Mr. Arnold. She has plopped herself in a grimy student desk across from his teacher desk, her laptop looking like it will slide right off the angled pressboard desktop surface and into her lap. "My supervisor, he says it doesn't meet the university's requirements."

So what does Mr. Arnold do? He could have said, "Tough shit. Do it anyway." But no. He helps her. He stays for hours after school with Heidi that afternoon and hours more the day following. Seated side-by-side in student desks, his six-foot body cramping enough that he has to get up and move every 20 minutes, Mr. Arnold helps his teacher candidate write the unit. Heidi emails him the university's required lesson plan template, all 27 parts of it, and he walks through it with her, one section at a time. Mr. Arnold rubs his head again and again as they fill it out, "Why the hell are they asking you to do this? What do they mean here?"

She doesn't know.

"What does this have to do with teaching?" he wonders aloud and his voice bellows through the empty classroom.

Melanie Sweeney, the third-year language arts teacher next door, pops her head in, "What's up?"

Heidi shrugs.

Mr. Arnold erupts with exasperation and motions her over to the open laptop. “Did they make you do this huge amount of stuff when you were in your prep program?” The language arts teacher peeks at the screen. Mr. Arnold continues to spew, “For a single lesson plan, they’re asking for all this: Rationale! Objectives! Generalizations! Primary questions. . . Who the hell writes generalizations anymore? In my humble opinion,” Mr. Arnold places a giant hand on his chest, “this is ridiculous. It totally takes away from the very thing that you’re trying to do and that is, teach kids. They need to engage in the lesson and learn. Those professors should be teaching you how to promote an organized classroom where every child has the opportunity to achieve at the highest levels possible.”

Heidi and Ms. Sweeney catch each other’s eyes for a split second, silent.

Mr. Arnold dislodges himself from the too-small student desk. The plastic back of the seat, missing screws, twists as he stands. He twists it back into place, temporarily, and continues his rant. “By the time you’re done with that *ridiculous* lesson plan template, you’ve got to be so confused! I would be! I get that there are important elements to every lesson plan, but my god! It needs to be simplified so that it gets at the heart of student engagement and learning and interaction – and everything else they’re asking you to do, without becoming so cumbersome that it takes away from what you actually need to learn. That lesson plan is not realistic for your practice, Heidi! There is no way you’re going to do that for the rest of your career! I bet you’ll never do anything like it ever again, after you finish student teaching. There is nothing about that tool that is helpful to you as a teacher. Seriously. Nothing.”

The language arts teacher smiles at Heidi. She gently puts her hand on Heidi's shoulder. "You're in good hands Heidi. Good luck! And both of you: Don't stay here too late!"

Heidi slumps in the chair.

Mr. Arnold doesn't have an issue when it comes to helping his teacher candidates plan their lessons. He knows that's part of being a cooperating teacher. And he will help Heidi write every last one, if he needs too. But he can feel his heart race when he does it. Sweat leaves dark splotches on the back of his shirt. This is a new year at McKinley. In the past, no one would have ever questioned what went on in his classroom, which was good and bad. But this year, Mr. Arnold feels intense pressure from the school administration. He has commented to his colleagues and to his wife, "I definitely feel like I'm teaching in a different place this year. It's a whole different ball game, and I am not sure I won't get benched." Without question, the teacher candidates at McKinley this year are walking into a pretty structured system.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ In their focused investigation of 13 turnaround schools, all serving populations of low-income students of color, Cucchiara, Rooney, and Robertson-Kraft (2013) find that to the teachers in the participating schools, "administrators were still operating from a deficit model, assuming that without constant monitoring" (p. 18) teachers would not serve the students. The authors write, "Teachers often saw themselves as operating in opposition to administrators who distrusted and devalued them" (p. 18). Crocco and Costigan (2007) conducted a comprehensive study of how neoliberal accountability measures in schools have narrowed curriculum in urban schools; many teachers described the "'shrinking space' for their classroom-based decision making" (p. 521), feeling compelled to use scripted lessons and mandated curriculum, even when it countered the professional expertise gained through teacher preparation. The authors linked this hyper-accountability to the disappearance of culturally relevant teaching practices and increased teacher attrition

Mr. Arnold let Heidi do it her way, once. One time. That day, she got to teach her way, entirely on her own. Wrote the lesson plan all by herself. He sat back, and let her go for it. It was a mess! The lesson was too complex. It wasn't scaffolded enough. The materials she chose were terrible. Mr. Arnold couldn't fault her for trying. He was positive she had spent hours, days, trying to get that lesson ready. But man! The maps she brought in lacked clear titles. They were missing any kind of key to help the kids know what they were reading. The kids were at a loss, which made total sense. Even simple things, like the font on the worksheet was too small. Incredibly small. Way too overwhelming for his students, he told her. They get intimidated by that much text! And the writing assignment had too many words crammed into that little space and not enough blank space for the students to write their answers. Maybe to others, those seem like small problems, but Mr. Arnold knew the tasks had to make sense for his kids. His students needed that.

But now, to hear from Heidi that he had to write the lesson plan, to structure the lesson in a particular way for the university? Come on. Maybe on paper, so that Heidi's supervisors are satisfied. But otherwise, when it comes to implementation, it's not gonna happen.

in urban schools. Although I was unable to find any literature that addressed the impact a turnaround climate has on the mentoring practices of cooperating teachers, interviews with McKinley teachers during those initial years of partnership suggest that hosting a teacher candidate heightened the conflict, both in practical and philosophical terms, within the cooperating teacher, between the realities of teaching in an urban school and university-based coursework.

Teacher of Color: *People look at our era*

They look at our date
2014
And they honestly believe that they are post-racial.

They
Honestly
Believe
They are a better breed
Than their parents,

A better breed
Than their grandparents,
Especially.

I say
You judge the system,
By the results.

You still see all this harm.
Not only is the harm being done,
But I would say
The meat grinder
Has been especially sharp.

When I see the results
With our kids. . . .

When I was growing up,
A Black boy had less of a chance of landing in jail
Than they do now.

And the fact that
We
Delude
Ourselves
Into thinking
Something along the lines of
A willful choice

That these kids are making
A willful choice

That it's not
As if they are
Literally
Being shepherded
To the same end.

They are constricted.

You know how in ranching
When they put down the chutes?

There is a chute
And they slowly close it
They make it
Narrower,
Narrower.
It starts in pre-K
And high school
Is a part of that.

It's a delivery system and
Our culture
Is the transportation.
Yeah.

It's not a conspiracy
Because that
Implies secrecy.

It's open.
It's what happens.
It's the industrial prison complex.
It's slavery by another name.

And then we say,

*But this time
They get to choose
Whether or not
They're going.*

They get a choice now.

Nobody told you

To be Black

*And be in a car
And have weed in your pocket.*

Even though
You're 80 times more likely to get stopped.

*Nobody told you to pretend
You were a normal American
That you would have the exact same risk
That other people would have.*

You think you're normal?

That's what you get.

Black people will even say it:
You know how it is?

How could you even presume?

Drones

Today is our chance to have input in this year’s school improvement plan. A dozen of us are seated around three large rectangular tables that have been pushed together in what was once a sewing room, but is now “the staff professional development library,” despite the absence of books. Antiquated, brass-covered outlets rise up in spots across the 1950s linoleum floor, rendering one of our tables slightly imbalanced. Ms. Sanchez, the assistant principal, passes a pile of packets to the teacher beside her, and the papers make their way around the table, each of us helping ourselves to a stapled stack. Ms. Sanchez tucks her hair behind her ears as she waits for us to be ready. “This is last year’s SIP,⁶⁹ and you’ll notice that we were at 34% passing in math, and 42% passing in reading on the state tests.”

“Where are you?” Asks a fourth-year science teacher, flipping page after page to catch up.

“Pages 4 and 5, halfway down. It got all screwed up when I tried to print. Sorry about that.”

⁶⁹ School Improvement Plan. School Improvement Plans range in length from 25–50 pages and can include documentation about the school’s mission and history, a narrative providing context to readers (for example, one school might report that two master teachers accrued multiple absences due to family emergencies; another school might describe the various professional development initiatives experienced by the teaching staff during the year), student and community demographics, data (e.g., testing, attendance, grade point averages, disciplinary data), and strategies utilized for meeting the goals set. Many schools make these documents accessible online.

Josie Altoonian, seated next to the science teacher, leans over to show her the page. “Right here.”

The assistant principal’s voice maintains its lilt, though a slight roll of her eyes betrays her impatience. “Okay, so we need to set goals for our improvement, one for reading, one for math. We can set two others, and one of those should probably be about school climate, right Marci?”

Our district-appointed Instructional Leader, Marci Renner looks up from her *iPad*, as if being spoken to has caught her off guard. “Yeah. Probably.”

Marci almost always arrives late for our instructional leadership meeting and slides into the chair closest to the door, even if it means sitting behind us, like today. Most times, she remains in her coat, her *iPad* in her lap, and she begins tap, tap, tapping out her notes. Notes she never shares with us. Her dishwater-blonde hair looks hastily pulled into a clawed clip at the back of her neck, and dark puffy circles couch the opaque bottom rims of the plastic glasses she wears. Her contributions are minimal and mostly monosyllabic, only uttered when she’s directly addressed. Otherwise, she listens to our discussion, smiles tight-lipped when you meet her eyes, and records our words in her digital files to bring back to her district supervisors. Her job is to watch us.

Her presence changes the tenor of the room. Nearly 15 of us, some full-time teachers, others teacher leaders and administrators, meet weekly. Our team hammers out the instructional vision for McKinley High, 18 months into our district-imposed

identification as a priority school.⁷⁰ Excluding Marci, the members of our leadership total more than a century of teaching experience between us. Despite our vast, cumulative tenure in the city schools, when Marci doesn't show up, we are lighter. Laughter comes more easily in those meetings, as does disagreement and dissent, and the conversation takes a more authentic tone. When she is present, our silence and resentment fill the room, and a mask of compliance dominates. We know she is here as surveillance, to characterize our interactions, our decisions and efforts, to ensure we align with prescribed professional development protocols and curriculum mandates issued from district headquarters.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Federal and state departments of education categorize schools according to their students' proficiency on standardized tests and the percentage of students who graduate on time. Student performance is assessed school-wide and by sub-group, disaggregating students by race, home language, gender, special education identification, and socio-economic status. Schools with high numbers of students in poverty, which enable them to qualify for Title I funding, are further scrutinized, as are schools that participate in state School Improvement Grant programs, aimed at improving schools serving high numbers of students living in poverty. "Priority" schools are those who "persistently" are ranked in the bottom 5% of Title I schools, based on state selected measures (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

⁷¹ Kincheloe (2008) describes the current, standards-based, data-driven era in education as a period in history where "knowledge is something that is produced far away from the school by experts in an exalted domain" (p. 17). While it can be argued that this is simply a reiteration of cyclical efforts by political, philanthropic, religious, and corporate interests to control the production of knowledge, "citizens," labor, and capital (Grande, 2004; Kincheloe, 2008; Kliebard, 2004; Watkins, 2001), the current era of standardization in education has spread its tentacles into teachers' curricular and instructional terrain in ways similar to the McCarthy era, when teachers' academic freedom was censored, penalized, and silenced

We all stare at the previous year's improvement plan. Testing data is sprinkled within paragraph upon paragraph of text. I read it once, twice, and circle back for a third reading, each time more distracted by what's bubbling up from the teachers at the table.

“When we're talking about reading proficiency, does that mean we're saying proficient on the state test?”

Deidre Ellis chimes in, “Or proficient according to state standards?”

The lead ESL teacher chimes in, “Or WIDA⁷² standards?”

“And do they factor in how long the kids have been in the country?”

by means of termination, slander, and accusation, all without due process (Nelson, 2003). Whereas during the period of the Red Scare, hysterical fear of encroaching Communism and anti-American indoctrination stripped teachers of academic freedom and classroom sovereignty (Nelson, 2003; O'Reilly, 1989), the calls for test-driven, disaggregated, data-based accountability originating from both *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* legislation have led to similar feelings of fear and surveillance among teachers. Taubman (2009) argues that the impact of audit culture on public schools, in particular, and the ways in which district tools, such as School Improvement Plans, serve to normalize discourse, and subsequently thinking and values, around “measureable goals” and “objective data,” is to monitor school and teacher performance.

⁷² WIDA standards focus on the English Language Development of linguistically diverse students.

Wisconsin, Delaware, and Arkansas received an Enhanced Assessment Grant in 2002, originally combining their state names to form the acronym WIDA. Currently, WIDA is housed in the Wisconsin Center for Educational Research at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and provides districts across the United States with access to standards, assessments, professional development, and research resources for supporting and teaching linguistically diverse students (WIDA, 2014).

“Why does nothing measure growth? The kids come so far, and none of this shows any of that.”

Ms. Altoonian, a second-year geography teacher who begrudgingly joined the team at the request of the principal, asks without looking up from the handouts, “Are we required to tie our SIP goals to the state tests? I mean, is there some kind of mandate that determines what our primary goals for the year are?”

Ms. Sanchez glances at Marci, who seems preoccupied with her phone. “Yes. We learned at the principals’ meeting last week that the district also expects us to set goals for at least 5 percent above where we were last year on both the math and the reading tests.”

“That would put us at 42 and 47 percent passing, for reading and math.”

“Right,” the assistant principal scans the room. No one looks up. Everyone seems focused on the documents in front of them. “So I’m asking, is that what we want? Do we want to go with that? Five percent growth? We need to have teacher input here. That’s required by the state. I will need you all to sign off on this, once we decide.”

The room is uncomfortably silent for a long moment.

“It’s still pretty lame,” the mustached math teacher grimaces. “We’re saying that we’re okay with more than half of our kids failing the state math test. That’s our ‘lofty’ goal.” He looks at us over his bifocals, chagrined, “Just making sure you’re all paying attention.”

Someone in the room sighs, and we all feel it in our chests.

Marko, another young teacher who had once been a teacher candidate at McKinley, shakes his head in disbelief, “That is exactly the problem we have at this school. Our expectations for the students are way too low. If we held our kids to higher standards, all of us, across the board, the kids would know that the adults in this building are a unified front, and they’d start kicking it in high gear. How can I hold my kids to high expectations if the teacher down the hall from me gives Ds to kids who are at 33%?” He is the youngest teacher on the instructional leadership team, having volunteered just days into his second year of teaching. He rubs his ruddy beard in thought, calming himself in the process. “I don’t understand. Why wouldn’t we set our goals at 100% passing in both math and reading? I mean, isn’t that what we would hope for? That all of our students would pass the state tests?”

Ms. Sanchez explains, “The district requires these to be SMART goals. You know?”

The young teacher looks puzzled.

Seated next to him, the instructional support teacher on special assignment spells out the acronym in what she intends to be a helpful voice. “SMART stands for ‘Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely.’” She writes it on the back of the handout and slides it in front of him. “What you’re suggesting isn’t realistic.”

The assistant principal frowns, “It isn’t achievable either.” And then she quickly looks at Marci. Two other teachers and I crank our heads to see what the assistant principal sees behind us. Josie Altoonian sucks her teeth and presses the point of her pencil tip into the packet until it breaks.

Marci's head is down and she continues to tap out her notes. She doesn't look up.

“She's a drone,” Ms. Sanchez tells me as we walk the empty hallways during second hour. The precision of her words stops me in my tracks, even though the assistant principal keeps walking. In my mind, I see images of the empty white shell of the storm trooper, mandating compliance by the threat of force. And the insect-like, hollow-shelled UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles), devoid of humanity, flying over contested and recolonized territories, streaming data reports of suspected defiance, potential resistance, and unknown disturbances to remote, faceless decision-makers. This year, our district has assigned two “drones” to every school. One, the instructional support teacher on special assignment, monitors classroom instruction, evaluating teachers multiple times each day. Sometimes the evaluations are scheduled. Other times, teachers experience an impromptu visit. The second, in our case Marci, monitors our leadership structure and decision-making process. All of their findings funnel back into McKinley's administration and then to district leadership. It seems like, soon after, further prescription follows.⁷³

⁷³ Foucault (1995) theorizes the construct of panopticism as it applies to society, social institutions, and social control. Based on a construct outlined by British philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, the panopticon described a specific type of prison architecture that ensured omnipresent surveillance: Employing a circular prison yard with a guard tower perched at the pupillary center, the design and position of prison cells to the guard tower, encircled with windows, allowed for continuous surveillance of the inmates. Foucault (1995) writes:

By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so

I have watched the test-driven, hyper-accountability climate grow over the course of my years of teaching in public schools. In some ways, the surveillance culture in our district has crept up on us like the proverbial steady increase in temperature on frogs in a pot of water over a flame. Because the intensity and pervasiveness have expanded incrementally, teachers have grown accustomed to the constant demand for data, evidence, and accountability. In our school, some teachers view it as a consequence of working with high-need students, part and parcel of always coming in last in the market-driven system of “school choice.” For other teachers, it is simply the new normal. One young teacher recently shrugged at me and said, “I don’t know anything different.”

When first instituted, the state-wide Basic Standards Test (BST) provided high schools with a baseline of knowledge in reading and math by which they held all graduating seniors to meet. Though the standards seemed to disregard the multilayered complexities and discount the importance of school, classroom, and community contexts, from both teaching and political standpoints, not many teachers will argue with minimum competencies in reading and math for high school graduation. As results came in, BST scores impacted student schedules, disproportionately so for students of color and who

many small theaters, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible.

The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly. (p. 200)

The architectural design was found to be so successful that the effects of the surveillance remained even if the guard tower were unoccupied. The structural design communicated to the prisoners that their actions were always being monitored, their movement perpetually scrutinized. Thus the panoptic gaze becomes normalized. Again, to cite Foucault (1995), “The perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary” (p. 201).

come from families in poverty, stripping those who performed poorly on the tests of their elective classes, such as music and art, and tracking them into remedial reading and math courses where test preparation eclipsed any creative, innovative, or student-centered curriculum.

In the years that followed, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation required the analysis of school test scores by student “sub group,” examining how students of different racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds fared on the exams. At school staff meetings, administrators projected disaggregated student scores by race, teacher, and program onto a mammoth media center screen, and teachers whose students fared worst sunk in their chairs. While such efforts may have been intended to motivate teachers to improve, teachers responded with anger (toward administration and district leadership), blame (toward students), and fear (for their jobs). At the end of each year, we saw heavy turnover from programs serving students who scored lowest on the state tests, as teachers sought out programs and schools with “better” students so that their data would look different.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ At the time, I worked as an instructional coach to a culturally-specific magnet program for Native students. Our school also housed two highly-coveted, district-wide magnets that, from their incarnations, intended to draw upper-middle class, white families to struggling schools in the city. Our program for Native kids had abysmal graduation rates, a consequence of historical and institutional racism, colonialism, and genocide, perpetuated in our school and city in ways too many to list here. Teachers outside of our program noted the high teacher turnover we experienced, and quietly reasoned that the program served as an inconvenient layover before landing a “real” teaching schedule.

Increased accountability in the name of equity moved a neighboring district to mandate a centralized, managed curriculum, requiring that all teachers, regardless of school or classroom context, follow a daily script and pacing schedule, log their students' progress on a daily basis, and move in lock-step unison with grade-level teachers across the city. In the last two years, our district has moved in a similar direction.⁷⁵ At this point, teachers at McKinley have little power over the content, texts, pacing schedules, sequence, or assessments they give their students.⁷⁶ Teachers communicate their lack of autonomy with one breath and their fear of reprisal with the next.⁷⁷ “We don't have a

⁷⁵ These district leaders, to quote Kincheloe (2008), “assume that if we lay out the minimum content requirements that all students must meet and then teach everyone in the same way, schools will be improved” (p. 22).

