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/k/ Words: The Role of Early
Literacy Instruction in Disrupting
Racism and Educational Inequity

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Kids, Content, Culture and other /k/ Words: The Role of Early Literacy Instruction in Disrupting Racism and Educational Inequity

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Dr. Overstreet previously worked at the University of Louisville's College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) as Director of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Project (MTRP) and Instructor, Department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education. At the University of Louisville, Mikkaka became dual certified in elementary education and learning/behavior disorders and minored in Pan-African studies as an undergraduate student; she then went on to earn her Master's degree with an emphasis in literacy education. She worked for 5.5 years in Jefferson County Public Schools before moving to a contract position as a literacy consultant at the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE).

At KDE, Dr. Overstreet facilitated professional learning for teachers around the state, working to strengthen implementation of the Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts and encouraging highly effective teaching and learning. She also supported teachers across Kentucky's 173 public school districts as the editor of the state's monthly literacy newsletter, the *KDE Literacy Link*. Her work with teachers increased her interest in teacher learning, her deep love of education, particularly the teaching of reading and writing, and her passion for equity and cultural responsiveness in education. In her doctoral pursuits, Dr. Overstreet engaged in research on teacher learning and change, empowering parents (particularly parents of underrepresented populations and impoverished communities), and empowering teachers to value the rich funds of knowledge that their students bring to the classroom in ways that strengthen their instruction. She continuously seeks new challenges and looks forward to a long career of exploration in education.

Abstract:

(How) does knowing content matter for disrupting the persistence of oppression? In this paper, Dr. Mikkaka Overstreet explores this question through the lens of a teacher educator working to teach elementary literacy methods in ways that center culturally responsive pedagogy and social justice as curriculum. Through a systematic analysis of extant data, Overstreet identifies practices that serve the two-fold purpose of building pedagogical content knowledge while prioritizing and elucidating methods of teaching that disrupt the status quo. Overstreet provides practical implications for teacher educators, teacher education programs, and facilitators of professional learning for beginning teachers.

KIDS, CONTENT, CULTURE AND OTHER /k/ WORDS: THE ROLE OF EARLY LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN DISRUPTING RACISM AND EDUCATION INEQUITY

Teacher education programs are unique entities; they are charged with teaching mostly young adults—individuals who are learning what it means to be responsible for themselves—how to handle responsibility for other people’s children (Delpit, 2006). If we think of the magnitude of preparing a twenty-year-old, who could feasibly teach hundreds or thousands of children over the span of their career, how to effectively help prepare those children for *their* lives, we can begin to recognize what a daunting task educator preparation programs undertake. When we consider further that these young adults are not coming to us as blank slates—that they have spent what Lortie (1975) calls a 13,000 hour “apprenticeship of observation” being schooled in a system we are seeking to reimagine, that they have unknowingly internalized oppressive practices and pervasive social biases, and that they have done so in an educational system that fails to prepare many of its students for the demands of college coursework (Tierney & Sablan, 2014)—we can begin to fathom the breadth of what teacher education programs have been tasked with. Despite the limitations of their K-12 education and life experiences, however, teacher education programs expect preservice teachers to come into methods coursework prepared to strengthen existing basic content knowledge while learning effective pedagogical practices for relating that content knowledge to children.

The undertaking of how to teach both content (the *what*) and pedagogy (the *how*) is another challenge in teacher education. The average person does not have the depth of content knowledge in most subject areas (e.g. reading, writing, arithmetic, science, and social studies) to accurately teach said content to a child. According to Ball, Thames, & Phelps (2008),

Knowing a subject for teaching requires more than knowing its facts and concepts. Teachers must also understand the organizing principles and structures and the rules for establishing what is legitimate to do and say in a field. The teacher need not only understand that something is so; the teacher must further understand why it is so, on what grounds its warrant can be asserted, and under what circumstances our belief in its justification can be weakened or denied. Moreover, we expect the teacher to understand why a particular topic is particularly central to a discipline whereas another may be somewhat peripheral. (p. 391)

Thus, when preservice teachers enter their teaching methods courses, they often do so with insufficient understanding of the material they will be learning to teach. Even if they have a reasonable grasp of their chosen subject(s), they do not yet have the depth of knowledge and skill required to effectively teach that content—the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) or “the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others” (Shulman, 1986, p. 9).

