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# Beginning Teachers' Perceptions of Preparedness: A Teacher Education Program's Transferability and Impact on The Secondary English/Language Arts Classroom

Mary C. Thompson  
*Georgia State University*

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## ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, BEGINNING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PREPAREDNESS: A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM'S TRANSFERABILITY AND IMPACT ON THE SECONDARY ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM, by M. CYNTHIA JORDAN THOMPSON, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

---

Dana L. Fox, Ph.D.  
Committee Chair

---

Mary Ariail, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

---

Mary P. Deming, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

---

Marti Singer, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

---

Date

---

Dana L. Fox, Ph.D.  
Chair, Department of Middle-Secondary Education  
and Instructional Technology

---

R. W. Kamphaus, Ph.D.  
Dean and Distinguished Research Professor  
College of Education

## AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

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M. Cynthia Jordan Thompson

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M. Cynthia Jordan Thompson  
Marietta, GA 30068

The director of this dissertation is:

Dr. Dana L. Fox  
Department of Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology  
College of Education  
Georgia State University  
Atlanta, GA 30303 - 3083

## VITA

M. Cynthia Jordan Thompson

ADDRESS: 459 Wall Street  
Marietta, Georgia 30068

### EDUCATION:

Ph.D. 2010 Georgia State University  
Teaching and Learning

M.Ed. 1993 William Carey University  
English Education

B.A. 1990 Mississippi State University  
Communications

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2007 Graduate Research Assistant, Georgia State University  
Atlanta, GA

2006-2007 Practicum Supervisor, Georgia State University  
Atlanta, GA

2003-2004 Graduate Teaching Assistant, Georgia State University  
Atlanta, GA

2002-2003 English Instructor, Chattahoochee Technical College  
Paulding County, GA

1995-2002 English Teacher, Cobb County School System Marietta,  
GA

1993-1995 English Teacher, Jackson Public School System Jackson,  
MS

### PRESENTATIONS:

“Making the Connection: Examining the Impact of a Teacher Education Program on Its Graduates.” 2009 National Council of Teachers of English Annual Conference, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

“The Effects of Standardized Testing on Writing Instruction in the Language Arts Classroom.” 2008 Conference on Literacy, Urban Issues, and Social Studies Education, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia

“We Teach Who We Are”: A Study of Two Latino Teachers, Their Reflective Practices, and Their Literacy Work with Struggling Latino Students. 2008 National Reading Conference, Orlando, Florida

“The Cultural Dimensions of the Portfolio: Fostering Respect and Acceptance of Diversity through Writing.” Presentation in Dr. Mary Ariail’s Middle Grade Literacy Class/Writing Workshop, January, 2008

“Teaching Writing Teachers in Urban Contexts.” 2007 National Council of Teachers of English Annual Conference, Nashville, Tennessee

“A More Tolerant America in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Bridging the Cultural and Ethnic Gap through Writing.” 2003 Georgia Read Write Now Conference, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia

“A More Tolerant American in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Bridging the Cultural and Ethnic Gap through Writing.” 2001 National Council of Teachers of English Spring Conference, Birmingham, Alabama

“Teaching Tolerance through Writing.” 2000 Delta Kappa Gamma Society International Conference, Toronto, Canada

“Transforming Classrooms: Using Portfolio Reflection to Create Appreciation of Cultural Identity and Diversity.” 1998 National Council of Teachers of English Third International Conference on Language and Literacy, Bordeaux, France

“The Cultural Dimensions of the Portfolio: Fostering Respect and Acceptance of Diversity through Writing.” 1998 National Council of Teacher of English Annual Conference, Nashville, Tennessee

#### PUBLICATIONS:

Jordan, R. & Thompson, C. (2002). A More Tolerant America in the Twenty-first Century: Bridging the Cultural and Ethnic Gap through Writing. *Indiana English*, 25, 16-21.

Jordan, R. & Thompson, C. (2002). A More Tolerant America in the Twenty-first Century: Bridging the Cultural and Ethnic Gap through Writing. *The Journal of the Mississippi Council of Teachers of English*, 22, 1-11.

