

The Role of Emotions in Effective, Meaningful Practices:
A Self-study on Emotionally-informed Teaching

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Abstract

This three-paper self-study dissertation explored the process of becoming a teacher with a focus on the emotional dimensions of teaching. Becoming a teacher is a complex, emotionally demanding process (Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016) and teachers' emotions impact student achievement, motivation, and well-being (Bălănescu, 2019). While emotional practices have been explored in pre-service teachers, teacher educators, and experienced teachers it is rarely studied in early career teachers outside of teacher education programs. Self-study uses self as a mechanism to gain insight into ideas important in classrooms such as emotions and teaching (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). As I entered a teaching career without and outside of formal teacher education, I initiated a self-study on my first three years of classroom teaching to create windows of comprehension into the role of emotions in teaching and becoming a teacher. Each study explored different aspects of emotional teaching practices and used different methods but wove together to create an intimate, complex story on emotionally-informed teaching in my first years in the classroom. The first study served as a prelude to the dissertation by providing familiarity with myself as the storyteller and main character, an understanding of the context, and an idea of becoming my aspired teacher self. As a standalone study I used qualitative analysis and narrative inquiry to explore critical reflections on bridges between theories and my first semester of teaching experiences (Fall semester 2021). Pivotal reflections led to proposing *emotionally-informed teaching* as a way of viewing teachers' usage of emotional knowledge to support student learning and well-being. This catalyzed the second study that looked outside of myself to learn emotionally-informed approaches from veteran teachers to improve my practice.

In the second study, I conducted observations of five veteran teachers teaching to explore how emotionally-informed teaching can explain effective teaching practices. Using a blended analysis process, I uncovered six emotionally-informed approaches that these teachers employed

in their effective teaching practices: offering engaged, supportive one-on-one interactions and instructions, modeling acceptance of failure and ways to overcome challenges, acknowledging student effort and providing emotive feedback, creating safe space for students to explore emotional topics, modeling constructive emotional responses to curriculum, and providing life-relevant education. In the third study, I used reflective field notes, video recordings of my third year of teaching, and findings from Study 2 to see the ways I have achieved my aspired emotionally-informed practice. I also traced the influences on how I developed this teaching practice and which experiences with students made me *feel success* as a teacher. In the final chapter, I considered how teaching is a perpetual process of becoming (Ovens et al., 2016) and how this dissertation's findings can provide critical insights for supporting early career teachers.

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The Role of Emotions in Effective, Meaningful Practices: A Self-study on Emotionally-informed Teaching

Chapter 1

How do I become
that teacher,
the one you remember
the one who cares
who you can turn to
the one that mattered
because in their eyes
you matter?
October 9th, 2021 (RFN)

Everyone is familiar with the profession of teaching, and many of us had teachers that impacted our lives beyond our time in the classroom with them. Nevertheless, there is a gap between the general perception of what makes a “good teacher” and the actual lived experiences of becoming and being an effective teacher (Bloomfield, 2010; Britzman 2003). This dissertation represents my journey into classroom teaching and my quest to become a meaningful teacher. In 2021, I took a teaching position in a middle school without formal teacher training or experience, rather with a backpack full of theoretical understandings of education and a belief that emotions must play a critical role in teaching. While my personal goal is to become an effective, meaningful classroom teacher, this dissertation aims to understand the emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher. I believe self-study into these aspects can enhance my emerging teaching practice and provide insights for aspiring educators, veteran teachers, teacher educators, and educational researchers.

In educational research, there is a scholastic turn to use a lived experiences lens to comprehend the lives of teachers (Hargreaves & Woods, 2019; Lortie, 1975), the process of becoming a teacher (Bloomfield, 2010; Britzman, 2003; Bullock, 2011), and improve one’s own teaching practice (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Teaching is also increasingly recognized to be an

emotional practice that involves emotional knowledge, emotional labor, and occurs in emotional contexts (Hargreaves, 1998). Negative affect and tiredness are key indicators of teacher burn-out (Jones & Young, 2012), especially in the first years (Meyer, 2009). We are coming to understand teachers' emotions and emotional experiences impact student learning, influence teacher motivation and burnout (Bălănescu, 2019), and becoming a teacher is filled with emotional complexity and unique challenges (Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016). This constellation of importance of emotions to teachers' lives, practices, initiation of careers, and student outcomes and well-being underscores the critical nature of understanding these aspects more especially from a teacher perspective. Nevertheless, there is a gap in the literature on the embodied emotional experiences of teaching and the emotional dimensions of becoming a teacher (Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016).

This longitudinal self-study documents my first years of classroom teaching with a focus on capturing embodied emotional experiences of becoming a teacher and insights into the emotional aspects of teaching. It is a multi-faceted self-study that occurred over my first three years of teaching with my professional position evolving from part-time to full-time science teacher. During this time, I was rapidly growing as a teacher and researcher, and these experiences shaped the flow of research. Thus, the objectives, methods, collaborators, and data were formed and reformed to match the on-going demands of my position, research aims, and the school context. This empowered various aspects to arise including initial theoretical insights, a deep dive into emotional scaffolding, and an investigation into my current emotionally-informed practice after three years. These overlapping elements of my self-study are written into three studies and weave together a rich, robust dissertation on the embodied, emotional experiences of becoming a teacher and the importance of emotionally-informed teaching.

Arriving to the classroom

I navigate life using a compass that centers on a life-long passion for fostering the growth/well-being of children and youth and connecting them with the world around us. I use this tool and reflection to piece together opportunities that enable me to embody that mission. The centrality of schools and classrooms to children and families' lives moved me from work in informal education and explorations into mental health professions to studying education at the University of Minnesota, and eventually into the classroom. In my doctoral studies, I explored theories on the emotional dimensions of education and learned many methodologies for understanding phenomena in schools and classrooms. However, it is not a doctoral degree that provides training for becoming a classroom teacher. In 2021, when I accepted the Teaching Fellow (TF) position at Albuquerque Academy (AA), I knew this was the opportunity to bring my life-long passion and theoretical knowledge to the classroom. It also opened the door for conducting a unique self-study.

AA is a 6-12th grade, independent school, which I attended as a student for middle and high school, graduating in 2011. The school started the Teaching Fellows program in 2021 as an initiative to support a cohort of aspiring educators by giving them part-time teaching assignments at AA, a mentor teacher, requirements to observe veteran teachers, and professional development seminars. The Teaching Fellows program is not part of a licensure program, nor does it require prior teacher preparation training. As a TF, I was assigned to teach a section of 7th grade life science and had a mentor teacher, Mr. P, who had been teaching life science there for 25 years. The following year, academic year 2022-2023, I was hired as a full-time 6th and 7th grade science teacher, a position I continue to hold.

With one foot in academia working on my doctoral degree and the other in the middle school classroom, this dissertation represents a distinct moment for an act of praxis to understand the experience of becoming a teacher. The dissertation is a self-study on my experiences as a TF

and teacher with a focus on exploring the emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher. Throughout this process, I was simultaneously weaving and wearing my researcher and teacher hats. I used reflection to both guide and understand my teaching and research experiences (Schön, 1993). The result is an in-depth, honest look into the world of becoming a teacher with minimal teacher preparation.

Positioning in the Literature

Over the past 30 years, the process of becoming a teacher has been extensively studied and draws from myriad research traditions (Ovens et al., 2016). This literature explores the emotions of becoming a teacher (Anttila et al., 2016; Bullough, 2009), emergence of teacher identity (Nichols et al., 2017) and voice (Bloomfield, 2010), experiences and critiques of teacher preparation, and confictions between early career teachers' expectations and lived realities (Britzman, 2003; Lortie, 1975; Nichols et al., 2017). Common methodological approaches include using interviews, surveys, and reflective activities with pre-service teachers in teacher education programs. While it incorporates early career teachers' reflections and in some cases emotions, there are seldom studies led and written by an early teacher during their first years of teaching especially outside of teacher preparation programs. Even though these studies are largely focused on pre-service or first year teachers in a teacher preparation program, they provide valuable insights and approaches for this dissertation.

There is a growing dedicated group of university faculty and teacher educators who are looking within their own teaching practice. These scholars use self-study methodologies to improve their teaching practices, increase our understanding of practical and tacit knowledge in education (Vanassche & Berry, 2020), and advance teacher education programs (Berry, 2020). This movement led by a special interest group called Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher

Education Practices (S-STTEP), aims to study self in relationship to others to gain insight into ideas important in classrooms and other settings (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Since the early 2000s, S-STEP research has proliferated into a plethora of studies on teaching practices (e.g. Akinbode, 2013; Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2022; Paravato-Taylor & Newberry, 2018; Tuval et al., 2011; Winograd, 2003) multiple handbooks (Kitchen et al., 2020; Loughran et al., 2004) and a dedicated “Castle” conference (Garbett et al., 2020). This field is typically focused on the practice of teacher educators but is inclusive of classroom teachers. This three-year longitudinal self-study from an early teacher adds a unique perspective on understanding the emotional process of becoming a teacher. In this dissertation, I also contribute the new self-study conceptual tool of *theoretical sparks* as a method for connecting embodied teaching experiences with educational theories.

In recent decades, there is also an increasing focus on understanding emotional dimensions of teaching. Scholars see emotions as central to teaching and have investigated teachers’ relations to subject matter (Zembylas, 2007), use of emotional knowledge in instruction (Rosiek, 2003), teachers’ emotions and school culture (Zembylas, 2005); and understanding the emotional practice of teaching (Hargreaves, 2001). Nevertheless, this field is led by university scholars and typically positions teachers as participants in the exploration of emotional practices. Seldom do studies approach understanding the emotional dimensions of teaching from a teacher-led viewpoint. There are even less from an early teacher perspective and none that center on teachers entering the teaching profession without formal teacher preparation. Findings from this perspective can further the goals of these fields by capturing the real-time challenges, thoughts, and knowledge of educators developing their practice and linking them with theories on emotional dimensions.

The three studies of this dissertation are wrapped within an over-arching self-study on my first three years at AA. Each study draws from literature, theories, and approaches from the fields on becoming a teacher, self-study, and emotional dimensions of teaching. Individually, the studies contribute distinct results and implications; and collectively the dissertation provides a significant addition to understandings of the emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher.

Structure of Dissertation

Prelude Study: Discovering Theoretical Sparks

As I entered the door of my classroom teaching career, I carried a backpack of educational theories and intentions to not only become a great teacher, but also use theories to enhance my learning. This Prelude Study is both a stand-alone study and a prelude to the three-year dissertation story. As a study, it explored critical connections between theory and my first semester of teaching experiences. As a prelude, it constructs a familiarity with me as both the storyteller and main character, an understanding of the context, and an idea of the aspired destination.

Self-study methodology, which centers one own's teaching practice and experiences to discover insights into teaching and improve practices (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009), was the most appropriate and effective tool for transforming my early experiences into deep learning and educational research conclusions. Effective self-studies define clear purposes, use multiple methods, create space for improvisation, and have an area of focus (Loughran, 2007). I have always had a fascination with the emotional aspects of teaching and literature supports it as critical to being a teacher, thus I allowed this interest to guide the self-study. At the onset of my Year 1, I outlined the purposes of this self-study to be: (1) creatively documenting the process of becoming a teacher, (2) weaving together theory and lived experiences, (3) learning how

experienced teachers use emotional knowledge to connect with students and make learning meaningful. I refined purposes and constructed the first research question (RQ) and sub-question:

- RQ1: How can reflection on bridges between theories and my initial experiences as a classroom teacher orient and inform my process of becoming my aspired teacher self?
 - RQ1.1: How does this process of reflection deepen my understanding of theories on emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher?

Pursuing this research question and purposes evolved into feeling, noticing, and understanding “*theoretical sparks*”. I conceptualized *theoretical sparks* or *sparks* as: embodied moments when my key theories sparked to life during my experiences as a teacher and led to further reflection and action. This first study captured distinctive first moments of teaching by placing them in conversation with educational theories, and a particular *spark* related to emotional scaffolding (Rosiek, 2003) propelled Study 2 of this dissertation.

Study 2: Explorations into Emotionally-informed Teaching

Study 2 is the multi-year, multi-method deep dive into emotional scaffolding and what I evolved to see as emotionally-informed teaching. It is a methodological turn to learn from the practices of other teachers to enhance my understandings and practice. As an early career teacher, I wanted to cull knowledge from veteran teachers at AA; therefore, I explored their practices to understand the role of emotional knowledge in teaching through emotional scaffolding (Rosiek, 2003). By expanding on emotional scaffolding which focuses on a teacher’s usage of narratives, analogies, and metaphors as means for supporting student learning (Rosiek, 2003), I explored any teaching technique, pedagogy, or philosophy that incorporated emotional knowledge. Thus, I conceptualized and investigated *emotionally-informed teaching* as teaching pedagogy that implicitly or explicitly involved emotional knowledge to foster student learning

and well-being. Through written classroom observations of veteran teachers and reflective field notes (RFN) on interactions with colleagues, I pursued the following research question:

RQ2: In what ways can emotionally-informed teaching explain effective teaching practices?

Study 3: My Emotionally-informed Practice

The final study of this dissertation explored my evolution as a teacher by investigating my emotionally-informed teaching pedagogy after three years in the middle school classroom. I utilized reflexive practice to see if I had developed my aspired teaching practice and what influences led to its' development. I utilized my refined research skillset and knowledge on emotionally-informed teaching to investigate the techniques I currently employ in the classroom through analyzing video recordings of my teaching and RFNs. This study was guided by the research question and sub-question:

RQ3: In what ways have I achieved my aspired emotionally-informed practice and how does it inform my understanding of success as a teacher?

RQ3.1: What experiences and perspectives influence the development of my emotionally-informed practice?

In Chapter 2, I explained the over-arching methodology for this self-study, my positionality, and the study's context. Chapter 3 is the Prelude study. Chapter 4 is the second study on emotionally-informed teaching. Chapter 5 is the final study on my emotionally-informed practice. In Chapter 6, I consider remaining questions and implications from the self-study.

Chapter 2

This dissertation is structured with an overarching self-study that envelopes three studies that explore the process of becoming a teacher and emotionally-informed teaching. The dissertation occurred at AA during my first three years of teaching from 2021 – 2024. Self-study methodology centers self as a mechanism to gain insight into ideas important in classrooms and other settings (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). As such, self-study provides the ideal framework, methods, and analytical tools to transform my experiences into meaningful, substantiated understandings on the emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher. Within the methodology umbrella explored in this chapter, each study used unique methods that are discussed in detail in that chapter along with its' relevant literature.

Methodology

Self-study

Self-study is a tradition of research that began cementing itself a place in educational research in the 1990s (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). In 1993, a Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association was formed that concentrated on Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices, S-STTEP. Subsequently, the S-STTEP movement has garnered international involvement and participation (Berry, 2020). S-STTEP and other self-study scholars aim to improve their own teaching practices (e.g. Akinbode, 2013; Kuzmic, 2014; Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2022; Paravato-Taylor & Newberry, 2018; Tuval et al., 2011; Winograd, 2003), increase our understanding of practical and tacit knowledge in education, and advance teacher education programs (Bullock & Sator, 2018; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009).

Self-study defines the focus of the study, not the way it is carried out (Loughran, 2004). The context drives the research design and methods within the self-study focus and

methodological skeleton. This adaptability empowers self-studies to be diverse in focus, results, methods, and intimately entangled with the contexts that they occur in. The field of self-study outlines core aspects to quality self-studies to ensure a level of consistency and legitimacy to the research: *self-initiated and self-focused; improvement oriented; interactive; and makes use of multiple qualitative methods* (LaBoskey, 2004). These guidelines provided structure for the research design, methods, and analysis of my dissertation.

Self-initiated and Self-focused.

In the field of educational research, self-study is initiated and focused on the researchers as teachers and teacher educators (LaBoskey, 2004). It considers the personal history of the researcher in understanding their experiences (Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020). It creates a meta-experience where you are both the researcher and key participant of the study or as LaBoskey (2004) puts it: “Self-study researchers are both actors and judges” (p. 820). I initiated this self-study as an effort to document my journey into becoming a meaningful classroom teacher. I focused on how my experiences in the middle school classroom and community could be understood through theories on becoming a teacher and the emotional dimensions of teaching.

Improvement oriented.

Self-study is not only a research approach but a process of improving and transforming practice. It is popular among teacher educators who want to develop as early-career teacher educators (Berry, 2007; Petrarca & Bullock, 2014), interrogate their own teaching to see alignment/misalignment of ideals and practices (Ramirez & Allison, 2022), and refine their practices as teacher educators (Loughran & Russell, 2004). These educational scholars use S-SSTEP as “a way for teacher educators to support their own professional learning and development through making explicit and empirically validating their knowledge of practice” (Vanassche & Berry, 2020, p. 191). While the self-study field is dominated by a focus on

improving the practice of teacher educators (e.g. Bair et al., 2010; Fletcher & Bullock, 2015; Hordvik et al., 2021), there are teachers conducting self-studies including to inform their teaching and transform classroom experiences (e.g. Akinbode, 2013; Paravato-Taylor & Newberry, 2018; Paravato-Taylor et al., 2020).

In this self-study, I aimed to form and transform my emerging practice through studying and reflecting upon my first three years of teaching experiences. My focus was to use theories on the emotional dimensions of teaching (e.g. Hargreaves, 1998; hooks, 1994; Rosiek, 2003) and becoming a teacher (e.g. Lortie, 1975; Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016) to develop my aspired teaching practice. Reflection and analysis between these theories and my experiences led me to my understanding of teacher effectiveness and meaningfulness, and how I can actualize them in my practice.

Interactive and Collaborative.

Self-study scholars interchangeably use interactive and collaborative when discussing and conducting research. While the title self-study may seem to indicate an exclusive focus on self, it is widely understood that self-studies need to include interactive aspects, which includes looking into texts, experiences, discourses, people, and interactions outside of the self (Fletcher, 2020). Interactivity in self-study is imperative for challenging one's assumptions, bias, and interpretations (LaBoskey, 2004; Loughran, 2004; Louie et. al. 2003). Interactivity can take many forms and can occur during the implementation, data collection, analysis, and dissemination phases. It pushes the researcher to pursue their research agenda through understanding interactions with students, colleagues, and others. This self-study is interactive by looking outside of myself to learn from my teaching community. The data collection process continually centered on interactivity through documenting interactions with colleagues in field notes and conducting written classroom observations of veteran teachers.

A common collaborative practice is to have a dedicated critical friend, which is a colleague who continually reviews and critiques your study as well as provide unique insights (LaBoskey, 2004). The researcher may use colleagues in their community of practice, or even their own student (Akinbode, 2013) as collaborative partners. Some studies use cohorts or learning communities as collaborative spaces, which can foster a culture of reflectiveness (Schoenfeld, 1999) and deeper levels of critique. Collaboration in self-study can also enhance the outcomes, provide social support, and increase validity of results (Louie et al. 2003).

This self-study collaborative by inviting others to discuss my research design, results, and core concepts. Collaboration during my dissertation evolved through the different stages of the longitudinal self-study. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the various areas of collaboration throughout my three-year self-study. This self-study began as part of a doctoral course about teaching and school contexts. During that Fall 2021 semester, I was in regular conversation with the professor and peer student to discuss my study design, methods, initial data and reflections. This process of collaboration with the professor and peer student shaped the prelude study and oriented the continued self-study.

Table 2.1

Collaboration across the longitudinal self-study

Study	Collaborator(s)	Purpose
Prelude Study	Professor and peer student in doctoral class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Critique in self-study initiation, purposes, design, and initial results
Whole self-study	Three TF Cohorts (21-22, 22-23, 23-24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feedback for usefulness on self-study's research design and results
	Dissertation advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Critique of research design, implementation, data collection, theoretical approach, analysis, and results

I collaborated with three separate cohorts of Teaching Fellows (TF). TFs are early career teachers who are part of AA's Teaching Fellows program, which gives them a part-time teaching position and a mentor teacher. The TF cohorts were composed of 3-5 TFs who were early career teachers and taught in various disciplines. During the three academic years of this self-study, I met with that year's cohort to share and discuss my self-study research. I explained the orientation and goals of the self-study as well as initial insights from the data I was collecting. These discussions provided a space to process, reflect, and improve the self-study. My dissertation advisor met with me regularly over zoom throughout the study period to design and redesign the self-study. Our conversations were both constructive to my dissertation's structure and execution as well as formative for myself as a teacher and researcher.

Makes use of multiple qualitative methods.

Throughout the field of self-study there is an emphasis on incorporating multiple data collection and analytical methods to provide "opportunities to gain different, and thus more comprehensive, perspectives on the educational processes under investigation" (Loughran, 2007, p. 860). Self-studies employ a diverse array of methods including journaling, interviews, correspondences, videotaping, focus groups, and document analysis (Louie et. al., 2003). The selection of methods should be guided by the context and purposes of the self-study. In this dissertation, I employed the qualitative methods of written reflective field notes (RFN), written classroom observations of other teachers (COs), and video recordings of my own teaching (VOs).

Trustworthiness.

The self-study methodology has challenges to ensure that the results are reliable, valid, and has application outside of the self (Berry, 2020). Within self-study, validity of results is approached through trustworthiness (Mishler, 1990). Validation is redefined "as the social construction of knowledge. With this reformulation, the key issue becomes whether the relevant

community of scientists [teachers and teacher educators] evaluates reported findings as sufficiently trustworthy to rely on them for their own work" (Mishler, 1990, p. 419).