As a literacy methods professor I, for example, have to revisit so-called “basic” grammar and spelling rules and strategies for decoding unfamiliar words with my students. To move from the mastery of content knowledge to PCK, I immerse preservice teachers in experiences in which they have to apply these rules and strategies to complex texts so that they can undergo reading instruction similarly to the ways their students will. Next, we explore developmentally appropriate ways to communicate these strategies to children. Providing instruction in early literacy content while also teaching instructional methods (not to mention child development, effective assessment practices, etc.) within a 14-week period is a difficult task. Teaching all of this in ways that disrupt traditional oppressive practices is even more difficult.

For this working paper, TeachingWorks has invited me to consider the ties between content, pedagogy, and equity. As a teacher educator who regularly teaches literacy methods courses and a researcher focused on educational equity, this consideration is central to my research and practice and is a source of ongoing study. TeachingWorks’ invitation has given me a unique opportunity to look at my body of research through a new lens. In previous studies of my methods courses (Howard, Overstreet, & Ticknor, 2018; Overstreet & Nightengale-Lee, in progress), I’ve asked questions such as the following:

- How do preservice teachers interpret and respond to instruction around culturally sustaining pedagogical practices?
- What unique aspects of preservice teacher culture must be considered in order to plan and facilitate meaningful learning experiences?

- To what extent (how) do courses and other program experiences (curriculum, instruction, assessments) influence candidate learning in literacy methods courses?
- How do specific instructional practices, particularly those incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy, influence candidates' understandings and abilities related to teaching 'all learners'?

In the development of this paper, I've considered the questions I've been asking and how the answers to those can help teacher educators to address the questions posed by TeachingWorks (see table 1):

- What is involved in knowing and using content in ways that enable teachers to:
 - hear children's ideas, disrupt deficit narratives, recognize children's strengths, see potential and resources in families and communities, and struggle with the canon in authentic ways, and
 - select and design content, and know it in ways that allow one to open up and to make change to what knowledge is and who (gets to) make it?
- How can we support beginning teachers to learn content in ways that are intermeshed with the imperative to use teaching to disrupt racism?

Given the opportunity to revisit previous findings through the lens of these questions, I have gained new understandings regarding the relationship between content and pedagogy, and how this relationship is central to disrupting the persistence of oppression. In this paper, I share some of my emerging discoveries.

Table 1. Crosswalk of my research questions with the 2019 TeachingWorks AACTE strand questions.

TeachingWorks Questions	Related Question(s) from Previous Research
What is involved in knowing and using content in ways that enable teachers to hear children's ideas, disrupt deficit narratives, recognize children's strengths, see potential and resources in families and communities, and struggle with the canon in authentic ways?	How do preservice teachers interpret and respond to instruction around culturally sustaining pedagogical practices?
What is involved in knowing and using content in ways that enable teachers to select and design content, and know it in ways that allow one to open up and to make change to what knowledge is and who (gets to) make it?	How do preservice teachers interpret and respond to instruction around culturally sustaining pedagogical practices?
How can we support beginning teachers to learn content in ways that are intermeshed with the imperative to use teaching to disrupt racism?	<p>What unique aspects of preservice teacher culture must be considered in order to plan and facilitate meaningful learning experiences?</p> <p>To what extent (how) do courses and other program experiences (curriculum, instruction, assessments) influence candidate learning in literacy methods courses?</p> <p>How do specific instructional practices, particularly those incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy, influence candidates' understandings and abilities related to teaching 'all learners'?</p>

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Education

Traditional, university-based teacher education programs are typical for four-year undergraduate degrees; students complete a sequence of general studies before spending their final years immersed more deeply in content related to their intended career. This coursework usually consists of a combination of how-to courses focused on teaching specific content (“methods” courses) and field experiences (practicums, internships, student teaching placements, etc.) designed to provide preservice teachers opportunities to apply their new learning in authentic classroom settings (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

As I discussed in the introduction, this process is much more complex than it appears on the surface. Darling-Hammond (2006) explains,

...the realities of what it takes to teach in U.S. schools such that all children truly have an opportunity to learn are nearly overwhelming. In the classrooms most beginning teachers will enter, at least 25% of students live in poverty and many of them lack basic food, shelter, and health care; from 10% to 20% have identified learning differences; 15% speak a language other than English as their primary language (many more in urban settings); and about 40% are members of racial/ethnic “minority” groups, many of them recent immigrants from countries with different educational systems and cultural traditions. (p. 301)

Unfortunately, teacher education in its current form does not adequately prepare preservice teachers to meet the needs of the diverse groups of students they will encounter—all of whom bring unique gifts, talents, and ways of knowing (Haddix, 2015).