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ABSTRACT  
BEGINNING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PREPAREDNESS: A TEACHER  
EDUCATION PROGRAM'S TRANSFERABILITY AND IMPACT ON THE  
SECONDARY ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

by  
M. Cynthia Jordan Thompson

In October 2009, United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan declared in a speech to Columbia University's Teachers College that many university teacher preparation programs are outdated and must undergo major reform in order to produce high quality teachers needed to improve academic achievement for all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Duncan stated that "America's university-based teacher preparation programs need revolutionary change – not evolutionary tinkering" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 2). To improve student success in the classroom, policy makers must understand the key role well-trained teachers play in achieving this goal (Boyd, Lankford, Clothfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2004; Loeb, Rockoff, & Wyckoff, 2007; Provasnik & Young, 2003; Rice, 2003; Rivers & Sanders, 2002).

This study examined the specific aspects of an English teacher preparation program that beginning teachers implement and rely on in their classrooms on a consistent basis. In addition, this study examines how administrators/department chairs view the pedagogical competence of graduates from the English teacher preparation program. The research questions that guided this study are: (1) How do beginning teachers perceive their preparation for teaching in the urban English Language Arts classroom? (2) How do school administrators perceive the teaching ability of graduates?

The participants were graduates of Southern Urban University's English Education Master's level program from 2005 – 2008. Data sources included Beginning Teacher Questionnaires, Administrator/Department Chair Questionnaires, in-depth phenomenological interviews with select teachers, classroom observations of select teachers' practice, "card sort" activity/interview, teacher artifacts and photographs. Data were analyzed inductively using the constant comparative method to determine categories and themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Trustworthiness was established through research methods that confirm credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study provides insight into how to better educate high quality teachers through the examination of an English teacher preparation program's daily effect and impact on their graduates and an examination of school administrators'/department chairs' perception of these graduates' performance in the classroom.



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in  
Teaching and Learning  
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADCQ	Administrator/Department Chair Questionnaire
BTQ	Beginning Teacher Questionnaire
GHSQT	Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test
GPS	Georgia Performance Standards
INTASC	Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium
NBPTS	National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
NCATE	National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education
NCTAF	National Commission on Teaching and America's Future
STEP	Stanford Teacher Education Program
SUU	Southern Urban University
TA	Teaching Assistant
TFA	Teach for America
UTR	Urban Teacher Residency

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In October 2009, United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan declared in a speech to Columbia University's Teachers College that many university teacher preparation programs are outdated and must undergo major reform in order to produce high quality teachers needed to improve academic achievement for all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Duncan stated that "America's university-based teacher preparation programs need revolutionary change – not evolutionary tinkering" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p.2). To improve student success in the classroom, policy makers must understand the key role well-trained teachers play in achieving this goal (Boyd, Lankford, Clothfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2004;Loeb, Rockoff, & Wyckoff, 2007; Provasnik & Young, 2003; Rice, 2003; Rivers & Sanders, 2002). However, with teacher quality highlighting student achievement, there still remains an ideological divide on how to prepare teachers, what constitutes good teaching, and how to ensure all students have access to quality teachers and teaching. On one side of this ideological divide, Chester E. Finn Jr., president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation asserted teaching has a very weak knowledge base and what is needed are more teachers with extensive content knowledge, strong liberal arts background, and improved verbal ability



(Lasley, Bainbridge, & Berry, 2008). The Fordham Foundation has pushed policy makers to loosen existing requirements for those entering the field of education and has attacked traditional teacher education practices such as the National Council on Teacher Quality (Lasley, Bainbridge, & Berry, 2008). Kanstoroom and Finn (1999) suggested that “States should de-emphasize traditional teacher education and instead open the profession to a large pool of talented and well-educated candidates” (p. 8). These critics make compelling claims that non-certified teachers are performing as well or better than professionals with a degree in education supporting their proposition that little if any pedagogical preparation is needed to improve student performance to become a successful teacher.