Trustworthiness keeps self-studies focused on creating insights that are significant to our teaching and learning communities. My dissertation design allowed for an on-going trustworthiness process through the layered collaborative structure. This constructed opportunities to share and discuss the research goals, data collection process, and initial results with colleagues in both academia and in the AA school community.

Context and Positionality

This three-year longitudinal self-study took place at AA during the academic years of 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024. AA is a 6-12th grade independent school in Albuquerque, New Mexico. As of 2023, there are 1,169 students in grades 6-12 enrolled at AA with 53% of students of color, and an average class size of 12 students. It is a merit-based admission with a tuition of \$25,390 and a quarter of the students are provided partial to full financial aid. The context of AA is central in both conducting the study and interpreting the results. As an independent school, there are affordances and limitations that are not present in public school settings.

I attended AA as a student from 6th through 12th grade, graduating in 2011. My extensive training in educational theories and research methodologies coupled with my familiarity with AA as a student affords me a unique opportunity to conduct a self-study. As a White, cis-gender, English-speaking male, I have many privileges and limitations as a teacher and researcher. This research context and my positionality are important in interpreting my data and considering my results. Regardless, I aim to provide insights for teachers, aspiring teachers, and educational researchers interested in the lived experiences of becoming a teacher and emotionally-informed teaching.

In 2021, I decided to move back to my home state of New Mexico to pursue an opportunity to teach. I accepted the one-year position of TF at AA. The Teaching Fellows is a cohort-based program at AA that intends to support early career educators by providing them a fellowship that includes: (1) teaching one section at AA (2) working with a mentor teacher (3) observing veteran teachers (4) engaging in professional development (5) participating in the school community including experiential education programs. I participated in the first year of the Teaching Fellows program and was placed to teach a section of 7th grade science with a 7th grade teacher mentor, Mr. P.

As a TF, I adapted Mr. P's curriculum that focuses on (1) learning animals and plants through scientific taxonomy and illustration, (2) evolution and adaptation, and (3) current environmental issues. This course had an embedded philosophy of facilitating student discovery and fascination of other living organisms while providing space for their creative exploration of life on earth. Meanwhile, I stayed enrolled to finish my doctoral coursework in science education at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. The context of AA, structure of the Teaching Fellows program, and my participation in graduate studies constructed a unique moment to initiate a self-study.

After my year as a TF, I applied to be a full-time science teacher at AA and was offered the middle school science teacher position. For AY 22-23 and AY 23-24, I taught two sections of 6th grade Earth Science and two sections of 7th grade Life Science. My class sizes varied from 16-18 students, and I advised a group of ten 7th grade students, as well as leading a student club centered around fungi. This dissertation is a continuation of the self-study started during my TF year through the Prelude Study and occurred exclusively at AA.

Research Design

This dissertation is a three-year longitudinal self-study centered on my experiences at AA between the beginning of Fall semester 2021 and Spring semester 2024. The dissertation is broken into three individual studies that all comprise the overall self-study. Table 2.2 displays the timeline of each study and when the data was collected. The Prelude Study occurred during the first semester as a TF and was primarily focused on my initial reflections on the bridges between theory and practice. Study 2 was active throughout the entire three-year project and was principally focused on identifying emotionally-informed teaching approaches. The third and final study occurred during the 2024 Spring semester and aimed to reflect upon my journey of becoming a teacher and the emotionally-informed practices I employ after three years in the classroom.

Table 2.2

Three-year Longitudinal Research Timeline

<u>Study:</u>	<u>Data:</u>	<u>Date:</u>	<u>Academic Year:</u>
Prelude Study	COs, RFNs	Fall 21	Year 1:
Study 2	COs, RFNs	Fall 21 – Spring 22	2021 - 2022
	COs, RFNs	Fall 22 – Spring 23	Year 2: 2022-2023
	COs, RFNs	Fall 23 – Spring 24	Year 3: 2023-2024
Study 3	VOs, RFNs	Fall 23 – Spring 24	

The overarching aim of the dissertation is to construct a narrative of an early teacher and researcher who is driven to become a meaningful teacher and understand emotional dimensions of teaching. Each study has unique research question(s) that guide the study and create diverse insights into the emotional process of becoming a teacher and emotionally-informed teaching.

Table 2.3 links together each study's research question(s) with the research activities, data, and analysis approach.

Table 2.3

Research Methods Table

<u>Study Part:</u>	<u>Research Questions</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Data</u>	<u>Analysis</u>
Prelude Study: Theoretical sparks	<p>RQ1: How can reflection on bridges between theories and initial experiences as a classroom teacher orient and inform my process of becoming my aspired teacher self?</p> <p>RQ1.1: How does this process of reflection deepen my understanding of theories on emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - writing reflective field notes of interactions with colleagues and classroom experiences, and reflections on teaching - documenting classroom observations of other teachers 	Fall 2021: COs & RFNs	Inductive analysis using the concept of <i>Theoretical Sparks</i> to connect experiences to theories on the emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher
Study 2: Emotionally-informed teaching	RQ2: In what ways can emotionally-informed teaching explain effective teaching practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - writing reflective field notes of interactions with colleagues and classroom experiences, and reflections on teaching - documenting classroom observations of other teachers 	COs & RFNs	Blended thematic analysis using the “emotive tools” from Lönngren et. al. (2021a) analyze the COs and RFNs and identify emotionally-informed techniques and approaches
Study 3: My emotionally-informed practice	<p>RQ3: In what ways have I achieved my aspired emotionally-informed practice and how does it inform my understanding of success as a teacher?</p> <p>RQ3.1: What experiences and perspectives influence the development of my emotionally-informed practice?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recording my teaching of 7th grade classes - writing reflective field notes of interactions with colleagues and classroom experiences, and reflections on teaching 	VOs & RFNs	Blended thematic analysis of VOs and RFNs using the emotionally-informed approaches identified in Study 2

In the Prelude Study, I used a narrative format to explore critical *sparks* between theories of the emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher and my initial experiences. I showed how I utilized reflection on theory-practice to orient and inform my teacher development and self-study research. This investigation crafted an initial understanding of how I view teacher effectiveness and meaningfulness, and my aspired teacher self. Study 2 is a methodological turn to identify masterful uses of emotional knowledge in AA teachers. By focusing on teachers' actions in the classroom, I described emotionally-informed techniques and approaches that create effective practices. In the third and final study I analyzed my teaching practice to see if I employed emotionally-informed techniques and if I felt successful in my teaching. I conducted video recordings of my classroom teaching and complemented the analysis with reflective field notes. This study applied learnings, perspectives, and methods from the Prelude Study and Study 2.

Chapter 3: Prelude Study

Every story needs a beginning, an understanding of the storyteller, an orientation to the context, and an aspired destination. The start of the journey of becoming an educator is difficult to pinpoint. Was it when I took my first doctoral course in education? Or when I assisted in childcare for 5-year-olds when I was in high school? Or when I interacted with my first classroom teacher as a preschooler? Or when I accepted the Teaching Fellows position at AA in 2021? Nevertheless, we do have a sense of the sought destination: becoming my aspired teacher self. But what is the teaching practice of my aspired teacher self and how can I develop it? This is the story of my journey of becoming a classroom teacher with the plot focused on the emotional dimensions of being and becoming a teacher. In this prelude study, I used analytical reflection to look back in time to grasp an idea of where this story of becoming my aspired teacher is headed.

This chapter serves as the prelude study to the larger three-year self-study that is a personal journey to become a meaningful, effective middle school science teacher and an academic pursuit to discover insights into the emotional aspects of teaching. At the heart of this self-study is the act of reflection as a practitioner. Reflection is the process of using lived experiences to learn and transform into your aspired practitioner (Johns, 2009). In this prelude study, I center reflections from my first semester of classroom teaching in the Fall of 2021 to both analyze how early teaching experiences can be understood through theories on emotional dimensions of teaching and set the stage for the longer tale of my becoming a teacher. I also look back at moments when I was a student to understand my origins and perceptions on teaching. As a standalone study, I aim to answer the first research question (RQ) and sub-question of this dissertation:

- RQ1: How can reflection on bridges between theories and my initial experiences as a classroom teacher orient and inform my process of becoming my aspired teacher self?

- RQ1.1: How does this process of reflection deepen my understanding of theories on emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher?

To pursue this research question and sub-question, I documented my first semester of middle school teaching through writing reflective field notes and observing veteran teachers. In my early interactions, I was amazed to see the educational theories I studied the years prior come alive in the classroom. This both personally validated the literature and demonstrated that my experiences could be deeply understood through theories and perhaps foster my development as a teacher.

From these realizations and reflections, I refined my focus to construct a self-study that linked impactful moments as a teacher with educational theories on the emotional dimensions of teaching. I conceptualize *theoretical sparks (sparks)* as analytical nodes that identify moments that sparked connection and reflection between my first experiences as a classroom teacher and theories on emotions in teaching. Writing and reading this prelude study is an act of time-traveling back into my first days at AA as a TF, because we need to see what I felt as important *sparks* then. In a way, I am objectifying my early teacher self to understand how I was making sense of the occupation of teaching through theory.

Since I wrote this dissertation at the conclusion of the third year, I embedded my understanding of the significance of each moment in the arc of my becoming a teacher through constructing and discussing a narrative composed of four vignettes. The following act of praxis highlights several critical moments of connection and reflection between theory and practice that sparked ripple effects in my understanding of the role of emotions in teaching and shaped my journey of becoming my aspired teacher. It also opened a critical dialogue on the definitions of teacher meaningfulness and effectiveness.

Theoretical Framework

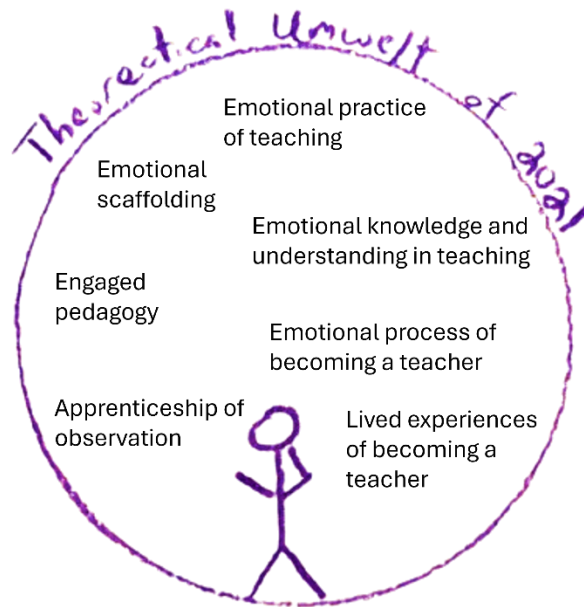
In this Prelude Study, I constructed a view into my mindset in the first days of middle school teaching. To achieve this, there is a biological concept called *Umwelt* that was adapted to this study. Jakob Von Ueküll (1936) coined *Umwelt* to explain the perceptual world that envelopes each animal. It is more than the animal's environment, an *Umwelt* is “specifically the part of the surroundings that an animal can sense and experience” (Yong, 2022, p. 7). Each animal has a unique *umwelt* even if it shares a physical environment with other species. For example, the *Umwelt* of a mosquito that involves sensing CO₂ gas trails and seeing infrared radiation, is a completely foreign way of existing to us who may be trying to visually find and kill the mosquito.

For this study, I constructed the idea of *theoretical Umwelt* to describe how a person's ability to comprehend the world around them through theory is created and limited by the theoretical frameworks they are aware of, as one cannot interpret the world around them through theories unknown to them. *Theoretical Umwelt* provides the ideal concept for glimpsing back to those first moments in the classroom in 2021. I walked at AA in a theoretical bubble developed over years of doctoral studies and life experiences. Only theories and concepts that existed within my *theoretical Umwelt* were able to be sparked during my experiences.

Figure 3.1 visually depicts the key theories on the emotions of teaching and becoming a teacher within my *theoretical Umwelt of 2021* that were sparked during my first classroom experiences. This figure provides a visual, imaginative aid to the vignettes to show how the moments connected with these theories.

Figure 3.1

My Theoretical Umwelt of 2021



Apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994), emotional scaffolding (Rosiek, 2003), emotional practice of teaching (Hargreaves, 1998), emotional knowledge and understanding in teaching (Zembylas, 2007), emotional process of becoming a teacher (Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016), and lived experiences of becoming a teacher (Britzman, 2003) are the key studies that comprise this *theoretical umwelt*. While they are not the only studies to propert and explore these theories, they are the ones that were particularly influential on my researcher and teacher self in 2021. They are discussed in more detail in the literature review and in dialogue with my data in the findings.

Literature Review

The studies of my *theoretical umwelt* of 2021 stem from the fields of emotional dimensions of teaching and the sociology of teachers and becoming a teacher. An overview of these fields provides the foundation for this study and the overarching self-study dissertation. The proceeding introductions on emotional knowledge in teaching, emotional scaffolding, emotional

labor, engaged pedagogy, apprenticeship of observation, lived experiences of becoming a teacher, and emotional process of becoming a teacher in the section allow further understandings of them to unfold in the vignette discussions.

Emotional dimensions of teaching

Emotions are an inherent part of educational discourse and practices (Boler, 1999). Emotions in education have been studied within various fields (Kuby, 2016), and this study positions itself within sociological perspectives that acknowledges the social and relational aspects of emotions (Denzin, 1984). While there are many definitions of emotions in educational settings, they can be overly simplified into the dichotomy of emotions as self-inherent and emotions as sociocultural products (Kuby, 2016). Kuby (2016, p.127) states that a “psychological stance that defines emotion as something that a person feels inside; other perspectives include emotions as social constructions, as discourses of social practices, and as skills to be learned in a developmental order”. While seemingly contradictory, these differing perspectives on emotions provide a broad understanding of emotions as a personal state/experience, a social act expressed in discourse, and developmental skills.

Denzin’s (1984) foundational text, *On Emotional Understanding*, outlined an understanding of emotions that underlines the social and relational aspects of emotions, which greatly influences how sociological studies approach emotions in education. Denzin (1984) sees emotions as “temporally embodied, situated self-feelings that arise from emotional and cognitive social acts that people direct to self or have directed toward them by others” (p. 49). This stance places personal self-feelings in the social contexts in which they arise. He sees emotions as felt relationally and interpreted through relational terms (Denzin, 1984).

In this dissertation, I do not fall clearly to one camp in a definition of emotions but rather accept a multifaceted definition: *Emotions are reflective self-feelings and situated social acts*

expressed through embodied discourse. I explore how emotions are personal feelings felt in moments and reflected in the person's knowledge and experiences. The reflective aspect highlights how feelings are understood through who we are and how we make sense of the world. This definition of emotions enables me to look inward at my emotional experiences of becoming a teacher and outward into how emotions are embedded in social interactions. Theories on emotional understanding and knowledge expand the viewpoint on how we comprehend emotions in social contexts, such as schools and classrooms.

Teaching involves emotional understanding and emotional knowledge (Zembylas, 2007). Emotional understanding is "an intersubjective process requiring that one person enter into the field of experience of another and experience for herself the same or similar experiences experienced by another" (Denzin, 1984, p.137). Emotional understanding is a socially embedded skill of taking consideration of another's emotional experiences. Zembylas (2007) furthers this skill aspect of emotional understanding by conceptualizing emotional knowledge in teaching as "a teacher's knowledge about/from his or her emotional experiences with respect to one's self, others (e.g. students, colleagues), and the wider social and political context in which teaching and learning takes place" (p.356). Emotional knowledge is constructed from experiences and emotional understandings and takes context into consideration. Scholars have studied several ways emotional knowledge and emotional exchanges impact teaching and learning (e.g. Hargreaves, 2001; Harvey et al., 2012; McCaughtry, 2004; Rosiek, 2003; Zembylas, 2007).

In this dissertation, one conceptual tool for studying the role of emotional knowledge, emotional scaffolding, was particularly influential. Emotional scaffolding was conceptualized by Rosiek (2003) through a meta-study on the role of emotional knowledge in teachers pedagogical content knowledge. He defined it as a "teachers' pedagogical use of analogies, metaphors, and narratives to influence students' emotional response to specific aspects of the subject matter in a

way that promotes student learning” (Rosiek, 2003, p. 402). Emotional scaffolding has been applied to several contexts to understanding teacher practices, such as early childhood education (Park, 2014; Park, 2015), middle school classrooms (Meyer & Turner, 2007), engineering and sustainability education (Lönngren et al., 2021b, Lönngren et al., 2021c), and English language classes in Iran (Shahidzade et al., 2022).

Generally, emotional scaffolding is seen as teaching tools and strategies that intend to shape the students’ emotional experiences to foster student learning. Typically, emotional scaffolding is centered on students’ learning of content knowledge and mastery (Meyer & Turner, 2007). However, impacts from emotional scaffolding are broad and include building positive student-teacher relationships (Meyer & Turner, 2007), reducing learning gaps in early childhood settings, (Park, 2014) and supporting students in engaging in emotionally challenging topics (Lönngren et al., 2021b). Nevertheless, these studies present case studies; therefore, do not claim generalizability of findings. Emotional scaffolding presents a critical lens for my understanding of how teachers use emotional knowledge in their practices.

Additional, foundational work is provided by Hargreaves (1998). He outlined key aspects to roles of emotions in teaching: (1) teaching and learning involves emotional understanding, (2) teaching is an emotional practice, (3) teaching is a form of emotional labor, and (4) teacher’s emotions are inseparable from their moral purposes and their ability to achieve those purposes. Denzin (1984) argues that teaching is an emotional practice that is embedded in the learning context to underscore emotions and emotional knowledge’s centrality in teaching. Teaching as an emotional practice affects both our internal emotional experiences and states, and our external emotions within social interactions and contexts (Denzin, 1984). Hargreaves (1998) further specifies: “as an emotional practice, teaching activates, colors, and expresses teacher’s own feelings... [and] affects the feelings and actions of others whom teachers work and form

relationships” (p. 838). Meyer (2007) adds that teachers are always engaged in emotional processes to “help them understand themselves, their relationships with others, and guide these interactions” (p.75). The act of teaching does not only involve teachers using emotional knowledge but also inherently expectedly or unexpectedly shapes emotional experiences, understandings of self, and relationships with others.

Emotional labor contributes a perspective of how the contexts and institutions of schooling impact the emotional elements of teaching. Emotional labor is the labor for inducing or controlling feelings to produce the desired emotional expression for the purposes of an organization (Hochschild, 1983). For teachers, emotional labor is “the effort, planning, and control teachers [need] to express “appropriate” emotions (Schutz & Lee, 2014, p. 169)”. Appropriate emotions for teachers are established and exercised by the school culture, administrators, and peers. Emotional labor for teachers can be a negative process and is attributed to teacher burnout and leaving of the profession (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009). Nevertheless, Hargreaves (1998) writes, “emotional labor is an important part of teaching, and in many ways, a positive one (p. 840)”. He points to the fact that teachers see teaching as labor of love, and they experience authentic positive emotions even if they are having to conform their emotional expressions (Hargreaves, 1998).

Another key author for my view on the emotional dimensions of teaching is hooks (1994). Through a reflective study, hooks (1994) drew inspiration from the Buddhist thinker, Thich Nhat Hanh, who viewed teachers as healers. This is not a healer in the medical or psychiatric sense, but rather a view that sees students as whole human beings “striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world” (hooks, 1994, p. 15). hooks (1994) uses this perspective to construct “engaged pedagogy”, which places well-being into the teaching practice. It also forces a process of self-actualization for the teacher because the teacher

must promote their own well-being to teach in an empowering way for students (hooks, 1994). Engaged pedagogy also involves empowerment and liberation, and critical thinking for students (hooks, 1994). Engaged pedagogy provides an important lens for this self-study since I am striving to become a teacher that supports student well-being.

Acknowledgement of Care Theory

While this dissertation centered on the perspective of the emotional dimensions and emotional practice of teaching, literature on care theory offers an important, overlapping field of study. Care theory or care ethics is a theoretical and research tradition that focuses on the relational and moral core of human relationships (Trout, 2012). It views life itself as inherently relational (Noddings, 2012). In care theory, caring is the practice of relating, with one acting as the carer and another acting as the cared for, which empowers a more moral, ethical, and feminist structure for society (Andre, 1986). Noddings wrote a foundational text, *Caring* in 1984, which argues for caring relationships to be centered in teaching and school structures (Andre, 1986). While I do not apply this perspective in this dissertation, it holds supportive, complementary beliefs to the emotional practice of teaching, and could be explored in further research.

Sociology of Teachers and Becoming a Teacher

A complementary and overlapping field of study looks at the lived experiences of being and becoming a teacher. Lortie (1975)'s seminal book, *Schoolteacher*, crafted a sociological access point to teacher's lives that demonstrated the complex aspects of their lives and practices. Among other findings, he coined apprenticeship of observation to describe how teachers have internalized images constructed from their experiences as students of what a teacher, especially a "good teacher" is (Lortie, 1975). Contemporaries to Lortie point out that while student experiences with teachers are important, early childhood fantasies and inherent depositions are key elements in the process of becoming a teacher too (Fuller and Brown, 1975).