⁷⁶ For as long as I have worked in the district, content specialists at the district level, working with teachers who are willing to take the time to volunteer to examine sample textbooks sent from soliciting publishers, select core texts that align with state standards and distribute these to all schools. As schools work to be certified to offer International Baccalaureate (IB) or Advanced Placement (AP) courses, curricular choices winnow to those deemed acceptable to national IB or AP organizations. As the Common Core, a federally endorsed curricular framework, rolls out across the country, behemoth Pearson markets curriculum texts and packages meant to meet the standards they helped to write. As Kincheloe (2008) writes, “There is no room for students or teachers in such a curriculum to explore alternate sources, to compare diverse . . . interpretations, to do research of their own and produce knowledge that may conflict with prevailing interpretations” (p. 9).

⁷⁷ This standardization of teaching deskills the teachers themselves (Apple, 1990; Apple & Jungck, 1990). It assumes they cannot be trusted to make pedagogical decisions on their own and positions teachers as “knowledge receivers” within a deficit model, where outside experts determine what should be taught and how. It also silences social justice and culturally relevant pedagogy. Picower (2011) writes, “From

choice,” one teacher tells me when I try to convince her to veer from the district’s “suggested” scripted lessons. Mr. Arnold, who has for years occupied a place of congeniality and love at the heart of McKinley’s staff, points an angry finger at me and threatens, “I hope *you* are in the classroom next year. There is no way you could teach the way you used to. Not anymore.”⁷⁸

standardized testing to scripted curriculum, teachers are being handcuffed by mandates that are often in conflict with their own desires to work for more just societal conditions for their students” (p. 1106). I have seen similar reactions in my colleagues. The locus of classroom control has shifted from internal, held by teachers and students, to external, controlled by district-selected curriculum writers, purchased curriculum packages to support testing efforts, and now, district-appointed instructional drones who monitor and evaluate teacher practice; teachers have lost agency over the heart of their work (Grande, 2004).

⁷⁸ Research on teacher attrition and teacher retention indicates teachers’ working conditions, generally, and control over their classroom policies, curriculum, and pedagogies, specifically, factor greatly in their decisions to remain in their school and the profession (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Strong, 2004; Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). Tye and O’Brien (2002) surveyed 115 alumni of their teacher education programs, finding that the number one reason for leaving the classroom was listed as “pressures of increased accountability” (p. 27) due to high-stakes testing, test preparations, and standards. My own career mirrors these statistics. I moved between six schools during my 15 years of teaching, often choosing to leave a school because of the curricular or pedagogical mandates imposed on my teaching by the district or school administration. My move to McKinley in 2001, my last teaching stop, was with the promise from administration that I would have total curricular freedom. I made a career out of working around curricular requirements and avoiding district-mandated textbooks by justifying the creative, arts-driven, and culturally relevant social studies curriculum I wrote with my students’ stellar results. I could articulate the ways my students met the standards and demonstrate the power of the curriculum I created by highlighting my students’ complete and whole-hearted engagement in the work. When my McKinley

Most recently, our district has implemented an elaborate, time-intensive teacher evaluation process. Each teacher experiences five evaluations over the course of a school year, each conducted by an administrator or district-appointed (drone) instructional specialist, many of whom have little classroom experience themselves. While our instructional specialist assures the staff that the experience is based in a coaching framework, teachers perceive it as a “gotcha” tactic, a view that most recently has been reinforced by administration. Upon returning from a teacher evaluator training workshop, our principal shared that district officials provided them with strategies for using the evaluation tool to identify evidence against teachers, thereby moving them onto a high intensity, improve-or-you’re-fired mentorship process.⁷⁹

For the teachers at McKinley, the triptych of teacher evaluation, data-based accountability, and scripted, prescribed curriculum has resulted in a distrustful, cynical, disillusioned, and timid teaching environment where pedagogical risk, creativity, and individualism have been muted, moved underground, and in some cases disappeared entirely. We have let Marci and the continually expanding architecture of teacher accountability she symbolizes check our choices and circumscribe our policies and pedagogies. Members of our leadership team have adopted her language and prod the leadership team to employ the “objective” data-based decision-making protocols and

colleague pointed at me that day, accusing me of not understanding the pressures he faced under the hyper-scrutiny our school faced, I didn’t know how to respond. I wasn’t sure if I could teach, and be true to myself and what I knew to be best for McKinley students, under those conditions either.

⁷⁹ Grande (2004) writes, “The very definition of hegemony requires that people participate in their own oppression” (p. 75).

reactive drive-by observations in order to comply with neoliberal policies and demands from our district. Many teachers outside the school's leadership structure blast the policies from behind the closed door of the teachers' lounge or within small trusted groups. As one teacher and long-time colleague requested just last week, "I gotta meet with you so I know who on the instructional leadership team I should watch my back with."⁸⁰

Amidst all this the room sits silent, and Ms. Sanchez fills the discomfort with empty and obtuse platitudes. "I know tests don't show all that our kids know, but we have to decide on a goal. You can decide. Together. All of us. This is a team decision, and you are on this team because you represent leaders in our school. We want to show we have high expectations for our students, like Marko has mentioned, and we want to make sure that this is not our only way of determining success. So maybe we also incorporate a growth measure. . ."

"Oh my god," Josie slams her hand down on the packet. "What are we doing? I'm sorry – all due respect Ms. Sanchez – but we have fallen through the fucking looking

⁸⁰ Picower (2011) found that the "state of fear" experienced by teachers in her study "was reinforced by colleagues and administrators who, under the same pressures to conform to normative styles of education, functioned as spies and traitors because of their inability or unwillingness to take risks" (p. 1113). As I write that, I recognize the hyperbolic feel of words that seem better suited for tales of espionage or an episode of HBOs *Homeland*. Yet teachers with whom I've worked and coached describe professional climates that make them afraid to veer from curricular directives, to publically disagree with administrative edicts, even to wear t-shirts signaling their support of union policies (Beaton-Zirps, 2014).

glass. We know these tests are biased. You can ask pretty much any teacher in the building, and they'll tell you that these tests can't show you what our students are capable of, how brilliant they are, what they dream about, or what matters to them.⁸¹ And these tests certainly don't make any accommodations for the trauma some of our kids are going through. All they tell us is that our kids are poor. That's it. And you know what," Josie looks directly at Marci, "I bet you that if you got any one of those folks at district headquarters alone in an elevator and you asked them, off the record, if they believed the tests were biased, if they believed the tests measured what our kids know in any kind of meaningful way, I bet you they'd tell you they didn't. They'd say what we know is true."⁸²

⁸¹ Gibson (2001) writes,

There are no honest stories on standardized curricula and exams, no beauty, no play, no sensuality, no aesthetics, no real scoundrels . . . and no joy. . . . What is not on the tests is an honest human relationship struggling for a significant truth that counts. The exams create a shadow universe where actions and ideas really do not matter, but the sham of the exam does, a casino-consciousness that looks at others and thinks: Sucker. . . . The exams create a false, deceitful consciousness that knows it must appear to be what it is not. Within this universe, even to resist can be to succumb. (pp. 317-318)

⁸² And yet, these supposedly True, Objective, and Standardized measurements render schools, teachers, and students Good or Bad, Valuable, Worthy, Talented, Knowledgeable, Intelligent, Skilled, Best. Schools and teachers and students exist in an educational landscape where, to quote Gibson (2001)

truth is located inside the exams, and inside the minds of the people who score it, not as it is rightfully understood as a struggle in the classroom where people can gain and test knowledge in a reasonably free and rigorous atmosphere. The purpose of the tests is the regulation of knowledge: both of what is known and, importantly, how people come to know it. (p. 314)

The tests are bunk, and somebody's making hand-over-fist money to make us all chase these tests and test scores. You know they are, Ms. Sanchez. I mean," Josie leans forward, "As a parent, do you rely on the test your kids take to tell you that they're learning? To tell you that your children's teachers are talented, qualified, or kind? Or that they're doing right by your child?"

Ms. Sanchez shakes her head. "That's neither here nor there, Josie."

Josie takes a breath and continues. "Come ON! I bet you don't. My parents didn't. And yet, here at McKinley, we continue the charade! We keep evaluating ourselves by this flawed measuring stick."

The mustached math teacher gently starts, "Not all tests are biased, Ms. Altoonian. Don't you think there's value in some testing? Some have been found to be more objective. Don't you think they give families a sense of how well their children are doing?"

Josie faces him square on. "But at what cost? What do those labels do to our students? And to us, as professionals? And I'm not saying we boycott the tests, Mr. Martell. I'm asking that we not allow test scores to drive McKinley's collective academic and instructional vision. There's more to learning than that, wouldn't you agree?"

Josie meets Ms. Sanchez's eyes and softly pleads. "Let's just not do it. Let's not play the game. How 'bout instead, let's write goals that actually matter, goals that we care about? Goals that actually help us be better teachers and help our students work at the edges of their abilities? How about that?"

The rest of us collectively hold our breath. Even Marci has stopped typing.

“Ms. Altoonian,” Ms. Sanchez’s throat is tight as she speaks, squeezing her words into bubbles as she utters them. “We can’t do that. I can’t do that.”

Marci’s tap-tapping on the *iPad* starts again. Ms. Sanchez clears her throat. “So shall we go with the 5% growth in math and reading, as the district recommends?”

Before anyone can answer, Josie Altoonian gets up silently, runs her hand through her jet-black hair, and tucks her chair back under the table. Standing behind her chair, she bends down and writes her full name in clear print on the back of the SIP draft and hands it to Marci as she walks out. “Just in case you need the correct spelling.”

She walks through the open door and back to her classroom.

Veteran teacher: *There are Times*

That I feel
We spend all of our days
Addressing
So many things besides
What is most important to the students.

Like we are teaching the system
Instead of the kids.

We are
Pulled in so many directions
By the students
(And their learning demands)
And then also by those above us.
Work on this.
Do that.
Be on that committee.

The kids too:

Do this assignment.
Study for this test.
Complete this worksheet.
Take these notes.
Measure up.
You better measure up.

So often
We question the kids
And end up
Doing what's best for the system
Instead of
Questioning the system
And doing what's best for the kids.

More and more
I believe
Learning doesn't happen
Without space,

And sometimes it is hard to find that.

My old piano teacher would say to me:
You can't
Rush through the rests between the notes
In a piano piece;

The silence is as important as the sound.

Isxaaq, Charmed



2013-2014
District: Midwest City Public School District
School: McKinley High School

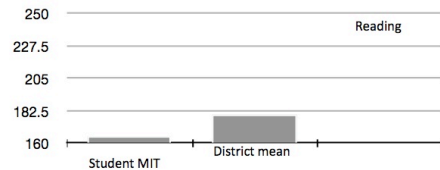
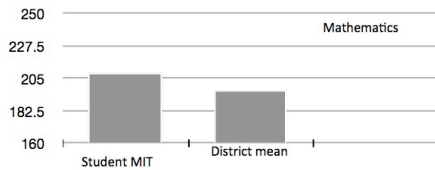
Student's Name: ██████████, Isxaaq

Student ID: ██████████

Grade: 9

Term/ Year	Grade	MIT (+/- Std Err)	Percentile Range
FA13	9	204-209-214	78-82-87

Term/ Year	Grade	MIT (+/- Std Err)	Percentile Range
FA 13	9	160-165-170	26-29-33



Problem solving	High	Measurement and geometry	High
Number sense	High	Statistics and probability	Mid
Computation	Mid	Algebra	Mid

Vocabulary	Low	Grammar	Low
Comprehension of literature	Low	Analysis and evaluation of language and writing	Mid
Comprehension of informational texts	Mid		

Name: Isxaaq ██████████		Date administered: ██████████
Grade: 9	Home Language: Somali	
Language Domain	Scale Score (Possible 100-600)	Proficiency Level (possible 1.0-6.0)
Speaking	405	5.9
Listening	383	4.1
Writing	424	5.5
Reading	400	5.9
Oral Language ^A	394	4.9
Literacy ^B	412	5.6
Overall Score ^C (Composite)	406	5.3
A – Oral Language = 50% Listening + 50% Speaking B – Literacy = 50% Reading + 50% Writing C – Overall Score = 35% Reading + 35% Writing + 15% Listening + 15% Speaking		

First Quarter Report Card McKinley High School					
Name: Isxaaq [REDACTED]				Grade: 9 Date: [REDACTED]	
Course	Per	Teacher	Grade	Comment 1	Comment 2
English 9	1	Miller	B	07 – Good student	18 – Procrastinates
Geography	2	Ellis	B	25 – Good participation	26 – Consistent effort
Biology	3	Reed	A	44 – Good lab skills	25 – Good participation
Health 1	4	Stone	C	33 – Talks too much	11 – Good daily work
Band	5	Williams	B	39 – Good attendance	69 – Must practice music
Algebra 1	6	Hutchinson	A	19 – Good attitude	21 – Highly motivated
French	7	Rose	A	78 – Good work habits	33 – Talks too much

Isxaaq weighs 107 pounds. His mother says he’s all legs. *All legs and a smile*, he reminds her, and she laughs and softly caresses his cheek.

Isxaaq is charming. He never stops talking, whispering, hollering, high-fiving. Coming to high school for Isxaaq was like walking into one of those feasts they show on TV, with the food shimmering and piled high. Only for Isxaaq, it’s a bounty of girls, friends, chances. He will walk up to any group of kids: Somali, Mexican, African American. Doesn’t matter how old either. Despite his size, even the seniors, one step away from the world, have welcomed him into the fold. He chats and socializes with whichever group of kids has circled up outside his class, until the warning bell sounds and then he sprints, calling out hellos to teachers and friends as he dodges open lockers and slow-moving girls on his way. *Slow down young man!*

Isxaaq is the first one out the door when the bell rings, hovering at the doorway the seconds before class lets out, packing his bag while the teacher is still talking. *Isxaaq, do you mind?*

But, really, the teachers don't mind. His hand shoots up with an answer for every question. He'll volunteer for anything: writing on the whiteboard, trying out for a solo, reading his writing to the class. His voice still cracks, and he laughs at himself. *Oh man, gotta work on that.* And the class laughs with him. Even when he won't stop talking, it's hard for them not to like him, to encourage him.

Isxaaq tries everything. He runs cross-country in the fall. Takes part in McKinley Students in Service in December and fills bag after bag of groceries, running holiday baskets to neighborhood families. He has no chores to do at home. He is the youngest and the only son. *Just don't miss prayer,* his father reminds him, and he doesn't. He checks in with his sixth-hour teacher to make sure he collects what he misses, and he finishes it while the French teacher describes the first Fête de la Musique in Paris in 1982.

His parents sign him up for beginning band, and he chooses to play the trumpet. Every Wednesday Todd, a volunteer from the university, comes to help the band, particularly the trumpet section. *I think I want to be a teacher,* he tells the kids. Isxaaq asks him question after question after he performs the university rouser and describes what it's like to be in the band at a varsity basketball game. The next week, Todd brings his own trumpet and plays for them. He prints out special fingering charts for Isxaaq and the other two trumpeters, and they practice together. Every week, Todd has something for them: new sheet music, a mouthpiece brush, a wah-wah mute.

Todd shows up on a Friday in January and says he's been able to get four tickets to the Sunday afternoon game. Isxaaq convinces his father (who hates basketball) to go. They sit just 15 seats away from the band, with an obstructed view of the court, but a clear line on the trumpet section. Todd is there, on the end, and there is a Black student, another trumpeter, next to him. Both of them stand for every song, blasting notes with their trumpets angled toward the rafters of the arena. Isxaaq feels the thump of the bass drum in his chest. After the game, he can't remember the score. He plays air trumpet on the light rail home, his breath billowing into the train car, and his father sits, arms crossed against his chest, smiling and quiet.

Principal: *It Never Changes.*

I believe that.

Without great intentionality

The system
Spits out
The same stuff
Over and over and over.

Thus
When we talk about. . .
You know,
You could use the word
Change
Or
In district-speak
We really use the word
Equity.
They're one and the same.
They're two sides of the same coin
If you will.

We talk about how
We're about *equity*
But in order
To be about
Equity,
You must make
Difficult *change*.

And the greater system
Does not want to risk that.

So
As we
Really seek to enact
Equity
And make the necessary
Changes,
We're working against
The greater system
All the time.

And it's not about
Working against
That person
Or that person

(Although
There are a couple of people
Where I think,
Yeah
They're really working against us.)

But it's more about
The greater system,
As nebulous
As that is.

And what you need
Are
Individuals
To actually champion that change.
And I don't think
There are enough people
Who are invested in
Championing
That particular
Change.

Thus everything we do,

The current of the district
Goes the opposite way.

And so
We're walking against that current
The whole time,
Every step of the way
And that's
Everything.
From
Budget and
Funding. . .
For example
One of the other schools in the district

Has been protected
And budgeted better
Than it should be
For next year.

I think McKinley is being
Lowballed.

Is there a real cabal?
No,
I don't think there's someone
Over there
Going,
*Oh we're going to really stick it
To McKinley.*

But
I do think
There are people
Saying,
*We better prop up
That other school.*

What is that about?
Placating more privileged communities?
That school's history
Of attracting affluent white families?
An existing reputation to uphold?
Maybe all of those things.

Maybe it's more that
If you think that we,
As human beings,
Are always working in a
Risk
Management
Capacity

In our schools
In general
In life. . .

If I'm simply
Working to mitigate

Loss,
Then I'm going to be focused there.

Why would I focus on McKinley?
It's already lost.

What else could happen?
What's the motivation?
If my goal is
To mitigate loss,
McKinley is already lost.

It's just like
When the district
Requires
That we target
Kids in the band of yellow
Kids who are just short
Of passing the test
Rather than the kids
In the red
Who struggle the most
The kids who are
Far
Far
From passing
Or from being proficient.

We'll put money
Into the kids
In the yellow
To get as many of them to pass
The test,

And we sacrifice
The kids in the red.

And
As a school
McKinley has always been
In the red.
Always.

We've always been

The stepchildren
Of the southside
High schools.
And that's okay

But it's not okay.
It's really not okay.

And when you look and
If you frame it as equity:

Why is the
One
High school
With the largest majority population
Students in poverty and
Students of color
The one that's most deprived?

You can rationalize that choice as well
I suppose
But
Fewer people wanna go there
So people at the district say,
Well, McKinley's numbers are declining.

So what?
So why don't you invest in it?

But
Until
District leadership has more of,
Let's call it,
An entrepreneurial approach
That's not about
Mitigating loss
But
Instead
About seeing opportunity,

Then no one at the district
Is going to grow our school.

So we've been working

Diligently
To grow our school
On our own.
And we're starting to be
Successful.

At some point
We'll get over a hump,
And people will say,
Let's get behind
McKinley.
But we're not there.

Though I'll admit,
With the district
We're better off
Than we've ever been.

But,
If we were to rest,
Just relax a bit,

And we just let the
Current of the district
And the city
Take us
And take the school
I think that
If I were to pull out
And not be here

Things could
Very quickly
Slip back to
What they were.
Not by anyone's fault
But because. . .
I don't know

And this isn't arrogant

It's not about
Being brilliant
Or. . .

It's about. . .
In order
To do this job
You gotta be willing
To go through hell
For the school.

Not for yourself
Because
It's not about the self.

You have to be willing to fight,
To go to combat
Every day.
Not for your own interests,
But for the interests of the school.
And I don't think there are many people
Out there
Who will make that choice.

You can't go out
And hire a gun
To do that.
At the end of the day
They're going to be tired
Because they're not
Emotionally
Invested in the school.

You've got to love the school.

That's where we go wrong
With our principal hirings.
One of our neighbor schools
That has had a rough go
For the past few years, they
Are just about to hire a new principal
From another district.

Will that principal love it enough?

I don't know.
Whoever goes
To that school,

Holy shit,

That principal
Better bring
A lotta love.

You've gotta be so vigilant
Constantly working
Making sure
We're doing the work
The right way,

Fighting with the system
To say
Hey
We're doing this
The right way.

Nobody's Gonna Make a Movie about You

“Knock-knock. You got a minute?” Janet Washington leans into my classroom. She has trekked up the stairs to see me, a first. I shut my computer.

“Absolutely. What is it?”

Ms. Washington steps into the room and closes the door behind her. Her heels click as she moves to a student desk and pushes it toward mine. “We need to talk about Katherine.”