On the other side of this ideological divide, Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, and Heilig (2005) highlighted how strong teacher preparation programs and certified teachers do produce higher student achievement. Their study examined teacher impact on student achievement in a large school system which included an examination of the effect of certification/licensure status and whether Teacher for America (TFA) candidates, recruits from highly selective universities who receive a few weeks of training before teaching, were as effective as similarly experienced certified teachers. The results found that certified teachers consistently produced significantly stronger student achievement gains than uncertified teachers, including TFA recruits. The research also found the uncertified TFA recruits were less effective than certified teachers and perform about as well as other uncertified teachers. The researchers concluded that teachers’ effectiveness is strongly related to the preparation they received for teaching. Unfortunately, there is

little research about the effectiveness of subject-specific content and pedagogical preparation teacher candidates receive (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005)

One factor many of the critics of teacher education do not examine is how our nation's most disadvantaged students need the most prepared and able teachers; yet, these students, who tend to be poor and from racial or ethnic minority groups, are most likely to have a non-certified teacher without an educational background. Jerald and Ingersoll (2002) found that inexperienced teachers comprised 21 percent of the teachers in high-minority schools, as compared with 10 percent in low-minority. Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2002) found teachers in low-achieving schools in New York were five times more likely to be uncertified in their current teaching position compared to higher achieving schools. Oakes, Franke, Quartz, and Rogers (2002) define a successful urban teacher as one who is:

...simultaneously as skilled classroom practitioners and as public intellectuals who work for educational equity and access through multiple forms of democratic participation ... if one is to be a teacher, a deep caring and democratic commitment must be accompanied by highly developed subject matter and pedagogical skills. Such teachers are agents of fundamental change.... (p. 229)

A group of leading researchers in the field of English education suggested that to have a democratic society, teacher education programs and teacher educators must be at the forefront of educational reform that should close the gap between students who have access to quality education and those who do not (Alsup et al., 2006). Since English education focuses on language and literacy, English educators have a larger responsibility to instill in graduates and future English/language arts teachers the importance of developing a "literate and responsible citizenry...tempered by the Jacksonian promise

that access to power would never be restricted to some privileged few, but would be open to emerging groups...” (Alsup et al., p. 280).

This study examined the specific aspects of an English teacher preparation program that beginning teachers implement and rely on in their classrooms on a consistent basis. In addition, this study examined how administrators/department chairs view the pedagogical competence of graduates from the English teacher preparation program. In this chapter, the background and rationale for this study, the theoretical lens that will provide the framework and foundation for my decisions in this study, and the overall methodological design for the study will be discussed. Finally, the specific research questions related to the study are outlined.

### Background and Rationale for the Study

Although there are accounts of teachers valuing their preservice education, what often seems to be more vocal and visible are the many teachers who have stated that their preservice teacher education did not prepare them for the complex realities of teaching and managing the classroom. This view has led the public and policy makers to believe that teacher education does not prepare teachers for the classroom and that the best preparation is on-the-job experience. For example, former United States Secretary of Education Rod Paige argued in his 2002 report on teacher quality that “burdensome requirements” for education coursework that make up “the bulk of current teacher certification regimes” should be removed from teacher certification standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 8). Paige argued that the best-prepared teachers are ones who have a strong background in their specific subject area, asserting that understanding pedagogy is unnecessary in becoming a quality teacher. The Secretary’s

report further states that certification should emphasize the testing of verbal ability and content knowledge while making education coursework and student teaching optional. Even with these criticisms of education programs, there is a growing body of evidence that supports the assertion that quality teacher education does make a difference in teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond 2000; Sander & Horn, 1998). Quality teachers are needed in all schools; however, quality teachers are imperative in urban or lower achieving schools, which need to bridge the achievement and opportunity gap.

#### Brief History of Teacher Education Programs

Recent research supports how strong teacher training can affect student achievement and performance; nonetheless, there is still a misconception by the public on how teachers are trained and what knowledge is necessary to be a successful teacher. Before the early 1800's, teachers had no specialized training. Historian Willard Elsbree (1939) describes early schoolmasters in an unfavorable light saying that while most were "sober, upright, virtuous, and God-fearing," the one who dominated popular memory was seen as "a rogue, scoundrel, defamer, souse, or knave" (Elsbree, 1939, p. 11). Disturbed by these stereotypes and the need for a wider pool of better-prepared applicants, school reformers in the United States began to see the need for teacher education/preparation schools. In the early to middle nineteenth century, education reformers established the state normal schools as the primary source of education for professional teachers. However, even after a quarter of a century of operation, these state normal schools remained an unpopular option for many who sought to become teachers because the early

curriculum lacked substance, and the methods of teacher training were weak (Ogren, 2005).