Lortie (1975) also discovered important aspects of how teachers view job fulfillment. Teachers place the highest value on rewards from their profession that are less tangible than salary or job security, which Lortie (1975) calls “psychic rewards”. These psychic rewards include “reaching students”, which has both learning and relational outcomes with students (Lortie, 1975). Caring relationships in teaching are also a source of professional satisfaction for teachers (Nias, 1989 as cited by Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). This adds another theoretical perspective that aids this dissertation on how to consider my satisfaction and sense of success as a teacher.

Lortie’s (1975) work has influenced innumerable studies on teachers and becoming a teacher. This includes researching the development of teacher identity and voice (Britzman, 2003; Nichols et al., 2017), factors that influence teachers’ decisions to enter, remain, or leave the profession (Rinke, 2008), and the lived experiences of teachers and becoming a teacher (Britzman, 2003; Bullock, 2011; Ovens et al., 2016; Ross, 1988;). Britzman (2003) provides a powerful ethnographic study on the lived experiences of learning to teach. She describes how the process of learning to teach is a struggle between personal and professional views of self (Britzman, 2003). A teacher must navigate existential crises to discover their voice and identity while navigating cultural myths about teaching (Britzman, 2003). Her writing underlines the tension between the early career teacher’ self and their striving to become their aspired teacher self.

The process of becoming a teacher is complex and demanding (Fuller & Brown, 1975). Increasingly, the emotional dimension of becoming a teacher is also being recognized (Bullough, 2009; Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016; Wu et al., 2021). A piece of what makes becoming a teacher an emotional process arises from the fact that becoming a teacher requires learning technical skills and is personal, who one is matters in teaching and becoming a teacher (Nias,

1989). The connections and tensions between learning technique and development/sense of self is emotionally-laden (Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016). Emotional experiences for teachers are also highly influential on their identities and self-esteem (Nichols et al., 2017). For teachers, pleasant emotional experiences confirmed identities, while “unpleasant emotional experiences caused them [teachers] to confront and/or adjust emergent identities” (Nichols et al., 2017, p. 406).

The emotional dimension of becoming a teacher is also intertwined with the moral, political, and structural aspects of teaching and schools (Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016). Overall, I agree with Kelchtermans and Deketelaere (2016) that at the core of the emotional process of becoming a teacher is the relational nature of teaching. Teaching is composed of relationships with peers, students, administrators, parents, as well as fostering student relationships with each other and non-social relations with curriculum. Becoming a teacher mandate learning how to develop, navigate, and maintain these relational aspects, which requires emotional work and labor. Teachers leave the profession at a disproportionately high rate in their first few years, which may be caused by the intensity of emotions and emotional labor in becoming a teacher (Nichols et al., 2017).

Empirical studies show that student teachers experience a wide range of emotions in their first year (Anttila et al., 2016), feel distress and emotional challenges in personally adjusting to teaching (Caires et al., 2009), but also may also discover positive emotional perceptions of self (Caires et al., 2012). These emotional elements are important to understand for the development and retention of teachers (Nichols et al., 2017). Additionally, teacher emotions like burnout affect student’s performance, motivation, and learning outcomes (Bălănescu, 2019). Attending to the emotional elements of teaching and becoming a teacher is critical for the teachers and students.

In this self-study dissertation, I observed and experienced my first years of becoming a teacher. These theories on the sociological and emotional dimensions of becoming a teacher provided reflective guideposts for understanding this process. Nevertheless, most of these studies are conducted on pre-service teachers (Anttila et al., 2016; Bullough, 2009; Caires et al., 2009; Caires et al., 2012; Nichols et al, 2017); therefore, my lack of formal training and not being in a preparation program may have contributed additional elements to my emotional process of becoming a teacher.

Methods

In the Fall of 2021, I initiated a self-study to use my initial classroom teaching experiences to better understand the emotional dimensions of teaching and transform my emerging practice. Self-study as a methodology¹ empowers me to center self to comprehend aspects of being and becoming a teacher (LaBoskey, 2004). I wrote reflective field notes including interactions with teachers and students and reflections on my teaching. I also wrote observations of veteran teachers teaching. I aimed to capture moments that related to the emotional dimensions of being and becoming a teacher. It was the bridges between these first experiences and theories that I wanted to document so I could reflect upon and analyze them to create insights into my emotional process of becoming a teacher and how the theories are understood through my lived perspectives.

This prelude study is an act of reflection and marks my journey towards developing reflective practice. Johns (2009) describes the importance of reflection for practitioners:

Reflection is learning through our everyday experiences towards realizing one's vision and desirable practice as a lived reality. It is a critical and reflexive process of self-

¹ For more on the methodology and methods of this dissertation please see Chapter 2.

inquiry and transformation of *being and becoming the practitioner you desire to be* (p. 4, italics added by author).

I aimed to use the power of reflection to orient myself to the practitioner I desired and aspired to be. As I began at AA in 2021, I immediately started a process of reflecting as a new teacher and researcher. Reflection-in-practice for teachers is difficult and some argue impossible due to the demands of teaching, and what teachers perform is perhaps closer to intuition in practice (Johansson & Kroksmark, 2004 as cited by Akinbode, 2013). In 2021, my reflective practice existed somewhere in between reflection-in-practice and intuition. I was actively connecting theories and my lived experiences; however, I processed, contextualized, and followed these reflections through a felt intuitive sense. In this Prelude Study, I shared my reflective points from 2021 through *sparks* and then add another reflective layer by transforming the sparked reflections into research vignettes that incorporate an understanding of the proceeding self-study.

I conceptualized *theoretical sparks* as an analytical tool for investigating my research question and purposes. *Sparks* are embodied, temporal nodes that are identified by how I *felt* a theory spark to life in a moment at school and how that moment led to deeper reflection and action in the journey that proceeded. While I experienced a multitude of *sparks* ranging from reflections on science teaching, connections with nature, race and private schooling, I focused on *sparks* that connected with theories in my *theoretical umwelt* on emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher. In the analysis process, I reviewed all the data between August–January 2021 including reflective field notes and classroom observations. I marked moments that were *sparks* connected to my *theoretical umwelt*. After I culled all the *sparks* related to the research question from the data, I employed Connelly and Clandinin (1990 as cited by Kim, 2015)'s analytical tools of broadening, borrowing, and storying and restorying to decipher what *sparks* to build a research narrative from.

In Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) approach broadening relates to connecting a moment to the larger context of the situation, cultural aspects, and storyline of the participant, to garner a greater picture of the participant (Kim, 2016). It involves reviewing other data such as field notes and literature alongside the moment (Kim, 2016). Burrowing occurs after broadening and is the process of focusing into specifics in the data to capture details such as how participants experienced the moment. The final step is finding ways to story and restory the moments to bring the participant's lived experience to the foreground (Kim, 2016). Through this process, I selected four *sparks* that were foundational to three major themes from this prelude study. Using the *sparks* I crafted a four-vignette narrative that highlights: (1) an understanding of my aspired teaching practice (2) part of the origins of this aspired view of teaching, and (3) reflections on how the school context that influence my development as a teacher.

Findings: Theoretical spark narrative

As a prelude, these vignettes and discussion establish a sense of the context for the story, a familiarity with me as both the main character and storyteller, and the direction of the rest of the story in the proceeding chapters. It also creates a rich dialogue between lived experiences and theories on emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher. In Vignette 1, I dove into a moment between me, a veteran teacher, and the Middle School counselor. In Vignette 2, I traveled back in time to a transformative moment with an influential teacher in my undergraduate studies. In Vignette 3, I showed my first reflections on my teacher self and personal connection with AA as a school. In Vignette 4, I captured how a masterful teacher at AA used emotional knowledge in his practice.

Vignette 1

November 11th, 2021

It was a crisp Fall morning in Albuquerque.
William walks towards his advisor's office. The rumination in his mind makes walking a secondary activity. The corner of the wall comes out of nowhere. "*Jesus. Okay focus*"
He enters his advisor's office. His gut forced him to this moment.

He shares, "I want to feel my feelings"

~~

After a discussion with his advisee William, Mr. T walks over to lunch.

~~

I wipe the leaves off the bench and place my lunch next to Laura's.

Mr. T, a veteran art teacher, walks straight to our table led by a need to talk to Laura, the middle school counselor.

Mr. T brings up his advisee who is struggling with understanding his emotions. Mr. T says, he decided he wants to "feel his feelings". He looks to Laura for guidance.

Laura explains, "Well, he could talk to upper school counselor, but we're all kind of in crisis mode right now. Although, kids who want to work on their emotional state are the most fun to work with."

I chime in, "But there is stuff you can do from a mentorship role. Ask him to journal daily about what feelings he does have. Help him look for other support. General coping skills."

Mr. T listens and nods, "good ideas."

"ya, he is ahead of the curve" Laura jokingly asks me, "you want my job?"

I brush it off with a laugh. "Well, I've always thought about being either a therapist or teacher. I've landed on teaching to see how I can be a meaningful support for a broad range of students. I believe teaching can be healing."

"My belief is that emotions play a key role in teaching. I am actually researching that for my dissertation. I want to see how emotional knowledge is central to meaningful teachers."

Laura, "Oh, interesting. I was always told that [the skills to being a meaningful teacher] is something you are born with or not. Those who aren't, don't get those juicy moments of connection with students. They are the moments that keep teachers from burning out. That only happens with teachers who build the relationships. It is what makes a great teacher."

Laura continues, "Sometimes it is obvious how a teacher connects with students. Like the big personalities of Mr. P and Ms. V. They are energetic and entertaining and that lands for the kids. But what about the others like Mr. B and Mr. E who clearly make an impact but don't have that approach?"

We continue our conversation on how to connect on an appropriate, meaningful emotional level to students isn't frequently taught to early teachers. That narrative of "you have it or you don't" seems to remain prevalent in our understanding of teaching.

And yet, Laura and I believe that at least part of it can be taught to new teachers.

This vignette is written from a reflective field note about a moment between the school counselor, a veteran art teacher, and I that proved to be a theoretical firework with several critical *sparks*. It not only provided connections to literature on engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994), emotional practice of teaching (Hargreaves, 1998), and apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) but also brought up several interesting insights and questions into my view of teaching.

It is important to consider the various ways I am discussing the idea of meaningful in this vignette. Mr. T is bringing up a dilemma teachers face: what is their role in the emotional and social development of students? bell hooks wrote "I do not think they want therapy from me. They do want an education that is healing to the uninformed, unknowing spirit. They do want knowledge that is meaningful. (hooks, 1994, p. 19)". For the student, Matthew, he was seeking guidance on how to feel feelings; he needed *meaningful knowledge*. In this scene, Mr. T's action of going to the counselor was an action of finding additional support for his student. While that was an appropriate action for Mr. T to take, especially if Matthew opened up on some life challenges, but did he share "*meaningful knowledge*"? My response of telling him to have the student try journaling and coping skills may be closer to *meaningful support*.

When Laura asks if I want her job [school counselor], my response "I've landed on teaching to see how I can be a meaningful support for a broad range of students. I believe teaching can be healing" (11/2021, RFN) nearly echoes the words from Thich Nhat Hanh on teachers being healers (hooks, 1994). My statement indicates that I believe that if the mentor, Mr. T, provides meaningful support (guiding his student to additional support and providing useful,

relevant tools and insights) it is an example of teaching being healing. In this view, meaningful support is closely related to emotional support. However, my admitted draw towards being a teacher or therapist makes it reasonable to ask if my interest in teaching as healing goes beyond the role of a teacher. Is my desire for my teaching practice to be healing for students aligned with hooks (1994)'s engaged pedagogy or is it aligned with being a school counselor? Nevertheless, I do believe my perspective on meaningful support, while it is not necessarily meaningful knowledge, does align closely with the whole student wellness focus of engaged pedagogy.

A further question to ponder is whether as a beginning teacher I can manage to build an engaged pedagogy where I provide meaningful support and knowledge for students. As hooks (1994) says, a teacher must be well themselves to be able to empower students. However, becoming a teacher is a complex, demanding, and emotional process (Fuller & Brown, 1975; Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016). I do wonder if meaningful teachers take care of their own wellness. While not an explicit research focus through this three-year self-study, I can grasp if I can stay well while I navigate these dynamics and become a teacher that provides meaningful support and knowledge.

This vignette raises another interesting question and view on meaningfulness: are impactful teachers born with a predisposition to being great teachers or are there qualities and techniques that can be learned to be meaningful to students? Laura identifies this cultural story of “you’re born with it or not”. The process of becoming a teacher probably begins early. The cultural story of “born with it” relates with the perspective that some people are born with traits that later make them a great teacher (Fuller & Brown, 1975). It is also argued that the exposure to teachers from the pupil experiences shapes internalized models of being a teacher that are actualized later (Lortie, 1975). In this dialogue, Laura and I share a third path: *there are techniques or approaches that involve emotional knowledge that make teachers meaningful to*

their students. This seems to indicate that students' sense of a teacher's meaningfulness relates to the teacher's use of emotional knowledge. I use this to orient my dissertation: I study myself to see if I can become a meaningful teacher through understanding and using emotional knowledge and if so, how did I develop that teaching practice.

Laura's idea of "juicy moments" encapsulates the positive feedback of connection between students and teachers that inspires teachers to keep teaching. At that time, I identified Laura's idea as part of emotional labor of teaching (Hargreaves, 1998). I was defining emotional labor in a general sense of the emotional energy teachers put into their work and creates positive outcomes like student connections and negative ones like teacher burn-out. While this definition is closely connected with emotional labor, emotional labor is more about *teachers manipulating their own emotions* to only display organizationally accepted ones (Hargreaves, 1998).

Rather than focusing on how teachers control and adjust their emotions, I was interested in how they use emotions to create meaningful relationships, and juicy moments of connection being the positive outcome of it. This more closely connects with the "psychic rewards" of teaching and the feeling of reaching and connecting with students (Lortie, 1975). For all teachers, this is the primary sought reward for their occupation (Lortie, 1975). I know for myself, a teacher particularly oriented towards the emotional aspects of teaching, these juicy moments of connections and positive student relationships are a major sought outcome.

Vignette 2

March 19th, 2012

It was a gray day in Colorado Springs with Pike's Peak shrouded in clouds. I excitedly waited to see my test results. I was confident that I aced it. She dropped the test with a pen circling the number 65 and the words, "let's talk"

~~

I entered her office that was filled with books and plants.

She asked me “what happened?”

I had gotten every question correct but didn’t answer the questions fully.
I raced through the test.

She knew that’s what happened, but she also knew something was off about me.
“Are you okay?”

She almost saw it before I did.
A disruptive mental health episode.

Vignette 2 is a reimagined memory from my first semester in undergraduate college and an impactful moment with my late botany professor, Tass. In November, 2021, I wrote a paragraph about an influential teacher in my life, and described about that moment of failing her test and how:

She helped me move through the rest of a challenging college career. Her presence and willingness to meet with me. Her telling me “I am so proud of you” for graduating was a special moment in my life (11/2021, RFN)

Tass was a teacher that left a lasting impact on my life not because of how she developed my love of plants, but mostly how she saw my challenges and supported me through my four years of college.

When I wrote about this as a TF, I realized that part of my belief in teaching as healing grew from my experiences with Tass. In line with the idea of apprenticeship of observation, I knew from my experiences as a student that I wanted to embody some of her approach in my teacher self. However, as Lortie (1975) describes a challenge to this: “the student's learning about teaching, gained from a limited vantage point and relying heavily on imagination, is not like that of an apprentice and does not represent acquisition of the occupation's technical knowledge” (p.63). Tass will not be teaching me the practical skills of teaching. Therefore, her influence on my process of becoming a teacher is based upon imitations of memories I had with her as a student.

Nevertheless, this reconstructed memory with her demonstrates several techniques I can aim to incorporate into my practice. As a student, I know that she provided me with both meaningful/emotional support and meaningful knowledge about how to navigate life. She paid close attention to my needs as a whole person, not just a student, an approach akin to engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994). She was willing to meet with me frequently and provide avenues to support my needs. She certainly was not my therapist but was my key advocate and support in college. I believe she was able to accomplish this because she used emotional understanding of what I was experiencing. From the student perspective, I identify Tass as a meaningful teacher and this discussion highlights, with Zembylas (2007) in mind, I attribute much of it to her use of emotional understanding/knowledge and by providing meaningful knowledge and support. I am not making an empirical claim about what makes a teacher meaningful, but rather *we are discovering my internal framework for how I define a meaningful teacher*. Apprenticeship of observation of Tass is one force that formed this framework.

Vignette 2 also provides an interesting moment to consider related to Laura's idea of juicy moments or Lortie (1975)'s psychic rewards of teacher-student connections. In this case, I was the student in the office so while it was an impactful, empathetic moment that created lasting impacts on myself as a student and person, I am unsure if it was impactful for Tass. Did this create a moment of connection for her as a teacher? Do moments like this and relationships with students like me provide her job fulfillment? Those questions will remain unanswered; however, seeing this impact on me as a student might help me identify moments if/when I make a similar impact upon my students.

Vignette 3

September 27th, 2021

I had a dream
You know some say invisibility
is the superpower they want.

In my dream,
it was the one I was given,
but apparently not asked for.

Walking about
the school campus
my friends were seen
while I was not.

what's it mean
it have such a dream
when I just dawned my
teacher's cap?

“Relationships given and possible.”

The contract says
role: teacher
clients: students
relation.....

Now there's the complexity
How to move beyond roles
given
to relationships
possible?

perhaps then
I'll feel
My invisibility cloak
fall
and my teacher identity
rise

Vignette 3 is a reflective poem I wrote in September during my first semester as a teacher. The poem portrays a dream I had of being invisible on AA's campus while my friends who attended it were seen. This sparked a reflection on my return to AA and the start of my

teaching career. I directly referenced Britzman (2003, p. 2) who discusses possible and given relationships with students for beginning teachers. At this early stage of teaching, creating connections to students was important to my teacher identity, but I was not sure of how those meaningful relationships developed.

Britzman (2003) discusses how becoming a teacher is a dual reality of lived experiences and private struggles. This vignette provides a glimpse into my internal struggles around my teacher identity and what actions I can take to become the teacher I aspire to be. It's the gap between myself and aspired teacher self, which can cause emotional tension and self-adjustment (Nichols et al., 2017). It seems part of the self I aspire to be is seen by students and has meaningful relationships with them. As Kelchertermans and Deketelaere (2016) explain, becoming a teacher is an emotional process as it is both a personal endeavor of self-discovery and learning of technical skills. This on-going, internal reflection on self is an emotional aspect to juggle as I learn to teach.

Vignette 3 provides another important aspect of this dissertation, which is my personal connection to AA. I spent seven years there as a student from 6th – 12th grade and have remained close with many friends I made there. My experiences as a student inspired me to start my teaching career there when the Teaching Fellows opportunity arose. Nevertheless, the fact that my friends were visible while I was not in the dream, could point to some of my harder moments as a student. This dream occurred in the upper school of the campus, while my time in the middle school I recalled fondly in a reflective field note written in October about a discussion with a veteran AA teacher and a new teacher:

I shared [with the other teachers] on my experiences as a student and how it was a magical introduction to education. Middle school is a time to become enamored with learning. I experienced that.
Now I want to create that as a teacher. (11/2021, RFN)

AA's middle school philosophy is centered on creative, experiential experiences. It is a non-graded program and involves many field trips and cultural events organized by the teachers. This journal reflection shows that my time as a middle schooler was magical. I also state an aspect of the teacher I aspire to be: one that constructs magical experiences for students. This is another instance of my experiences as a student creating my perception of the teacher I want to become (Lortie, 1975).

Further, the school context and assemblages of its social community (students, teachers, parents, administrators) is intrinsically connected to who a teacher is (Ovens et al., 2016), and it affects their embedded emotional practice (Hargreaves, 1998). Learning to navigate these dynamics makes becoming a teacher an emotional process (Kelchertermans & Deketelaere, 2016). Related to emotional labor (Hargreaves, 1998), reflections from this dream provoked feelings about teaching that I could not express at school. I think this dream displays another layer of complexity; I navigate my feelings embedded in that context from being a student. Therefore, my past student experiences at AA and the present assemblage of the school impact the teacher I am and will become. My selection of AA as the school to initiate my teacher career directly shapes the teacher I will become. Whether it is possible to track the influences of my student experiences upon my emotional process of becoming is yet to unfold in this self-study. Nevertheless, Vignette 3 shows an initial connection between my struggles to create my teacher identity and my personal connections with the school.

Vignette 4

October 12th, 2021

Ava walks into the kitchen where her mom is cooking. Beneath her Yale sweater, Ava's stomach has an anxious knot.

Her mom greets her, “Hi honey, how was school?”

“It was okay.”

“Why okay? What’s up?” Her mom asks while pausing her chopping carrots.

“Well, I got my math test back.”

“oh, ya. How’d that go?”

“Well, here are the questions I missed and the resources for fixing the mistakes. The score is on there too.” Ava nervously passes the package to her mother. It’s hard to tell whose expectations are higher for Ava, her own or her mother’s.

Her mom looks over the paperwork. “Okay, ya I see the problems you missed. I’m glad you will relearn these. Good job, honey”

Ava’s stomach relaxes and she thinks of Mr. B’s words
‘Trust me, this will help’.