My hands return to my laptop. “Should I take notes?”

“Not yet.”

Ms. Washington slides into the desk and runs her manicured hands across the writing surface, moving from the center of the desk to the outer edges, where she grabs hold of the melamine sides. She raps three times on the desktop with her brown fist. “I am pumping the breaks on this placement. I don’t think Katherine is a good fit for me.”

I feel a prick of anxiety in my throat. The work it took to make this placement happen comes rushing at me. Multiple conversations. The pledge that I would find her a high quality teacher candidate. Repeated descriptions of the co-teaching model⁸³ to

⁸³ Originally developed as an instructional model for serving special education students, co-teaching facilitated greater inclusion of students with special needs in the mainstream classroom through a collaboration between special education and content area teachers (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). On paper, the model envisions two teachers working side-by-side, co-planning lessons and sharing instructional and assessment responsibility for all students in the room so as to best meet the needs of all students. In recent years, teacher preparation programs have adopted a co-teaching model for their student teaching experiences, finding in the current era of increased standardized testing that the

convince Janet Washington to take the young woman on as a teacher candidate. I even offered to set up an interview. When push came to shove, Janet trusted me and took the leap.

I have come to know Ms. Washington professionally over the years: the energy of her classroom, the comfort her students have when they enter, when they sit with her to unpack notions of power and conquest through chapters of Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, or when they deconstruct a chapter from Toni Morrison's *Beloved* to better understand complex and intertwined layers of race, class, gender, and oppression in the U.S. slave system. I have subbed for Janet on occasion, something I've done for other teachers as well, almost as a thank you for their work with teacher candidates and undergraduate volunteers. Ms. Washington always has something interesting happening in class, but filling in for her means I am subject to her students' sour dissatisfaction with

traditional "sink or swim" model of student teaching (Lortie, 1975) deterred master teachers from hosting teacher candidates lest their students' achievement be entrusted to a novice (Bacharach, Heck, & Dahlberg, 2010). Roth and Tobin (2002) see the move to co-teaching as a positive one for teacher education, resulting in a more democratic context for teacher education in the sense that all participants are regarded as both teachers and learners. Teaching has become the locus for learning to teach not only for those individuals in the teacher preparation program but also for those in traditionally higher positions, such as the cooperating teacher, university supervisor, and methods instructor. (p. 126)

my presence. “Why you gotta be like that,” a tall, light-skinned African-American senior scowls when I gently scold him for swearing. “Ms. Washington, she just lets us be.”⁸⁴

In more than one of our conversations, I tell Janet about her prospective teacher candidate, Katherine. “This young woman did her undergraduate work at Rutgers and has been working in Boston as a tutor for the SAT test. I had her in methods class this summer. Katherine seems to be very reflective about race and her own privilege as a white woman. She’s requested McKinley for her student teaching. She wants to be here. I just think it would be so valuable for her to work with and learn from you.”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ In 1991, Foster bemoaned the lack of research that examined “the thinking or pedagogical process, the understandings or considerations of effective teachers of urban high school students” (p. 298). Since then, an ever-increasing body of literature has developed in an attempt to identify (Ladson-Billings 1995/2009, 2001), describe (Milner, 2011), and provide practical examples (Hyland, 2005) to demonstrate the knowledges, skills, and dispositions of successful teachers of students of color. In a 1998 commentary for *Education Week*, Irvine described the culturally-based practice of African-American master teachers as the work of “warm demanders” (Irvine, 1998). Bondy and Ross (2007) describe the warm demander role as “a teacher stance that communicates both warmth and a non-negotiable demand for student effort and mutual respect” (p. 54). Other researchers highlight dispositional descriptors such as care (Bondy & Ross, 2008; Eislinger, 2012; Knight, 2004; Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012; Whipp, 2013), a rejection of color-blindness (Milner, 2012); humility and a desire for knowledge (Eislinger, 2012); a view of teaching as an avenue for civic agency (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Foster, 1991, 1997; Mirra & Morrell, 2011), and a view of knowledge as co-constructed (Salinas & Castro, 2012).

⁸⁵ Among the research on cooperating teachers, I found it nearly impossible to find empirical studies that described the experiences of African-American cooperating teachers. I conducted searches on lead educational research engines (Academic Primer, ERIC, and Sage Journals) and within peer-reviewed education research journals under whose mission such research might fall (*Education and Urban Society*;

“If there are any problems. . .” Ms. Washington⁸⁶ warns.

Journal of Teacher Education; Journal of Negro Education; Race, Culture, and Education; Teaching and Teacher Education; and Urban Education). For each search, I used the complete phrases of “African American cooperating teacher” and “Black cooperating teacher” as well as “cooperating teacher + African American” and “cooperating teacher + Black teacher.” All told, my searches resulted in a single peer-reviewed article that specifically focused on the ways in which the racial identity of a cooperating teacher informed her/his mentoring of a teacher candidate (Kerssen-Griep & Eifler, 2008). A second article described mentoring networks of African-American female teachers, outside of teacher preparation systems (Dingus, 2008). Other studies noted the race of the participating teachers in methodology or participants sections, but did not link the racial identity of the cooperating teachers to their mentoring choices. Other seminal works focused on African-American teachers acknowledge the absence of teachers of color, particularly African-American teachers, from teacher education literature (Foster, 1991, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Pabon, 2014). From there, I delved into two recent literature reviews that addressed cooperating teachers and student teaching in high-poverty, urban contexts (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Clarke, Triggs, & Nielson, 2014), searching for references to peer-reviewed articles that discussed the ways in which the racial identity of the cooperating teacher informed mentoring choices and strategies when working with teacher candidates. Given the ever-present discussion in research of both the demographic imperative as the youth population continues to diversify and the achievement gap between white students and students of color in the United States (see, e.g., Billingham, 2015; Brown, 2014; Ford & Sassi, 2012; Goldenberg, 2013; Howard, 2008; Milner, 2011; Pollack, 2012; Quioco & Rios, 2000; Rogers-Ard, Knaus, Epstein, & Mayfield, 2012) and the heightened emphasis of teacher preparation journals and education research journals on multicultural and culturally responsive teaching, the lack of focus on the perspectives of cooperating teachers of color seems to be a giant gap in the research.

⁸⁶ I shouldn't have been surprised at this. African-American teachers are, as one researcher writes, *an endangered species* (Cole, 1986). The ranks of African-American teachers across the country have taken

repeated beatings from racism and, ironically, desegregation legislation (Foster, 1991, 1997; King, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Foster (1991) catalogues the blows:

[African American teachers are] paid less than white teachers, rarely hired except to instruct black pupils, discriminated by largely white unions, dismissed in large numbers following the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, and denied access to teaching positions by legal and extra legal means and currently by increased testing at all levels. (p. 275)

Cole (1986) references the obstructive impact of standardized testing, both for entry and exit from teacher licensure programs, as further reducing the numbers of African Americans in teaching (p. 326). Numerous researchers discuss the failure to recruit teachers of color into teacher preparation programs (Foster, 1997; Perry, 2014; Quiocho & Rios, 2000). One African-American teacher, interviewed for this study, remarked, “If you’ve gone through school to be a teacher, if you are one of the Talented Tenth [and have] managed to get yourself through four years of college, that means you can do anything. Why be a teacher?” (Interview, 2014).

A second body of research describes the difficulties experienced by teacher candidates of color upon entering teacher preparation programs designed for the large numbers of white, middle-class female teacher candidates they serve (Brown, 2014; Evans & Leonard, 2013; Nguyen, 2012). Other studies cite the challenges schools have in retaining teachers of color beyond their induction years (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010; Dunn & Durrance, 2014; Evans & Leonard, 2013; Haberman, 1991; Pabon, 2014). Achinstein and Ogawa (2011) illustrate the “double bind” faced by young teachers of color through the reproductive function of schools embedded in a fabric of institutionalized racism and classism. A teacher interviewed by Pabon (2014) asserts, “If you love your kids and are unapologetically black, I don’t think you can exist in these schools” (p. 18).

African Americans make up only 5% of all social studies teachers in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). White men currently hold the majority of high school social studies positions in U.S. public high schools and have done so historically (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). In light of these data, combined with the invisibility and absence of African-American cooperating

“It’s on me,” I tell her. “If there are any problems, come find me. I will clean up the mess.” I promise her that I will be the back-up, the heavy hand if needed.

I drop in twice during Katherine’s initial week of student teaching and make one visit during week two. I watch Katherine as she stands, talking to a group of boys, many of them basketball players, clustered together at the back of the room. On another visit, she sidles up to a small group of students and asks if she could join their discussion.

There is something that reads high school in her mannerisms. Ingratiating. Uncomfortable. Slightly flirtatious. I chalk it up to immaturity. It is early, I figure. She is still getting her bearings, finding her teacher voice.

Now, into week three, Janet Washington is ready to pull the plug. I meet Janet’s eyes. “What’s going on?”

Ms. Washington takes a deep breath. “You know what I say about what it is to teach, right?”

“Yes. All kids come to us hungry.”

“Every last one of them,” she adds.

“Every last one of them” I repeat. “And it’s our job as teachers to prepare food so they can eat.”

“Mmm hmm,” she waits for me to continue, folding her hands together and resting them on the desk.

teachers’ perspectives on the mentoring of teacher candidates in the research on teacher education, the voice of an African-American high school social studies teacher serving as a cooperating teacher might as well be a fictional construct.

“And if a kid won’t eat, that’s on us, as teachers.” I say quickly. “If a kid won’t eat, our task is to go back to the kitchen and make something else for that kid, using the materials and ingredients we’ve got. You know I agree with you on this, Janet. . .”

Ms. Washington interrupts me. “Katherine. . . my teacher candidate doesn’t want to go back to the kitchen.”

“What has she,” I start to ask.

“Nothing that she’s done, really. It’s more who she is. I had this feeling the minute I laid my eyes on the girl. I could tell it from the set of her shoulders what she thought she was about to accomplish by being here.”

I get up from behind my own desk and move into the student desk next to Janet. The desk squeaks against the tile when I turn it to face her. “What do you mean?”

* * *

The day I know I want Janet Washington to be a cooperating teacher, my schedule is packed. I have an early morning meeting on the university campus with the teacher candidate placement coordinator and two methods instructors who have concerns about the mixed messages they feel their teacher candidates have received from a couple of McKinley’s cooperating teachers. Then I speed across town to McKinley for an orientation to the school for a group of undergraduates initiating their service learning work at the school. The day’s agenda also promises an observation of a timid teacher candidate and a contentious PLC (professional learning community) meeting during the social studies teachers’ shared prep hour. After a frustrating meeting at the university I set up for the orientation at McKinley and only three of the six college students show. I

sit with two young women – one with white-blond hair, the other, basketball-player tall – and a long-haired young man with glasses. I describe the school, our student body, the needs of the kids, and the expectations of their time with us. The college students stare back at me, silent. The one comment comes from one of the women who asks, “How safe is it here?” She then springs into a description, peppered with nervous laughter, of the phone call she received from her grandfather who lives outside of the city after he’d heard she would be working in our school. He tells her to map out the safest journey to McKinley and back to campus and makes her promise to travel “using the buddy system,” committing only to being at McKinley during daylight hours.

I clench my teeth. “Tell him you’ll be fine,” I say. “Why don’t I give you three a tour of our school?”

The university students stand uncomfortably and gather their backpacks.

“Just leave your things here in my classroom,” I tell them. “Don’t worry. The door locks.”

As we wander through the hallways, I describe the programs we offer at the school. Our growing student body. The number of teacher candidates we host as they move through their teacher prep programs to licensure. Most classrooms are quiet. Student heads bend over desks; teachers tap their Smartboards to advance to the next slide or image. We head downstairs, and I lead them through the hushed media center, vacant of students except two, each working without a sound at the bank of computers against the west-facing windows. As we exit the media center, we hear a blast of laughter

from room 234, Ms. Washington's classroom. I am tired of hearing my own voice, and we are a small enough group; maybe we can just drop in and listen for a few minutes.

We stand at Ms. Washington's open doorway for a few minutes before she waves us in. We move quietly into the room and find a spot where we can lean against the cabinets. Her students are seated in a circle that stretches to the edges of the unused classroom space. A list of expectations is etched on the remaining three square feet of gray chalkboard beside the back window.

Standard English, please.

One person at a time.

Respect: Give it. Get it.

Connect to the text.

We learn together.

Ms. Washington sits among the students. A pencil resting on her ear, she holds out one hand, palm facing the students. "Calm down now. I want to hear more of what you mean. Angelique, do you want to say that again?"

The dark-haired girl shakes her head with a smile and leans toward the girl seated next to her, until they bump shoulders, friend-to-friend.

Ms. Washington purses her lips and looks to the rest of the class. "C'mon now. Anyone else think they can add to what Angelique has said?" She waits again and then

raises the question to the class a second time. “Is Malinche⁸⁷ responsible for the fall of the Aztec empire? Was she a traitor to the Aztec people? Or is she a heroine?”

The students sit quietly for a moment, possibly hoping to avoid being called on or maybe genuinely considering the question. It’s hard to know. Ms. Washington waits. Two girls seated across the circle from her whisper to each other.

One of them, a petite East African girl in a deep purple headscarf, raises her hand.

“Yes Amal?”

“Can I code switch?”

Ms. Washington tilts her head and then points to the chalkboard list. “You know one of our rules is that we express ourselves in Standard English, but maybe we need to bend that rule a bit to get ourselves rolling again. So yes, go ahead and change registers.”

Amal launches into a lengthy response, peppered with historical terms (*perspective, biased*), Somali words, which the boy seated next to Ms. Washington translates for the class and Amal repeats (*betrayed, cruelty*), and African American Vernacular English (something along the lines of *that ho did what she had to do*).

Amal’s comments unleash a heated ethical discussion among the students about women’s choices in pre-Columbian Mexico and the impact of the arrival of Spanish colonizers on the status of women in colonial Mexico, intermixed with connections to women’s lives in history as compared to contemporary U.S. society. Spanish, Somali, Arabic, and Hmong weave through the conversation, along with stories of female

⁸⁷ Also known as Malinalli, Malinche stands in history as the indigenous translator and lover of Hernán Cortés (Esquivel, 2006).

relatives, neighbors, and friends and their choices. One student invokes Miley Cyrus, and the class erupts in laughter again.

Janet catches my eye and smiles. I mouth, *thank you*, and then tap the university student closest to me on the arm. “Let’s go,” I whisper.

The university students follow me back out into the hall. The young woman with the protective grandfather, stares forward as we walk and says, “That was amazing.”

“I know,” I agree.

* * *

“This girl, Katherine,” Ms. Washington continues. “She’s got to go. She needs to spend some time at Boys and Girls Clubs before she ever sets foot in another classroom. If she’s going to teach in a Black school, or teach even one Black child, for that matter, she needs to spend time in a position where she’s not actively teaching, but she’s leaning and loving.” I must look confused, because Janet repeats herself, “You heard me right: leaning and loving. She needs to learn how to care for kids first. If she can’t learn how to care⁸⁸ for kids, and I’m not talking saving them. . .”

⁸⁸ Shevalier and McKenzie (2012) assert that the application of Noddings’s care theory (2002) with aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy demonstrates the purpose of the CRP: “The point of culturally responsive teaching is to *respond* to students in ways that build and sustain meaningful, positive relationships” (p. 1091). The authors differentiate between caring *about* students and caring *for* them. Caring *for* students is defined as more intimate, stemming from the ability to forge “on-going face-to-face relationships, where one focuses attention intensely, experiences the issues, sees the consequences, and understands how one’s caring affects others” (Noddings, as cited in Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012, p. 1090). Caring for students –

“I know,” I whisper.

“I mean truly *care* for them. There are teachers in this very building who are very rigid and strident, who don’t come from a nurturing stance.⁸⁹ Take Deidre Ellis, for instance. She got kids of her own. She ain’t trying to take nobody’s child home. There is nothing savior about her. Nothing! She’s about the business of teaching. She tells them what they’re going to do each day, how they’re going to learn it, and gets down to it.

through culturally responsive teaching – is entirely relationship-based and seems to parallel Ladson-Billings’s (1995) teacher descriptors around culturally relevant teachers’ social relations. Further, Shevalier and McKenzie link this “caring for” work to the development of cultural competence in students by referencing studies where teachers who cared for their students of color demonstrated “competent command of the cultural metaphors, rituals, and social structures that permeated their students lives” (p. 1092) and integrated them into classroom practice.

⁸⁹ In their article titled “The Teacher as Warm Demander,” Bondy and Ross (2007) argue that such teachers (warm demanders) hold their students to high expectations, both academically and behaviorally. Teachers who are warm demanders build relationships with their students, so that they know their students and demonstrate that they are genuinely interested in their lives. As part of the work of familiarizing themselves with their students, teachers who are warm demanders attend to their students’ learning styles, cultural backgrounds, “idiosyncrasies . . . and talents” (Bondy & Ross, 2007, p. 56). The authors assert that warm demanders are introspective about their own cultural backgrounds and reflect on how their own cultural perspectives influence their teaching and their interpretation of their students’ actions. Further, warm demanders are relentless in their pursuit of academic success for their students. Bondy and Ross outline specific teacher behaviors, including clear and consistent expectations, “respectfully repeat(ing) their requests and remind(ing) students of their expectations” (p. 57). The authors do not define academic success nor do they explain if academic success is measured solely through standardized testing.

Treats them all equal. When she feels like that's not working for a kid, what she's willing to do is come to me, or somebody else, and say, 'I'm having problems with a couple of my Latino boys. They're just not feeling what I'm doing.' Never, and I mean never, does Dee tell me, 'These kids aren't hungry.'”

“But this girl,” Ms. Washington sighs. “This girl has got the curse of *Up the Down Staircase*, *To Sir With Love*, *Dangerous Minds*.⁹⁰ She thinks she's in the trenches. She thinks she's doing God's work. Sit your ass down, I wanna tell her. You're a teacher. Ain't nobody gonna make a movie about you.

“Now, I thought it would be different. I did. I have heard you talk about this co-teaching, and it hasn't always been like that. All those years that I've been asked to take a student teacher, it wasn't a co-teaching model. So I said no, again and again.⁹¹ This is a

⁹⁰ Cann (2013/2015) identifies the likes of *Dangerous Minds*, *Blackboard Jungle*, and *Freedom Writers* as “White Teacher Savior Films,” arguing that such films do more than entertain their audiences. Instead, such films

suggest and reflect the perception that urban youth do not need highly qualified, experienced, and trained teachers. In fact, they don't need resources at all; instead, all they need are well-meaning White teacher saviors, willing to provide appropriate rewards and/or punishments. (Cann, 2013/2015, p. 6).

⁹¹ Many teacher preparation programs struggle to secure high-quality cooperating teachers for their candidates. At a recent state conference for colleges of teacher education, teacher educators and placement officials battered the keynote speaker, the head of the state teacher's union, about the inability to place teacher candidates for student teaching. The teacher educator audience implored the speaker to use her position to persuade the rank and file to step up to the responsibility of preparing up-and-coming teachers. The literature confirms teachers' reluctance to hosting student teachers. Koerner (1992) identifies multiple

new thing, and I was more inclined to do it for the co-teaching part of it. I'm thinking, I can actually influence what a teacher candidate is doing. You know, it's not about the lesson plans. Her lesson plans are fine. It's altogether something else.

"I know you sent me her papers, her application and such, beforehand. I appreciate that, I do. I knew going in that I was looking for a teacher candidate who had a true, honest and earnest, Kool-Aid-drinking belief in the power of history and literature to help anyone transcend any circumstance, because I believe words have that kind of power. You know? You can live those lives, through literature, through non-fiction. I feel like I am a compendium in and of myself of all of mankind's knowledge because I have the ability to read. Right here," and Ms. Washington points to her chest. "And I thought Katherine came close. The application essay you sent me suggested that she might just be on that same path."

"I thought so too," I offer. "What has happened to suggest otherwise?"