This is not without reason; teacher education programs face political pressures that heavily influence their design. Competing routes for teacher certification, which are often faster and less expensive, put pressure on traditional programs to streamline already-overfull courses, resulting in “more new weak programs that underprepare teachers, especially for urban schools” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 302). Public perception of teaching also influences preparation. The prevalent belief that teaching is something anyone can do simultaneously devalues the importance of an education degree, makes it difficult to attract academically gifted individuals to the profession, and sets expectations for quick and easy pathways to certification (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Zemelman, Daniels, & Bizar, 1999). This perception is damaging to programs, teachers, and most importantly, to the K-12 students who need and deserve quality educators.

Considering the variety of stakeholders influencing teacher education curriculum, the pressures to both shorten and strengthen teacher education programs, and the challenges of recruiting new teachers into the profession, it is no wonder that pushing teacher education programs toward culturally responsiveness and social justice can seem an impossible task. Many programs purport components of equity, diversity, inclusiveness, etc., but these elements are perfunctory—treated as something to check off a list rather than to be actualized throughout a program (Haddix, 2015). Truly changing these programs will require changes to the ways teacher educators think about and design their courses.

Teacher Education and Educational Equity

According to the National Center of Education Statistics the US student population of public schools is increasing in diversity. In 2014, 49.5% of all public-school students were white; by fall 2026 the percentage of white students enrolled in public schools is projected to decrease to 45%. Meanwhile 82% of US public school teachers are white (US Department of Education, 2016). The implications of this disparity are sobering; research indicates that having same-race teachers has dramatic positive impacts on students of color. According to Gershenson, Hart, Hyman, Lindsay, & Papageorge (2018), Black students who have one or two Black teachers in the elementary grades are significantly more likely to attend college and significantly less likely to drop out of high school. Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge

(2016) suggest that this might be related to the fact that Black teachers have significantly higher expectations for Black students than White teachers do.

While such research clearly delineates the need to recruit and retain teachers of color, the fact remains that until the time when America's teaching population more closely mirrors its student population, White teachers are going to be mostly responsible for the education of children of color—a reality we must more effectively prepare them for (Emdin, 2016). In response to such calls, and as student and family diversity in the U.S. has both increased and become more visible, teacher education programs across the country have begun the work of better preparing the nation's educators to effectively meet the needs of a diverse student body (Bissonnette, 2016). A great deal of literature has been written regarding the best ways to approach this work (Trent, Kea, & Oh, 2008). Recognizing the systemic inequities affecting children and families from diverse backgrounds, many programs are actively seeking to prepare educators who promote social justice through pedagogy. This paradigm shift calls for moving beyond "tolerance" or "celebrating diversity" to critically analyzing the policies and instructional decisions that disadvantage particular groups of students (Nieto, 2000). To meet this call, teacher education programs must strategically re-envision the ways teacher educators prepare future educators to create and frame curriculum, assess knowledge, and assign value, especially considering the ways in which teachers think about, speak about, and speak to students

Critics of teacher education programs lament the lack of preparation and experience that new teachers exhibit. As in most careers, teachers can improve as they gain experience; unfortunately, unlike in most careers, this "learning on the job" has consequences which directly contribute to inequity. It is students who suffer while first-year teachers figure out how to navigate the complex role of educator. First-year teachers are regularly placed in difficult contexts: high poverty schools where children would most benefit from experienced practitioners (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Peske & Haycock, 2006). Poor children are twice as likely than their economically advantaged counterparts to be assigned first-year teachers (Haycock, 2004). Their schools typically have very high turnover rates, about 50% higher than more affluent schools, meaning that our most needy students are being exposed to beginning teachers year after year. Of students with comparable starting abilities, a child with three years of inexperienced teachers can perform as many as 50 percentile points lower than their peers who had three years of effective teaching—the difference between a remedial and gifted label (Haycock, 2004). Clearly improving the quality of beginning teachers is more than just a teacher education issue; it's a social justice issue. Providing preservice teachers (PSTs) with effective instruction in culturally responsive pedagogy could be one way to better prepare beginning teachers to address cultural mismatches and reduce teacher turnover.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Teacher Education