This vignette of the 7th grader Ava and her mother is fictional but based upon my observations of the Math teacher, Mr. B’s class during the Fall semester in 2021. He was returning a test that day, which could not only create anxiety for the students but also tension with their parents/guardians. He also wanted them to be comfortable with failure and learn from their mistakes. I saw him masterfully address their worries and provide a plan to use this test as a moment for growth. He did this through story-telling a narrative, “Trust me as a dad getting test results from your kid can be a tense moment. This sheet which shows your plan for improving on your mistakes will help” (10/2021, RFN). Asking students to write down what they missed and what resources they have to retry the problem provided a tool for mitigating their anxieties. This plan diminished Ava’s anxieties when discussing her results with her mother and allowed her to learn from her mistakes.

Mr. B effectively used emotional understanding (Denzin, 1984) of the students’ potential concerns to support them and achieve his student learning goal of growing from their mistakes. I

also attributed this moment to emotional scaffolding (Rosiek, 2003), because I noticed his use of emotional knowledge of the context of math results and how to address it. Interestingly, he used emotional knowledge to (1) achieve his learning goal of learning from mistakes, and (2) provide a resource and knowledge of the parent perspective to support students' emotional needs. The first objective closely aligns with the student learning goals of emotional scaffolding. While the second seems to connect with providing meaningful support and knowledge for the students' well-being, which may align with an aspect of engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994).

In this vignette, I also embedded a viewpoint into the student body of AA. As an "academically rigorous" school in the United States, there is a lot of pressure on students to perform exceptionally in class and get admissions into prestigious schools (note Ava's Yale sweater). This pressure is felt for students from high expectations set internally themselves and externally from parents. Students' emotional expressions paint their experiences and interactions with me as a teacher at AA. Through acknowledging this, I can get an idea of what the common stressors are, and what meaningful knowledge and supports I can provide. The emotional flow between student stressors and my support makes this an emotional practice (Hargreaves, 1998).

For me in 2021, Vignette 4 seemed to be evidence for my hypothesis of emotional knowledge playing a role in effective, meaningful teaching. This in-the-moment reflection upon that observation and theory catalyzed a desire to more completely understand this and see if I can identify more ways AA teachers use emotional knowledge to be effective, meaningful teachers. This informed and oriented both my research interests but also the direction for my pursuit to become my aspired teacher self. In Chapter 4, I conduct a deeper dive into the various uses of emotional knowledge in teaching practices.

Moving onward

In this Prelude Study, I aimed to understand how my reflection on connections between my initial experiences teaching and theories oriented and informed my becoming a teacher. I also hoped to see this reflective process deepen my understanding of theories on emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher. To investigate this research question and sub-question, I constructed a novel approach for identifying, analyzing, and discussing critical moments in a self-study. As analytical nodes, *theoretical sparks* created a viewpoint into the dynamic nature of theory and practice. They help us understand how important moments in my first semester connected with theory and how that led to further investigation. *Theoretical Umwelt* demonstrated a new approach to a theoretical framework that displays what theories enveloped my reality during this study period and impacted my data collection and further investigations.

In the absence of a teacher preparation program, I argue that my initial reflective practice of using reflection, intuition, and theoretical frameworks formed my structure for informal teacher education. Within this framework, I came to understand how my experiences as a student at AA, my relationship with an influential teacher, my observations of other teachers, and interactions with peers and students constructed sources of knowledge on meaningfulness and effectiveness of teachers.

My view of meaningful teachers seems to connect with hooks' (1994) engaged pedagogy since I aim to support the whole student through providing meaningful knowledge. Nevertheless, I may not be directly pursuing other aspects of engaged pedagogy, such as critical thinking and student liberation, and I also emphasize emotional support. My view of teacher effectiveness seems to relate to emotional scaffolding since I prioritize the role of emotional knowledge in teaching. However, I'm interested not only in scaffolding learning goals and student's agency, but also fostering student well-being. Through reflection and intention, I see that my approach to meaningfulness and effectiveness may exist between or beyond these theories.

I propose a new pedagogical approach to teacher meaningfulness and effectiveness: *emotionally-informed teaching*. From this study, I can define *emotionally-informed teaching as practices that support student learning and well-being through providing meaningful knowledge, emotional support, and effective teaching that incorporates emotional knowledge*. This conceptualization of emotionally-informed teaching orients and informs the proceeding goals of my self-study research. In Chapter 4, I pursue further understanding emotionally-informed teaching through the practices of AA middle school teachers. In Chapter 5, I then reflect inward at my emotionally-informed practice after three years and try to see how it developed over time.

Chapter 4

“He’s just naturally a good teacher”

6th grader at AA about Mr. E (01/2022, RFN)

In January 2022, I walked with a 6th grader across a park when he told me that Mr. E. was “naturally a good teacher.” We were discussing how history class was his least favorite class in elementary school but now his favorite, thanks to his teacher Mr. E. While I understand what the student meant, part of my goal as a researcher is to problematize that statement. What makes Mr. E such a meaningful, effective, good teacher? Was he “born” a great teacher? Or did he become one by developing and using effective techniques and skills? More importantly, these instances created internal reflective ripple effects on my development as a teacher as I asked: How can I become a meaningful, effective teacher? Am I born with it, or can I develop techniques?

This self-study provided a constructive framework for methodologically investigating these questions that swirled throughout my teaching experiences. In the Prelude Study (Chapter 3), based on my observation that Mr. B used discrete techniques to address emotional moments like receiving test results, I hypothesized *there are techniques or approaches that involve emotional knowledge that make teachers effective and meaningful to their students*. If so, these approaches would be part of how Mr. E is effective and meaningful to that 6th grader. In this chapter within the overarching self-study, I employed qualitative research methods to investigate the teaching practices of five veteran teachers at Albuquerque Academy (AA) to uncover emotionally-informed approaches and understand how they construct effective teaching practices.

This study is guided by the second research question of the self-study:

- RQ2: In what ways can emotionally-informed teaching explain effective teaching practices?

Literature Review

The role of emotions in teaching is pivotal in promoting student learning (Lönngren et al., 2021c; Rosiek, 2003), self-efficacy, and well-being (Meyer & Turner, 2007). Scholars have researched and developed many conceptual and analytical tools for understanding emotions and teaching (e.g. Hargreaves, 2001; Harvey et al., 2012; Zembylas, 2007; Rosiek, 2003) including emotional scaffolding (Rosiek, 2003). This study expands emotional scaffolding to *emotionally-informed teaching* to investigate AA teachers' nuanced and expansive usage of emotional knowledge in teaching.

Emotional scaffolding

While emotional scaffolding has several definitions, it can be considered the pedagogical means teachers employ to shape students' emotional experiences to foster the teacher's desired student learning. It has roots in both Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and scaffolding literature. Several studies (e.g. McCaughtry, 2004; Rosiek, 2003; Zembylas, 2007) investigate the importance of including emotional knowledge in teacher's pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Emotional knowledge in teaching is a teacher's knowledge about their emotional experiences in a social context, and how others may experience it (Zembylas, 2007).

First described by Shulman (1987), PCK is a "useful conceptual tool for explaining and analyzing the knowledge that teachers use to transform subject matter for student learning" (McCaughtry, 2004, p. 30). Most PCK research focuses on how teachers comprehend and facilitate student learning based on their cognitive understanding of students and is not inclusive of the important emotional elements (McCaughtry, 2004). For example, through a case study on a physical education teacher McCaughtry (2004) found that the teacher's interpretation of her students' emotions influenced the curricular of her PCK, particularly her unit selection. This provides evidence for the need to acknowledge the importance of emotional knowledge in PCK.

In a meta-analysis study, Rosiek (2003) specified a way emotional knowledge is employed in teaching through the concept of emotional scaffolding. Connected to PCK, emotional scaffolding is a “teachers’ pedagogical use of analogies, metaphors, and narratives to influence students' emotional response to specific aspects of the subject matter in a way that promotes student learning” (Rosiek, 2003, p. 402). This concept assists teachers in identifying how students emotionally react to subject material and create ways to foster what Rosiek (2003) calls constructive emotions (supports learning) and diminish unconstructive emotions (obstruct learning). He also illustrates through teacher case studies that emotional scaffolding “motivated them [teachers] to examine the intersection of individual student feelings, student culture, school context, and the curriculum” (Rosiek, 2003, p. 410). While these studies in PCK provided the foundation for emotional scaffolding, most of the proceeding literature took a scaffolding-centered lens.

Emotional scaffolding emphasizes the emotional components of Vygotsky-inspired scaffolding, which centers teachers’ techniques to allow students access and agency over knowledge that is otherwise unachievable (Meyer & Turner, 2007). In the educational literature, there are three forms of scaffolding: cognitive, meta-cognitive, and affective/emotional (Lönngren et. al., 2021a). While scaffolding is a well-researched field, the affective/emotional form has received scant attention (Lönngren et. al., 2021a); studies in emotional scaffolding aim to fill that gap.

Meyer and Turner (2007) defined emotional scaffolding as “temporary but reliable teacher-initiated interactions that support students’ positive emotional experiences to achieve a variety of classroom goals” (p. 244). They viewed the goals of emotional scaffolding to be student achievement, autonomy, and responsibility of their learning (Meyer & Turner, 2007). This is a slightly different aim than Rosiek (2003) who focused more on learning being effective

and connected to students through emotional scaffolding practices. As we will see, my aim in this study is related to both but also incorporates a focus on non-disciplinary learning and student well-being.

In a case study of a 7th grade teacher, Meyer and Turner (2007) showed how emotional scaffolding can achieve classroom-level goals of constructing an environment of students taking responsibility in their learning and well-being. They found it is fundamental to “sustaining students’ understanding of challenging concepts, students’ demonstration of their competencies and autonomy, students’ involvement and persistence, and students’ emotional or personal experiences” (Meyer & Turner, 2007, p. 245). Emotional scaffolding has also been applied to early childhood educators demonstrating its role in reaching developmentally appropriate practices (Park, 2016). Park (2014) showed that using positive emotional experiences through emotional scaffolding strategies can help address challenges of early childhood educators, such as a diversifying student body, reducing learning gaps, and increasing achievement of all students.

Recently, emotional scaffolding has been explored as a tool for assisting learning in sustainability (Lönngren et al., 2021c) and engineering education (Lönngren et al., 2021b). Lönngren et al., (2021c) expanded the viewpoint on emotional scaffolding from only subject matter to include the teacher’s influence on students’ “emotional experiences and expressions related to subject matter, learning processes, performance and social relationships” (p. 2). The question of how teachers implement emotionally scaffolded learning has been explored through looking at teacher’s teaching techniques, tools, strategies, and approaches.

Emotional scaffolding approaches

The teaching tools and techniques identified as useful to achieve emotional scaffolding have been expanded from Rosiek (2003)’s analogies, metaphors and narratives. Lönngren et al. (2021a) consolidated new findings on emotional scaffolding through a meta-analysis of selected

literature on scaffolding practices (e.g. Lönngren, 2017), emotional scaffolding (e.g. Meyer & Turner, 2007; Park, 2016; Rosiek, 2003), wicked problems in engineering education (Lönngren et al., 2019), emotions in sustainability education (Ojala, 2013; 2015), and emotions in Pedagogical Content Knowledge (McCaughtry, 2004). These six emotive tools and strategies are:

(1) Acknowledge and validate expression of emotions. Frequently, teachers fail to acknowledge students' emotions, which misses opportunities to understand student's conceptualizations and marginalizes them (Rosiek & Beghetto, 2009). Hufnagel (2018) showed how an instructor acknowledged and valued student emotions during a lesson and reflective writing assignment tailored for emotional discourse by utilizing emotional language verbally and in text prompts, and by emphasizing students' ideas. Nevertheless, Hufnagel (2018) underlined that not acknowledging students' emotional expressions during activities not intended for emotional discourse, especially in science teaching, is common.

(2) Create safe spaces for expression and failure. In activities aimed at exploring emotional topics, Hufnagel (2018) showed a teacher constructed a safe space for emotional expression through changing the physical orientation of the classroom and allowing students to move in the classroom to express their feelings. Meyer and Turner (2007) highlighted how a seventh grade math teacher created a culture of being okay to fail through emotionally scaffolding students to support each other in learning from mistakes.

(3) Model constructive emotional responses. In an example of modeling constructive emotional responses, Ojala (2015) conducted a study to understand how teacher's orientation towards hope in the face of climate change impacted student's environmental engagement. They found that when teachers embodied "constructive hope" rather than hope based on denial of climate change their students were more prone to pro-environmental behaviors (Ojala, 2015). Constructive hope acknowledges students' negative emotions on societal issues, such as climate

change and communicates a positive, future-oriented position (Ojala, 2015). Teachers can show students how to engage with topics such as climate change in an emotionally productive way.

(4) Provide encouragement and reassurance in the face of unconstructive emotional experiences. Meyer & Turner (2007) described a teacher who characterized activities as interesting and created a climate of being a community of learners who cared about their learning. She used encouragement along with group work and peer interaction to support students in taking risks and facing challenges (Meyer & Turner, 2007). Teachers of undergraduate engineering students reassured students that their solutions to challenging problems in engineering did not have to be perfect and encouraged them to keep working (Lönngren et al., 2019). These are examples of teacher techniques for addressing students' learning challenges and decreasing unconstructive emotional experiences.

(5) Adjust subject content and/or pedagogical presentation to match students' needs, cultural backgrounds, and competencies. Rosiek (2003) provided four examples of teachers using metaphors, analogies, and narratives to emotionally scaffold their teaching approach. These teachers individually addressed connecting science lab skills to students' understandings of basketball, wrote lesson plans that related math word problems to quinceañeras for Latinx students, provided a narrative to build empathy and understanding with Native Americans experiences of colonization, and used other historical contexts to decrease potential emotional tension when studying the civil rights movement in the U.S. (Rosiek, 2003). In each of these examples, teachers demonstrated emotional scaffolding by proactively planning ways to mitigate potential unconstructive emotional responses to and foster emotional engagement with the curriculum.

(6) Build positive relationships in the classroom. To build positive relationships a teacher must convey positive support to all students to establish a "context of trust" (Meyer &

Turner, 2007, p. 249). They argue that their case study teacher began scaffolding positive relationships during the first days and consistently used emotional scaffolding approaches to build a supportive emotional environment of trust (Meyer & Turner, 2007). They emphasized how important the connection between emotional scaffolding and positive relationships is: “Emotional scaffolding can help to establish and sustain positive relationships and classroom climate that support student engagement, learning, and perceptions of competence” (Meyer and Turner, 2007, p. 248).

Not included in Lönngren et al. (2021a)’s meta-analysis, Shahidzade et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative study on what emotional scaffolding approaches teachers and students in Iran believe are most important/effective for facilitating English language learning. From the teachers’ views, they stated “expressing optimism and hope about students’ prospective lives and jobs... and having eye contact with students” as the top strategies (Shahidzade et al., 2022, p. 8). The students identified many approaches with the top ranked ones being teachers’ sharing relevant personal real-life experiences with students, using some computer-assisted activities in language teaching, and expressive atmosphere of language classes where both teachers and students are willing to verbalize and regulate their emotions (Shahidzade et al., 2022). Teachers’ enthusiasm for their topic and course is also highlighted as important for engaging students in learning (Shahidzade et al., 2022).

I agree with Lönngren et al., (2021c) that emotional scaffolding is a useful research perspective but is being conceived too narrowly and is under-theorized. Lönngren et al.’s (2021a) meta-analysis adds a helpful collection of emotive tools but is based on a limited number of studies, and several not explicitly focused on emotional scaffolding. Further, there is not a consistent methodology nor context in which Lönngren et al.’s (2021a) emotive tools have been

studied. In this study, I present a singular qualitative study on the practices of five middle school teachers and aim to refine and expand Lönngren et al.'s (2021a) emotive tools.

Proposing emotionally-informed teaching

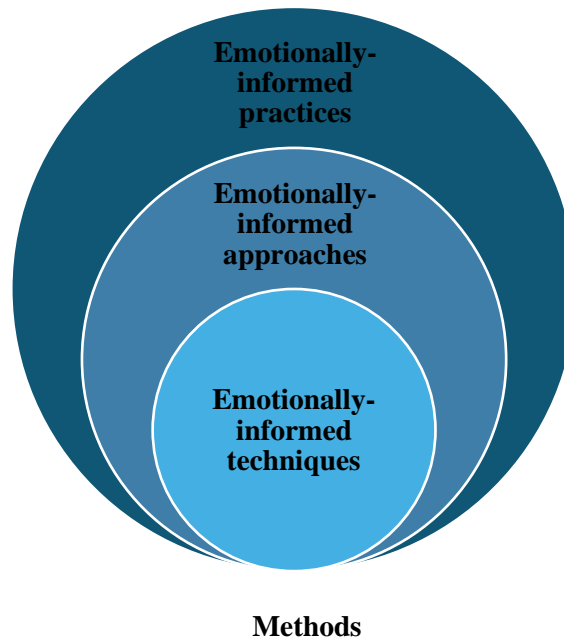
The field of emotional scaffolding is beginning to drift from solely looking at subject matter mastery to incorporating aspects of student-teacher relationships (Lönngren et al., 2021c; Meyer & Turner, 2007) and classroom climate (Meyer & Turner, 2007). I propose a new conceptual framing of *emotionally-informed teaching* to adequately and effectively capture teachers' impacts on students' learning, development, well-being, and relationships. Emotionally-informed teaching provides a wider net than emotional scaffolding for capturing, analyzing, and learning from teacher's actions that involve emotional knowledge. Through emotionally-informed teaching I am not looking to understand how students gain independence in their learning, but rather how effective, emotionally engaged learning experiences are constructed by teachers. I am also looking for how teachers use emotional knowledge to support students' needs and foster their development.

Emotionally-informed teaching is teaching techniques, approaches, and practices that involve emotional knowledge to facilitate student learning, support their emotional needs, and foster their well-being. Emotionally-informed teaching can be understood and researched through a nested, tri-level model ascending from teaching techniques to approaches to practices (see Figure 4.1) I differentiate an emotionally-informed technique as the concrete skill employed by a teacher to achieve their emotionally-informed approach. For example, a teacher may create safe spaces for students to explore emotional topics (approach) through modeling how to share vulnerability (technique). As such, approaches can be viewed as the overall intended impact(s) on student's learning and lives. An emotionally-informed practice is the kaleidoscope of approaches

and techniques unique to each teacher. This study investigates the emotionally-informed techniques, approaches, and practices embodied by five middle school teachers.

Figure 4.1

Nested model of emotionally-informed teaching



In this study, I strove to obtain an understanding of various emotionally-informed techniques and approaches that teachers are enacting in the AA middle school context. I also hoped to use that understanding to comprehend their overall emotionally-informed practices. I took an observer's stance in terms of documenting the actions of fellow teachers. However, my embeddedness in this teaching context and self-study goal of applying these findings to my own teaching practice, placed me in more of an insider-outsider position.

The data collection process for this study centered on observing, exploring, analyzing, and learning from the practices of veteran middle school teachers at AA. This study began with the initiation of the self-study in the Fall of 2021 when I worked as a TF at AA. The TF position provided a part-time teaching position with a mentor, a 7th grade science teacher and a cohort of

other TFs. From this position and a doctoral course, I began a self-study on my experiences of becoming a teacher including investigations into emotionally-informed teaching². This second study of the overall self-study was a methodological turn to externally research the practices of veteran teachers with the aspiration to cull knowledge that can improve my emerging teaching practice and identify emotionally-informed approaches.

Mediated Discourse Analysis

To research emotionally-informed teaching at AA, I took an observer's viewpoint to capture insights through documenting veteran AA teachers' classroom actions. I employed Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA) as the methodological framing of my classroom observations of other teachers. MDA centers social actions in understanding discourse and interactions in complex settings such as classrooms (Norris & Jones, 2005). MDA is a form of discourse analysis that focuses on "linkages between discourse and action and how these play out in complex social situations." (Scollon & Saint-Georges, 2013, p. 1). It always involves a social actor and a mediational means, which are the tools and objects that enable the person to take the action (Scollon & Saint-Georges, 2013). In the classroom, the mediational means can range from physical objects like whiteboards, lesson plans, activities to representational tools like language and vocal qualities.

From a theoretical perspective, MDA allows a viewpoint into the complexity of actions taken in social settings (Norris & Jones, 2005). As a methodological framing, MDA enables me to analyze the teacher's actions as social acts that impact the emotional aspects of learning. The MDA framing assists my understanding of how a teacher's actions can communicate usage of emotional knowledge and understanding, and how those actions impact students in the complex

² See Chapter 2 for more on the research design and methodology of three-year, three-study self-study.

settings of classrooms. In the analysis, I used MDA to see how actions taken through instructional techniques allowed them to achieve emotionally-informed approaches. I also considered how teachers used different mediational means (e.g. gaze, gesture, vocal qualities, worksheets) and how each mediational means provide distinct affordances to the teacher as a social actor.

Data collection and Analysis

The data for this study was collected during the academic years of 2021-22, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024. The primary data is written classroom observations (COs) of veteran middle school teachers at AA. In my observations, I was interested in noticing any action by the teacher that hinted at incorporating emotional knowledge or impacted an emotional aspect of learning. I paid attention to the teacher's actions through their word choice, vocal qualities including changes in pitch and volume during instruction. The framing of MDA also enabled me to look at the teacher's actions through their classroom environment and lesson design. I kept my lens broad in terms of allowing myself to note any of the above actions during my observations. I centered the data collection on five teachers (n=5) who are my colleagues in the 6th-7th grade division of AA.