I see Janet Washington glance at the industrial clock on the wall. Then Janet looks me in the eye, holding my gaze for a moment, and I wonder if she's trying to decide how

"consequences" to taking on student teachers, including the interruption of established rhythms, schedules, and instruction, the displacement of the classroom teacher, a change in the autonomy and control of the classroom teacher, and a distraction from the primary purpose of the classroom teacher, her students' learning, in order to mentor the teacher candidate. Only Foster (1991) speaks to the experiences of Black teachers and links their unwillingness to host teacher candidates to student teachers' lack of content knowledge.

honest to be with me. I will never know how close what she says to me comes to her truth.

“You know, the difference between people who can feed our students and people who can’t. Honestly. It’s a simple answer. And you may think I’m being harsh.” Janet stares down at her hands for a moment, one rubbing the other, before she speaks. “There are people who see Black and Brown kids as human beings. And there are people who see them as a *version* of a human being. It’s just that simple. But that belief translates into everything they do. That belief pervades every single interaction they have with that kid, to the point where when they have a decent interaction with that kid, they pat themselves on the back. It’s entrenched, bone-deep racism. That’s what it is,” Janet points at me. “And it’s so bone-deep, they can’t even separate it from themselves, because being ‘racist’ is such a bad thing, and they don’t see themselves as bad people. They’re teachers, for goodness sakes.”

Janet inhales deeply.

“But that racism: it’s Palmolive:⁹² You’re soaking in it. We are all soaking in it.”

She and I face each other, the air still between us. I am uncomfortable in the desk. I want a pencil, a cup of coffee. Something I can put my hands on.

⁹² For 27 years, print and television advertisements for Palmolive dish soap featured manicurist “Madge,” seated across a table from a nameless housewife who suffered from dishpan hands. The housewife rests her fingertips in a shallow bowl of sea-green liquid while the two women talk. Donned in her expert blue livery, Madge points to the other woman’s hand, dipped in the green fluid, and enlightens the housewife that she is “soaking in it” without any awareness of what it is or what it does. All the while it soaks into her skin and permeates her person (ClickAmericana, n.d.).

Janet clicks her teeth and continues. “Now that’s the smog. That racism is the pollution in the air. It is in the air that we breathe every day. It’s the pollution that our students have already acclimated to. That’s our zero level. When I said yes to taking on a teacher candidate, I expected that smog to come with whoever walked through my classroom door. Because, you know, I can’t have a problem with smog. If I had a problem with that, I wouldn’t be able to talk to anybody at all. I wouldn’t have any colleagues. If I had a problem with the smog – and I do have a problem with it, of course. You know I’m all like ‘Ooh, Clean Air Now!’” And Janet lifts a weak fist, raising her eyebrows briefly, then drops her elbow to the desk with a thud. “But seriously, the smog: it’s that bad. I’m talking in my neighborhood; I wouldn’t have friendly neighbors. I wouldn’t have colleagues. Racism is everywhere. That’s the world we live in.”

“But this girl. . . this student teaching thing is something else.” Janet knocks again on the desk. She looks past me, as if shuffling mentally through moments, incidents to recall. In a heartbeat, the stories come. “Last week, I invite her to come to the band concert, you know, to see the students outside of the classroom, see them shine in a different way. Katherine is sitting next to me, and leans over to me, whispers, like we’re BFFs or something, and says, ‘Oh my god. His father is here. Did you know he has a father at home?’”⁹³

⁹³ Brown (2012) asserts that the persistent and dominant deficit discourse about Black male life is that of the absent Black father (p. 307). This narrative is one of many, projected by the media that stereotypes Black male youth, and contributes to dysconscious racism (King, 1991; Sealey-Ruiz & Green, 2015). These misrepresentations impact the ways teachers and teacher candidates treat their African-American students in the classroom and influence their disciplinary decisions (Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015). Scholars Sealey-

“And I look at her. Me, who has had a father all my life,” Ms. Washington waves her hand in an arc in front of her and then laughs. “I’m such a daddy’s girl, and I’m looking at this young woman, this child I should say, who feels comfortable enough to tell me that she’s shocked that a Black boy has a father, as if we spawn from the dirt! As if his mom must have rutted somewhere and dropped a child onto the public schools.”

“Uhhhhh. . .” A noise exits my closed lips, like Janet has hit me in the gut and knocked the wind from my lungs.

“And you wonder why I have never taken a teacher candidate before?⁹⁴ Why I stay in my classroom?” Her chin drops, and she eyes me over her cat-eye bifocals.

Ruiz and Green (2015) call for teacher preparation programs to focus on the racial literacy of their teacher candidates. Addressing white teacher candidates’ misconceptions of Black male students’ behaviors in school, they urge teacher preparation programs to prioritize “discussions of race and problematizing the ways in which Black male students’ social and academic behaviors are misread” (p. 60). Teacher candidates recognize their own discomfort in working with students whose cultural background differ from their own (Avery & Walker, 1993). To forefront the racial literacy skills needed to address such discomfort, teacher preparation programs must be sure that those who lead their courses and supervise their teacher candidates are racially literate as well.

⁹⁴ But nowhere in the research could I find evidence that teachers of color identify race or racism, deliberate or unintentional, as a deterrent to serving as a cooperating teacher. So what about it? Is it enough to infer within the gaps between studies, to read between the lines? Teachers interviewed in Foster’s (1991, 1997) study reflect on the low expectations held by white teachers of their African-American students and the “patronizing feelings of sympathy as excuses not to teach black students” (1991, p. 296). King (1993) cites numerous studies that reaffirm these African-American teachers’ beliefs. Nguyen (2012) argues that teachers are socialized into a teacher persona that implies “being in character of at least looking and speaking like an American teacher” (p. 669), a characterization that suggests whiteness. A teacher’s

“And then, this girl, she wants to connect with the kids, and so she makes a catastrophe of every child of color’s life, like sympathy is the only way she knows how. Thinking something extraordinarily dramatic is going on with every last one of them, making allowances for their disrespect, for them not handing in assignments.⁹⁵ I don’t have time for that, and neither do they. Now, never do I presume that my class is the most important thing going on in a person’s life. When I was a senior in high school, my dad had a heart attack, my house burnt down, and my dog got hit by a car. I had shit going on. No two ways about it. And I know we got kids who are homeless, kids who are in litigation because somebody diddled with them, kids who don’t eat unless they’re here. I

identity *as a teacher* is “intricately intertwined” with her/his racial, ethnic, linguistic, and gender identities (Nguyen, 2012, p. 668).

Additionally, much has been written about the ways in which P-12 schools and teacher education normalize racism. Hyland (2005) writes, “Few teachers would continue to act in ways that they would endanger the educational opportunities of their students. However, sometimes racism is inserted into schools simply by doing what is normal in those schools that primarily serve students of color” (p. 432).⁹⁵ Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, and Rivera (2009) define racial microaggressions as “brief and commonplace, daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights to the target person or group” (p. 273). Pierce (1974, as cited by Kohli & Solórzano, 2012) writes, “These assaults to black dignity and black hope are incessant and cumulative. Any single one may be gross. . . . Almost all black-white racial interactions are characterized by white put-downs, done in automatic, preconscious, or unconscious fashion” (p. 446). Racial microaggressions reflect an “unconscious worldview of White supremacy, superiority-inferiority, and inclusion-exclusion,” oftentimes invisible to whites (Sue et al., 2009, p. 183). These implicit and explicit racial slights may be perpetuated by teachers who learn to teach in licensure programs that “reinscribe white privilege, power and racism” (Cross, 2010, p. 266; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012).

know that. We're all fighting battles. What I can say to my students is, 'here's what I have to offer. You can focus on it or not. It doesn't hurt my feelings.' My class is a mirror. It's a window. It's a door. So if you can see yourself, if you can look out to the other side, and if it helps you walk through, good on you.

"But what kills me, what kills me, is that this girl, she's going back to her barracks, back to her people, back to her cohort at the university, talking about her time in 'the trenches.' I looked her up on Facebook and see her presenting herself like some war hero, like she's breaking up knife fights everyday. You know, bandying about like, 'I taught a boy named Treacherous! Can you believe his name is Treacherous?'"⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Rumors circulated on the university campus that a white male McKinley teacher advised his white male teacher candidate that it was okay for a teacher to use the word "nigger" in class if it was in reference to a historical text or period. When this was shared in class, the methods instructor was caught off-guard. He might have said, "interesting" or "hmm," but nothing more. Comments between teacher candidates flew through the room, past this moment, unrelated and oblivious, rapid fire. In hindsight, the methods instructor knew he should have stopped; he should have said *something* or opened up the conversation for deeper discussion. But the methods instructor wasn't sure what to say or how to say it. He'd only taught for a few years himself before returning to graduate school. He didn't respond. He was silent, which is sometimes the worst thing.

As uncomfortable as it was, the methods instructor was certain his department chair would let him know if something was awry.

Months later he learned that the teacher candidates of color in the cohort had reported the incident, and their anger, to the head of the department. He wondered about their conversation with the department chair. What they'd said. The names they'd called him. He imagined they'd called him racist, as he'd allowed racism to remain unchecked in a space that should be safe and trusted for learning. That he'd done them wrong. He imagined they might have called for his removal, demanded that he not teach again. But he

Janet closes her eyes for a long second and shakes her head ever so slightly. “That casual shit irks me so bad. I have to stop myself from cussing her out,⁹⁷ saying ‘yeah, and his middle name is Justice. He’s my next-door neighbor.’”

did. His department chair never said much about it. His subsequent classes, with that cohort and others, were never the same. Rumors got around. After the day when the methods instructor neglected to speak, teacher candidates – of all races and shades - participated only minimally in discussions, some refused to speak entirely. Stifled tension filled the room every minute of every class from then on; of that the methods instructor was sure.

⁹⁷ Clarke, Triggs, and Nielson (2013) found that cooperating teachers are hesitant to criticize their teacher candidates. According to the study, cooperating teachers are more concerned about maintaining an amicable relationship and preserving the feelings of the teacher candidate. Given the missing voices of cooperating teachers of color in the research, what is less clear is how teachers of color might handle conflicts with their teacher candidates and mentees, or how a cooperating teacher’s racial identity might inform or alter their mentoring choices when working with a teacher candidate.

Yet there is substantial research on the impact racial microaggressions have on people of color. In their study of racial microaggressions college students experience in university classrooms, Sue et al. (2009) summarize the literature on the impact of racial microaggressions on people of color:

(a) They assail the mental health of recipients (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008); (b) create a hostile and invalidating . . . climate (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000); (c) perpetuate stereotype threat (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002); (d) create physical health problems (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999); and (e) lower work productivity and problem-solving abilities.” (p.

183)

Further, the invalidating climate created by the pervasiveness of racial microaggressions interferes with learning for both white students and students of color (Sue et al., 2009).

It's quiet between us for a moment, and I reach across and touch the sleeve of her blouse. "What can I do, Janet? Do you want me to talk to Katherine? I can set up a meeting with her supervisor. It won't be an easy conversation, but. . ."

Janet sighs and I stop mid-sentence.

"I know that, right now, I'm not in the limelight or the doghouse with the administration, and I'm good with that. I don't believe I have to save everybody, but I do have to teach everybody." Ms. Washington's breath catches, and I realize she is holding back tears. "I suffer, and I do say 'suffer,' from the delusion that sometimes I am an island in a sea of. . ." Her voice fades again. "That I am an island. Sometimes I am the only respite that a kid will get that day. For one hour of the day, they're smart. Kids who never get a chance to show how smart they are, they're bouncing off the walls in my class, because they finally can. You know?"

Janet looks at me. I nod.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ I know that feeling. There is a grandiosity to teaching – a feeling that you have something to offer students that others can't. I used to feel that. There were days when I felt like my middle-school classroom was a sanctuary for my students, a place where the curriculum spoke to them, where they didn't sit in rows or sit silent or have no say in their learning. I prided myself in creating a classroom where they could laugh and push each other to the edges of their intellectual possibility. How might the discourse around the need to diversify the teaching force, hopes placed on an army of Black superheroes drawing "on their Blackness" to enable students of color to succeed academically, irrespective of the layers of institutional oppression they confront (Pabon, 2014, p. 3), or the added role shouldered by teachers of color to serve as role models for students of color and white students (Quioco & Rios, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2004) further exacerbate feelings of grandiosity – and pressure – on teachers of color?

“Can I put my finger on some egregious thing that this girl has done in my classroom? No, I cannot. But there are things my students know, and I know they know, because I helped them. I teach them. They learn.” Janet clears her throat. The bell rings, and my body shudders at the noise. Students fill the hallways. Janet lifts herself from the desk and smooths her skirt. Her hands move down the front of the burgundy fabric and then across the back. Before she leaves, she says to me, “If we believe what we do as teachers is a practice, then there is such a thing as malpractice. By putting this girl in there, I’m rolling the dice. If she stays, I have to let go and let that girl practice. And already, the kids are getting less of me, and she hasn’t even taken over yet.”

She pauses and looks at me. “I just need to make sure that, at least in my classroom, my students can breathe.”

Janet shakes her head, as though, for a moment, she again considered keeping Katherine, “Nope. I thought I could do it. But I can’t. I was wrong.”

I swallow. The back of my throat burns. I nod. “I’ll get in touch with her supervisor, and we’ll find her another placement. Do you want me to tell her?”

Janet Washington smiles sadly, “Would you mind?”

“I’ll call her tonight.” I’m still sitting in the student desk. Janet is at the doorway. “Thanks for letting me know.”⁹⁹

⁹⁹ In search of advice, a university supervisor shared that one of his teacher candidates, a white man, was insisting that his field placement be changed. “My cooperating teacher won’t speak to me,” the teacher candidate said, “not unless she has to.” So the supervisor set out to meet with the cooperating teacher, an African-American woman, who was highly regarded by the principal and the other teachers in the school. “Every time I try to meet with her,” the supervisor explained, “she is nowhere to be found. I think she hides

Janet shrugs. “I tried.” And with a wave, she merges into the student traffic, her big voice carrying strong above the din.

from me.” The supervisor described the moments when he would catch a glimpse of the cooperating teacher in the office or hear her speaking on the phone in the classroom. Yet when he’d knock on the door, there was no answer. A sentence or two later, the supervisor recounted the teacher candidate’s indignation that the cooperating teacher accused him of calling the students, 99 percent of whom were African American, “colored.” The supervisor asked, “Well, did you say that?” And the teacher candidate responded, “I don’t remember.”

The supervisor was new to the school and building. The teaching staff knew nothing of his years of teaching in an urban elementary school whose students were all African American. This cooperating teacher may have viewed the supervisor as an outsider, a young white man from the university, and not as a colleague in the shared development of a teacher candidate. Maybe she didn’t want to be perceived as difficult, as the difficult *Black* cooperating teacher. Maybe she couldn’t allow her classroom, too, to be polluted with the smog of racial microaggressions by a teacher candidate, intentional or not, because she too was trying to keep herself from dying from a thousand tiny cuts. Maybe she couldn’t watch her students lose one of the few spaces that validated their culture and identity, held them to high expectations, and let them breathe.

New Teacher: *To Me*

They're kids.

For the most part
If I can
Interact with them,
I'm good.

I think

I find different ways
To connect with the kids
Because
I figure out
What they're interested in
I learn who they are and
What they're interested in.

For the most part
For me
It's like
They're kids.

Am I going to interact
And discipline
A kid differently
Because I'm white
Or because they're not?

Maybe.

But
For me,
I have to figure out
What's going to motivate them.
I have to figure out
How to get them
Calm
And to a state
Where we can
Actually learn.

I didn't think about it that much

Here. . .
When I was student teaching.

Well,
Maybe I did.

I thought about it
A lot when
I was
Student teaching.
And that was more
From the ELL standpoint
Because it was so new to me.
Working with so many
Kids
From all over the world
And who speak
All different languages
And
Me

Being
In a school setting

Realizing I'm going to have
All these different students
Who are at
Different levels of understanding
English
And they're at a
Normal
High school.

And I've got to figure out
How to teach them.

At my previous school
Where almost every one of my students was
Black,
Oh there,
I felt my Whiteness.
Oh yeah.

It's like,

Kids,
You know I'm white.
Right?

Kids,
You know that
I know
I'm white.
Right?

Did I hear about
My whiteness?
Did I know it?
Yeah.

How I talk.
How I dress.
What the kids would say
And
I'm like,

Yeah I get it.
I know I'm white
So yeah.

Was I aware of it?
Yeah.
How could I not be?

I don't know.

I feel like I'm not really
Getting to any point.

A Good Story¹⁰⁰

I sit with my advisors around a small, circular table at the university. The October sun shimmers through yellowing foliage, casting a glare on the office window that, in combination with the oven-hot air pouring from the recently-activated radiators, belies the chill that has fallen over the city in the past days. University students trudge to and from class, across campus sidewalks dappled with fallen leaves. There are too few for campus grounds crews to clear; many more will drop before the month ends. We're halfway through another meeting where I update my co-advisors on the progress of my dissertation, a dissertation that looks unlike any other that has crossed their desks in their combined 35 years in academia. We talk over our laptop screens, our attention divided between my words on each of our screens and each other's questions, explications, analyses. I am certain that my advisors want me to finish writing and defend this thing even more than I do. We all are ready for me to go.

Still, they continue to show up to meetings, to patiently read the revisions I send them: new material highlighted, neon yellow speckled throughout the drafts. One of my advisors asks, "Where are the stories of change? Haven't things changed for the better at McKinley?"

My other advisor says, "But maybe that's not what this story is about, because that's not what's here. Your focus seems to be on the ways these overarching oppressive structures and forces recreate themselves. Am I right?"

¹⁰⁰ See the work of Alexie (1993), whose writing inspired the structure of this chapter.

“There have been changes,” I acknowledge. “Overall, the teaching is better at McKinley. We’re a stronger school. We’re no longer on the precipice of being shut down. Kids want to be there. Families are considering sending their children to our school. At least right now. . . . But that story is only partial.” I sigh, maybe even grit my teeth a little. “It’s more complicated than that.”

One advisor offers suggestions, structural and tonal. “Maybe you could use that final chapter to tie things together, you know? Let the reader know what happens to each character. Kind of like they do in the movies. You know, a *where-are-they-now* kind of thing at the end? Did Alex go to college? Did the old racist teacher in the copy room retire? He’s such a caricature! There’s someone like him in every school I’ve ever been to. What happens to him? And what happens to Ms. Washington? Does she ever take another teacher candidate?”

I stare at my laptop screen, bulleting notes, suggestions. I fill my cheeks with air, like my son was told to do in kindergarten. *Put a bubble in your mouth and keep it there.*

My other advisor nods. “Yes! As readers we need some hope! Your readers need to know that good things happen in urban schools, and that it is possible to successfully prepare a teacher for schools like McKinley.”¹⁰¹ She catches my eye above her screen. “Where are the good stories?”¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ I hear their questions and feel defensive. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1977) criticizes educational scholars for their intractable focus on pathology and failure. She catalogues the damage of such relentless attention on the negative: It “magnifies what is wrong and neglects evidence of promise and potential”; precipitates “cynicism and inaction”; results in “blaming the victim” for the problems at hand; and “encourage[s] facile inquiry” (p. 9). I wonder if I am following suit.

As soon as the meeting ends, after I've collected my things, fished my car from the parking lot, and headed home, as soon as I have a chance, I am at my computer.

The Story

The McKinley partnership liaison¹⁰³ received an email from a cooperating teacher. Or maybe it was the principal who informed her, as she passed him in the hallway, on her way in or out of the building between the school and the university.

“Have you had a chance to see Marko? That teacher candidate working with Deidre this year? Deidre is really impressed. So's Ms. Sanchez. Everyone I talk to says we gotta find a way to hire this guy. Teacher candidate of color. Really strong, I hear. I keep meaning to get up there to see him.”

¹⁰² My advisors are not alone. My husband has asked the same question, after I shove yet another draft under his nose. “Ugh,” he says, “So heavy, Jehanne. I know good things have happened since you've been back at McKinley. Why don't you write about that?”