The long and storied history of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012), and similar pedagogical frameworks are widely accepted in educational research as a necessity for improving educational outcomes for students of color. However, while teacher educators strive (often unsuccessfully) to prepare culturally responsive teachers, we often fail to acknowledge that we are not modeling these practices in our own teaching. As Haddix (2015) argues,

Many teacher education programs foreground multicultural teacher education, teaching for social justice, culturally relevant pedagogy, among other liberatory curricular and pedagogical aims. This often occurs, however, without complicating the racial, cultural, and linguistic perspectives and ideologies that preservice teachers bring to their learning to teach processes or without troubling our own positionalities (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Like their students, teacher educators design and implement programs and curricula with the similar assumptions that all of their preservice teachers are the same and that what works for one will work for all. Teacher education programs in the United States become a one-size-fits-all factory model. (p. 65)

A small but growing body of research seeks to remedy this discrepancy. Along with Haddix (2015), scholars such as Bissonnette (2016), Bautista, Misco, and Quaye (2018), and others have written both theoretical and practical pieces about interrogating our own identities as teacher educators and pushing our PSTs to do the same. It is my hope that this piece contributes to that body of work.

METHODS

Since completing my doctoral degree, I have primarily taught multiple sections of literacy methods each semester. As described above, these courses are the heart of most teacher education programs and are required of anyone pursuing a teaching degree. Considering the opportunity that I, as a methods instructor, have to impact so many of those pursuing careers in teaching, I have taken this work on as a serious area of my own research. Through Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved studies, I have continuously gathered data to support exploration of a variety of research questions (see table 1).

Data Sources

For this paper, I have revisited extant data collected from the fall of 2015 through fall of 2018. These data include research and teaching notes, assignments, discussion-board posts, audio transcripts of classroom conversations, reflections, teaching evaluations, and other materials collected through normal teaching situations.

Contextual Information

These data were collected across two institutions of higher education, as described in figure 1 (below). One university is urban and the other is in a relatively urban area, but attracts many students from the rural areas in the surrounding region. The institutions are located in the Midwestern and southeastern United States, but have similar teacher education demographics which are reflective of many teacher education programs throughout most of the U.S., as both programs' teacher candidates are primarily White, female, and monolingual.

Course 1	Course 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• K-5 Literacy Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• K-2 Literacy Methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• University in an urban area (city population 600,000+; university enrollment ~22,000 students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Urban but rural serving institution (city population 92,000+; university enrollment ~28,000 students)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taught at a clinical partnership school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taught at the university
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Separate Practicum Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Separate Practicum Required

Figure 1. Overview of Courses

I approached this analysis of extant data from a qualitative paradigm, but do not present it here as final research findings. Rather, this working paper has offered an opportunity for me to look across courses and contexts and reflect on what works, what doesn't work, and what I'm still wondering about. I will discuss these reflections in the following section.

DISCUSSION

Across four years and two different institutions, I have sought, with varying degrees of success, to approach my role as teacher educator from a place of equity and cultural responsiveness. This approach has manifested in my methods and materials, assignments and applications, as well as through reflection and revision of said methods and materials. It is not my intention to make grandiose claims about

effectiveness, but rather to share my explorations into practical methods for integrating culturally responsive teaching (CRT) with instruction in pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in order to address the question: *How can we support beginning teachers to learn content in ways that are intermeshed with the imperative to use teaching to disrupt racism?* In this section I highlight how the decisions I make regarding methods, materials, assessments, and assignments work together to make more visible practical methods for integrating culturally responsive teaching with instruction in pedagogical content knowledge. Again, this is not a comprehensive analysis, but simply a glimpse into my classroom.

Practical Methods for Integrating CRT and PCK

As previously discussed, time is a limited resource in teacher education. For that reason, I cannot afford to approach culturally responsive pedagogy as “one more thing” in already full literacy methods coursework. Rather, I try to privilege culture as the curriculum—as integral to teaching reading as phonemes and sight words. Admittedly, it is not always easy to do the topic justice and make explicit all the connections between student identities and literacy, but I attempt to integrate these ideas into the teaching methods I use and the materials I choose.