During the study period, I conducted a total of nine classroom observations (n=9), which are real-time written notes on veteran teacher's actions in relation to emotionally-informed teaching. I used reflective field notes (RFN) written throughout the self-study period (2021 – 2024) as the secondary data for this study. Reflective field notes are written reflections about an experience that occurred during school. They demonstrate a reflective process of capturing and connecting moments such as interactions with colleagues/students and my teaching experiences with my becoming a teacher and viewpoints into emotional dimensions of teaching.

In the data analysis process, I used a blended analysis approach to answer research question 2. I framed the analysis with Lönngren et al.'s (2021a) six emotive tools to deductively

investigate the data; I also allowed new techniques and approaches to arise from the data. This inductive element was critical since I aimed to delineate how emotionally-informed teaching is more expansive than emotional scaffolding. In the first analysis, I thoroughly reviewed the data to identify and write initial emotionally-informed techniques apparent in the dataset. The first analysis was performed on a single teacher before moving to the next teacher. This allowed me to get a fuller picture of that teacher's specific emotionally-informed techniques. In the second round, I looked at the techniques generated by all the teachers and grouped together to form emotionally-informed approaches. The emotionally-informed approaches were drafted and edited alongside Lönngren et. al.'s (2021a) emotive tools. I performed this analysis on all the classroom observations then reviewed the RFNs to see if any more techniques could be identified. Two additional techniques were added from one field note, which is discussed in the results section.

The final techniques and approaches provide insight into the variety of ways teachers can employ emotional knowledge in their teaching and address emotional aspects. A viewpoint of the techniques and approaches of a specific teacher allows understanding of that teachers' unique emotionally-informed practice.

Meet the teachers

All the research occurred at AA, which is the private school that I attended from 6th – 12th grade. I was at AA as a student from 2004 – 2011. The five teachers selected for this study are current middle school teachers at AA (see Table 4.1), and two were there when I was a student. They were selected largely based on my curiosity about their practices. In line with the self-study goals, I believed I might be able to transform my own teaching practice through learning from their practices. My subjective view on their teaching and relationships with them, and my

relationship/history with the school should be acknowledged within the analysis and interpretation³.

³ See Chapter 2 for more on the context of this self-study and my positionality statement

Table 4.1*Overviews of AA Participant Teachers*

Name	Gender	Subject	Grade	Years at AA	Notes
Mr. P	Male	Science	7 th	25+	As a TF, Mr. P was my mentor teacher. In the role, he provided daily lesson plans, taught me key content knowledge, and advised on teaching approaches. His classroom is filled with oddities and curiosities including terrariums with various animals, large scale animal art student-projects, books, and travel photos.
Mr. E	Male	History	6 th	40+	In 2004, he was my 6th grade history teacher and I remember him fondly as a calm, approachable presence who also gave us interesting projects. He seemed to hold me accountable as a young student. His classroom had student projects around the room when they finished them during the year. Otherwise, it was simple, clean with a few posters usually with tables in a circle.
Mr. H	Male	History	7 th	4	He has taught and coached at other schools, mostly public schools before AA. He also teaches an upper school elective course. In the Middle school, he is active in coordinating the school's social-emotional learning program. His classroom, the desks are facing forward. The walls are filled with historical content, student work, sports, feelings posters, and a suggestion box is on his desk.
Ms. M	Female	English	7 th	14	She is the middle school Diversity, Culture, and Belonging coordinator and is now transitioning from a teacher to a learning specialist role. Her classroom was filled with soft lighting with walls adorned with student work, checklists, and social justice posters. She also has deep questions on the wall like "what is good? What does it mean to be human?"
Mr. B	Male	Math	7 th	5	During the study period, he was a 7th grade teacher. He now teaches 8th grade and is the 8-9th grade dean of students. He has worked as a coach and teacher at other schools before AA. His room was neat, simple. and organized. He had cultural math and inspirational Michael Jordan posters along with family photos.

Findings and Discussion

I presented the results intermixed with discussion of connections with relevant literature to create robust views on emotionally-informed teaching. First, I overviewed the emotionally-informed approaches and techniques discovered through the analysis of the AA teachers' actions. Then using literature, and insights based on the results, I discussed: (1) how my results related to and refined Lönngren et. al.'s (2021a) emotive tools, (2) how teachers' emotionally-informed teaching demonstrates both planning and in the moment techniques, and (3) what emotionally-informed practices are and how they relate to teacher effectiveness. These findings and discussion provide a robust, detailed answer to the research question on the ways emotionally-informed teaching can explain effective teaching practices.

Emotionally-informed techniques and approaches

I identified six unique emotionally-informed approaches and sixteen emotionally-informed techniques. I did not observe every teacher enacting each approach and frequently teachers demonstrated a different technique to achieve an approach. Table 4.2 displays all the observed emotionally-informed approaches and techniques implemented by the AA teachers in the study with the techniques marked by teacher names that used them. The proceeding discussion showcases how AA teachers masterfully embedded teaching with emotional knowledge. The results include direct quotes from classroom observations and use brackets [] to highlight important facial or body gestures.

Table 4.2

Emotionally-informed teaching approaches and instructional techniques enacted by five AA teachers (marked)

Emotionally-informed approach	<i>Emotionally-informed techniques used</i>		
Offer engaged, supportive one-on-one interactions and instructions	<i>through devoted listening and eye contact when students are sharing [Mr. E].</i>	<i>through using emotional language to check for understanding and students' emotional response to curriculum [Mr. B, Ms. M]</i>	<i>through using humor to decrease student stress [Mr. H]</i>
Model acceptance of failure and ways to overcome challenges	<i>through narrating/story-telling potential struggles in activities and providing additional support. [Mr. H, Mr. B]</i>	<i>through using inclusive language to talk about student work [Mr. B]</i>	
Acknowledge student effort and provide emotive feedback	<i>through celebrating student successes. [Mr. B.]</i>	<i>through providing insightful feedback towards student's thoughts and behaviors. [Ms. M, Mr. E]</i>	
Create a safe space for students to explore emotional topics	<i>through modeling how to share vulnerably. [Ms. M]</i>	<i>through normalizing student emotions. [Ms. M, Mr. P]</i>	<i>through clever and masterful lesson planning. [Ms. M]</i>
Model constructive emotional responses to curriculum	<i>through embodying and expressing their own positive emotions relates to the topic. [Mr. P]</i>	<i>Through demonstrating perseverance in learning. [Mr. E, Mr. B]</i>	<i>through ending the class with a curious reflection or question [Mr. E]</i>
Provide life-relevant education	<i>through connecting learning to life beyond the classroom [Mr. B, Mr. E, Mr. P]</i>	<i>through expanding moments to impart knowledge about being a good person [Mr. P, Ms. M, Mr. H]</i>	<i>through understanding and bringing students' interests and cultures into the classroom [Mr. E]</i>

Offer engaged, supportive one-on-one interactions and instructions

Every teacher interacted in supportive ways with students whether by checking in on their understanding, reviewing their work, or listening to them during class discussions. I observed all the AA teachers conducting these daily student interactions; nevertheless, a few of them provided exemplars of how to make these moments emotionally supportive. For example, Mr. E employed the skill of *devoted listening and eye contact when students are sharing*. During several moments, when a student shared with the class, Mr. E leaned in, made eye contact, and devoted all his attention to listening to their thoughts. It felt as if the whole class discussion suddenly switched to a moment of personal connection between Mr. E and the student.

Mr. B and Ms. M *used emotional language to check for understanding and students' emotional response to curriculum*. After they explained a concept or shared instructions, they incorporated language that checks in on the students' feelings, "how you feeling?", "Is this overwhelming? How can I help?". This signals that the students' emotions and emotional responses to curriculum are aspects of learning. Mr. H *used humor to decrease student stress* when performing a task. His students had to practice questions for an interview and before they began he frequently made a humorous comment; "Oh, Ry, I'm excited to hear what you have [slightly sarcastic tone; smiling]" (03/2024, CO). Ry did not seem to take it as an insult, but rather his body and face gestures [shoulders move down, smiled] indicated a bit of release of stress.

Model acceptance of failure and ways to overcome challenges

Modeling acceptance of failure and ways to overcome challenges is an emotionally-informed approach where teachers create a culture of being okay with failure and provide avenues for learning from mistakes. A couple AA teachers modeled this approach *through story-telling or narrating potential struggles in activities and providing additional support*. For example, when providing instructions on an on-going project, Mr. H acted out some of the student's challenges in

the assignment, such as a student not being prepared with questions while interviewing a teacher: “the teacher was like I’m sorry what’s the question? And I’m like uhhhhhhh [eyes wide; lips turned down; head back]” (03/2024, CO). This narration displayed the student’s emotional experience of being embarrassed in front of a teacher by not being sufficiently prepared. He then smoothly transitioned to saying that is an understandable experience that can be avoided by following the concrete, clear tips written on the board for fixing this issue.

Mr. B also utilized storytelling to provide support for a potential emotionally tense moment between students and their parents when they receive their math test results. He related a story about when his daughter brings home test results, which can be a tense moment for both him and her. He followed up his story with a worksheet and work time to mark what they got wrong and find resources to fix them⁴. This worksheet would help mitigate the tension with their parents on the test they just got returned. Mr. B also modeled acceptance of failure *through using inclusive language to talk about student work*. He created a culture of being okay to fail by using the subject “we” instead of “you all” when talking about what the students missed on the test. This emotionally-informed technique does not refer to the common interpretation of inclusiveness meaning inclusive of racial, gender, sexuality or other student identities, but rather it places the teacher in the students’ successes and failures. He is included in their learning. These techniques create a culture of failure being a normal part of the learning process.

Acknowledge student effort and providing emotive feedback

Acknowledging student effort and providing emotive feedback is an emotionally-informed approach that can be seen through various techniques in teacher-student interactions. For example, Mr. B *celebrated students’ successes* through excited exclamations like “GO

⁴ Chapter 3 expands this story through a vignette inspired by it.

TIME!” and “YES SIR! [gives student a fist bump]” (11/2021, CO). In these moments he raised his voice from his typically soft-spoken demeanor and made animated gestures. These celebratory actions, while not the only way to provide effectively positive feedback, created a stronger emotional impact for students than simply stating “good job”. This aligned with Mr. B’s emotionally-informed technique of being included in his students’ failures.

As another technique, Ms. M and Mr. E *provided insightful feedback towards students’ thoughts and behaviors*. For example, Ms. M stated “I’m impressed. You are all very profound thinkers” (12/2021, CO) when discussing their work on a reflective project. Mr. E followed up on his devoted listening by validating the students’ thoughts, “ahh, interesting, very good” (4/2023, CO). These techniques communicated to the students that efforts and thoughts are valuable and worth celebrating.

Create a safe space for students to explore emotional topics

Creating a safe space for students to explore emotional topics is a multi-faceted emotionally-informed approach that incorporates various techniques to accomplish. Ms. M provided an effective example of how to create this safe space. She *cleverly and masterfully planned a lesson* that wove together their book reading with sharing a personal story to bring them into a deep, reflective writing activity about their identities. The activity asked them to write about their internal and external selves, which Ms. M *modeled how to share vulnerably* through talking about her different selves. She shared that she is quieter at home and more bubbly at school; she said, “I sometimes wonder if I am false genuine with my bubbly self” (12/2021, CO). She allowed this to assist students in looking at their authenticity in a profound way.

Ms. M and Mr. P also *frequently normalized students’ emotions* to create safe space. For example, one of Mr. P’s students was afraid of a live snail they had in class. He did not judge her but rather normalized it and provided a way for her to interact with the animal in a way that felt

safe to her. Compassionate techniques like these can create emotionally safe spaces for students to engage in learning that involve emotional topics.

Model constructive emotional responses to curriculum

Modeling constructive emotional responses to curriculum is an emotionally-informed approach that shows the teacher in the student learning experiences. Mr. P *embodied and expressed his emotions related to the topic* through performing his love for squids in body gestures, vocal expressions, and costumes. His learning goal for his students was for them to develop connections and appreciation for other animals. Mr. P's performative display of his affection for other animals went beyond geeking out about squids to modeling a constructive emotional experience with the topic. It established a positive emotional context for the students to then engage in learning about these animals.

Other techniques for modeling this emotionally-informed approach involved dealing with potentially unconstructive responses to activities through persevering past them. Mr. E and Mr. B did this by placing themselves in the activity and *demonstrating perseverance in learning*. Mr. E demonstrated how to do an activity that asked students to create personal connections with the Bill of Rights. While doing it, he acknowledged challenges in it by stating “oof this is tough, and I’ve lived longer than you all” (4/2023, CO). Nevertheless, he modeled persevering through the challenges by completing the exercise and provided guidance to students on why it was important. Mr. B placed himself in the learning by projecting him solving a math problem and when hitting “tough parts” he asked the students to “help him out”. This masterfully positioned the students in the role of constructively addressing Mr. B's voiced emotions regarding the math problems. These emotionally-informed techniques show that teachers can model constructive emotional responses through embodying positive emotions and showing perseverance to overcome potentially unconstructive responses to learning.

Mr. E demonstrated an additional technique for modeling the emotional response of being curious. In a discussion with Mr. E, captured in this field note, he describes making the students curious and motivated in his class *through ending the class with a curious reflection or question.*

“I always have to end class with them wanting to come back. They have to always want to come back to class the next day.” He explains how he sometimes leaves them with a question, remark, or mystery. They remember it and the next day come asking about it. (12/2021, RFN)

He uses this emotionally-informed technique of leaving the students with a question or mystery to ponder between classes to foster a feeling of them wanting to come back to class the next day. He is showing his students a way to be curious and engaged in class. This could be seen as fostering a constructive emotional response of being curious.

Provide life-relevant education

Providing life-relevant education is an emotionally-informed approach that makes students’ experiences at school relatable to life. AA teachers demonstrated this through both linking disciplinary studies to the world around us and by sharing knowledge applicable to being a good person. Mr. B, Mr. E, and Mr. P *connected learning to life beyond the classroom.* For example, Mr. P emphasized and explained how we are connected to an amazing diversity of life in New Mexico. Mr. E frequently underlined how U.S. history is important for understanding life today because “history has repeating cycles, that you need to know to understand today” (4/2023, CO). Mr. B showed how their graphing skills can be used in future work like running a business.

Mr. P, Ms. M, and Mr. H *expanded moments to impart knowledge about being a good person.* When assigning his students to interview a teacher, Mr. H reminded them “there are situations when to not interrupt someone’s tasks” (03/2024, CO), and to be mindful of the amount of time you ask them to participate. Ms. M linked a Japanese cultural story to share insights on happiness and greed. When Mr. P reminded students, they do not have school Monday for MLK

day, he shared this advice: “America is a place where an individual’s freedom is central and that’s kind of rare in the world. However, not everyone is free. Martin Luther King was a fighter for freedom for everyone. It matters to stand up for those discriminated against...” (05/2024, CO).

In the same field note involving Mr. E as previously discussed, he continued to share another emotionally-informed technique for providing life-relevant education.

“I always have to find a way to bring their cultures to the classroom”, he tells me and how he has “to start with and always include the students’ cultures in class. You have to start with an understanding of that.” He’s not as much talking about only larger cultural practices like holidays but also smaller knowledges and cultures of students. “I have to learn what they listen to. Then when they walk in the class, they’re like ‘hey I love this song’. They feel welcomed and seen” (12/2021, RFN).

This is a technique of *understanding and bringing students’ interests and cultures into the classroom*. He identified this to allow students to feel welcomed. It is an addition to the emotionally-informed approach of life-relevant education since it makes their learning environment relatable for students.

These techniques do involve some assumptions about what makes a “good person”, whose history is important, and what jobs are relevant to students’ future lives. Nevertheless, this emotionally-informed approach of providing life-relevant education was frequently implemented by AA middle school teachers, many of whom see teaching life skills as more important than disciplinary learning at that age. This approach also showcases the difference between emotional scaffolding, which is focused exclusively on disciplinary learning and emotionally-informed teaching, which adds a perspective on teaching for personal development.

Mediational aspects of teachers’ actions

The MDA perspective shows the AA teachers’ emotionally-informed techniques are social acts that achieved emotionally-informed approaches. The teachers’ techniques were *mediated* by seven observed mediational means, each providing different affordances for communicating emotional understanding and addressing emotional aspects of teaching and

learning. Table 4.3 displays the seven mediational means observed in the AA teachers' techniques and the affordances of each means.

Table 4.3

Teachers' mediational means and affordances

Mediational Means	Affordances
<i>Gaze</i>	Tacitly communicates students' participation is worthy of attention and consideration
<i>Listening</i>	Creates a means for understanding and valuing student thinking and emotional expressions
<i>Body movements</i>	Models and performs teachers' emotional relations to curriculum
<i>Vocal qualities</i>	Expresses emotive aspects of speech; can create emotional closeness through celebrating student successes
<i>Story-telling</i>	Constructs an imaginative bridge for sharing important insights and tools for addressing emotional aspects of learning such as growing from failure
<i>Worksheets</i>	Enables tangible supports for easing students' potential unconstructive emotions such as test results anxiety
<i>Classroom activities</i>	Crafts experiences that provide student safe ways to emotional topics

In this study, AA teachers employed a kaleidoscope of mediational means that opened up many affordances for achieving emotionally-informed approaches. Interestingly, most of them were representational means such as vocal quality, story-telling, body movements, listening, and gaze. While worksheets and classroom activities provided physical mediational means. This shows that teachers' techniques for expressing emotional understanding, using emotional knowledge, and addressing emotional aspects of teaching and learning were primarily mediated through embodied discourse. This emphasizes an importance to understanding the acts and impacts of teachers' embodied discourse actions opposed to solely their curricular materials.

Relating to and refining emotive tools

While I used Lönngren et. al.’s (2021a) emotive tools and strategies as a deductive element in the analysis, my data mostly did not correspond directly with their tools. Nevertheless, there are overlaps in several aspects of emotive tools and emotionally-informed approaches that are worthy of discussing. Table 4.3 displays the emotionally-informed approaches and emotive tools side-by-side.

Table 4.4

Comparative table of emotionally-informed approaches and emotive tools

Emotionally-informed approach	Emotive tools (Lönngren et al., 2021)
Offer engaged, supportive one-on-one interactions and instructions	Build positive relationships in the classroom
Model acceptance of failure and ways to overcome challenges	Provide encouragement and reassurance in the face of unconstructive emotional experiences
Acknowledge student effort and provide emotive feedback	Acknowledge and validate expression of emotions
Create a safe space for students to explore emotional topics	Create safe spaces for expression and failure
Model constructive emotional responses to curriculum	Model constructive emotional responses
Providing life-relevant education	Adjust subject content and/or pedagogical presentation to match students’ needs, cultural backgrounds, and competencies

Note. The gray middle bar is to indicate that the table is not implying the approach and the tool in the same row are aligned.

I did find one direct connection in “modeling constructive emotional responses”, and I was able to add the perspective on embodying positive emotions towards the learning topic as part of modeling constructive responses. I believe the “provide life-relevant education” is an emotionally-informed approach that does align partially with “the adjusting subject content...”

emotive tool, but also goes beyond it. The techniques employed in this emotionally-informed approach include sharing wisdom for being a good person, which highlights a key difference between emotionally-informed teaching and emotional scaffolding. Emotionally-informed teaching includes supporting students' development into being considerate, thoughtful young people, not only fostering disciplinary learning.

Addressing students' emotions around failure and fostering learning from mistakes is another important aspect to both the emotive tools and emotionally-informed approaches.

"Building positive relationships in the classroom" is an emotive tool that does not seem to have connections or overlaps with the emotionally-informed approaches. I argue this is because building positive relationships is a *key, intended outcome* of effectively using emotional knowledge in teaching. As Meyer and Turner (2007) explain, positive student-teacher relationships can be established and supported through emotional scaffolding. I contend that successful implementation of any of the emotionally-informed approaches can catalyze positive relationships. Nevertheless, I did not employ any methods to assess and understand student-teacher relationships in this study.

Overall, my study adds a deeper level of nuance and details than Lönngren et. al. (2021a) by displaying all the emotionally-informed techniques and discussing the actual teacher actions taken in middle school context. Many of the discussed differences between emotionally-informed approaches and emotive tools likely relate to the respective focuses on emotionally-informed teaching and emotional scaffolding. It could also indicate the broad array of ways teachers use emotional knowledge, or that their techniques are closely connected with the individual teachers/the school context.

Emotionally-informed planning and moment-to-moment teaching

The emotionally-informed techniques enacted by the AA teachers were observed during the actions in the classroom (aside from the two connected with the field note with Mr. E). Nevertheless, you can see when some emotionally-informed actions suggest prior planning while others were in the moment skills.

Several of the emotionally-informed techniques the AA teachers used show they were *anticipating students' emotional responses to lessons and planned ways to best support them*. Worksheets and stories were prepared to address test anxieties. Reflective journaling and a personal story were organized to create safe spaces for exploring emotional topics. This ability to anticipate and plan for the emotional aspects of learning is foundational to emotionally-informed teaching. This is echoed by Park et al. (2020) who showed that for early childhood educators' emotional scaffolding involved teachers trying to predict students' emotional responses to content and viewed lesson design as a form of supporting or engaging students' emotion. Rosiek's (2003) teacher case studies also demonstrate them anticipating and planning ways to address students' emotional responses to curriculum.