¹⁰³ In historical narrative, the omniscient narrator remains a staple. Void of identity, able to breeze across perspective, time, and space, the narrator

remains disembodied and indistinguishable from the narrative process itself, almost like a power of the past tense. This “Nobody” narrator, this implicitly collective historical reflex rationalizes consciousness by aligning time into a single horizon. At this level of awareness, distinctions between individual sites of consciousness, whether of author, reader, or character, seem less important than the power to slide between them, that is the power to move between past and future. (Ermarth, 1992, pp. 27-28)

The partnership liaison walked backward to maintain the conversation, while still heading out of the building, trying hard to make a mental note. “Geography?” She asked. “From the university?”

Principal Bell’s back had already turned, and he called over his shoulder, his voice echoing through the empty, student-less halls, proving to him the school was improving. “Yes, from the university. Can you look into it?”

Within days¹⁰⁴ the liaison had checked in with Deidre, the geography teacher, and contacted the university program lead for social studies licensure. Both of them directed her to Hannah, another doctoral student serving as Marko’s university supervisor. The liaison and the supervisor exchanged emails,¹⁰⁵ bemoaning the statistics series they both survived one summer together. The liaison asked, “Can I come and join you for one of Marko’s observations? Our principal is really interested in finding a way to get him an early contract.”

¹⁰⁴ Modernism likens historical time “to ‘a road’ and its life ‘a kind of journey’” (Ermarth, 1992, p. 16): passage and movement are unidirectional, linear, and forward, assuming certain change and, often, *progress*. Days pass; history marches; change, modernists would say *for the better*, occurs.

Overwhelmingly historians present historical time as a linear continuum, despite “the myriad orientations toward past, present, and future time that greatly complicate its temporal character, through the multiple narratives competing within it” (Winders, 1993, p. 28).

¹⁰⁵ There is no trepidation contacting Hannah. No discomfort or chasm between theory and practice, school and university to cross. The two have sat together through graduate school classes. Hannah and the liaison know enough of each other’s stories to trust that any contact is in support of both school and teacher education. “I wasn’t uncomfortable at all at the thought of sharing an observation,” Hannah explains. “Made sense. I knew we’d learn from each other. I mean, it was actually kinda fun” (Interview, 2013).

“He’s really strong,” Hannah assured the liaison. “You’re going to be impressed.”

Within the week Hannah and the liaison have taken seats in the back corners of the classroom. Ninth graders of every shape and size have draped themselves over every one of the plastic seats and rickety desks. Marko walked the class through a simulation with Deidre at his elbow, whispering suggestions and co-teaching when Marko stumbled. As the class progressed, the pair moved between co-teaching strategies, assisting, teaming, and working in parallel, comfortable and calm. Only twice did the liaison see Marko freeze, each time only for a split-second, and Deidre instinctively filled the space his indecision made, responding to a student question and silencing a student snipe. In each case, she quietly explained her choice, unpacking her practice succinctly, within a sentence or two for him, as they passed each other between helping cooperative groups, readying for the next phase of the lesson.

The bell rang, and the students filed out. They get seated together at a student table – cooperating teacher, supervisor, partnership liaison, and Marko – to debrief the lesson. The conversation started by asking Marko how student teaching was going.

“Not every day is terrible,” he said. “There are good days and bad ones. Some days are downright excellent. But I am learning so much, every day.”

In 40 minutes, compliments and criticism have constructed a tapestry of support for Marko, and he scribbled notes on a yellow pad, looking up at each of the teacher educators as she offered her insights. He knew they wanted him to succeed.

“I want this guy in our department,” Deidre said. “He needs to work in our school. In our district at the least.”

“I’ll start working on that,” the liaison informed them.

Soon after, the principal had called the district’s human resources office, and they worked through the language of the contract, consulted union by-laws, found ways to circumvent antiquated policy that prevented hiring new teachers until all internal movement of teachers had ended, and they fast-tracked a contract¹⁰⁶ for Marko. “It’s no guarantee that we’ll have a teaching position for you at McKinley,” the principal warned, “but we’re gonna do what we can to make something happen.”

And something did. A spot opened up at McKinley. Calls and emails flew between Marko and Hannah, Deidre, the principal, and the liaison. Marko interviewed. The social studies department selected him as their top candidate for the position. Marko accepted and joined the McKinley staff.¹⁰⁷ A whole new kind of learning began.

¹⁰⁶ In four years of partnership, we have fast-tracked seven teacher candidates who student taught at McKinley into teaching positions at our school. Most of these required tremendous negotiation between our administration and our district human resources department. In each case, someone at McKinley noticed the talent, the dispositions for urban teaching, the commitment to the work, and the potential and did the legwork to alert the school administration. In every case, successful preparation and recruitment pivoted on trust and collaboration between university teacher educators and McKinley staff.

¹⁰⁷ Winders (1993) writes that historians

fall into the least common denominator of linear chronology, and in the process, we produce a fictional narrative; “first this happened, then this happened. Later a lot more happened” etc., etc. We create these fictions to reduce the complexity of our task *and* because it comforts us and reassures us that we really know what we’re talking about. (p. 28)

How often do we do the same as educational researchers, smoothing out the bumps and air-brushing the flyaway participants and procedural imperfections to demonstrate that our work, our intervention,

For years afterward,¹⁰⁸ Marko taught in the classroom next door to that of his former cooperating teacher. The liaison checked in with him regularly to see how things were going. Hannah embarked on research for a class at the university and regularly sat

assessment, innovation, curriculum, our involvement matters and *that we really know what we're talking about?*

¹⁰⁸ Narrative time enables me to compress data in ways that I could not otherwise. Within three words, I establish linear coordinates and years pass, creating “a homogeneous, neutral medium, not warped by divine or other influence but instead a constant universal neutrality in which human values take shape and disappear” (Ermarth, 1992, p. 29). Does that further the fictive nature of the work? Should I acknowledge my narrative smoothing (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), which omits so much with the choice of a phrase? How many days of struggle disappear with this retelling, days when Marko wants to quit; when colleagues infuriate him; when district bureaucracy brings him to the brink of resignation; when his students cuss him out, fall asleep during a lecture, fight in his classroom; when he gives up on them and they fail his class; when he questions his sustainability at McKinley and in the profession? Yet, we want progress. We want a good story. We long for a link between what we do and the cultivation of a young, strong teacher, well-suited for an urban school like McKinley; we seek “the possibility of causal sequences from one to another” (Ermarth, 1992, p. 28). Thus I collapse years within a phrase and I produce a marker of success for teacher education: A teacher candidate becomes a supported novice teacher who then develops into a teacher leader and mentor.

But in doing so, what is lost? What narrative secrets (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) do I keep from you, reader? Kincheloe (1997) writes,

Such historical fiction formulas operate on both academic and public terrains creating narratives that are conflict-free, seamless, objective, and official. Such fiction formulas arise not from the need to remember but from the need to forget. The formula calls for a bleaching of bloodstains that helps prop up established power. (p. 59)

in on Marko's class to collect data. "Put me to work," Hannah would tell him. "Let's make sure me being here benefits you and the kids, right now, not just someday down the road."

First years of teaching test every teacher, but Marko worked through his novice struggles with three built-in mentors,¹⁰⁹ teacher educators from school and university who had witnessed his development as a teacher and supported his commitment and staying power in the school.¹¹⁰ Not every day was terrible. There were good days and bad ones. Some days were downright excellent.

Marko was asked to host two undergraduate students, slated for teacher licensure programs, who are required to accrue service learning hours in classroom settings. He shrugged, undaunted by the presence of other adults in his classroom when he taught, and welcomed them. A whole new kind of learning began. He laughed at his teacher-self

¹⁰⁹ Of the seven hired into McKinley after student teaching onsite, most have been able to rely on continued coaching from a teacher educator with whom they'd established a mentor-mentee relationship during their teacher preparation year. In most cases, this person had served as a cooperating teacher. In other instances, a methods instructor or university supervisor who remained connected to the school frequently visited and supported the novice teacher in their first year. Most of these novice teachers would argue that support mattered in their resilience through their initial year on their own at McKinley. One novice, who had neither a former cooperating teacher nor the continued presence of a university mentor to help troubleshoot during the first year, resigned her position at the end of her first year.

¹¹⁰ Even then, there is no guarantee. Sometimes mentoring is not enough. Despite having her former cooperating teacher down the hall and her methods instructor frequenting throughout her first year of teaching, one of our fast-tracked teacher hires quit just days into her second year of teaching, leaving the veterans around her scratching their heads at what they missed.

when he stumbled and humbly narrated his mistakes and successes, be they minimal or monumental, when the pre-service education students were there. The undergrads asked him everything:

Why did you lecture today?

Why don't you use the textbook?

Will you get in trouble?

Did you hear the homophobic remark during the discussion about education rights?

What should we have said?

Why assign seats if you're not going to make the two Somali boys, who came in late, sit where they're supposed to?

Each question forced Marko to draw from what he believed and knew about geographic education, about adolescent development, about classroom management, about culturally relevant pedagogy, about McKinley and teaching, about his students and himself, in order to answer, even if his answers weren't an answer at all. Each question made him unpack his practice and question his own choices. Each question made him stronger.

Deidre made sure that she and Marko had a common prep hour, and for the first two years their free prep extended into their lunch period. Once a week, Deidre dragged Marko to the cafeteria, and they ate together in his classroom. They swapped stories about kids that made them crazy, about the newest initiative coming from the district for their discipline, about their unified decision to subvert the assertive discipline system the new dean had decided all teachers must use. Deidre tendered advice when he needed it

and consoled him when he screwed up: “They might be mad at you today, but that’s the great thing about kids. You always start fresh with them tomorrow. Just be your true self. Apologize if you feel you have to. Unlike adults, they don’t hold grudges.”

When Marko told the story of a student who shouted “White power” upon entering the classroom, he shook his head and his face reddened, “I do not like that kid.”¹¹¹

Deidre reminded him, “You’re the grown-up, remember? Your job is to find a way to connect with *that* kid. Even if you don’t like him.”

When Deidre volunteered to take another student teacher, she introduced Marko and said, “Be sure to talk with him too. He’s closer to what you’re going to be experiencing in student teaching. He can tell you what you’re in for with me as your cooperating teacher.”

¹¹¹ Lawrence-Lightfoot (1977) argues that in the examination

of the dimensionality and complexity of goodness, there will, of course, be ample evidence of vulnerability and weakness. In fact, the counterpoint and contradictions of strength and vulnerability, virtue and evil (how people, cultures, and organizations negotiate those extremes in an effort to establish the precarious balance between them) are central to the balance of goodness. (p. 9)

At McKinley there may not be Goodness. There may not be Change. But goodness abounds; changes occur to and fro, inside and out. They are minute and revolutionary, contradictory and conflicting, finite and ongoing, collective and singular. You see them in momentary interactions and reflective pauses, sometimes ephemeral and hard to put your hands on. But they are there, reader. Haven’t you seen them?

Fortified by a preparation and mentoring structure, informally extended through partnership, and the continued support for ambitious social studies teaching¹¹² by those he admires at McKinley, Marko took bolder risks as a young teacher. He abandoned impersonal and fragmented stock curriculum more readily. He reveled in the confidence he felt from his colleagues about his efficacy and skill and crafted more student-centered, complex, and transformative instructional activities for his students.¹¹³ His students wrote poetry about the Revolutionary War, conducted community interviews about voting rights and restrictions, and wrote policy briefs on redlining and desegregation. Students flocked to Marko's classroom, requested his courses at registration and in the counseling office, carted their school lunches upstairs to eat in Marko's room, hanging out for after school support or because Marko's room was a place where students in the school salsa club knew they could practice. The principal endorsed a new course on Chican@/Latin@ Studies that Marko authored and taught. Hannah's presence in Marko's classroom

¹¹² Grant and Gradwell (2010) argue that ambitious teaching occurs when teachers come to understand themselves, their content, and their students' complex lives well. Ambitious teachers recognize their students' tremendous intellectual capacities and work to stretch every student beyond their potential. Additionally, ambitious teachers "actively work to connect [their] subject matter with the lived experiences of their students, [often] while facing contextual factors (e.g., state curricula, state tests, unsupportive administrators and colleagues) that may push them in different direction" (Grant & Gradwell, 2010, p. vii).

¹¹³ In studies that examine the reasons why teachers quit the profession and/or leave their teaching positions – especially in school contexts with larger numbers of students with high needs – lack of support and lack of autonomy surface as key factors (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Beaton Zirps, 2014; Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, & Wycoff, 2011; Ingersoll, 2004; Ingersoll & May, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Kraft, Marinell, & Yee, 2015).

continued, as she finished her dissertation, and the two co-authored conference presentations and journal articles.

After four, maybe five years of teaching,¹¹⁴ when Marko felt ready, he took on his first student teacher and a whole new kind of learning began. Not every day was terrible. There were good days and bad ones. Some days were downright excellent.

¹¹⁴ Ermarth (1992) reflects on the metaphors used as “linear conventions of time: a car on a road or a train on a track, both mechanical conveyances that carry consciousness half-involuntarily toward conventional destinations along routes already traveled” (p. 43). Schools work to conceive learning as ordered and cast growth as linear: We structure classes into discrete periods, chop and disconnect concepts into separate disciplinary units, contain student bodies with rows of desks and ringing bells, grades and lessons and tests and benchmarks. We seek data as another “neutral” and linear representation of time; the input-output model of teaching; the if-then, causal notion of learning as a linear (and supposedly neutral/objective) way to show time passing – and making progress.

If we were intellectually honest with ourselves, would we characterize our own education as orderly? It seems that one of the joys of learning is its often haphazard process, as one learns gradually where to fit certain things or how unexpectedly one may articulate knowledge from diverse areas. (Winders, 1993, p. 30)

That’s the thing: Change takes time. Improving a school, especially one facing numerous challenges and carrying the weight of history, a spoiled identity (Yon, 2000), one that is stuck in the crosshairs of institutional racism and classism, ever-changing desegregation and educational reform legislation, and decades of austerity measures and an audit culture (Taubman, 2009) . . . for a school like McKinley change does not happen overnight, within a school year, or within a dozen pages. Nor does the development of a teacher, even one who starts strong out of the teacher preparation gates. Both are haphazard processes, convoluted, emotionally and psychically taxing and unpredictable, occurring in capricious contexts swirling with human, professional, and political complications. Regardless of how many checklists these teachers

receive that guarantee they'll "teach like a champion" (Lemov, 2010), regardless of the shortcuts educational administrators and policymakers want to take, learning to teach well, to become a master teacher, takes years of practice, and is "a multidimensional web of plural realities" (Ermarth, 1992, p. 67), one with multiple interpretations, depending on your passing perspective, nonlinear and messy, and not necessarily producing immediate and/or measureable outcomes.

But it's a story worth reading.

New Teacher: *For the Most Part*

I am successful with my students.

I think I got really lucky to not get a job right away.

I got to sub.

I got to see some schools,

Different schools.

And then I got a long call job.

And that school

Provided me with a perfect transition

From my licensure program.

I liked the principal

A lot.

Everyone on my team

Had been teaching at the school

For more than 10 years.

Coming into

That professional situation

And having that kind of support

Made a difference.

And the students

For the most part,

Came ready to learn.

I didn't know it at the time,

But I was like,

OK:

This

Is what eighth graders are like.

This

Is what an eighth grade paper looks like.

This

Is what an eighth grader can write.

After I got my first full-time job

On the other side of the city,

Even here at McKinley
I realize now,
That first job
And the kids there were
More of the exception
Than the rule.

But I think
Transitioning into that
Was a good way to start.

I was happy to get a job.
I felt like I was successful there.

I remember
The principal saw one lesson,
And it was a good one.
I got lucky.

The next year
I got the job at a
High poverty
Middle school.

I had no idea what I was getting into.

At that school
You just . . .
You can't really teach.

I
Couldn't
Teach.

Between kids' behavior,
Their struggles with reading,
And with
Me being new
And not really knowing what I needed to do.
And I was
Teaching a subject
I didn't know.

Everyone around me

Was new too.
The school
Filled
With rookie teachers.

I felt like I was not teaching.

My biggest issue
Was
I was told
By the principal that
I was being successful there.

That was an issue for me.

When I looked at my own classroom
What was going on. . .
I was like,
How is this success?

I felt like I was dealing with so many other things
Besides learning.

The students were dealing with
So many other things.
Homelessness
Violence
Some didn't eat before they got to school.
Some had lost a brother
Or a parent.
And every year
They had some new teacher
Like me.

I wasn't able to reach all my students.
Not even close.

A couple of my classes
Were just

Chaos.

My seventh hour class
The bell would ring

To start class
And I would say to the kids,

OK
You've had your
Three minutes passing time,
Let's go.

But I'm not starting class.
The kids aren't moving
And
I am literally in the hall and
I am wrangling this group of students.

And it was no better in the room.
Like,
This girl gets up
She does an inappropriate dance.
Then she's crawling on the floor.
Kids in the back of the room
Are throwing stuff
One of my ceiling panels was out and I've got
Kids throwing stuff
Up into the open hole
In the ceiling.
A kid is hiding behind my desk
Another kid on the phone
One day
A kid shimmies
To the ceiling
Up the water pipe in the back of the room
Another day
A kid lights a match.
Or I'm asking for the lighter that
A kid is showing off to his friend.

And I'm just like,
Take your seats please
We're going to get started. . .
What a joke.

Kids would say to me,
I don't want to sit here.
I don't want to do this.

*Let me go see the principal
I wanna see the social worker
Or the dean
Or the behavior specialist
Or call my mom.*

One kid gets upset
And leaves the room
And so
Of course,
I try to call the office,
I try to call home or
Call the hall monitors,

Class is just lost.

Chaos.

It wasn't like that every day,
But it was like that
Enough.

I kinda caved,
To be honest.
Where it was like
I went for more control on some days.
I moved to that mentality
Real quick.
Clamping down.
No movement
No choice.
No discussion.
Completely the opposite of what they taught me
In my licensure program.

And then
At the end of the year,
I don't know if it was because
I didn't know what else to do
Or maybe
I was thinking
*I probably won't be back here
Next year*
But

I started to do what I believed.

We would do class discussions
Other student-centered activities
And it went
Way better.

When we had discussions
Class changed.

The kids enjoyed it.
They're like,
We're in a circle
We're going to talk about things
That matter.

It changed their level of engagement.
They wanted to participate.

On days where
I needed them to do something different
And take a break from discussion
To do something else.

That frustrated them.

For them, but for me too
Class was more enjoyable when we talked.

I was less frustrated,
And they could tell.

We weren't talking about stupid stuff.
We talked about history.
Or something that was happening
In the community
Or the world.
At the core of the discussion
There was always something that mattered.
Something important.
It's not like it was wasted time.

Looking back,

There were too many times when
I would fall back on the textbook
And I'd say to the kids,
Here's a few questions,
Try this.

In my head,
I'd think,

They need practice
Reading
Because they're reading levels are so low
And while of course
That was true,
I have to be honest with myself.

I was also
Exhausted.

There was a part of me that said,
I can't think of
A creative way to do this lesson
So we're going to use the textbook.

I was upset at myself.
Because once I structured class
In ways
That got them talking,
And it worked,

I was like,
Why didn't I try this right away?
Why didn't I let them talk,
Let them think
About real things
And the real world
From the very beginning?

Maybe the year would have been a lot different.

Looking back now,
I caved in
And went to control because,
I didn't know what I was doing.

At McKinley,
My classes are not crazy
I enjoy my classes a lot
And I feel like
I can do
The kind of teaching
I want to do.

The kids' writing frustrates me, a little bit.
I know
I'm not that good working with our ELL students,
Not as good as I want to be.

There's a lot of times
Where I'll try a strategy and
It won't work.
There's a lot of times
When I wonder what they're taking away.

I think about this a lot.
I have a large population of students here
Where I need to
Practice strategies and teaching methods
That are going to work for them.