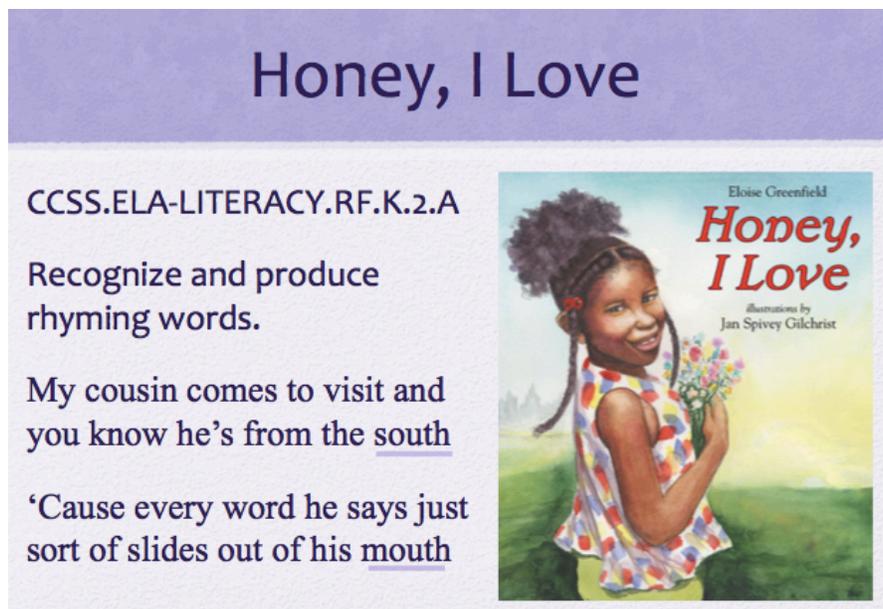


Figure 2. Example Slide—Using Diverse Books to Model Phonological Awareness Instruction

Choice of materials

Almost every education major has heard of Bishop’s metaphor of books as mirrors and windows (Bishop, 1990). Children need opportunities to see themselves reflected in the books they have access to (mirrors) and to see into the lives of others through literature (windows). The idea is a good starting point for an analysis of teaching materials: do the materials in our classrooms provide opportunities for *all* students to see themselves reflected and for *all* students to see into the worlds of people unlike themselves? The books I lug into my bare college classroom to display and invite students to read feature characters representing a broad range of races, ethnicities, languages, gender identities, sexual orientations, and abilities.

Children’s books are a wonderful starting point for ensuring representation, but it is not culturally responsive to simply have diverse books available. Often, I use these texts to model read alouds and address phonological awareness and/or phonics content (See figure 2). Further, when teaching comprehension, I resist the impulse to avoid potentially uncomfortable conversations that might arise around issues of race or sexuality, for example (figure 3). While it might be easier to treat texts as neutral, such practice is contradictory to teaching for equity. Thus, I invite PSTs to talk about the texts openly and sit with any discomfort they feel related to the topic at hand. We question why a topic might bother us and

how that impacts us as teachers. I ask them to “think like a teacher” and consider what questions children might ask and what they as educators need to know/do to accurately and affirmatively address these questions.

Read Aloud

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1](#)
Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.2](#)
Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

- Why do you think Mrs. Lockner acted meanly to this family?
- How did Marmee and Meema react when Mrs. Lockner was mean to the family?
- How is this family similar to yours?
- How is this family different from yours?
- Why do you think the author chose to write this book?

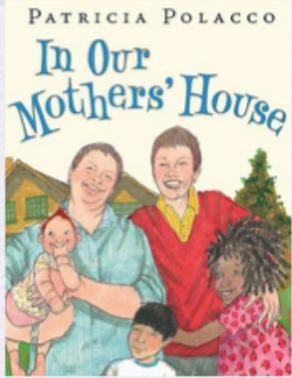


Figure 3. Example Slide—Using Diverse Books to Model Reading Comprehension Instruction

This integration of culture and content extends beyond books. As we continue to learn about phonological awareness and phonics instruction, I challenge them to think about how they can ensure students have mirrors and windows throughout the curriculum. One such example (figure 4) is to consider the images used for early literacy instruction. For phonological awareness activities, teachers have to select pictures that are clear and explicit so that they prompt children to say the intended words. In a rhyming activity, for example, children might be sorting words that rhyme with /at/. Often, teachers understandably use what materials are readily available, when they could instead take an (admittedly more time consuming) opportunity to connect to students’ lives.