Emotionally-informed teaching is also enacted in moment-to-moment interactions and actions in teaching. I observed teachers making teaching more effective and supportive through incorporating emotional knowledge. Checking in with students became moments of being appreciated through eye contact and devoted listening. Student failures and successes became a collaborative and emotionally safe journey that included the teacher. Reminders about days off or tasks in an activity became moments of learning about how to be a considerate person. The AA teachers completed these actions in moments during class through emotionally-informed techniques that support students' learning and well-being.

Emotionally-informed practices

My field note with Mr. E concluded: “Mr. E is not “just natural talent”, but rather he thoughtfully employs emotionally-informed techniques” (12/2021, RFN). This seems to be a direct response to the opening conversation with the 6th grader about Mr. E being ‘naturally a great teacher’. What students identify as good or effective teaching may at least partially be attributed to the teacher’s use of emotional knowledge in their teaching. Emotionally-informed teaching provides a descriptive framing of a teacher’s practice and arguably, effectiveness. As the nested diagram (diagram 4.1) displays we can understand that a teacher’s emotionally-informed practice is built by their emotionally-informed approaches, which are achieved through emotionally-informed techniques.

For example, just from the two observations and field note we can infer that Mr. E’s emotionally-informed practice includes:

- **Offering engaged, supportive one-on-one interactions and instructions** *through devoted listening and eye contact when students are sharing.*
- **Acknowledging student effort and providing emotive feedback** *through providing insightful feedback towards student’s thoughts and behaviors.*
- **Modeling constructive emotional responses to curriculum** *through demonstrating perseverance in learning, and through ending the class with a curious reflection or question.*
- **Providing life-relevant education** *through connecting learning to life beyond the classroom, and through understanding and bringing students’ interests and cultures into the classroom.*

I argue these emotionally-informed approaches and techniques are pieces of what makes Mr. E an effective teacher. Mr. E, Mr. P, Ms. M, Mr. H, and Mr. B shared several techniques and approaches, but each have unique emotionally-informed practices that make them effective

teachers. Each teacher's distinct emotionally-informed practice also makes them effective teachers at supporting student learning, personal development, and well-being.

Moving onward

In this study, I shed light on various aspects of how teachers use emotional knowledge in their teaching practices. This included identifying a mosaic of emotionally-informed techniques and approaches used by AA middle school teachers with some techniques that were achieved in the moment actions while others demonstrated planning. Further, I demonstrated that each teacher has an emotionally-informed practice that is constructed by emotionally-informed approaches and techniques. The emotionally-informed practices make these teachers collectively effective at being attentive to student needs, supporting them through failure, empowering them to explore emotional topics, showing them constructive ways to emotionally engage with learning, and providing them life-relevant education. In conclusion, I argue that emotionally-informed teaching creates effective teacher practices.

Nevertheless, I remain curious to how teachers develop these emotionally-informed practices. Meyer and Turner (2007) echo my question of “how do teachers develop the values and pedagogies needed for emotional scaffolding?” (p. 255). Park (2016) discovered that for the early childhood educators their construction and implementation of emotional scaffolding strategies arose from “the participants' [two early childhood educators] beliefs about self-identity, their understandings of students' emotions, and their feelings of school expectations and academic pressures” (p. 2353). This perspective of beliefs, emotional understandings, and context provides an interesting framework for comprehending the construction of emotional scaffolding strategies. Meyer and Turner (2007) also call for longitudinal studies on how these pedagogies and relationships with students develop over time.

My self-study framework crafts a unique stance for not only identifying the aspects of my emotionally-informed practice, but also leverage an understanding of how they developed over the first three years of my teaching. In Chapter 5, I applied the insights garnered from this study to dive deep into my emotionally-informed teaching practice.

Chapter 5

This self-study reflects on and explores my journey to become the teacher I aspired to be. At the conclusion of my third year of teaching and researching, I have perspectives, teaching experiences, research approaches and insights, and data to understand the teacher I am becoming and if I have developed my aspired practice. In the Prelude Study (Chapter 3), I affirmed that the teacher I want to be is meaningful to his students through seeing students as whole persons and supporting them with meaningful knowledge and emotional support. My aspired teacher also creatively and masterfully uses emotional knowledge in teaching to be effective at promoting student learning and development. In the second study (Chapter 4), I explored the emotionally-informed techniques and approaches enacted by five Albuquerque Academy (AA) middle school teachers. These emotionally-informed approaches construct part of my aspired teaching practice. In this study, I aimed to get a view of the teacher I am becoming by investigating my emotionally-informed practice in Spring 2024.

The power of self-study allowed me to not only identify aspects of my emotionally-informed practice but also answer Meyer and Turner's (2007) call for understanding a teacher's development of emotional scaffolding pedagogies by tracing my development and reasons for using a particular emotionally-informed technique. This can provide perspectives into how various influences, such as life experiences and insights from this self-study, affect the emotional dimensions of my emerging practice. In this study, I utilized video recordings of my teaching in Spring 2024, along with reflective field notes throughout the three-year study period, to construct windows into my emotionally-informed teaching practice and answer the following research question and sub-question:

RQ3: In what ways have I achieved my aspired emotionally-informed practice and how does it inform my understanding of success as a teacher?

RQ3.1: What experiences and perspectives influence the development of my emotionally-informed practice?

My reflective practice and research questions empower me to step “through the mirror” to go past simply looking at what’s reflected to look at the depths of my practice (Bolton, 2010 as cited by Akinbode, 2013). Casting light into these depths brings new understandings of self, feelings of success, and the dynamic roles of emotions in teaching.

Literature Review

This dissertation centers itself among the fields of emotional dimensions of teaching, sociology of teaching, and becoming a teacher. In Chapter 3, I provided a literature review of the foundational scholars, theories, and approaches of these fields. In Chapter 4, I discussed in detail research on emotional scaffolding, which supported the substantial exploration of emotionally-informed teaching. In this study’s literature review, I shared a refresher on the dissertation’s foundational literature and further detail theories related to (1) emotional understanding teacher-student relationships, (2) emotional scaffolding and engaged pedagogy, and (3) navigating emotional expressions.

Emotions are at the heart of teaching (Hargreaves, 1998). This sociological perspective emphasizes the relational and situated aspects of emotions, which shows they are both self-feelings and social acts (Denzin, 1984). For this dissertation I use the following definition of emotions: *Emotions are reflective self-feelings and situated social acts expressed through embodied discourse*. This is an apt definition since teaching is an emotional practice where emotions are influenced internally in a person and externally through relationships (Denzin, 1984; Hargreaves, 1998). For this third and final study, this definition of emotional practice is particularly informative: “Emotional practice [is] to reference the ways in which teachers are constantly engaged in emotional processes that help them understand themselves, their

relationships with others, and guide these interactions” (Meyer, 2009, p. 75). This study provides windows into my interactions and engagement with students and how I emotionally process those experiences.

Emotional understanding and teacher-student relationships.

Emotional understanding is fundamental to a teacher’s emotional practice of teaching. Emotional understanding is “an intersubjective process requiring that one person enter into the field of experience of another and experience for herself the same or similar experiences experienced by another” (Denzin, 1984, p.137). Teachers’ emotional understanding of student emotions is core to making interactions and instruction successful (Meyer, 2009). Since emotional understanding is inherently relational, it is natural that it will lead to forming relationships. Additionally, there are several theoretical perspectives that assist in seeing the importance of emotional understanding in teaching (e.g. Hargreaves, 2000; Hargreaves, 2001a; Meyer, 2009).

Teacher relationships in the school context are complex and multifaceted. Hargreaves (2001a) described *emotional geographies* as a conceptual framework for understanding the various aspects of teacher relationships. Emotional geographies are “the spatial and experiential patterns of closeness and/or distance in human interactions and relationships” (Hargreaves, 2001a, p.1061). Hargreaves (2001a) outlines five types of emotional geographies of teaching: sociocultural, moral, professional, political, and physical distance. This framework has been used to explore the relationships constructed and acted out through education, including teacher to student (Hargreaves, 2000), teacher to colleagues (Hargreaves, 2001b), and teacher to parents (Hargreaves, 2001a). Emotional geographies create a construct for seeing how emotional

understanding and misunderstanding occurs across many relational aspects for students and teachers.

Using emotional geographies, Hargreaves (2000) conducted a comparative study of teachers' relationships in elementary and secondary classrooms. He found that elementary school teachers had more physical and professional closeness, which caused more emotional intensity (positive and negative) in their student relationships and classrooms (Hargreaves, 2000). In secondary teaching, there is greater professional and physical distance and from the teachers' perspectives emotions are intrusive in classrooms (Hargreaves, 2000). The patterns of closeness and distance in my classroom setting and student relationships are interesting to consider when understanding my emotionally-informed practices.

These patterns are also intimately connected with teacher satisfaction. Studies repeatedly confirm that the most important rewards and sources of satisfaction for teachers are gained from students (Dinham & Scott, 1997; Hargreaves, 1999; Hargreaves, 2001; Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1989), but also can be a source of emotional strain, anger, and disappointment (Acker, 1995; Leavitt, 1994; Nias, 1993 as cited by Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Lortie (1975) found that teachers' job rewards were "psychic rewards" opposed to salary or job security. In Lortie's (1975) study of teachers in school systems in five towns, the teachers felt these psychic rewards through working with students through "gratifying graduates who came back to thank their teachers, public performances and celebrations, and spectacular successes with individual students" (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 818). However, Hargreaves (2000) noticed a different trend in how teachers receive reward and satisfaction from students:

Teachers now gain their psychic and *emotional rewards* not just from exceptional breakthroughs with individual students, nor only from receiving positive student feedback once their teaching of them is over. Teachers now gain positive feedback from

students while they are teaching them; and this occurs with whole class groups as well as with individuals. This is an indication of stronger emotional understanding between teachers and students than in Lortie's day. (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 824; italics added by author)

Hargreaves (2000) acknowledges the emotional aspects of these physic rewards and how they can be received from current students and classroom experiences. This third and final study provides perspective into my relationships and interactions with students and seeks to construct an understanding of my sense of success and fulfillment as a teacher.

Emotional experiences and relationships with students are fundamental to early career teachers' identity formation, sense of success, stress, and satisfaction (Meyer, 2009). For early career teachers, pleasant emotional experiences confirmed identities, while "unpleasant emotional experiences caused them [teachers] to confront and/or adjust emergent identities" (Nichols et al., 2017, p. 406). Meyer (2009) studied pre-service teachers to see which emotional tensions, conflicts of unpleasant and pleasant emotions around a recurring situation or issue, were common. The three most common emotional tensions for preservice teachers were: (1) autonomy in relation to the mentor teacher, (2) feelings of competence and fulfillment, and (3) building relationships with students (Meyer, 2009). The third tension that involved "both joy and pain in the management of these relationships" (Meyer, 2009, p. 81). This tension is the most interesting in this study's focus on my emotionally-informed teaching.

Another important element for teachers, especially early career teachers, is being able to attribute emotional experiences to something. In a study on first-year teachers, Nichols et al. (2017) explored how teacher identities were shaped by emotional episodes. Teachers attributed their pleasant or unpleasant emotional episodes to reasons under their control (e.g. they are a good/bad teacher), or not under their control (e.g. I don't have power over the students) (Nichols

et al., 2017). This process of attribution was influential, both in productive and unconstructive ways for teachers to build and adjust their identities (Nichols et al., 2017). As discussed, emotional experiences, success, and satisfaction for teachers frequently center student relationships so these teacher self-evaluations are important for attributing sources of success and failure.

Emotional Scaffolding and Engaged Pedagogy

Emotional knowledge in teaching is a teacher's accumulated knowledge from their emotional experiences and understanding of social relationships and learning contexts (Zembylas, 2007). Emotional scaffolding is an example of an approach where teachers use emotional knowledge to support student learning (Rosiek, 2003). Teachers employ various tools and strategies to influence students' emotional experiences to foster content learning and mastery (Meyer & Turner, 2007; Lönngren et al., 2021a; Rosiek, 2003). There is an array of approaches teachers use for emotionally scaffolding learning (Lönngren et al., 2021a), which provided the basis for my emotionally-informed approaches (Table 5.1). Emotional scaffolding has been found to foster positive relationships and learning climates (Meyer & Turner, 2007), support teachers in achieving development goals (Park, 2014), and assist students explore emotional topics (Lönngren et al., 2021a).

Table 5.1

An overview of emotionally-informed approaches

Emotionally-informed approaches
Offer engaged, supportive one-on-one interactions and instructions
Model acceptance of failure and ways to overcome challenges
Acknowledge student effort and provide emotive feedback
Create safe space for students to explore emotional topics
Model constructive emotional responses to curriculum
Provide life-relevant education

In my expanded view of emotional scaffolding, emotionally-informed teaching, I include a perspective on how teachers support student well-being. The inclusion of student well-being in emotionally-informed teaching is partially attributed to hooks' (1994) engaged pedagogy, a teaching philosophy that pursues mutual participation (from teacher and student), student liberation, critical thinking, and well-being (hooks, 1994). Engaged pedagogy is a holistic teaching model where the teachers grow alongside the students (hooks, 1994). It does not require teachers nor students to figuratively leave their personal lives and identities at the classroom door, but rather intentional attending to the personal and academic can foster transformative learning experiences (hooks, 1994). Engaged pedagogy and emotional scaffolding were foundational theories for my construction of emotionally-informed teaching.

Navigating emotional expressions

There are additional theoretical viewpoints that assist in comprehending emotional aspects in classrooms: *emotional frames and emotional expressions*. Hufnagel (2018) conducted a study in an undergraduate ecology course to see how emotional expressions were constructed. She focused on how emotional frames, which are “the expectations for emotional expressions in talk and writing” (Hufnagel, 2018, p. 1958), dictated emotional expressions in classroom discourse. Hufnagel (2018) found that the teachers in the study used prompts and changes of physical space to frame a class activity on climate change as a space for emotional expression. In those activities, the teacher acknowledged students’ emotional expressions and supported their ideas while they did not acknowledge them during activities that were not framed to foster emotional expressions (Hufnagel, 2018).

This study explores my techniques for both facilitating learning around emotional topics, such as endangered species and fostering the affective aspects of students’ connection to nature (Chawla, 1998). Teaching and learning about environmental problems such as climate change is inherently emotional with students being more worried and anxious about the future of the planet (Ojala, 2015). Hufnagel (2018) showcased a relevant example for engaging students in emotionally-laden science topics, and Ojala (2015) provided another. Ojala (2015) conducted a study to understand how teacher’s orientation towards hope in the face of climate change impacts student’s environmental engagement. They found that when teachers embodied “constructive hope” rather than hope based on denial of climate change their students were more prone to pro-environmental behaviors (Ojala, 2015). Constructive hope acknowledges students’ negative emotions on societal issues such as climate change and communicates a positive, future-oriented position (Ojala, 2015).

Relevant Findings from Chapters 3 and 4

This third and final study built upon the findings, insights, and methods from Chapters 3 and 4. In Chapter 3, I initiated my reflective practice by noticing critical moments when my initial experiences *sparked* connection and reflection with theories on the emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher. Through analyzing the key sparks of my first semester, I came to my early understandings of teacher effectiveness and meaningfulness, and a view into my aspired teacher self. This led me to define a new concept, *emotionally-informed teaching, as practices that support student learning and well-being through providing meaningful knowledge, emotional support, and effective teaching that incorporates emotional knowledge*. I view emotionally-informed teaching as the core of my aspired teacher's practice.

In Chapter 4, I discovered emotionally-informed teaching is enacted everyday through teaching techniques, which create intended emotionally-informed approaches. Through analyzing the techniques and approaches of five Middle school teachers at AA, I outlined six emotionally-informed approaches (Table 5.1) that were implemented through sixteen distinct emotionally-informed techniques. I also found that teachers used these approaches through anticipating and planning to address student's emotional responses, and by responding in the moment to students' emotional expressions. I gained perspective that each teacher constructed their unique kaleidoscope of emotionally-informed techniques and approaches to enact an emotionally-informed practice. I argued these emotionally-informed practices made the teacher effective and meaningful.

Methods

In this third and final study within the broader self-study, I utilized the perspectives and understandings garnered from the first two studies and years of teaching and research to explore my emotionally-informed teaching practice. Self-study uses self to understand aspects of teaching

and transforming practice (LaBoskey, 2004). In this self-study, I used my experiences and reflections from my first years as a middle school teacher as avenues to comprehend emotional dimensions in early teaching and develop my teaching practice. In this study, I continued using a reflective practice⁵ to discover personal insights and connections with theories from lived experiences (Schön, 1983).

For this study I utilized video recordings of my teaching in Spring 2024 along with reflective field notes throughout the three-year study period to construct windows into my emotionally-informed teaching practice. I assembled a narrative of a class period of “Mr. Levin’s 7th grade science” with student interactions before and after class. Rather than sharing a transcript of a single video recording, I collapsed moments from multiple recordings and field notes to craft a richer narrative of my emotionally-informed practice. This narrative is explored through a series of five vignettes and analysis that provide insights in my developing emotionally-informed practice.

The primary data for this study was two recorded video observations of me teaching in April and May of 2024 and reflective field notes (RFN) from Spring 2024. The videos were recorded on an iPad from my desk in the back corner of my classroom. They were about 40 minutes and unfortunately at times the view of my head or body is obstructed. The secondary data was RFNs written between Fall 2021 and Winter 2023. This dataset centered my teaching practice in Spring 2024 and contextualized it within my overall classroom teaching career.

Data Analysis

In the analysis, I employed Connelly and Clandinin (1990 as cited by Kim, 2016)’s analytical tools of broadening, borrowing, and storying and restorying. Broadening relates to connecting a moment to the larger context of the situation, cultural aspects, and storyline of the

⁵ See chapter 3 for more literature reflected to reflective practices in teaching

participant, to garner a greater picture of the participant (Kim, 2016). It involves reviewing other data such as field notes and literature alongside the moment (Kim, 2016). Borrowing occurs after broadening and is the process of focusing on specifics in the data to capture details such as how participants experienced the moment. The final step is finding ways to story and restory the moments to bring the participant's lived experience to the foreground (Kim, 2016). In this study, I am the participant, therefore I was able to add a layer of reflexivity to broaden, borrow, and story experiences that are pivotal to my emerging emotionally-informed practice. Through this process field texts can be transformed into research texts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Before utilizing Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) tools, I used a deductive approach with the six emotionally-informed approaches identified in Chapter 5 as analytic codes (see Table 5.1) to identify instances of emotionally-informed teaching in the video recordings and written reflective field notes. These instances focused on my action as a teacher, which could be observed in the videos through micro-actions, such word choice and body movement while teaching, and meso-actions like activity design. This methodology is framed under Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA) where discourse and interactions are understood as social acts that are embedded with meaning (Norris & Jones, 2005)⁶. My RFNs documenting moments with students or reflections on teaching also provided instances for analysis. In the initial round, I liberally marked moments in the videos and RFNs with potential connections to the emotionally-informed approaches.

To begin broadening the data, I reviewed the coded instances to identify ones that appear particularly powerful for answering the research questions. I asked myself questions about how it might relate to key literature such as emotional scaffolding, other data such as RFNs, or my personal story of becoming a teacher. A few of the reflective questions were: does it provide

⁶ See Chapter 4 for more on the role of Mediated Discourse Analysis in this self-study

critical insight into my emotionally-informed practice? Does it connect with other moments during my self-study? Can it elucidate new or reinforce existing understandings of emotionally-informed teaching? Can I trace an understanding of how I developed this technique or why I used it? From this process, I identified fifteen powerful instances.

The next step of analysis involved burrowing into the instances to see what details can contribute perspectives to the narrative of my emotionally-informed teaching. I consolidated related instances and selected five that provide the reader an informed view of my emotionally-informed teaching practice. The selecting of the powerful instances was a process of interrogating myself and the narrative of the teacher I present. The narrative I chose to write for this study is a constructed class period of “Mr. Levin’s 7th grade science” through five vignettes. The narrative collapses together instances from the May 16th and April 19th videos, as well as from my RFNs. I shared the vignettes with analysis that connects the instance with emotionally-informed approaches, other data, and relevant experiences. This approach invites the reader into the narrative and allows them to create their own interpretations.

Findings

The five-vignette “Mr. Levin’s 7th grade science class” narrative provides a rich image of my teaching practice from moments preceding, during, and after a 7th grade class. The narrative incorporates *direct quotes* and *body movements* (written in italics), as well as prose that is constructed from video recordings and recollections based on reflective field notes.

Vignette 1: Welcome

It’s a Tuesday morning during the last full week of school. Students begin coming into class as I walk around placing booklets on their tables. I start welcoming and checking in with them as they come in. “Hi Claire, how are you doing?
Tom, Will, Eric, what’s going on?”
I see another student Ben and ask how his personal push up challenge is going.

I walk over and pick up my classroom pet rabbit, Butters. Holding him, I ask a pair of girls eating rice cakes, “Lily, Aria, a different snack?”
“We’re being more skinny” Lily responds.
“OHhhh okay.” I say as I am walking towards another student. I leave that exchange without fully responding to their reference to skinny snacking.

I welcome more students and place Butters on Sabrina’s desk who forgot her science journal that day, and say “it’s okay, we won’t be using it that much today.”