The biggest challenge for me is
Figuring out

How not to baby them
And
Hold them to high expectations

While at the same time
Make the work accessible for them.

That's the one thing
That I know
I need to work on more
For the next few years

Everything else
I feel pretty good about.

Minerva, Good Student

First Quarter Report Card ██████████ High School					
Name: Minerva ██████████					Grade: 9
					Date: ██████████
Course	Per	Teacher	Grade	Comment 1	Comment 2
Geography	1	Veracruz	B	39 – Good attendance	96 – Poor writing skill
English 9	2	O'Malley	B	36 – Low participation	19 – Good attitude
French	3	Adams	C	20 – Very cooperative	23 – Working to ability
P.E.	4	Jackson	D	36 – Low participation	66 – Needs gym clothes
Biology 9	5	Yang	B	20 – Very cooperative	11 – Good daily work
Algebra I	6	Johnson	C+	12 – Low test scores	97 – Needs more ESL
Art	7	Rosen	A	11 – Good daily work	

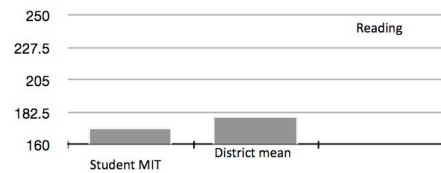
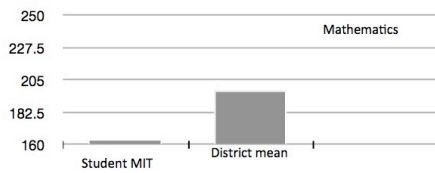
Name: Minerva ██████████		Date administered: ██████████
Grade 9	Home Language: Spanish	
Language Domain	Scale Score (Possible 100-600)	Proficiency Level (possible 1.0-6.0)
Speaking	307	4.2
Listening	404	4.9
Writing	410	4.8
Reading	385	4.7
Oral Language ^A	387	4.6
Literacy ^B	397	4.8
Overall Score ^C (Composite)	393	4.6
A – Oral Language = 50% Listening + 50% Speaking B – Literacy = 50% Reading + 50% Writing C – Overall Score = 35% Reading + 35% Writing + 15% Listening + 15% Speaking		

Student's Name: ██████ Minerva

Student ID: ██████

Grade: 9

Term/ Year	Grade	MIT (+/- Std Err)	Percentile Range	Term/ Year	Grade	MIT (+/- Std Err)	Percentile Range
FA13	9	159-164-169	16-20-24	FA 13	9	167-172-177	36-40-44



Problem solving	Low	Measurement and geometry	Low
Number sense	Low	Statistics and probability	Low
Computation	Mid	Algebra	Low

Vocabulary	Low	Grammar	Low
Comprehension of literature	Low	Analysis and evaluation of language and writing	Low
Comprehension of informational texts	Low		

Minerva’s papi drops her off on that first day of kindergarten. She doesn’t speak any English. Not a word. They’ve been in the country two weeks.

Nobody at the elementary school speaks Spanish, but Papi has heard from the other roofers he works with that it’s a good school. And that’s what matters.

The kindergarten teacher, Ms. Worth, smiles a lot and gently touches Minerva’s arm, motioning with her hands to come near her, to work with this smiling blonde girl who doesn’t stop talking. Minerva cries in Spanish. *Where is my papi? When is he coming back? Is he coming back at all?*

All Minerva can remember is that there is this white woman, maybe one of the other kids' moms. She is there, and she knows some Spanish. Her Spanish sounds funny, but it's just enough to get the girl to stop crying. She sits on the floor with the girl and asks in Spanish, *do you know your numbers?* Minerva recites her numbers in a soft Spanish, and the volunteer mom says them back to Minerva in English. Even on that first day, Minerva knows the lady wants her to repeat the English words back at her. Minerva speaks in numbers and then letters, in both Spanish and English. She stumbles, even giggles, over the English names of animals and objects in the classroom. Minerva is almost okay. Her nose is no longer stuffed, her tears have stopped. And then the volunteer mom has to leave. *I have to go to work*, she says to Minerva in Spanish, and the child starts crying again. Minerva cries and cries until her head hurts and the skin above her upper lip is raw from wiping it. She cries until the teacher walks her to the office at the end of the day. Papi is there and Minerva cries some more.

All through elementary school, Minerva does what the teachers ask. She is quiet in class. She goes with the ESL teacher when she is supposed to and works on her letter sounds. She collects English words at school, Spanish words at home. As she gets older, she sometimes wonders if she should tell her teachers that the work is too easy. When her test scores come back, she thinks, *I better not*. The teachers give Minerva less than the other kids. Thinner books with bigger words. Her worksheets have sections crossed off. Minerva completes the parts the teacher marks yellow, the problems circled in red. Minerva prides herself in her handwriting. She loves practicing her cursive letters, writing swirly capital "E"s and lowercase "z"s over and over again. Minerva always sits

in the front of the class when the teacher reads aloud the day's story. Minerva always keeps her hands in her lap.

In seventh grade Minerva's classes are full of other Mexican kids. A few Somali and Ethiopian kids are there too. The worksheets are different from the ones the American kids get, but the same for all of the ESL kids, no matter what language the child speaks at home.

Minerva carries her lunch up three flights of stairs every day during middle school. She, along with Marta, Grizelda, Ana, and Luz, leave the cafeteria and eat their lunches in Ms. Ochoa's classroom. Ms. Ochoa is the ESL teacher. Twice a week, Minerva stays after school, sometimes for as much as two hours, to get help from Ms. Ochoa on her work. Her girlfriends do too, all except Ana who has to go home and care for her younger siblings so her dad can sleep before he heads for work. Even though Ms. Ochoa is from Puerto Rico and her Spanish isn't that good, she talks to Minerva and her friends about being Hispanic and staying in school. She lets them speak Spanish in class, even when they are working on their Language Arts assignments, even when they have to write in English. Even when she doesn't entirely know what they are saying. *You kids! Your Spanish is too fast for me!*

In Minerva's history class, the teacher stands at the overhead projector and uncovers an outline. He lowers the paper and reveals one line for the students to copy and then the next. Minerva and her classmates read it and write it in their social studies notebooks. Every day, that is the task: *Copy the outline in your notebooks. No talking.* While the students write, the teacher tells stories about Midwestern statehood or about

James J. Hill and the railroad, with a Chinaman under every rail tie. After a week or two of outlines and stories, the students write a paper about it. For Minerva and Grizelda and Marta, the teacher ushers them to the small circular table in the back of the room. He has a paper already written. *Just copy it*, he tells them. *Add anything you like*. The girls look at each other and stay quiet. They write his words on their papers. Minerva, Grizelda, and Marta each receive an A in history. Minerva's report card says, *Good student*.

New Teacher: *Some Days*,

Honestly
I feel like leaving teaching.

It's true.

I like the district,
I guess.

I like the city.

A lot,
Seems like.

I enjoy my job a lot.
We'll go with that.

Do I like the district
And a lot of the policies?

No.

One of the teachers at my old school
She was like,

*I do this job because
I can*

And other people can't.

*And
Because I can,
I feel like
I should.*

I felt that a little bit there.

But then,
Something will happen
And I'll ask myself,
Why should I work this hard

To support

A school
And a system
Which,
In my eyes,
Fails the students?

Why do that?

You ask yourself,
Is it better
To let that system fall apart
Entirely
Right now
So that something else
Comes,
So that
The kids
And their families
And that community
Can have something
That is more
Functional?

Here,
At McKinley,
I feel like I can teach
And be successful.

I think
I will do better
Than in my previous school.

In my head,
I hear that teacher's voice
And
I think,

*If I am not going to teach these kids,
Who is?
Who is going to teach these kids?*

That's what it gets down to
Some days.

I enjoy being here,
I am reaching
A few of the kids,
And they're going to be fine.

I enjoy
Helping them out.
I like it,
And I like them.
So I want to stay.

At first
It wasn't like
I wanted to teach in the inner city
Or I had some calling
To be here.

It was more like,
I like the district.
It pays well.
And I enjoy teaching
The kids who show up.

And I want a job.

So many of the people in my cohort
Warned me about the city,
*It's hard to get a social studies job
In that district.*

No, it's not.
I know that now.

If you're good enough
It's not hard at all.

That's my take.

Knowing that
Has been motivating for me.

I want to be here.

I enjoy working

With the students.

I feel like I relate to them
Well enough,

Where it's like
In a weird way
It's like I . . .
I would. . .

I don't know how to say this
Without coming across as
Super cocky
But,
In my eyes,
When I look at some of my colleagues,
I think,

I am a better teacher than you are.

So why shouldn't I be here
Working
With these students?

They deserve good teachers.

Maybe this is me,
Thinking
That others who do this. . .
Some of my colleagues
Here at McKinley
Hold themselves
With an attitude of

*I work in the inner city
With these poor kids
Blah blah blah.*

That is the worst approach to take.
That's what frustrates me the most
About this staff.
I want to say,

Don't feel sorry for our students!

How is that going to help them?

I hear it
And see examples of it
All the time and
It frustrates me.

Someone
Needs to be here
Who realizes. . .

(And
There are a lot of other teachers
At McKinley
Who feel the same way
That I do,
So it's
Not like I'm some crusader
Or something)

But I believe
Someone needs to be here
Looking out for these students

So that they can actually learn.

Caroline, McKinley's It



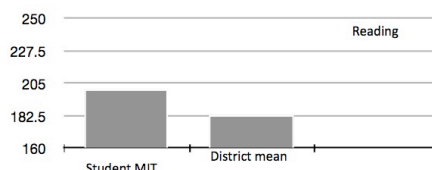
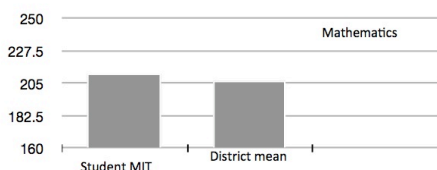
2013-2014
District: Midwest City Public School District
School: McKinley High School

Student's Name: ██████████, Caroline

Student ID: ██████████

Grade: 10

Term/ Year	Grade	MIT (+/- Std Err)	Percentile Range	Term/ Year	Grade	MIT (+/- Std Err)	Percentile Range
FA13	10	207-212-217	72-76-83	FA 13	10	196-201-206	84-87-93



Problem solving	Mid	Measurement and geometry	Mid
Number sense	High	Statistics and probability	High
Computation	Mid	Algebra	Mid

Vocabulary	High	Grammar	Mid
Comprehension of literature	High	Analysis and evaluation of language and writing	High
Comprehension of informational texts	Mid		

First Quarter Report Card McKinley High School					
Name: Caroline ██████████				Grade: 10 Date: ██████████	
Course	Per	Teacher	Grade	Comment 1	Comment 2
English 10	1	Sampson	B	20 – Very cooperative	10 – Good written work
World History	2	Arnold	B	06 – Excellent homework	36 – Low participation
Chemistry	3	Elliot	C	20 – Very cooperative	31 – Not up to potential
P.E.	4	Jackson	D	36 – Low participation	66 – Needs gym clothes

Geometry	5	Stevens	B	20 – Very cooperative	11 – Good daily work
Choir	6	Hutchinson	C+	70 – Missed performance	
Spanish	7	Rose	A	23 – Working to ability	25 – Good participation

When Caroline first heard about McKinley, she was in third grade.

Caroline always thought her cousin, Becca, was perfect. Even after Becca got pregnant, she was perfect to Caroline. Becca went to McKinley High, which was a long walk across the footbridge that hung over the freeway, and after school, Becca came over to Caroline's house. *It's closer*, Becca explained. *Your house is on my way home*. When Caroline and her twin younger sisters, Caty and Carly, got home from Madison Elementary, Becca would be there and would stay with the girls until her mom got home. Sometimes the girls took out the game of Sorry! Or, if the twins insisted, Candyland, and the four played board games until Carly started crying because she was losing, or Caroline got sick of it. But Becca never quit the game.

Other times, Becca would let her cousins play with her hair. Caty and Carly would run to the bathroom, brushes and combs spilling out of drawers, the girls gathering all colors of bows and barrettes, all of which would end up perched in Becca's auburn hair. While the girls argued over which brush to use or exactly where to place a bobby pin, Becca talked on the phone, the spiral cord stretching from the kitchen and into the den. Caroline assumed she was talking to boys. A boy. Many boys. Maybe a different boy each day, like teenage girls did in all the books and on the Nickelodeon shows she watched. In between phone calls, Becca made hot dogs in the microwave or dumped a

bag of Doritos from the corner store into a bowl. The twins carried the bowl to the den, each of them sitting on pillows in front of the TV, snacking while Becca did her homework at the kitchen table. Big heavy textbooks open, Becca blew through it. She had it done in no time flat. And then she would stuff the textbook back in her backpack and drink a glass of water, her knees pulled up on the edge of the couch.

Sometimes Becca would stay for supper, but then Caroline's mom would make her go home. *It's no big deal*, Becca always said. But every night, Caroline asked her mom, *could Becca stay? Just a while longer? Overnight? Till breakfast? Can Dad drive her home later?* To Caroline, it just seemed like Becca didn't want to go home anyway. Most times, Becca left before Caroline's mom lost her patience and yelled loud enough to make the curtains curl. Caroline would run to her room and cry, watching Becca from her bedroom window. The dark winter sky would be closing in, and Becca would pull her jacket tight around her as she walked in the direction of her house.

Becca got pregnant at the end of her sophomore year at McKinley, and her parents kicked her out. That's when she came to stay with Caroline, Caty, and Carly. At Thanksgiving dinner, Becca, all nervous, bounced baby Jordan in her arms like he had a bug in his onesie and she was trying to shake it off. Right there at the table in front of everyone, even Caty and Carly, Becca's dad blamed it on the Blacks at McKinley. This never ever made any sense to Caroline. Jordan, who woke up crying loud as ever, either from the bouncing or the yelling, looked just as white as the rest of family.

Becca stayed with Caroline's family for three years. Caroline's parents moved a second bed and a crib into Caroline's room. When Jordan was three, Becca found a job

that would take someone without a high school diploma. She also moved in with her boyfriend. Dustin. *Total loser*, Caroline's mom said. Caroline's mom still helps with Jordan. She picks him up from Madison Elementary, down the street, and walks him to her house. Then she leaves for work and Caroline watches him once she gets home from McKinley. He's like a little brother and a son, even though he's a cousin.

When Caroline told her parents she wanted to go to McKinley for high school, they gave each other their prune-faced concerned looks. Then they set about learning everything they could about the school. They went to both open houses. They took turns showing up for tours and sitting down with the school counselors. Her father even sat in on a history class. They had visited McKinley when Becca was there. During Becca's two years there, they talked to the teachers and social worker to make sure she got into the program for teen moms that's there and that Jordan got into the daycare, located right in the school.

Caroline's mom tried to convince her daughter to attend Martin Luther Christian Academy. *It's a very nice school, Caroline. You'll get a good education.* Then when Caroline's father lost his job, the private school was less of an option. Neither the odd jobs he has landed nor the position his wife holds as a nurse's aide at the senior center offer health insurance. This stress piled on top of the years when they housed and cared for Becca and Jordan. It took a toll on their finances, but her dad refused to put Becca out. *No way in hell is a niece of mine living in a shelter.* And Becca's parents refused to let her come home. They still won't see Jordan. Caroline's parents simply haven't saved all that much. So, Caroline knows, McKinley's it. *It's close, just right over the freeway.*

Some of the kids from the neighborhood go there, so she will know a few people when she starts. Becca always says the schoolwork will be easy for Caroline. *I never did have much homework.*

Caroline's parents worry, though. Now that she's there, they never miss conferences and always sign all the letters that come home from McKinley so that they go back the very next day. They call the main office in a heartbeat if they haven't heard about when report cards are coming home. When it comes to McKinley and Caroline, they pay close attention.

But it's fine. The teachers are nice and Caroline has made a couple of good friends. Caroline does her homework at the kitchen table while Jordan watches TV or plays in the backyard. Caty and Carly come home from middle school late, because both of them are involved in all sorts of afterschool sports. Caroline's parents are looking into a suburban high school for the twins. It's further away, but it's got better athletic programs than McKinley. It's on the bus line, so it's not that far. And they can go together, which makes a difference.

Looks like Caroline will have McKinley all to herself.

Veteran Teacher: *This Job is a Dream*

Come true.

I was a student at McKinley.

Being able to come back
And work with young people
In similar places,
Similar situations
To what I lived and experienced.

It's what I owe
The school and the community.
It's what I owe
Those young people.

Someone did it for me.
Someone took the time
To ensure
That I had opportunities,
That I had options.
I get to do that
For another young person.

All kids need one person to be their champion.

I was the only one
In my family who went to McKinley.
All my other siblings
Went to other schools,
Over on the north side.

I was drawn to the automotive magnet at the time.
I had decent teachers.
It was really Ms. Green who was my person,
The teacher who championed
My future.

She recommended
That I look into a job
At the Boys and Girls Club,
One that I could
Work

And get credit.
Two-for-one.

She could tell
I didn't want to be
Locked up
In a classroom.
She knew
I had things to accomplish.

She would point at other kids,
Friends of mine
Making mistakes,
Letting life
Choose for them
Rather than making choices for themselves.

Ms. Green said,
"I will never let you do that."
She knew
I had something to give
And to give back.

As recent as 1994,
McKinley was majority white.
Sixty percent of the school
Was white students.
I think there were two
Somali kids
In the entire building.
That's when I was a student here.

Then
White families fled.

I get pissed now
When people talk about the school
Getting better.
There's coded language
Behind what people say
About the demographic changes
Happening at McKinley.

When they say the school is getting better,

What are they saying
Exactly?

Or that bumper sticker
That the McKinley Parent Association
Has just printed.
The
“We’re Back!”
Bumper sticker
Plastered across staff cars
Hanging on classroom walls.
They’re handing them out at
Parent-teacher conferences
The pancake breakfast we hold every year
For our alums.

Tell me
Exactly,
Who it is
That’s back?
The neighborhood?
The white people?
Are we celebrating
Because the white folks
Are back?

Because
The rest of us,
We’ve been here
All along.

When McKinley was in rough shape
And district officials threatened
To close the school,
Nearly every student here
Was a student of color.
Only six percent of the students
Were white.

Every year,
As we implement changes,
As we hire stronger teachers,
As we turn up the heat
On weaker ones,

As we dig in to provide
Opportunities
That other schools
Have always offered,
Our percentage of white students grows.

The second year I was back,
Eleven percent.
Third year,
We were up to 19 percent white students.

You hear the same thing
At one of the other southside schools:
As they get whiter,
People say
The school is getting better.

You think we don't feel that?
You think us Black teachers
Don't feel that
In our very bones?

You think our students of color,
The Black
East African
Latino students
Don't feel the
Unspoken link
Between our percentage of
"Good"
And how many white faces you see?

Our students know what's being said about them.
They can read between the words.

But I don't say much.
What's the point?

If I confront
My colleagues or
The families with it,
If I challenge
That characterization
Of McKinley,

Point out
Other people's
Beliefs
That whiteness
Makes our school
Better,
I become
The militant
Angry
Black man
For the rest of my career.

I don't need that.
I got kids to feed.

When I look at the Black community –
My community –
I just want to shake my head.
When I see
Parents scramble
To get their kids
Into the suburbs,
Into more affluent white schools.
There –
And everywhere, really,
Because so many teachers are white. . .
We are sending our babies there
To be educated by the oppressors.

What other society does that?
Would you send your children
Into schools,
Into classrooms
Where they will be seen as
Less than?
Where teachers will look at them as
Undeserving and subordinate?

Why aren't we sending
Our children
To schools and into classrooms
Where they can be steeped in
The beauty
And brilliance

Of Black culture?
Where our children
Learn that
Black culture *is* American culture?

When I moved to the Midwest
As a kid,
I lived just a few miles
From downtown.
We would take the bus downtown,
And I remember
Standing in awe,
Gawking at all those tall buildings,
Glass windows,
Story after story,
Gleaming in the sun.
I remember
Wondering,
In my little kid way,
What the hell is going on in these buildings?
What do they do in there?