-at

Milestone: Use letter-sound correspondence when writing, representing all phonemes in single-syllable words.

hat



cat



Figure 4. Example Slide—Rethinking Images Used in Early Literacy Instruction

For example, the books provided for emergent readers usually contain generic ideas and images; their writers are much more focused on readability and providing space to teach specific skills such as one-to-one correspondence and finger pointing than on reflecting the diversity of our student population. Books like “Big” from www.readingatoz.com follow a predictable pattern with text that closely matches the pictures (e.g. “A big house”, “A big dog”, etc.). It might be difficult for PSTs to imagine how to create lessons centered on such texts *and* including mirrors and windows for students, so I share the example sequence in figure 5 as an authentic writing experience. My PSTs are then challenged to “think like a teacher” and come up with additional ways to make their instruction culturally responsive. We engage in similar explorations throughout the semester, using this lesson as a touchstone reference point. When students write their assigned lesson plans, we revisit these ideas and models and they work on applying them to their own instruction.

Shared Reading

Big

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.K.1.A
Follow words from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.K.3.C
Read common high-frequency words by sight (e.g., the, of, to, you, she, my, is, are, do, does).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.K.2.D
Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme (consonant-vowel-consonant, or CVC) words.

Shared Writing

- Let's write our own "big" stories and add them to our classroom library
- Find/use big things in our school and community
- Use different media (photos or drawings, digital or written stories, etc.)
- Read the world and the word (Paolo Freire)

Shared Writing

- Help students make connections between writing and their real lives (culturally relevant teaching)
- Give students authentic writing opportunities (write for real purposes)
- Practice sound (inventive) spelling

A big man.
A big car.
A big building.
A big school.
A big dog.

Figure 5. Example Slides—Incorporating Authentic Writing Experiences

Explicit modeling of culturally responsive literacy instruction

Throughout the semester, I try to model cultural responsiveness in my own teaching. I ask students to move in and out of the roles of teacher, college student, and primary student (see figure 6). This way I can engage them in simulations as children and then have them debrief the activity from the perspective of the teacher. During debriefs I am metacognitive, reflecting on my own practice and explaining my instructional moves when they are unable to generate the “why” behind a particular choice I made. This metacognitive approach permeates everything from the way I set up the classroom, to the routines I establish, and to the ways I handle grouping and transitions, as well as the instruction itself.

On a typical day, students arrive to find an entry slip waiting for them along with an assortment of diverse children’s books to read when they finish the entry slip. On the first day of class we discuss why such structures are important to classroom management. I engage the PSTs in a community building warm-up, stressing the importance of creating a positive classroom environment and getting to know students and also letting them build relationships with one another. Building a community in which the learners are centered and their funds of knowledge are valued requires the teacher to establish and nourish these positive relationships (Moll et al., 1992).



Figure 6. Example Slide—Avatars Used to Indicate PSTs' Role in Classroom Activities

The PSTs are familiar with the exhortation to “get to know their students”, so I try to model *how* that can be done. I draw on Schwartz (2016) by asking them to share things they wish I knew (see figure 7), which I use later when providing them personalized feedback and when planning my instruction. I value their expertise about how they learn best by having them sign up to lead a weekly discussion of our readings, using the “co-teaching model [to assess] their content knowledge through how they design and teach their lessons” (Emdin, 2016, p.89). I use exit slips throughout the semester to ask for their feedback, their ideas, and what they need from me. In so doing, it is my intention to model the ways in which they can connect with their students and draw on the funds of knowledge that they bring to the classroom (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