This opening vignette gives a glimpse into how I try to start my classes. I try every class to welcome each student to class before I start any activities. My style for this is based on my on-going relationship with the student. You can see this in my asking about Ben’s personal push-up challenge, noticing John’s haircut, and noting Lily’s and Aria’s snack choices. As much as possible I aim for the welcoming check-ins to be more than a shallow “hello, how you doing?”. By providing individualized welcomes I am expressing an emotional understanding of the students as individuals. I am also framing (Hufnagel, 2018) the interaction as a space the student can share emotionally with me. Through this and probably coupled with 7th graders’ frankness and/or a personal connection with them, frequently I’ll hear more detailed answers about how they are or what they are thinking about than a perfunctory “good”.

In the vignette, Lily responds to my comment about their snack by saying “*we’re being more skinny*” (04/2024, VO). Her response brought up a sensitive topic, especially for a middle school girl, of body image and dieting. This statement was embedded with emotions, and I did not meaningfully acknowledge this emotional expression. I did not want to reinforce any viewpoint about their physical appearance, especially as a male teacher; however, I also did not take the moment to provide a more thoughtful discussion on health, beauty, and cultural pressures. This instance highlights that even though I opened the door for emotional expressions,

I felt unprepared or limited (by the time of needing to start class) to meaningfully acknowledge and engage with the emotional expression.

This technique of welcoming students individually and intentionally to class may be a means to achieve the emotionally-informed approach of offering engaged, supportive one-on-one interactions and instructions. It also is certainly an aspect of my way of building and expressing emotional understandings with the students. The goals of this are to both set a welcoming learning environment and foster positive relationships. This is a conscious practice that I credit back to a discussion with a friend who is an educational psychologist. He was telling me how a teacher standing at the door to welcome students is positively correlated with various student metrics of wellness and achievement. I am not familiar with the study, but I keep this conversation in mind frequently in my teacher life. During a school visit to New York, I also observed a teacher having every 6th grader share how they are doing with the class before starting. This assisted me in thinking of making my welcomes more of personal check-ins on how they are rather than just friendly greetings.

This vignette also introduced another important character to the story: Butters the bunny. I adopted Butters in 2018, but in 2021 I decided to bring him to school for the Halloween parade. He was dressed as a Luna moth, and I was a caterpillar (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1

Peter and Butters, AA Halloween, 2021



Since that moment, Butters has become a popular figure at AA and an integral part of my classroom, teaching practice, and teacher identity. I have incorporated Butters into the middle school in intentional ways to support students' emotions and well-being. In the vignette, you see that I placed him on Sabrina's desk. She typically is organized and thorough in her work. She seemed distressed that she uncharacteristically forgot her journal. I do not recall my exact thinking in that moment, but I may have considered easing her feelings by allowing her to interact with Butters. In a related example, in the Spring of 2021, we found out in the middle of a school day that there was a 7th grader who attempted suicide. I immediately left school to get Butters from home. I allowed students, especially friends close to the student who attempted suicide, to spend time with Butters. He has become an important collaborator in achieving the supporting student's emotional needs and well-being aspect of my emotionally-informed practice.

Vignette 2: Shoebill Storks

It's time to start class. As I am headed to the front of the room. Raheem excitedly asks me, "Mr. Levin, have you heard of Shoebill storks?"

“Have I heard of Shoebill storks? Duh!” I answer with enthusiasm.

“How tall are they?” he asks. I respond, “Umm I think about six feet. Look it up”. Raheem opens his computer to research this bird he is interested in.

“Alright, let’s get started. Welcome back to science class. You have 150 minutes of science class left in 7th grade. I will miss you all next year. Before we go over the day, have you all heard of shoebill storks??” I highlight these amazing animals that Raheem walked into class interested in. I project photos of the goofy, big birds, which seem to frequently trend online.

“Raheem, how tall are they?”

“They can grow up to five feet tall.”

“Who is five feet tall? Delilah, want to come up to the board to become a shoebill stork?”

Delilah stands in front of the whiteboard. “Raheem, what are their wingspans?”

“Up to 8 feet!” I had Delilah put her arms out wide and I explain how her wingspan is approximately that same as her height of five feet. I draw lines on the board of where the shoebill storks’ wings would end.

“Imagine a bird that big walking around!”

“Thanks Delilah, you can sit down. Thanks for the Shoebill exploration Raheem.”

This vignette captured a spontaneous learning opportunity that occurred at the start of class. Raheem and a couple of boys arrived in class with an unexpected, life science content-related interest. I noticed not only that this interest connected with our current class learning, but also that there was energy and excitement behind his interest. I placed myself into a facilitator role of translating his interest and energy into a short class exploration. This instance showed that I valued and elevated Raheem’s emotional expression in the classroom. I believe that it is my noticing of his emotional expression and fostering it to give engaged learning makes this an emotionally-informed technique, as evidenced in the field note that I wrote immediately following this class to explore this more:

A couple guys came in talking about Shoebill storks. I gave the space to explore that as a class. I knew their energy could be focused on learning, which isn’t always true so I allowed it to grow. I also mostly just had fun with them and was willing to adjust the learning. It’s hard to identify what I was doing but I know I felt an energetic flow with the class. It was high energy for Friday morning, and I had the enthusiasm centered on the class learning which was exploring mammals. (05/2024, RFN)

The energy that I noticed in their interest and facilitated into the Shoebill discussion seemed to set the rest of the class up to be “an energetic flow”. This *Mr. Levin’s Science Class narrative* is not a direct construction of that whole class period. However, this field note shows the shoebill stork instance may have played a key role in what *felt like a successful* class. It demonstrates that translating student energy and interest into emotionally-engaged learning and having fun with students are aspects of when I feel energetic flow in my classroom, which is an apparent goal of my teaching. This instance showed that opposed to students’ emotions and emotional expressions being seen as obstacles to classroom learning (Hargreaves, 2000), I value them as means for engagement.

This idea of “flow or energetic flow” has surfaced before in my teaching career and is intimately connected with emotionally-informed teaching. For example, a poem I wrote regarding *flow* in the Fall of 2021:

Flow.
When only that moment exists.
You are moving with the students
Interest
Excitement
Meaning filling the air.
(9/2021, RFN)

I do not recall after what class or interaction I wrote that poem, nevertheless, both *interest* and *excitement* are in my understanding of flow at that point, and I linked it to meaningful learning. In this Shoebill stork instance, I would label it *emotionally-engaged learning* instead of meaningful, because I felt that the students’ energies and emotions were engaged in learning together about an organism. These *flow moments* are not daily occurrences in my teaching career but provide some of the most fulfilling experiences of teaching middle schoolers.

This vignette and discussion outline a new emotionally-informed technique of translating students’ curiosities, emotions, and energy into engaged learning. I can partially credit this

technique to my year working as a preschool teacher. This field note from 2021 expands the view on being a facilitator of learning experiences:

As a middle school teacher, I have taken on the role of “question answerer”. This is a new role for me and I am not totally satisfied nor comfortable in it. When I was a preschool teacher, I worked at a Reggio-Emilia inspired school which places the teacher as a facilitator of student interest. I listened to 5-year-olds’ questions and created pathways for them to explore those questions. (11/2021, RFN)

As a preschool teacher, I garnered the perspective that students’ interests and emotions can be doorways to *emotionally-engaged learning*. In that setting where there was an explicit focus on attending to children’s well-being, I used emotional knowledge to see the students’ interests and connect them with the larger context for more *emotionally-engaged learning*. This instance with Raheem, demonstrates the same use of emotional knowledge of identifying a moment where “I knew their energy could be focused on learning”, and expanding it for *emotionally-engaged learning*.

This vignette and discussion painted a clear image of my emotionally-informed technique for creating a meaningful, emotionally-engaged learning experience. However, I can complexify it through placing that moment of success in the larger context of that class and that student, Raheem. It is important to understand that at this time as a researcher I was becoming more aware of Nichols et al.’s (2017) work on teacher identity and attributions. Their writing sparked connections with my practice and led to deeper investigations and reflections.

That Shoebill Stork instance happened in May of 2024 and for most of April and May that class was markedly more engaged in class learning as this field note describes: “This class is still being locked in with course learning. They are interested and engaged. They were the most challenging. But now they are using their energy for class learning. *It’s hard to pinpoint why*” (05/2024, RFN). Again, I am noting aspects of interest, engagement, and using their energy as indicators of successful learning. However, I said that I did not know what to attribute this

classroom success to. I noted that they were the hardest class, which means behaviorally they were challenging. I thought the success could possibly be attributed to the additional emotional work that the class required in terms of setting boundaries, re-establishing norms, changing seating arrangements, and individual feedback. The success could possibly be attributed to the emotional bonds and classroom climate that I fostered over time through emotional work.

However, other teachers had ideas of what to attribute this class's period of success to. Mr. P substituted for my class during that time frame, and said it went great and that success must have been due to a change of pace having a new teacher that day (05/2024, RFN). I also discussed this class's successes with another 7th grade science, Mr. R, and he attributed it to the possibility that his class did a similar bird unit recently so maybe my students are excited to get to do it now. (05/2024, RFN). Mr. P and Mr. R could be right that these elements played parts in this class's successes. From all these various self-attributions, I reflected:

“But what is interesting is how Mr. P, Mr. R and I are looking to attribute this moment of success which feels great as a teacher. We all hope for it to validate our teaching because it is a hard profession, and students are what make it fulfilling. (05/2024, RFN)

All three of us teachers were searching to internally attribute (Nichols et al., 2016) the students' success to our teaching. This aligns with the studies that show a teacher's sense of satisfaction and success is sourced from positive emotional experiences and relationships with students (Lortie, 1975; Hargreaves, 2001).

My relationship with Raheem can provide additional insight into this discussion. A few days earlier in May, 2024, with this same class, I did a collaborative lesson with the garden teacher, Ms. A. Afterwards, I had the following conversation with her:

I talked with the garden teacher who I just did a lesson with. She says, “Can I ask you something?... What did you do to Raheem and Garrett?”

They were so attentive and engaged and followed instructions and were positive. That is a stark difference from last year.”

I said “Well I’ve worked with them for 2 years since I taught them last year. They are notorious for being disruptive. I said I’ve had to give several rounds of direct feedback to them. But I don’t know, they’ve been very on task and energetic in class.”

It’s interesting that she attributed their success to me. Teachers really do look at themselves or others for attribution of student successes and failures. I know I put a lot of time into my relationships with them. Mostly in class, but idk maybe that’s paying off? Or are they generally maturing? (05/2024, RFN)

What is striking about this conversation is the fact that Ms. A *externally* attributes Raheem’s and Garrett’s growth in learning behaviors to me. Even though I was more of an assistant teacher during the lesson she taught, she attributed them being attentive, engaged, positive, and following instructions to me. This contrasts to the previous discussion of two male teachers who *internally* attributed the class successes to themselves. Neither Nichols et al. (2016) nor this study investigated differences in teacher attributions based on gender, but this instance did highlight it as an area of inquiry. Another important difference is that Ms. A was commenting on individual student behaviors, while Mr. P, Mr. R, and I were discussing the whole class.

In the conversation with Ms. A, I questioned how I may have impacted these students’ development. I noted providing rounds of direct feedback with them and putting time into my relationships with them. This showed how creating positive student relationships does not happen right away, but it takes emotional work and labor to complete. And as a teacher it is not always very clear from where student development and classroom success arise. Vignette 2 showcased those momentary instances of success with students, such as collaboratively exploring Shoebill Storks, are not only constructed through in-the-moment emotionally-informed techniques but also by longer term emotional development of student relationships and classroom cultures.

Vignette 3: I got an E!

I go over the agenda written on the board:

- Review Grades
- Mammal order work time

- Endangered Mammal Odes

“I have posted your bird quizzes and journal page grades on Canvas. I have to say that I am extremely impressed with you all mastering the difficult skill of identification. I am proud of you all for putting the energy in to learn the details it takes to identify birds by sight and sound. Now, please find your grades on Canvas. As always, let me know if you have a question and if you want to improve your work you can and then show me”.

Students open their computers to find their grades. I remain in the center of the room as they review their grades.

“Mr. Levin!” Claire calls me over.

I walk to her desk. I kneel as she tells me, “I got an E!”.

I look her in the eyes and say, “Yay you did! That’s awesome. Good job”

In this vignette, I shared a window into how I assess and provide feedback for my students, which as discussed in Chapter 5 with Mr. B’s math test results, can be an emotional topic for students. In this instance, I discussed their quiz results by emphasizing my feeling of being proud of their performance. Throughout the self-study project, I had become aware of how teachers like Ms. M shared their own feelings about their students’ behaviors, thoughts, and work. That emotionally-informed technique seemed like an effective way of providing feedback, so I was working to incorporate more feelings words when discussing their performances. In Vignette 1, you can also see me saying “I will miss you all next year”. I believe this was a related instance to this technique, in that I am openly sharing my feelings towards not having them in class next year. The statement “extremely impressed with you all mastering the difficult skill of identification” also signaled to them that I value their skills mastery as a learning goal.

Claire sharing her grade with me was a moment that can be expanded for more insights. In this instance, she decided she wanted to share her successes with me. I am also Claire’s advisor so our personal connection may contribute to why she wanted to share that with me. My actions of kneeling to her level at the desk and making eye contact while celebrating her success demonstrated an engaged moment of celebrating her success. As discussed in Chapter 5, eye

contact is an emotionally-informed technique I noticed in Mr. E and was identified as important in Shahidzade et al.'s (2022) study.

Kneeling to be at Claire's level when engaging is a technique that my science department head, Ms. G, noticed when she watched me teach. Ms. G was observing my 6th grade class and since she was familiar with my research I asked if she would look for any emotionally-informed techniques. Afterwards she told me she noticed how I kneeled to be at the students' level to answer questions and provide feedback. Using Hargreaves's (2000) emotional geographies, my action of getting to the students' eye level when working together could increase relational closeness by decreasing physical distance. I do not do this every time I engage with a student but do consciously think about how it might level out the power dynamic between a teacher and a student by not having me look down on them. I credit this technique to my experiences as a preschool teacher where it is imperative to get to the eye level of five-year-olds when engaging with them. These embodied actions enabled me to meaningfully celebrate Claire's success with her.

I believe this moment also provided perspective on my grading system. For my 7th grade class, I do not use numerical grading but rather a standards-based one from D (does not meet expectations) to M (meets expectations) to E (exceeds expectations). This is the most common grading system in 7th grade, but it is not uniformly enacted by teachers. My personal approach is making students comfortable with receiving "Meets expectations". This means they did all the work adequately. To get up to an E, the student must show more dedication, care, investment, in the assignment, usually that is through additional research or effort to effectively display their learning. I set a higher standard for Es that some students frequently get motivated to try and achieve, even though they will pass my class without receiving any Es. Claire is clearly excited

she reached that higher bar that I set. This moment may indicate that setting high, but attainable expectations for students may be an emotionally-informed technique.

Vignette 4: Endangered Mammal Odes

I turn off one of the overhead lights and sit down in the front of the room. “So, you spent time getting to know an endangered mammal...Let’s take a minute to appreciate these animals that live on our planet and hopefully will keep living but might not.

So, pick one of your odes. You have two choices: you read it out loud or Mr. Levin will read your ode out loud.

Right now, decide which.” Students look at their work deciding which they will read.

“Okay, pick your ode we will start. After each ode we will snap because we are fancy like that. It is poetry and we appreciate the arts at Albuquerque Academy...Bryan, will you start?”

The students quietly listen and fidget in their seats as each student reads their short ode about an endangered mammal they studied. I am seated in the front, always looking towards the speaker. We start off snapping after each, but that habit dies out.

Students share about chimpanzees, Utah prairie dogs, tree kangaroos, and many more.

Many poems include emotional aspects:

“Knowing you are endangered simply breaks my heart. Without you, our plants would grow so slowly, and we won’t have anyone to dig burrows into the soil.”

I model listening and acknowledging their poem with reflective statements, *“Nice, very respectful”*; *“Ooof, I hope they can recover”*.

The last two students want me to read their odes out loud for them. I read the first one and then the final one: *“It is very unfortunate the Iriomote cat is critically endangered especially as it became engrained in Japanese culture. If this is destroyed, the island of Iriomote would collapse. It would be a horrendous day for Japan.*

aaaaooff and it’s culturally important. Thank you ,Jim for enlightening us.”

In this vignette I demonstrated playful and in-the-moment emotionally-informed techniques during a lesson about endangered mammals. In teaching life science, there is always the sadder side of the content that involves extinctions, endangered animals, environmental degradation, and climate crisis. As an emerging science educator, I am aware of the difficulties in teaching these topics and this small assignment showed a couple emotionally-informed

techniques I apply to these topics. Overall, I was aiming to achieve the emotionally-informed approach of creating safe spaces for exploring emotional topics. Using Hufnagel's (2018) perspective on framing and emotional expressions, it's possible to see how I framed the writing assignment to allow the students to study and write with emotional expressions through the structuring of writing an ode that is an appreciative, respectful poem that highlights unique and important aspects of the endangered species.

In this vignette, I decided to try facilitating a class reading of the odes to share their work and have a moment of remembering these endangered animals. My actions of turning down the lights and sitting down with students tried to signal a calmer activity. At the onset, I tried to set the emotional tone of acknowledging the sadness aspect but highlighted that we should appreciate them by saying, "*Let's take a minute to appreciate these animals that live on our planet and hopefully will keep living but might not*" (4/2024, VO). Both the turning the lights down and that statement emotionally framed the activity as a space that allowed emotional expressions (Hufnagel, 2018). Many of the students' odes did express emotions, especially sadness towards the endangered animals. I listened and normalized these emotions through expressing emotion in my responses of "oof", and "aaooof". Like Hufnagel's (2018) findings, during the activity framed for emotional expressions I acknowledged their expressions and supported their ideas.

In this vignette, I employed several emotionally-informed techniques including normalizing student emotions, modeling constructive emotional responses through expressing appreciation to the animals, and creative lesson planning for students to engage in an emotional topic. Nevertheless, I do not think I fully embodied "constructive hope" that acknowledges negative emotions on topics and communicates a positive position (Ojala, 2015). My empathetic, compassionate approach came across more as somber than hopeful. One way I could have improved this lesson and embodied a constructive hope perspective would have been through

following up the ode readings with discussion into the factors leading to species being endangered and how we can support conservation efforts.

An additional emotional dimension of this vignette arose from the first day of this lesson being instructed by a substitute teacher. I decided the day before this class to have the odes reading, so the students were not expecting to read them. Since reading your work out loud can be socially-emotionally challenging, I provided the option to read their ode if they didn't want to read it themselves. This adjustment was made to address the student's emotional response to the activity and two students selected the option. While I am not sure I can locate the origins of my development of each of these techniques, I do know that I was inspired by observations of Ms. M's masterful lesson on students reflecting and sharing of their authenticity and identities.

My planning and actions in this lesson demonstrated emotionally-informed techniques for creating a safe space for exploring emotional topics. Nevertheless, the activity may have still been emotionally challenging for students since they did not previously know they were going to read their poem aloud and endangered species is a potentially sad topic.

Vignette 5: You don't need to be your brother

I conclude class and remind everyone to go outside this weekend. As the students file out and I clean up, Matt lingers behind.

"Hey Matt, what's up?"

He wants to go over some of his work to make sure he is caught up. As we are looking at it, he makes a comment about not being as good as his brother. He does this a lot.

I say, "*You know you don't need to always compare yourself to your brother*".

Apparently, he was filled to the brim with emotions on this topic. He starts sharing the struggle of being constantly compared to his overachieving brother who went to this school and now is at an ivy league, publishes articles, track star, on and on... He doesn't feel supported nor heard by his parents. He's crying. We talked about it for about 20 minutes. He says he hadn't talked with anyone about it before. He shares that he once tried to take his life over it.

I gave him a couple hugs. Tell him he is loved and cared for who he is. I talked with him about getting more support for him like the counselor. He's open to it but really doesn't want his parents to find out.

This vignette moved the discussion to the aspect of emotionally-informed teaching that emphasizes providing emotional support and fostering student well-being. In this instance, unexpectedly, discussing work with a student transformed into a moment of emotional processing of a personally difficult topic. In that moment, it felt safe to provide the reflection about his comparisons to his brother. His response of spilling of his feelings about it demonstrates him being “filled to the brim with emotions”. It also seemed to indicate a level of trust and safety in his relationship with me. This claim is supported by him sharing “he hadn’t talked with anyone about it before”.

At the heart of my support for him in this vignette is *listening, guiding, and loving Matt*. I did not shut him down from sharing his feelings. I provided space for it and intently listened and validated his feelings. I was also aiming to guide him to additional support, such as the counselor, and provide insights about him not needing to be comparative with his brother. My main message to him was he was loved for who he is and showed this affection by giving him a hug. Using Hargreaves (2000), it is possible to see how the action of giving him a hug decreased our physical distance to create a feeling of closeness and compassion. As a male middle school teacher, I generally keep greater physical distance from students than I’ve seen female teachers express who regularly hug students. I’ve noted how female teachers demonstrated patterns of closeness with students through hugs. In this instance, a hug was an emotional support Matt wanted.