In my neighborhood
There were barbershops
And Popeye's Chicken,
Gas stations
And corner stores.
I knew just by looking at those places
That I didn't need an education
To work there,
To work and stay
In my neighborhood.

But when I'd be downtown,
I'd think:
If I want to do this.
If I want to be up there,
I gotta go to school.

Principal: *Liberating Education*

Consists of acts of cognition,
Not transferals of information

– Paulo Freire

This week
A number of McKinley students
Parents
Teachers
Attended the school board meeting
To advocate
That our school
Receive more funds
For the upcoming school year.

As most of you know,
Since receiving
Our budget for next year
I have argued
For increased funding.
This turned out
To be an exercise in
Futility
And extreme frustration.

Then our community
Came together.
Nothing would be different
If our community
Had not spoken up.
Parents and teachers
Engaging school board members,
Drawing attention to budgetary inequities.
The presence of our students,
However,
At a school board meeting
Marks a turning point in this struggle
In our school's changing culture.

We are a school
Committed to social and educational justice.
We aim to provide

More rigorous,
High quality education,
Affording all students
To be positive social agents
Impacting the world.

Our students did that.

Working with adults in our community,
They attended the school board meeting,
En masse,
To express their frustration
About our budget.
They represented McKinley well,
Meeting our district leadership
After our school had presented to the board.

Budget adjustments
Now appear more likely.

Lessons we have taught
Our McKinley students
About civic engagement were evident
In our students' words on Tuesday night.

However, these lessons
Are not new
For McKinley students.
Such messages are what we impress every day,
As we affirm our students,
Listen to them,
Provide them with a sense of efficacy
Around social change.

Sometimes
Struggles forge a stronger community,
But only
If the community has
The necessary elements
Within its culture
To rise to the occasion.
The onus for success
Is on the community members.
We are prepared

For this struggle.
Our students – in particular –
Are prepared for this struggle.

Regardless of
Whether the school board
And district leadership
Better our budget,
Our students,
Teachers,
And families
Can declare victory
By empowering ourselves.
This is the goal of our daily work.

So
I thank
Each of you
Who comes to work each day,
Fortifying our students,
By pushing them
Academically,
Engaging them socially.
You are not just developing strong students
But well-rounded,
Principled individuals.
You are building a better
Tomorrow.

Time to Go

It's time for me to go.

I start packing up my work to take with me: the long list of emails to write to McKinley teachers, names bulleted in neat rows, following up with potential placements for next fall, determining interest among the staff in co-teaching, a unit plan to read from Deidre Ellis's recent teacher candidate (she wants a second opinion; gotta check with Deidre to see if she knows), notes to finish typing up from the last leadership team meeting. I have to get moving. This is only a part-time gig. I have to get back to the university, back home, pick up the kids, revise a paper for one of the last courses I need to take. I've got to go.

I put on my coat and check the windows of my classroom to make sure they're shut. Spring seems slow to come this year, but even so, I have cracked the west-facing windows that overlook the street on the days when I need more air.

I lock my classroom door and head down the stairs. A flight down, I come face-to-face with the lead ESL teacher, Brenda. "Hey, I've been meaning to email you. You got a minute?"

I stop halfway down the flight. She stands even with me on the stairs. If it were passing time, we'd cause chaos. "Of course. What's up?"

A young student in a purple sweatshirt and her headphones whispers, "Hello Miss Anderson," and squeezes past.

"Hi Minerva," Brenda smiles, then turns to me. "We were talking yesterday at our team meeting. The ESL team has been looking at our student data. So many of our ESL

kids are not newcomers at all, like they used to be. They've been here in the country for a long time. I mean, in the system, *our system*, for years. Something like 40% have been in district schools since elementary school. Some, even since kindergarten, but they've never been exited out of ESL classes. They're still classified as level 3, level 4s.¹¹⁵ They're stuck." Brenda coughs into her elbow, a full raspy cough, away from me. "What we're doing isn't working. Who do you know at the university who might help? Is there anybody who specializes in working with long-term English language learners? Is there anyone who knows the research that's out there?"

I pull my mouth to one side, scanning the imaginary rolodex in my head of possible faculty members who might be interested. "I have no idea, honestly. But I can try to find out. I'm heading there now for a meeting, and I can start asking around." I shift my shoulder bag from left to right shoulder. I'm in my coat, holding my mittens. The spring sun is deceptively bright. From the stairwell it looks warmer than it is outside, but my own temperature is rising, bundled like I am. "I'll email you once I see what's out there and who might be interested."

"Great. Thanks. The sooner, the better. I don't see this trend ending any time soon for us." She takes the stairs up, two at a time.

I continue down.

I swing into the principal's office. Bright green notices fill each staff member's mailbox; I pull the stack out of my own box: notices for families. Since I'm not directly working with students (no classes of my own, no advisory), I quickly slide them into another teacher's box. I remind myself to send an email to the student workers to exclude

¹¹⁵ WIDA levels, indicating a student's English language proficiency.

me from these mass handouts. I catch the eyes of Colleen, the lead secretary, seated at the fortress that is her desk in the main office. “Is Mr. Bell in?”

She rolls her eyes and shakes her head. “He’s somewhere in the building.”

“Any idea where?”

“Nope. He doesn’t tell me. Do you want me to radio him?”

“Shoot,” I say. “I’ve tried emailing, but it’ll wait. I can find him another day.”

“I keep telling people, the best way to get ahold of him is to make an appointment through me,” she says without pulling her eyes up from her computer screen. “I am trying very hard to keep his calendar.”

“Got it. Thanks.” I pull out my phone to check my calendar, “Let me see what tomorrow looks like. . .”

Her desk phone rings, and she points a “wait-a-sec” finger in the air. She smiles a closed-mouth smile, and her attention turns to the conversation in her ear.

“I’ll email you,” I whisper.

She glances at me and nods.

I pass by Tim Arnold’s classroom. He’s at his desk and looks up as I pass. I wave. The room is empty.

Twenty paces down the hall, I hear him. “Say, you got a minute to talk?” I hear him shuffle to the doorway.

I spin, look at my watch, and start back toward his classroom. “Ahhh. . . sure.”

“I’ve been thinking,” he says as I step in the room. He pulls a student desk up toward the teacher desk. He sits down and leans back into the heavily used chair. “I’ve got a situation.”

“What’s that?”

“I’ve got these two classes, full of ELLs and SpEd kids. They’re hard core. Not at all on the edge. They are the majority of the room. This is happening more and more now that we’ve got the IB kids registering for specific IB classes. We’ve got these low-end kids tracked as well. Kids with fossilized language and learning. When I look them up on the data systems, they’re failing lots of classes, not passing state tests. They are on the road to not-graduation. The ELLs. . . They’re super-fluent when you talk with them, and I bet they usually fool teachers with the speaking skills they have. But many seem to be missing a real complete and automated phonemic awareness. They don’t have any internalized comprehension strategies. I sit with them when they’re trying to read an assignment. They just don’t know how to meaningfully engage with the text.”

I set my mittens down on the desk, my shoulder bag on the floor. I unzip my winter coat. “Go on.”

“I’ve tried everything I know how. Everything. Disciplinary literacy practices. Word wall. Strategies from SIOP.¹¹⁶ Even some choral reading. . . Remember when they told us *that* was the answer? Ha!” He shakes his head and smiles.

¹¹⁶ SIOP stands for Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2016). This model has been used in the district since the mid-1990s. A number of my former colleagues participated in the creation of SIOP lessons for the new Somali refugees who had just arrived in the district at that time.

“I do. Are you making any headway?”

“Well sure, with one or two kids. A little here, a little there. But you know, admin’s pushing for us to increase the textual rigor in all classes.” Mr. Arnold straightens the papers on his desk and moves a stapler an eighth of an inch towards him. “There’s even a rumor that we might go IB for all. I think we can guess how that’s going to play out.”

I look up at the classroom clock. It’s broken; stuck at 3:45. I look back at Tim Arnold when I hear his voice again.

“Would it be completely weird to ask you if you would co-teach a unit with me? I mean I know you’ve got a lot going on. . . and just say no, if you got too much going on right now. . .” Mr. Arnold draws circles on a notepad, so many times that it punctures the paper.

I am a bit flabbergasted. “Oh wow. Tim. I’m not exactly an expert on working with ELL students, and I’m pretty rusty. . . It’s been a while since I’ve been in a classroom full of kids. . .”

“You say that, but I’ve seen the work that’s coming out of Josie Altoonian’s kids. I know you’ve been working with her some.” Tim Arnold rubs a sandpaper cheek.

“That’s 99% Josie, not me. I’m just helping out. . .”

He fans his hand at me. “Whatever. . . I figure between the two of us, our two big brains, we might be able to come up with something that can help these kids. Anything’s gotta be better than just me. And whenever I’ve co-taught with a teacher candidate from the university. . . even when they’re terrible, it pushes me to be better.” He looks at me,

leans back in the chair as far as it will go, and shoves his hands in his pockets. “I gotta do *something*. Plus, it might be fun.”

“What hours?”

“Periods 1-3, I’m thinking.” He leans forward and the chair squeaks. “Those are my toughest groups.”

“Ninth graders?”

“Mostly, but older kids too – transfers, kids who didn’t get geography wherever they were before they came here.”

I take a deep breath in and let it go, loudly. “I probably can’t be there every day. I have to be at the university for a few required meetings, meetings I’ve already committed to. . .”

“Of course, of course,” he says. He starts scratching out a grid on his notepad.

“How long a unit?”

“Two to three weeks? Three weeks, max. And if you can’t get here some days, that’s okay.” He turns to his computer, “I’m setting up a google doc now, so that we can start working virtually.” His fingers fly across the keyboard.

“When do you want to start?”

“Two weeks from now. Will that work?”

“You’re sending me all of this right? Or should I write it down?”

He pounds the table with an exuberant fist and the desk shakes. “I’m on it!”

We hear Principal Bell bark outside the classroom, “Dontrell! Dontrell! Come back here! Right now!” He glances at us as he strides past Mr. Arnold’s open door.

I look back at Tim Arnold. “What’s the focus of the unit?”

“Identity and place,” he says, without glancing at me.

“Sounds about right.”

I readjust my shoulder bag, curricular ideas buzzing in my head, and head toward the back of the building, toward the parking lot. I turn the corner by the computer labs and hear Principal Bell before I see him. Although I’ve seen this situation transpire many times before with countless other kids,¹¹⁷ the tension between Dontrell and Mr. Bell prickles when I come upon it and thoughts of my conversation with Mr. Arnold vanish.

“Take your hat off. I said: Take. It. Off!”

Dontrell won’t look at Mr. Bell. His slim body is rigid, pants sagging, blue plaid boxers puff across the top of his belted jeans. Black headphones hang across the back of his neck, a black wire snakes from the right earphone, resting on his chest, to his right front pants pocket. His hands are empty, splayed slightly by his sides. He wears an

¹¹⁷ Most times – and not just at McKinley, but at every school where I have worked – the kids being publicly disciplined in the hallways are Black. By Black, I mean historically African American and not African immigrant. I have not collected data in the course of this study to prove that statement. It’s entirely anecdotal, validated by a handful of interviews with McKinley staff I conducted, and yet reinforced by research that African-American kids are subjected to more school disciplinary action (referrals, detention, suspension, expulsion) than any other racial group (Khalifa & Briscoe, 2015). Dontrell’s race is coded in the language here, in his name, his clothing, in the description I give him, and intentionally so. But maybe it isn’t necessary for me to ascribe his race to him. You, reader, probably did it without even thinking.

Atlanta Falcons knit cap, black around the rim, the top half bright red, with a fist-sized red pom-pom at the top. His deep brown eyes, narrowed, cast down the hall past me.

“Where are you going? Why aren’t you in class?” Mr. Bell¹¹⁸ points a stiff finger at Dontrell, not directly in his face, but close enough. “This is the third time today.”

¹¹⁸ This is where fiction meets research. I have waited until now to share Principal Bell’s racial identity with you, reader. I wrestle with two lines of thought as I do. First, there is but one head principal in my data, one person who has occupied that position throughout the study. Because of this, preserving Mr. Bell’s anonymity has proven challenging. Numerous assistant principals, administrative teachers on special assignment, and administrative interns have worked with McKinley’s lead principal, and their identities run the gamut: men, women, African American, Latino, Mexican American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, European American/white, multi-racial, heterosexual, gay, and lesbian. The diversity among them and their multiple identities allow me greater creativity, while still being true to my data, in carving out a character to embody their presence in the school. Their diverse identities also enable me to ascribe behaviors to a character that are entirely different from the participant who provided the data or story, thereby protecting their anonymity.

But it is Mr. Bell who has run the ship, set McKinley’s course, instructional vision, and disciplinary tone. Dissent has waxed and waned among the administrative team over the years; differences of opinion and inconsistencies abound in their implementation of the principal’s administrative agenda, but since the beginning Mr. Bell has had the final word. Thus, each member of McKinley’s administrative team, past and present, must find ways to work in tandem and alignment with Mr. Bell’s disciplinary vision for the school. His voice has remained constant through the turnover of staff and administrators. His singularity in leadership requires me, ethically, to exclude data that might hurt him, his family, his work. And yet, his fingerprints are all over the changes that have occurred at McKinley.

Second, ascribing a racial identity to Mr. Bell may change how you read his behavior. If you read Mr. Bell as African American, do you interpret his interaction with Dontrell as tough love? If Mr. Bell is white, does his policing of Dontrell reinforce the status quo, white supremacy, and an educational

Dontrell will not give the principal a word. Not a glance. Not an inch.

My steps falter. I wonder if the boy is holding his breath.

A handful of students appear at the doors of the computer lab, witnesses, waiting for Dontrell to act. Dontrell must feel their presence; he pivots slightly so that they cannot see his face.

Mr. Bell seems unmoved by the audience. “We have had this conversation before, Dontrell. Too many times. You cannot learn if you’re in the hallway. None of it seems to get through to you. Look at you. Look at yourself. You just don’t seem to care. You’ve got your headphones on. You know we have a zero-tolerance policy for electronics at McKinley. Your pants should be up. You look like a thug. Three times today. Three times, I’ve had to deal with you, Dontrell. If this is how it’s going to be, we don’t need people like you in our school. This is not a place for kids who don’t care about learning, who don’t care about making themselves better.” Mr. Bell jabs his finger in the air at Dontrell. “I’m done. I’m done with you. It’s time for you to go.”¹¹⁹

institution that privileges white ways of knowing and being as a learner? Either way, do you read his actions as racist? Or do you read his disciplinary choices as congruent with the warm demander approaches described by proponents of culturally relevant pedagogy (Bondy & Ross, 2007), albeit a little heavy on the “demander” part and not so much warmth?

¹¹⁹ If you ask any McKinley staff if they have witnessed such a scene, most of them will describe what I have here: Mr. Bell poking a finger in the face of one, two, or a handful of students for minor infractions in the hallway. Most times, the students hearing Mr. Bell’s bark are students of color. Most times, those students of color are African American. There is rarely a “hello” that precedes it. Mr. Bell begins with an order: Take off your hat; Get to class; Put your phone away; Come here right now. Maybe it’s Mr. Bell’s

I see Ms. Washington come to the door of the computer lab. She gently taps the students at the door, silently redirects them back to their work. She slowly steps out of the classroom, unwedges the wooden doorstep, and pulls the door closed. She looks at Dontrell, at Mr. Bell. Neither of them redirect their attention to her. Dontrell maintains his vacant stare past me. Mr. Bell continues to fix on Dontrell. Ms. Washington meets my glance. She nods, every so slightly, and holds my eyes, her mouth flat and closed, until she turns and closes the door behind her.

“Let’s go, Dontrell.” Mr. Bell pivots and strides by me without saying hello. “Now!” Mr. Bell turns a corner, the signature beep of his walkie-talkie precedes his order: “Mr. Boyd: I want these halls emptied. Please let your staff know that there are to be no students in the hallway during class time.”

A deep voice responds, “We’re on it, Mr. Bell.”

Dontrell closes his eyes and swallows. Without a word, Dontrell follows Mr. Bell, a good 10 paces behind. Even though I see Dontrell side-step away from me, his fist at the ready, I still jump when he slams the metal locker.

Mr. Bell’s voice reaches back from around the corner. “I said now, Dontrell!”¹²⁰

I make my way for the parking lot.

Broken Windows (Braga & Bond, 2008) disciplinary strategy for McKinley: call the kids on all the minor infractions to avoid the major ones.

¹²⁰ Yeah. I’m not going to tell you. I leave it to you to decide Mr. Bell’s racial identity, for now, and to determine why and how it matters to the story itself and beyond, to real kids and in real schools. Then, maybe, in a later draft, I’ll let you know. Once Mr. Bell can speak to his choices himself.

Just before I head out the door, I pass Josie Altoonian's room. I slow, seeing her push student desks back into rows. She's not talking to herself, but she might as well be. With every desk she soldiers into line, I can feel the curse words ricochet through her thoughts.

"Josie? You okay?" I stop in her doorway.

She looks at me, shakes her head, and turns toward the next desk. "I'm not sure I can do this."

I take a step into her classroom. "Do what?"

"This!" And she sweeps her arms up and away from her, her hands open, palms upward over the desks, over the room. Heavy resignation punctuates the gesture; her arms flop to her sides with weight.

"What happened?"

"Everything. And nothing," Josie says. She slams one desk into another, picks up a blank worksheet off the ground, crumples it and throws it as hard as she can into the recycling bin. Despite the anger that propels her arm, the wad of paper flits weakly through the air, falling short of the bin. Josie sucks her teeth, then picks up the wad with a sigh, dropping it in the recycling with little flourish. "I've tried everything, and they do nothing. They don't care. Doesn't matter what I do. This sixth hour is the worst. The class before is just as bad.

"I hear all these other teachers talk about how much they want to teach IB, and I resent them for it, because they just want to teach *some* of our kids here, just a sliver of

our population. And we both know which sliver that is.” She looks at me and grimaces. “But when I listen to myself, I realize I’m starting to sound just like them.”

Josie walks to the table that sits beside her desk and grabs a stack of blank worksheets. “These were a waste of time.” The worksheets join their crumpled clones with a thud in the recycling bin.

“Why should my kids care about working hard, when there are other teachers in this building who have no expectations for them? They can just switch into one of our colleague’s classes and do half the work, and still get an A. Just today, I had three of them come up to me and demand that I send them to the counselor’s office so that they can switch into Mr. Olson’s class.” Josie walks back to her desk and sits down. She presses wisps of black hair that have escaped her ponytail at the back of her head. She scoffs and shakes her head, freeing the same wisps she’s just tried to tame. “I don’t think I can do this for another year.”

I walk to the recycling bin and extract a single worksheet. I set it on a student desk. I pull my phone from my coat pocket and text a message to a colleague at the university. *I’m not going to make it to today’s meeting. Something has come up at McKinley and I need to stay a bit longer. Please go ahead without me.*

I take off my coat and hang it on the back of my chair, grab the roll of industrial toilet paper Josie’s got sitting near the pencil sharpener and place it in front of her on her desk. Quiet tears spill from her eyes. I pull the student desk and slide into it so that I face her. “Ok, start from the beginning. Tell me what happened, and let’s figure out a plan.”

Implications

Honestly, I don't want to write this part.

When authors finish writing their novels, they don't add another 15 pages to tell their readers what sense to make of the story. They leave that work in the hands of the reader. The reader must decide who and what to believe. The reader renders judgment on the choices of the characters, the twists and turns of the plot. The reader links the details and experiences of the story to their own, mentally tagging aspects of the work as authentic or valid, aligned with what they know to be true. If a piece of fiction is strong and it has convinced its reader to suspend judgment and believe its story, the text pushes its reader into discomfort, empathy, and self-examination (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2013). It leaves the reader wondering, thinking, wanting to find out.