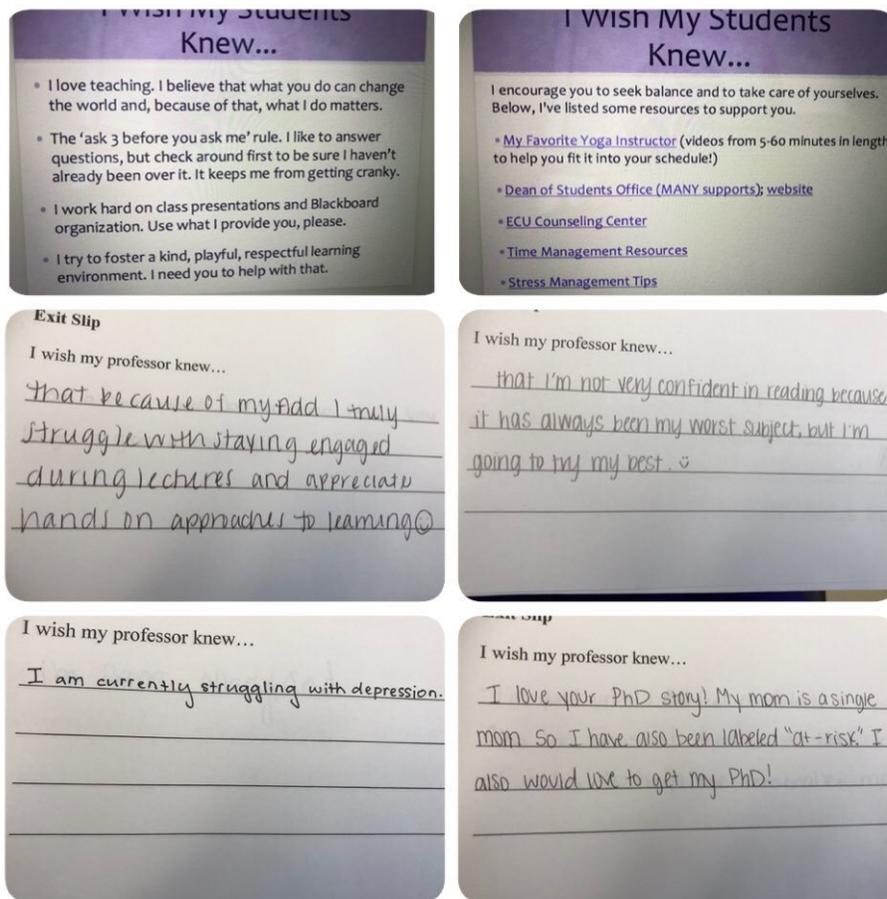


Figure 7. Sample Exit Slip—I Wish My Professor Knew

Disrupting deficit thinking through counter-narratives

Tschida, Ryan, and Ticknor (2014) posit, “[i]t is only by disrupting single stories with narratives told from other perspectives that we form a more nuanced picture of the people, issues, or ideas at hand” (p.31). Too often, preservice teachers come into my classes with preconceived notions about poor Black and Brown students and their families; these notions are based on their personal experiences, what they’ve heard from other teachers and, sometimes, what has been reinforced by their own upbringings. Through my instruction, I aim to complicate these limited conceptions to help expand their ideas of “others” into full and complex beings like themselves.

One way I approach this is through the reading of a chapter of Compton-Lilly’s (2002) text on confronting racism, poverty, and power. The chapter we read presents twelve commonly held beliefs about poor and diverse families. The list reads like a conversation overheard in a teacher’s lounge among frustrated and exhausted educators, including statements such as “parents are content to rely on welfare” and “parents do not care about school”. Compton-Lilly counters these statements with stories from qualitative research conducted over years of working with diverse families, offering much more than a single story of the lives they lead.

Silent Reflection: Ink Shedding

- ▶ Reflect on the reading: *Twelve Myths About Poor and Diverse Parents*
- ▶ Write continuously and silently until the timer sounds.
- ▶ If you run out of thoughts, write “I don’t know what to write” until you think of something else.

Small Group Debrief

- ▶ Return papers to their authors
- ▶ Read what your classmates have written in the margins
- ▶ Discuss your thoughts aloud
 - ▶ What big ideas did you notice across your papers?
 - ▶ What questions or disagreements did you have?
 - ▶ What ideas do you still have questions or concerns about?
 - ▶ How does this impact you as a teacher?

Facts to Consider

“Welfare Queen” Becomes Issue in Reagan Campaign

Nearly one-third of food stamp beneficiaries lived in a household where at least one member had some earned income in 2013. Different states have different eligibility rules for the program, but federal law puts the upper income limit at 200 percent of the poverty line, currently \$20,090 for a family of three. Many SNAP recipients qualify based on their participation in another means-tested program, such as Medicaid or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

What's all this mean?

- ▶ Our perceptions of people who live in poverty, particularly those who are also racially, linguistically, or ethnically diverse, might be flawed or biased.
- ▶ These flawed perceptions might impact how we think and speak about them and their children.
- ▶ These flawed perceptions might impact how we treat the children in our classrooms and what we expect from them.

Figure 8. Sample Lesson Sequence—12 Myths of Poor and Diverse Families

My PSTs read this chapter and respond through a free write activity. The free write is followed by silent conversations in small groups—during which they respond in writing to one another’s free writes. After small group conversations, we debrief as a whole group, and then I provide further data and connection to literacy instruction. (For more details, see Howard, Overstreet, and Ticknor, 2018.)