These emotionally-informed techniques can be seen as just personal attributions of being caring and compassionate. Nevertheless, I believe some of this can be credited to working in youth development programs where I had to support students with various emotional and mental health crises. Additionally, explicitly telling students they are loved by their teachers, is a technique that I had consciously tried to foster during this period. I saw this modeled by other

teachers like Ms. A who started our morning meetings with the 7th graders by saying “good morning 7th graders that I love and adore!”.

It’s interesting to consider: how did I create safety in my relationship with Matt that led to him opening up? This is my first-year teaching Matt, and he is not one of my advisees, so our relationship is not formally extended from our class, nor did I know him in his 6th grade year. I was honestly a bit surprised he chose me to open up to me. During our year in my class, Matt had been disorganized and fell behind especially at the beginning and middle of the year. He damaged his science journal, the primary work product of our class, to the extent that I had to get him another one. Perhaps my approach to working with him through that failure of his journal and struggling in class may have contributed to developing a trusting relationship. Or perhaps it has to do with how I tried to establish my classroom environment as comfortable and safe. Or his problems were so prevalent that day that he had to share them with anyone. Another moment with a student, Nelly, may shed more light on the role of relationship development and emotional support:

A student who I am close with opened up on her struggles. She’s been holding off from telling me or the counselor the deeper issues she’d been having for a while. It seemed to finally bubble over this time. Very similar to Matt really. They spilled over and I was a safe receptor to their worries. That might be developmental. It is very hard for middle schoolers to ask for help, opening process challenges, proactively identify and cope with issues. Maybe that is the type of emotional labor or healing a teacher can provide for that age. A safe place to spill lol. That sounds like the life of a middle schooler. (5/2024, RFN)

In contrast to Matt, Nelly is one of my advisees and I’ve taught her for almost two years at this point. She spent a lot of time in my classroom telling her friends and I her random ideas, interests, and things going on. Nevertheless, over the past half year the counselor and I had been worried about her because she was seeming “off” and upset but would shut down if offered help. In this instance, she spilled over about no one liking her and not being accepted (the issue that apparently underlined much of her stresses).

My teacher-student relationships with Matt and Nelly are characteristically different in terms of how long I've known each and how much time I spend with each. With Nelly, I had an emotional understanding that something was off for her and previously offered help. With Matt, I had an emotional understanding that he constantly compares himself with his brother. However, I did not know it was a deep-rooted problem. While there were many variables that obscured clarity into why these students chose to seek emotional support from me or felt I was a "safe space to spill", it seems that emotional understanding was an important bridge for both students to access emotional support. I also noted the potential developmental characteristic that emotional support for middle schoolers seems to be creating safe spaces to spill. This contrasts to the high school student who wanted to "feel their feelings" in Mr. T's office (see Chapter 3). The high schooler had a certain level of awareness of an emotional issue and sought emotional support and meaningful knowledge from a trusted teacher to address it.

In reflection upon my actions and techniques in these interactions with students, I connect them back to my experiences with my undergraduate teacher, Tass. She played a significant role in supporting my emotional and academic needs and assisting me in flourishing as a student, especially in moments of emotional distress. With my students, in my embodiment of the emotionally-informed techniques of expressing emotional understanding, listening to their feelings, and providing emotional support, I see reflections of Tass. I believe I can partially credit my techniques to a subconscious mimicking of Tass' support of me learned through the process of apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975).

Discussion

In this third and final study, I hoped to understand what aspects, if any, of my teaching could be considered emotionally-informed and how they influence my understanding of teacher

success. The results discussed through the narrative of *Mr. Levin's Science Class* expanded understandings of theories on the emotional dimensions of teaching and my teaching practice.

In my facilitation of the lesson on endangered animals (Vignette 4), like teachers studied in Hufnagel (2018), I demonstrated actions that framed the activity as a space for emotional expression. I also acknowledged students' emotional expressions and supported their ideas during this activity (Hufnagel, 2018). In Vignette 2, my recognition of a student's spontaneous interest and emotional expression of excitement towards Shoebill Storks led to facilitating whole class exploration on that topic. My actions contrasted with the teachers in Hufnagel (2018) who did not acknowledge nor support emotional expressions outside of activities designated for emotional expressions. I argue this shows planning and intentionally framing activities is important for discussing emotional topics, but also awareness of students' moment-to-moment emotional expressions and adaptability to use them for emotionally-engaged learning is powerful. I also demonstrated a classroom environment welcoming students' emotions and emotional engagement that is closer to the elementary rather than the secondary classrooms where students' emotions are seen as impediments to learning studied in Hargreaves (2000).

In the whole narrative, I enacted several of the emotionally-informed approaches identified in Chapter 4 (Table 5.1) including creating a safe space for students to explore emotional topics, acknowledging student effort and providing emotive feedback, offering engaged, supportive one-on-one interactions and instructions, and modeling constructive emotional responses to curriculum. To enact these approaches, I utilized three emotionally-informed techniques previously identified in AA teachers (see Chapter 4): sharing my feelings about the student's behaviors, thoughts, and work, normalizing students' emotions, and clever and masterful lesson planning. I also demonstrated new emotionally-informed techniques such as welcoming students individually and intentionally, establishing and hold high yet achievable

expectations for students, and being at students' eye level and making eye contact to celebrate student success. These findings further support my argument for recognition of emotionally-informed approaches as refinement and expansion of emotional scaffolding strategies (e.g. Lönngren et al., 2021a)

Emotionally-informed teaching not only expands the approaches and techniques for using emotional knowledge in teaching but also incorporates the goal of supporting students' well-being, which is beyond typical emotional scaffolding (e.g. Lönngren et al., 2021a; Meyer & Turner, 2007; Rosiek, 2003). In this study, I provided a deep analysis of my role as teacher in supporting the emotional needs of students. I embodied and enacted various techniques for providing my student's emotional support including allowing students to interact with Butters, offering alternatives to them verbally sharing their poems in front of their peers, listening to their emotional distresses, leading them to more support (counselor), and normalizing their feelings. I discovered an intimate, personal acknowledgement of the pivotal role of emotional understanding and agreement with literature (e.g. Hargreaves, 2007; Meyer, 2009) that argues it underpins the formation of relationships with students. I argue that foundational to all emotional supports for students is emotional understanding of who they are, what they are experiencing, and how they might be feeling.

Development of my Emotionally-informed practice.

In this analysis, I used reflection to look for the sources of development for the various emotionally-informed techniques I employed. While many times it was not clear through reflection what influence may have led to my use and development of a technique, there were three apparent sources: preschool teaching, experiences as a student, and insights from this self-study. I was surprised to find that my experiences from a year of preschool teaching influenced how I interact with students, such as getting to their eye level and my orientation towards being a

facilitator of student learning. My experiences as a student, particularly with my teacher Tass, surfaced as critical to my use of techniques to meet my students' emotional needs, express emotional understanding, and perspective on teaching as healing. Finally, insights garnered from reflections between observations of other teachers and my practice influenced my usage of several emotionally-informed techniques, such as creating safe spaces for exploring emotional topics and sharing my feelings towards students' effort and thoughts. This shows my reflective practice that is embedded in this self-study did influence my emerging teaching practice.

Feeling success.

Three years ago, if I was asked to explicitly write out the techniques my aspired teacher self uses, I do not think I would come up with emotionally-informed techniques observed in this study. That is not because those techniques are out of line with my aspired practice, but rather my perspective of my aspired teacher was opaque. As a teacher, the only way I can truly understand if I am successful is through *feelings*. While I did not have a clear picture of my aspired techniques nor how to define teacher success, *I could feel when I was effective and meaningful as a teacher*. This perspective of feeling success is supported by teaching being an emotional practice (Hargreaves, 1998) and psychic and emotional rewards of teaching are felt by teachers not received in bank accounts (Hargreaves, 1999; Hargreaves, 2000; Lortie, 1975). The narrative of Mr. Levin's Science Class and discussion highlighted several instances of me *feeling successful* and shows that psychic and emotional rewards derived from students are my primary source of satisfaction and constructed feelings of being successful.

This analysis showed I *feel successful* from three different sources: *emotionally-engaged learning, juicy moments of connection with students, and students' personal and academic development*. The Shoebill Stock vignette and discussion discovered that I feel successful when the class is emotionally-engaged in the learning experience. I identified these moments from the

feeling of “flow teaching” where it feels like we are all on a learning journey together.

“Emotionally-engaged learning” is characterized by mutual interest, energy, and excitement concentrated on the same topic. This feeling of success relates to Hargreaves’ (2000) findings of teachers receiving emotional rewards through positive emotional experiences and engagement of the whole class.

“Juicy moments of connection” borrows its name from the conversation the school counselor and I had about making meaningful moments of connection with students (see Chapter 4). The instances with Matt and Nelly both highlight a time a student felt safe to share vulnerably and emotionally about their struggles. In these moments, I stepped into the role of expressing emotional understanding and providing emotional support. These acts of emotional understanding also increased closeness in my student-teacher relationships (Hargreaves, 2000). These moments are key to my perspective on teaching being healing (hooks, 1994) and a source of job fulfillment through psychic and emotional rewards (Lortie, 1975).

“Students’ personal and academic development” relates to Ms. A’s noticing of Raheem and Garrett’s growth in terms of engagement, interest, and positive attitudes in learning. This source of success connects to my effectiveness in developing student learning behaviors and attitudes. This source was also apparent in Vignette 3 when I discussed my pride in the students’ mastering skills and a student exceeding expectations. This demonstrates that I feel success when I observe significant growth in students’ behaviors, attitudes, and performances. This study showed that central to my role in facilitating success from any, all of these three sources is my use of emotionally-informed approaches.

In this third and final study, I demonstrated tangible ways I am currently implementing emotionally-informed approaches in my teaching and identified a few sources for their development. I also acquired a deeper understanding of my role in supporting student’s emotional

health, personal development, and well-being. I argue that these emotionally-informed approaches make me effective and meaningful as a teacher and can create instances with students where I *feel success*. This emotionally-informed practice resembles my aspired teacher self; nevertheless, in Chapter 6 I take a reflective look back at this self-study to fully reflect on my becoming of a teacher.

Chapter 6

"I don't think we'll become the teachers we want to be, but we'll get really close."

Carmen, former AA Teaching Fellow, (11/2021, RFN)

This dissertation was a deep journey into my experiences of my first three years of teaching. While all research is methodological questioning to understand unknowns, this self-study felt like a spiraling path where each step was created just before my foot landed upon it. My reflexive, teaching, and research practices forged my pathway to understanding emotional aspects of teaching and how they shaped and reshaped my emerging teaching practice. The three studies of the dissertation were methodologically framed to create detailed perspectives on emotionally-informed teaching generally and within my teaching specifically. Nevertheless, there are several unresolved questions that arose from this self-study.

In this final chapter, I explore remaining questions including how this self-study will continue to shape my teaching, how it could inform other early career teachers, and the principal question raised by Carmen's statement and this self-study: did I become my aspired teacher self? In the following act of reflection and discussion, I incorporate reflective field notes (RFN) collected during this study period and related literature.

Did I become my aspired teacher self?

In short, yes and no. In the end, I agree with Ovens et al. (2016), "teachers are continually in a process of becoming as they live life, build relationships, and work with particular students, colleagues, and families in particular schools and communities" (p. 364). The aspired destination of this story was never a place I could achieve because teachers do not have rigid, unchanging teacher selves and practices. Teachers are always becoming. I appreciate the way Ovens et al. (2016) writes about Deleuze's (1994) perspective: "The teaching self is an ever-changing phenomenon, never fully realised, always in the process of becoming other" (p. 358). Instead of

centering my research focus on how I perceive and experience the concept of becoming, I followed my practice reflection and intuition (Johansson & Kroksmark, 2004) to investigate the emotional aspects of teaching and becoming a teacher.

From a researcher perspective, I do feel that I am currently embodying and enacting aspects of the teacher I want to be. I also believe this self-study, especially Chapter 5, demonstrated the emotional aspects of teaching, learning, and connecting with students form a significant part of how I perceive myself and value teaching. However, from a teacher/personal perspective, I do not always feel I am my aspired teacher self, nor really close to it, as I expressed in this reflective field note where a student comments on why students wouldn't be looking for their friends in my classroom:

A student sarcastically jokes “they don't look in here because students are always in here. Because you're such a popular and cool teacher” that was a dagger. I have noticed this inner critic grow in the past weeks and have actively worked to soothe it. But that comment rubbed this active wound.

I re-read my student evaluations which are positive and great. That helped a bit, but still this pulling on my attention and energy is making me thinner. Although to be honest, the first years I've felt thin most of the time. The two preps, the learning content, setting up systems for grading, and now the researching. I guess I might be making big steps on being my best teacher self but also literally need more time free to create stronger bonds with kids. (2/2024, RFN)

This field note re-emphasizes the impact of students on my sense of success. The student comment, which I call a *dagger* essentially states, “you're not popular nor cool so students do not want to spend time in your classroom”, hurt my self-esteem. Like the elementary teachers in Hargreaves (2000), I am certainly influenced by being called a favorite teacher or “popular”. In the RFN, you can also see how the formal student evaluations of my teaching provided a positive affirmation of my teaching. This demonstrates the tentative nature of psychic and emotional rewards (Lortie, 1975). If the opinions of twelve-year-olds shape a portion of how I understand

my own success, then my self-evaluation process will be understandably unpredictable and variable.

My reflections in the second paragraph distinguish the two ways I see my teacher self: effective and meaningful in the classroom and connected to students outside of the classroom. In this note (as noted by the reflection on the student evaluations) and related field notes during this period, I felt confident and close to an ideal teaching practice during my classes. I proved in this self-study that my uses of emotional knowledge and emotional understanding through emotionally-informed approaches are what make my teaching practice effective and meaningful. In this field note, the viewpoint on being connected to students outside of class pointed to a slightly different student-teacher dynamic than previously explored in this dissertation.

My research on emotionally-informed teaching includes providing emotional support and meaningful knowledge that extends beyond disciplinary learning. I also showcased my emotional understanding and emotional support of students like Matt and Nelly in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, the student connection mentioned in this field note is closer to being a teacher who students find fun and enjoyable to be around. This could be argued to be a shallower aspect of student-teacher relationships than providing emotional support. Regardless, being present and having fun with students outside of class is an important part of developing relationships with them. Unfortunately, I mentioned feeling limited in achieving these student connections, “I guess I might be making big steps on being my best teacher self but also literally need more time free to create stronger bonds with kids” (2/2024, RFN).

Hargreaves (2000) acknowledges that it takes significant time to develop strong emotional understanding and relationships with students. Gutierrez (2000 as cited by Hargreaves, 2000) found that complex school structures and demands create a frenetic pace of teaching that does not allow time for relationships to develop. Even though Gutierrez’s (2000) study focused

on teaching to standards and public-school contexts, my experiences throughout the first three years of teaching resonate with a similar situation of feeling stretched on time to be able to develop student relationships. In this field note, I mentioned early teacher stresses of learning content knowledge, setting up grading systems, and judging preparations for multiple classes as well as the time and energy for dissertation research. While not portrayed in this field note, I also noticed through my experiences that personal life issues and school structural changes (such as scheduling and additional teacher tasks) have huge impacts on my feeling of being stretched thin as a teacher and (in)ability to form student-teacher relationships.

This discussion highlights several factors into how I view and criticize my teacher self including the role of student feedback (both positive and negative) and student relationships, and the dilemma of not having enough time. It also shows that my on-going internal processing of job satisfaction and effectiveness is dynamic, complex, and emotional. Stepping back to a wider, general viewpoint on my development over the three years, I believe that I have improved as a teacher in ways that align with the teacher I aim to be. This improvement included more frequent and conscious usage of emotional understanding and knowledge in my practice. I believe that I am always becoming the teacher I desire to be.

Moving forward anew

Self-study is aimed at improving the practice of a teacher through an on-going process of reflection and inquiry that constructs new understandings that support the teacher and the broader community of teachers and scholars (Galman et al., 2009 as cited by Paravato-Taylor & Newberry, 2018). Self-study is also challenging to conduct and “makes life more difficult” (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004, p. 806) due to the continual questioning and reflecting. I found this self-study formed a challenging state of mind and the time required to conduct and write this

self-study partially constrained my time to connect with students. Nevertheless, this self-study framework and reflective practice did inform, orient, and improve my teaching.

At the end of this study period, Ms. G (my department head) and I discussed the student evaluations of my teaching and the students' generally positive feedback, which includes ratings/comments on if the student felt I cared about them and if my classroom was welcoming. Ms. G, who is familiar with my research, "credited my success to my focus on emotional aspects of teaching" (05/2024, RFN). When she said this, it felt as if she was seeing something I could not yet view. Unlike many self-studies (e.g. Akinbode, 2013; Paravato-Taylor & Newberry, 2018) I did not create a structured reflective cycle where I could implement changes from my reflections while I was teaching and researching. Nevertheless, in Chapter 5, I traced the influences of insights from the self-study research to my development and use of emotionally-informed techniques. This shows that I did make some changes to my teaching practices based on self-study reflections such as creating safe spaces for students to explore emotional topics and sharing my feelings towards students' efforts and thoughts.

Over the past couple months, I entered an intensive period of reflection and inquiry by conducting my analysis for all three studies and writing the results. So how will this deep reflexive period and the preceding self-study experiences shape my teaching moving forward? My awareness of the plethora of ways to incorporate emotional knowledge into my teaching is exciting and I will try some more of the techniques I observed. Specifically, I want to emulate the *expanding moments to impart knowledge about being a good person* more in my teaching. I think the meaningful knowledge I've seen teachers share in those moments are akin to the type of teaching hooks (1994) calls for. I am also impacted in learning by how critical emotional understanding is to teaching, supporting students, forming relationships, and feeling successful. I will be reentering the classroom with that awareness heightened.

This reflective process will assist me in shifting my ways of understanding and feeling success as a teacher. Akinbode (2013) states that by “opening reflective spaces, one can become aware of how emotions have a powerful impact on the rational aspects of being a teacher” (p. 72). This self-study displays that I, like most teachers, get my sense of job satisfaction from students (Lortie, 1975; Hargreaves, 2000). Nevertheless, I believe the field note about the student’s comment on my “popularity” shows that internally this process of receiving physic rewards from students braided with feelings of unconstructive self-criticism. I am comfortable acknowledging that students provide my sense of satisfaction and success, but I will strive to keep a broader evaluation of myself rather than a responsive, emotional one to comments made by middle schoolers. These are a few of the new understandings from this self-study that will support my continued becoming of a teacher. Nevertheless, I know this long, transformative project will reveal insights for years to come.

How can this self-study inform and support early career teachers, veteran teachers, and teacher educators?

“I wish I knew teaching would be this hard and challenging”

Tim, Former AA Teaching Fellow, (5/2024, RFN)

In this self-study, I hoped to discover insights, teaching approaches, and reflective techniques that could be informative for educational researchers and teachers, especially early career teachers. As the participant of this self-study, I benefited from developing a reflective practice during my first years of teaching, which asked me to inquire about the emotional aspects of teaching. This reflective practice was particularly important for orienting and navigating my early teacher experiences as I entered teaching outside of a teacher preparation program. In future work, I aspire to support early career teachers like Tim not only to understand the daunting nature

of becoming a teacher but also in forming powerful reflective practices to navigate and comprehend their teaching experiences.

Narrative-biographical and reflective approaches are gaining international usage in teacher education, which allows student teachers to understand underlying beliefs related to teaching (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004). Most teachers probably identify as reflective practitioners as they actively seek to reflect on their professional practice (Loughran, 2006 as cited by Akinbode, 2013), but this practice is mostly characterized by a use of tacit knowledge and intuition (Akinbode, 2013). Given the reflective and continual self-improvement nature of teaching, creating more opportunities for early career teachers and practicing teachers outside of teacher preparation to construct effective reflective practices is paramount.

Even though the study of emotions in teaching has increased, it remains less acknowledged in teacher education (Fletcher & Hordvik, 2022). Since becoming a teacher is an emotional, demanding, and complex process (Fuller & Brown, 1975; Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016), it seems apparent that more preparation for teachers around the emotional aspects of teaching is critical. This self-study demonstrates reflective practices on the emotional aspects of teaching can be supportive and transformational for teacher development (also see Akinbode, 2013; Paravato-Taylor & Newberry, 2018). Supporting early career teachers to develop reflective practices around the emotional aspects of teaching could be transformational for beginning teachers.

My findings on emotionally-informed teaching provided important new perspectives for research on emotional scaffolding and emotional dimensions in teaching. There needs to be more research focused on teachers' uses of emotional understanding and knowledge in teaching that is inclusive of viewing students' well-being and development. My conceptualization of emotionally-informed teaching presents an opportunity for this research, but it can be expanded

and refined through adjacent fields such as caring in teaching (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Additionally, more research into how teachers outside of teacher preparation view and implement effective and meaningful teaching is important for understanding teacher development without formal training.

In future directions, I hope to develop a robust cohort-based model of professional development for early career teachers that centers developing reflective practices and understanding the emotional dimensions of teaching and becoming a teacher. Lönngren et al., (2021a) facilitated a workshop around emotionally scaffolding that informed the participants of research perspectives on emotions in teaching and allowed them to collaboratively develop emotional scaffolding tools to use in their own teaching. This workshop model is inspirational, and I believe more professional development for teachers, teacher educators, and educational researchers around emotional dimensions of teaching is critical for supporting teachers in forming teaching practices that effectively and meaningfully use emotional knowledge.

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