Thus, to find a middle ground between fiction writer and educational researcher here, at the end of the work to satisfy the traditional dissertation requirement, has proven particularly challenging. Instead, I leave it up to the reader to choose one of two paths.

For the Educational Researcher

- In urban teacher preparation, context matters.

The specific context in which urban education occurs is shaped by a confluence of factors, including a community's political culture and a school's history, the racial and social composition of the school community, the students' and the teacher's gender, race, class, and personality. The kind of research that is required calls for a breadth and complexity that, heretofore, have not been demanded, and will not

be as neat or polished as the tidy studies that located isolated factors that promoted academic success. (Weiner, 1993, p. 80)

In schools like McKinley High, the swirling convergence of factors that influence an individual student's learning, a classroom teacher's efficacy, or a young teacher's trajectory into the profession vanish from the pages of many quantitative research studies that render them static, simplified numeric representations, minimalizing their importance. Contexts matter in teaching and learning to teach (Hollins, 2012; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014), and educational researchers and teacher educators are well served by paying greater attention to their human and institutional contours, the ways in which they flux, constrict, and sway. Such attention will sharpen our understandings of the challenges students, teacher candidates, and teachers face on a daily basis and will better enable us to prepare young teachers for urban school contexts.

- Urban teacher preparation and urban education need honest, critical storytellers.

Barone (2000) writes,

Like all good art, honest stories are powerfully observed. Carefully detailed. They must tend to generate in the reader awareness of the locations of (actual or fictitious) characters' thoughts, beliefs, desires, and habits, in the webs of contingencies that constitute their life worlds. (p. 192)

He argues that through these honest stories, readers come to empathize with strangers, with people whose lives and experiences differ from their own. In the same essay, Barone later asserts that educational researchers must write critical stories, which attend "to the connections between an individual life and a debilitating sociopolitical milieu" (p. 196).

Scores of schools like McKinley exist throughout the United States, each with its own unique, beautiful, and complex human and political topography. Popular media's stories of urban schools are painted with broad brushstrokes and reduce their inhabitants to caricature: savior, sloth, or superhero; victimized, violent, and voiceless; ineffective, unruly, and out of control. Educational researchers whose work centers on the collection, creation, and dissemination of counterstories intervene and challenge dominant, singular narratives, propelling readers to question racist and classist assumptions of what it is to learn and teach in schools like McKinley.

- Urban teachers need to tell their stories, and the rest of us need to listen.

This dissertation privileges teachers' stories: those of new and aspiring teachers, veteran teachers, teachers of color, and cooperating teachers. Theirs are the voices that carry this dissertation and craft a larger narrative of teaching, learning, and learning to teach at McKinley High School. Teachers' stories are often relegated to scholar-interpreted inserts and two-dimensional backdrops in educational research, and they are largely absent in the narratives that dominate and influence educational policy (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; 2009; Nias, 1991.). While initially, I didn't set out to forefront the perspectives and voices of practicing teachers, their stories demonstrated a keen awareness of their school and district's tumultuous and complex political and human contexts, missing from educational policy initiatives and neglected in teacher preparation design. Though present, stories and perspectives of administrators, campus-based teacher educators, parents and students take a less prominent position in the work. McKinley principals and parents might tell different histories of these three initial years

of partnership. Methods instructors and supervisors might emphasize different struggles and stories in what it was like to learn to teach at McKinley during the period in focus. While I recognize the limitations this places on the work, my analysis suggests the work should serve as a megaphone for McKinley's teachers, a witness to their emotionally-charged moments, and a platform for teacher truths rarely shared outside of trusted teacher communities.

- Urban teacher preparation requires a more activist and collaborative role for academia.

No longer can teacher education and educational research sit back and engage with urban schools at arms' length. Teacher education and educational researchers rely on P-12 schools to provide the classroom and school environments for the clinical portions of their teacher candidates' preparation, and teacher preparation literature often cites the school-based experiences of learning to teach (practicum and student teaching) as the most powerful and impactful of an aspiring teacher's preparation (Lortie, 1975). Yet with the increased emphasis on standardized testing in schools and, in many districts, the links between student performance (as measured by standardized tests) and teacher job security, master teachers are less likely to volunteer to host teacher candidates for student teaching experiences.

On paper, partnership with P-12 school districts has taken a more prominent place in the national accreditation standards for higher education institutions that license teachers (CAEP, 2013). Yet still much of the enactment of this 'partnership' work is

positioned as extracurricular and supplemental. There is no incentive for tenure-track faculty in teacher education to engage in partnership work, as it is not counted as research, teaching, or service. Those most likely to engage in collaborative work with classroom teachers in partner sites, most often about an individual teacher candidate's development, are university supervisors. In many institutions such as the university in focus in this study, the role of the university supervisor offers doctoral students in education tuition assistance for their graduate courses (Zeichner, 2010, described a similar structure in his university system). In many cases, these doctoral students have limited teaching experience in schools, and many fewer have first-hand knowledge of teaching in diverse, urban schools. During the course of this study, McKinley cooperating teachers met with four university supervisors in social studies education. Two supervisors had 4-5 years of teaching, one had taught for two years, and the fourth had not taught in a school at all. One of the four had taught in a city school. Supervisors receive little training and are not required to complete any professional development on teacher education or mentoring pedagogies. While each of the social studies supervisors brought their own, unique insights into teaching, their lack of familiarity with urban school contexts often left them searching for suggestions to give teacher candidate mentees, struggling with issues of race or poverty that presented during student teaching. My research suggests cooperating teachers recognize the nominal nature of such collaborations with university-based teacher preparation and express feelings of disrespect from programs viewed as "outsourcing" their work to P-12 schools with little compensation, little support, and little interest in teachers' opinions of what it takes to be

an urban teacher.

Thus, teacher education must commit to struggling schools with challenging political and professional contexts and dig in, working side-by-side with p-12 educators to build the next generation of urban teachers. A key component of this collaboration involves the hiring, preparation, and support for a band of talented, passionate thirdspace teacher educators, who are grounded in diverse school contexts and well-versed in teacher education research, who link elbows with practitioners to guide preservice teachers and novice teachers through the minefield of induction and facilitate their translation of theory to practice. Teacher education and P-12 schools need community teachers in teacher education who are adept at navigating urban schools and districts and masterful with culturally relevant, anti-racist, and ambitious pedagogies in challenging, real-life contexts. In order to grow community teachers and thirdspace teacher educators, both teacher education and P-12 schools must erase current boundaries between the roles of university supervisor, methods instructor, teacher educator, and practicing teacher. Further, teacher education must make a deeper investment in practicing teachers and the cultivation of outstanding cooperating/mentor teachers who learn to reflect side-by-side with teacher candidates. Together, teacher educators and P-12 leaders must roll up their sleeves and engage in honest and difficult conversations to find contextually-based ways to coach and counsel underperforming teachers either to improve or to leave the profession.

- Novice teachers in urban schools require enriched and extended support.

Novice teachers enter politicized teaching contexts with invisible ideologies that “privilege the interests, values, and practices necessary to maintain the status quo, and ironically, the powerlessness of teachers” (Britzman, 2003, p. 33). In order to enact the ambitious, culturally relevant, and anti-racist pedagogies promoted in teacher education and needed in urban schools, novice teachers need models through their student teaching experiences and throughout induction years. The absence of such modeling inhibits pedagogical risk-taking and circumscribes novice teachers’ identity development (Beaton Zirps, 2014). Ronfeldt and Grossman (2008) write,

When novices do not actually see [mentors] in practitioner roles, the possible selves they encounter are always partial. . . . Untested images of what may be possible are not enough to prepare novices for new roles, even when these images include specific strategies and ways of interacting with others. It is one thing to have a clear and elaborated vision of a possible self and quite another to actually enact that vision. (pp. 47, 49)

As Samaras and Gismondi (1998) assert, “Teacher educators need to live their own models” (p. 716). Teacher educators in teacher preparation and P-12 schools must flex their mentoring muscles and engage in co-teaching with their teacher candidates and cooperating teachers in various student teaching contexts. They need to get up from their remote observation perch and assist novice teachers in their work in diverse urban classrooms. Novice teachers need to see the way mentor teachers respond to controversy in a discussion or a bullying comment between students during small group work. They need to see strategies attempted with a struggling reader when unpacking a complicated

text. Further, a more active role enables the mentor teacher to provide honest feedback that is more informed by the complexities of the students in the room and the institutional constraints of the school. This is even more imperative for supporting critical, social justice-minded young teachers in schools. As Apple (2011) writes, the critical teacher educator must

act as a deeply committed mentor, as someone who demonstrates through her or his life what it means to be *both* an excellent researcher and teacher and a committed member of a society that is scarred by persistent inequalities. She or he needs to show how one can blend these two roles together in ways that may be tense but still embody the dual commitments to exceptional and socially committed research and participating in movements whose aim is interrupting dominance. (p. 230)

This collaborative and activist mentoring responsibility must be shared by P-12 and campus-based teacher educators alike and must extend through a young teacher's first three years. It requires that school, district, and teacher education leaders partner to recognize, fund, and protect institutional structures that honor the complex relational work involved in teacher preparation and development. This is an expensive endeavor, both in human and financial resources, but will result in retention of greater numbers of ambitious, culturally relevant teachers, greater stability in high-need urban schools, and better learning opportunities for children who are most often underserved and marginalized in education.

- Standardization undermines culturally relevant and authentic pedagogies.

For decades, educators have been pressed to align their instruction and assessment towards uniform standards. The process of determining how standards are set, by whom, the degree to which alignment must occur, and the content of said standards have been politically contentious endeavors, causing roiling state and national controversy (Smith-Crocco, 1998; Symcox, 2002; Vinson, 1999). Yet, even before publication of the report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, which condemned the mediocrity of the nation's public schools and called for national standards to improve student achievement and address inequities in curriculum and course offerings between schools and districts, critical scholars decried standardization for its fundamental conflicts with authentic, culturally relevant, and activist pedagogies (see Cherryholmes, 1978 as an example of the ways standardized objectives for student learning reduce the complex problem-posing and inquiry-based teaching needed with social justice pedagogies). Other authors have challenged the imposition of national curriculum standards as a means of reproducing the status quo (Cherryholmes, 1978; Crocco, 1998; Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Gibson, 2001; Grande, 2004; Kohn, 1999; 2001; 2010; Kumashiro, 2012; Ohanian, 1999). While mandated standardization purports to reduce the achievement gap between students of color and their white counterparts and remedy the educational debt owed to students of color and poor students, the negative consequences of hyper-standardization impact the very students they aim to address (Ohanian, 1999). As has been described in this dissertation, teachers in high-needs urban schools face more intense scrutiny and pressure from district and school leaders to adhere to a one-size-fits all, standardized and prescribed curriculum and work in professional contexts which constantly battle a

relentless stream of racist, classist, and anti-teacher narratives that undermine the profession, diminish teacher efficacy, insult their schools, and dehumanize the students with whom they work. Under such conditions, many teachers abandon culturally relevant and authentic pedagogies that facilitate teachers and students in the co-construction of learning, that create classrooms that nurture and embed students' cultural identities in the curriculum, and that cater to the unique and complex needs of the particular students present (Crocco & Costigan, 2007).

- Urban schools need ambitious, critical, student-centered teachers.

A teacher emails a parent with a recent reflection a child writes in class. The writing describes his most memorable experience from elementary school: not fitting in. The student's writing shoots straight from the heart, but does not drip with emotion or self-pity. It catalogues the derisions cast his way over the years, the ways he has felt excluded. The writing is painful and beautiful, a momentary window into internal landscape of an 11-year old. The teacher sends the child's writing to his parents with an FYI, a 'just so you know.' A conversation ensues between the adults as both parent and teacher interpret the child's words, trying to make sense of them, to gauge the need for concern for what lies ahead as they continue through the school system. What enables a child to feel safe enough to share so honestly? To speak and write from the heart with such clarity? Above all, it is a teacher who recognizes the child's complexity and who has enabled the child to feel seen in his entirety. To know that he is not a mistake when he makes one. It is a teacher who has made it clear through her words and actions, she is on that child's side. She is his advocate. She and his parent are on the same team: his.

As Grant and Gladwell (2010) write, “Teachers do not work in a vacuum. [T]he typical constraints teachers face (e.g., time, access to materials) are now joined by ... the rise of high-stakes testing” (p. 8). The increased complexity of highly diverse, high-needs urban school contexts compounds these constraints, further challenging teachers in their capacity to fully see and understand the young people in their charge. The ability to see students in their entirety, for all of their complexities, requires an armor of fortitude and ambitiousness in a teacher, as well as a deep-seated belief in the limitless possibilities of every child, thus enabling the teacher to wade through any stories that assume a student (and their family) doesn’t care, can’t learn, won’t amount to anything, isn’t creative-smart-capable-disciplined. Such seeing requires time and pedagogical autonomy so that teachers don’t feel compelled to follow the district-required recipe, but rather can craft curriculum that is authentic and centers on the students’ lives, so that the students’ stories and intellectual wrestling becomes the core of the content. Such seeing requires the ability to alter and tailor an assignment or an assessment to meet the social-emotional, developmental, and intellectual needs of an individual child. Such seeing requires an ambitious, critical, and student-centered teacher who accepts all of her students unconditionally.

For the Fiction Reader

Last night, Charlie came over for dinner.

Charlie is in his first year of teaching in our district. It’s not his first teaching job. After student teaching at McKinley, he taught abroad for a year, venturing to the other side of the globe to teach history in an international middle school, serving mostly

affluent, Westernized families in Singapore. He returned and worked as a substitute teacher at various schools across the city. It offered a relaxed schedule. On days he didn't feel like getting up early, he turned down jobs. He supplemented his substitute income by working at a local pub. When he got the job offer to teach full-time at a McKinley feeder middle school, he took it, contacting his methods instructors and his former cooperating teacher, Tim Arnold, for letters of recommendation and advice.

The middle school gladly offered Charlie the job. Ninety-nine percent of Charlie's students qualify for free- and reduced-price lunch. All but one child in his classes is a student of color. Twenty-five% are classified as homeless or high mobility. On any given day, he can expect that at least 15% of his students will be absent. He loses a student or two every week, and gains one or two new ones at about the same pace. All of the teachers on the middle school team resigned, left, or transferred schools at the end of last year. The school hired Charlie in mid-September, after the new teacher they had hired in August packed up one afternoon, before the school day had ended, and told them she wasn't coming back. Charlie has the most experience of any of his colleagues on the seventh grade team. They laugh about that. They call him, "The Veteran." Charlie is 24.

When Charlie's students leave his classroom in the middle of a lesson (because they always have, because previous teachers couldn't or wouldn't stop them, or because they didn't know how or didn't care enough to keep them there), Charlie heads down to his principal's office and asks her for advice. He wants to tell her that the kids' stories make his heart hurt and that he doesn't know what to do with that. He wants to ask her how to create projects with them that tap their interest. He wants to know what happens

to the kids who stop coming to school. She tells him, “I can’t do this for you. I have too much, too many calls to make, too many meetings to attend, too much paperwork to fill out.” Charlie knows that she can’t be the sounding board he needs. Charlie tries to talk to his parents, who listen. They pat his arm; they swell with pride and tell him he’s doing the Good Lord’s work. He tries his girlfriend, who teaches too. But she has her own students and her own lessons to write. She listens for a time, more than she can afford, and then she asks him to stop.

Charlie talks the entire time he is at our house for dinner. He rattles off students’ stories: Eduardo, Naveah, Jaylen, Celestina, Fito, Faisa, and Josiah. My own sons watch him. They listen silently as Charlie describes the young people he teaches. Charlie tells a story about Malik, who is ready to fight at every moment, who always comes late. Malik’s father seems to trust Charlie. Malik, his dad and his younger brother Reggie have been staying at the shelter downtown, until they get their own place. And when the housing comes through, it’s an apartment in a southern suburb, 30 minutes from school. Charlie talks about how he gets worried when Malik isn’t in school for two weeks straight and how he tries to get hold of Malik’s dad, tries to figure out what happened. Charlie smiles when he shares how they worked and worked to get transportation for Malik so that he keeps attending, keeps showing up in Charlie’s class. How they found funding for a cab to bring Malik and his little brother to school.

Charlie tells a story about Monysha and Jazmin, two girls who come to his classroom when they have a substitute teacher in math class, how they ask him if they can stay, even though they’re not supposed to, but they don’t want to deal with the

substitute, another stranger who doesn't see them as whole people. Charlie gets grief from one of the deans for letting them stay, but he shrugs it off, then looks up at me for assurance. "I give them books to read. I tell them they have to be respectful and quiet so the class can learn. Otherwise, they have to go back. That seems to work."

Charlie worries about his kids, that they're behind, that he can't keep up with the district's pacing schedule. "We should already be studying Asia," and we hear the pressure squeeze his voice. "But I had to spend at least a couple of weeks getting to know the kids when I first got there. I couldn't just go straight into the content. I had to learn about who they are."

When I offer to help him plan his next unit, Charlie refuses. "No really. I just need to talk." But by the time he leaves, when my husband and I have admitted that we need to put our kids to bed, Charlie walks out with a bag full of books and sketches of a three-week unit to begin in February. When he's standing at the front door with his coat on and his hand on the doorknob, he rationalizes his visit to our house. "It's just hard," he says. "Most days, I'm not sure I'm doing any of them any good."

"I could work with you and your class on seminar discussions. I bet your kids would love it," I offer, suggesting a visit, where I sit in or that we co-teach. I know it's not ideal: I don't know the school. Don't know the administration. Charlie's students have never laid eyes on me. And I don't have time.

As though he's read my mind, Charlie says, "If you were at my school, maybe. But I'll figure it out. I'm good." He promises, "This is good. Really. I'll let you know how it goes."

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Appendix A – Interview with Veteran Teacher at McKinley High School

1. How would you describe what it's like to teach/work at an urban high school like McKinley?
2. How long have you been part of the McKinley High School community? What brought you here?
3. What do you see as some of the most challenging aspects of teaching in an urban school such as McKinley?
4. What is unique and rewarding about teaching in an urban school such as McKinley?
5. Please share a quintessential McKinley story, a story that you believe speaks to the nature of our school and students.
6. What do you see as an ideal teacher for urban/McKinley students? What does that ideal teacher look like? What are his/her characteristics? What goes on in his/her classroom?
7. When teachers don't have success with McKinley students, why do you believe that is? What happens?
8. In what ways can teacher preparation better train teacher candidates so that they can be successful in urban high schools such as McKinley?
9. When you see young teachers and teacher candidates coming into McKinley High School to learn how to teach, what kinds of advice do you give them?
10. Please share a teaching and/or learning to teach story that has taken place at McKinley High School.

11. In what ways do you see the partnership benefiting McKinley and the district? In what ways does it benefit the university teacher preparation programs?

Appendix B – Interview Questions for University Supervisors, Methods Instructors

1. How would you describe what it's like to teach/work at an urban high school like McKinley?
2. What do you see as some of the most challenging aspects of teaching in an urban school such as McKinley?
3. What is unique and rewarding about teaching in an urban school such as McKinley?
4. What do you see as an ideal teacher candidate for urban/McKinley students? What does that ideal teacher look like? What are his/her characteristics? What goes on in his/her classroom?
5. When teacher candidates don't have success with McKinley students, why do you believe that is? What happens?
6. In what ways can teacher preparation better train teacher candidates so that they can be successful in urban high schools such as McKinley?
7. When you see young teachers and teacher candidates coming into McKinley to learn how to teach, what kinds of advice do you give them?
8. Please share a teaching and/or learning to teach story that has taken place at McKinley.
9. How would you characterize how the university's teacher preparation program prepares teacher candidates for working in an urban high school and with diverse, urban students like at McKinley? In what ways is it lacking?

10. How would you characterize your interactions with cooperating teachers and teacher candidates at McKinley? What do you do to prepare for those interactions? What kinds of strategies, considerations do you make when you supervise at McKinley?
11. Please share a supervision story from your work at McKinley.
12. In what ways has the partnership impacted McKinley? In what ways has the partnership benefitted the university's preparation programs?