Incorporating focused reflection

Education theorist John Dewey is often erroneously quoted as having said, “we do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience. Despite the inaccuracy in attribution, the sentiment is present in his work and applies directly to teacher education. According to Overstreet (2017), “education researchers have suggested such critical reflection as a means of incorporating issues of equity and social justice (and ultimately culturally relevant teaching methods) into teacher thinking and practice” (p.

206). It is not enough to simply present information; we must also ask PSTs to deconstruct their learning and think about their thinking. I ask my PSTs to reflect throughout the semester—through exit slips, on videos of their teaching, on assessments they administer. They reflect in various formats including through writing, on video, using voice recordings, and through artistic means. These reflections are an opportunity for them to show me how they're applying what they've learned.

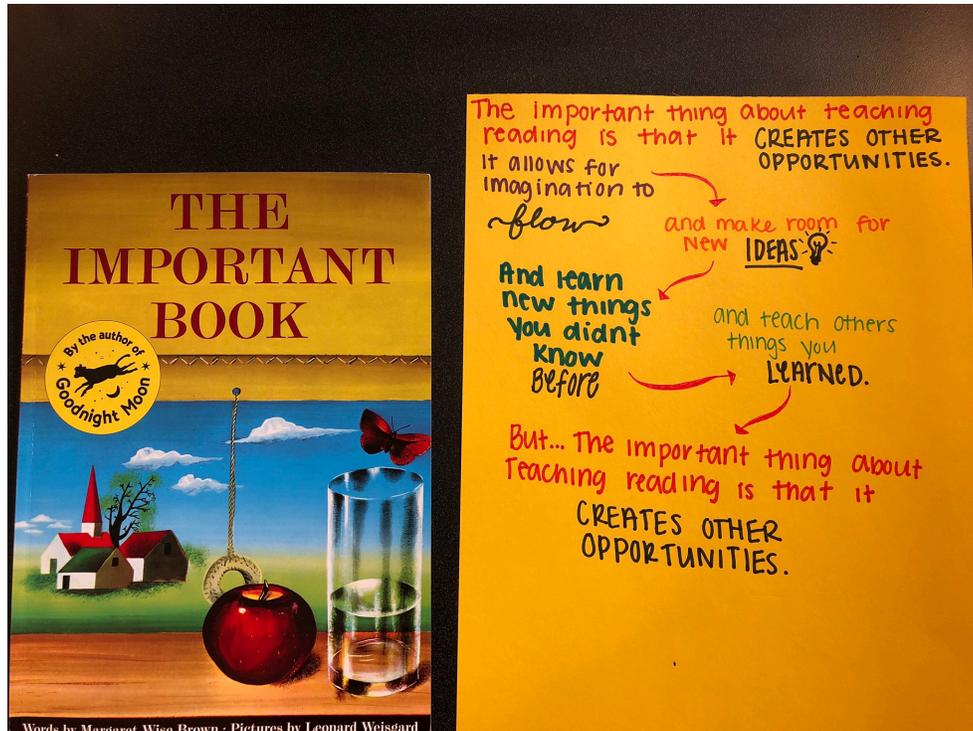


Figure 9. Example Reflection—The Important Thing about Teaching Reading

Further, their reflections provide a unique look into the ways PSTs think about literacy, about teaching, and about children. I pay attention to the language they use and the ways they describe children. I challenge them to use course vocabulary to demonstrate their pedagogical content knowledge, as well as to use accurate and affirming language to demonstrate their cultural awareness and understandings of teaching for equity. All of this informs my own reflections and, consequently, my teaching.

CONCLUSION

There isn't enough time and space to share all the promising practices I've discovered, nor is there adequate room to discuss all the revisions and modifications I've made to my courses based on what I've learned from the practices described above. Instead, I offer this brief summary of practical ideas in hopes that you can take them, make them your own, use them as a springboard for your own ideas, and then share your own discoveries. The field needs these stories—we have agreed on the *why* of this work, but we need many more examples of the *how*.

We could individually explore the individual practices I've described and collect responses to compare across contexts. We could follow these PSTs into student teaching and out into their first years in the classroom to see how and/or if their practice reflects what we've attempted to instill in them. The possibilities for exploration are endless and I am left with more questions than answers.

I believe, however, that the more we teach in ways that intentionally disrupt traditional practices and as long as we continue to model equitable teaching practices, we will begin to shift the status quo. We will change the norm so that this type of instruction is the rule, not the exception. As we teach in ways that intermesh content knowledge and cultural responsiveness, our PSTs will be empowered to do the same.

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