Early state normal school curricula typically followed what Governor Everett of Massachusetts outlined as the “nature and objects” which included four core elements of instruction (Ogren, 2005. p. 29). First, students would have a review of the subjects to be taught in common schools; second, described as the essential aspect of a normal school education, students would understand the principles of instruction and learning along with the best methods to utilize these principles; third, students should understand the moral influence of the teacher and his/her position in the community; and finally, the fourth part of Everett’s core was the opportunity for students to observe and practice good teaching methods.

John Dewey (1904/1965), however, criticized the tendency of teacher education in his day to place too much emphasis on the immediate proficiency of the teacher and too little emphasis on preparing students of education who have the capacity and disposition to keep on growing. Dewey argued:

Practical work should be pursued primarily with reference to its reaction upon the professional pupil making him a thoughtful and alert student of education, rather than to help him get immediate proficiency. For immediate skill may be gotten at a cost of power to go on growing. Unless a teacher is...a student of education he may continue to improve in the mechanics of school management, but he cannot grow as a teacher, an inspirer and director of soul-life. (p. 151)

#### *Teacher Education Today*

Today, the standards for professional teaching knowledge can be traced to the standards and assessments of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). During the early 1990’s, the National Board’s standards were integrated with

student learning standards from subject specific groups such as the National Council of Teachers of English and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and were adapted for beginning teacher licensing by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC). These standards were then adopted by most states and incorporated into the standards of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). NCATE states that teachers prepared at accredited institutions should know the subject matter, demonstrate knowledge of effective teaching strategies, reflect on their practice and adapt their instruction, teach students from different backgrounds, integrate technology into instruction, and have been supervised by master teachers (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2005).

The INTASC and NCATE standards reflect a contrast to the era of teacher training where teaching was seen as implementing set routines and formulas for behavior. Darling-Hammond (2006) stated:

The bureaucratic school sought to simplify and control teaching by creating curricular edicts at the top of the system and hiring teachers to march through a prescribed curriculum...[M]any normal schools (and later university-based programs) watered the teacher education curriculum down to a thin gruel of simple techniques to be used to implement a preset curriculum. (p.78)

Cochran-Smith (2001) also illustrated this behaviorist model of teaching in her article “Constructing Outcomes in Teacher Education: Policy, Practice and Pitfalls” where she found that from the mid 1950’s to the mid 1980’s, English teacher educators examined whether or not their delivery of pedagogical skills and techniques were actually producing modifications in observed classroom behavior. If there were observable changes in the preservice teacher’s pedagogical methods, then the education program was considered effective in producing high quality teachers.

Darling-Hammond (2006) examined teacher education programs that successfully integrated the INTASC and NCATE standards but put effectiveness at the center of practice. Through her research of exceptional colleges and schools of education, Darling-Hammond discovered eight aspects that contrast traditional teacher education and define today's quality teacher preparation. First, these programs emphasize understanding learners and learning as the core of making sound teaching decisions. Preservice teachers need to have a deep understanding of how humans develop and learn, how social contexts affect development and learning, and how some learn and develop in exceptional ways. Second, students in these programs understand that subject matters and learn to teach through subject specifics. Next, programs unite the study of specific subject matter and pedagogy in the analysis and design of curriculum. Fourth, they see learners, subject matter, and curriculum as existing in a socio-cultural context. Fifth, these programs seek to develop a repertoire of teaching strategies and understand their purposes and uses for diverse learners and contexts. Sixth, programs place emphasis on assessment and feedback as essential to both student and teacher. Next, these programs seek to develop teachers' abilities as reflective decision makers who can continually revise their teaching to become more effective. Finally, these programs see teaching as a collaborative activity conducted within a professional community.

#### Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The English teacher preparation program used for this study follows what INTASC and NCATE have outlined as quality programs and adheres to Darling-Hammond's (2006) standards for excellence in teacher education curriculum. Because the English teacher education program used in this study follows many of the standards

that define quality teacher education and to understand and further examine the dimensions of teacher education that contribute to student success, this study focused on the specific aspects from an English teacher education program that beginning teachers (in this case, those with one to three years experience) implement, adapt, and reflect on in a consistent manner. This study attempted to address the concerns that teacher education lacks substance and applicability to the classroom and examined the degree to which first, second, and third year beginning teachers use the theory, methods, and training received in a preservice English teacher education program. Finally, this study examined perceptions from program graduates' school administrators to determine their view of teacher graduates' preparedness for the classroom along with how well graduates from the English Education Master's level program are viewed as improving student achievement.

Specifically, the research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do beginning teachers perceive their preparation for teaching in the urban language arts classroom?
2. How do school administrators/department chairs perceive the teaching ability of graduates from the urban English teacher preparation program?

### Theoretical Framework

To understand and further examine the dimensions of urban teacher education along with addressing the concerns that teacher education lacks substance and applicability to the classroom, this study will focus on the specific aspects from an urban English teacher education program that beginning teachers (i.e., first-, second-, and third-



year teachers) consistently use, implement, and reflect upon. This study also examines the perceptions of administrators/department chairs on how graduates from the urban English teacher preparation program perform in the classroom.

### *Transformative Learning*

Because this study centers on a preservice teacher education program that awards a Master's in teaching English, the participants have earned a bachelor's degree or equivalent in English before entering the program and represent a diverse perspective of adult learners ranging from younger, recent college graduates to older, mid-career changers. Focusing on adult learning theories, Jack Mezirow's (1996) transformative learning theory is best suited for this study since his theory examines how adults interpret their life experiences and how they make meaning through these experiences. Learning and teaching can be defined as a process of making new or revised interpretations of the meaning of an experience that guides future understanding, appreciation, and action (Mezirow, 1996). Mezirow (1996) explained, "Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or a revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (p. 162).

Mezirow (1996) defined his theory further, differentiating between *meaning schemes*, such as specific beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and value judgments, and *meaning perspectives* which are "broad, generalized, orienting predispositions" (p. 163). Learning can occur through a change in one's beliefs or attitudes (meaning scheme) or it can change one's entire perspective. The key to transformative learning is through a change in perspective. Mezirow (1990) stated:

...the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting on these new understandings. More inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspectives are superior perspectives that adults choose if they can because they are motivated to better understand the meaning of their experience. (p. 14)

It is through dialogue that learners attempt to understand, and it is through assertions made by others that learners are able to achieve validation for their own perspective (Mezirow, 1990). Transformative learning involves a specific aspect of reflection: reassessing beliefs and acting on insights derived from the transformed meaning perspective that results from such reassessments (Mezirow, 1990).

To achieve transformational learning, Mezirow advocated critical reflection since it assists the learner in making meaning. Mezirow (1990) stated, “by far the most significant learning experiences in adulthood involve critical reflection reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, feeling, and acting” (p.13). Reflection can be defined as making inferences, generalizations, analogies, discriminations, and evaluations as well as remembering and solving problems; critical reflection is the process of sensibly examining the assumptions by which we have been justifying our convictions (Mezirow, 1990). Critical reflection is a vital part of decision making since it is not concerned with the how or the how-to of an action but with the why, the reasons for, and the consequences of what one does. Mezirow (1996) explained that individuals commonly check prior learning to confirm that they have correctly attempted to solve a problem, but whenever one challenges and becomes critically aware of their own presuppositions, the

meaning perspectives with which they have made sense of the world can change or transform.

### *Social Constructivism and Liberating Education*

To provide preservice teachers the opportunity to experience perspective transformation along with experiencing and clearly understanding emancipatory education and the importance of empowerment, this study's theoretical framework also incorporates Vygotsky's social constructivist theory and Paulo Freire's ideology of democracy and liberating education through critical reflection. Through these perspectives on learning, students in an urban English teacher preparation program can transform and transcend preconceived notions about schools, teaching, and students through understanding and participating in social constructivist pedagogy. Vygotsky (1986) described social constructivism as building individual knowledge through social interaction, and through this interaction, individuals test and modify their knowledge in light of new experiences. With social constructivist theory, "Individuals create their own new understanding, based upon the interaction of what they already know and believe, and the phenomena or ideas with which they come into contact" (Richardson, 1997, p.3). Social constructivism views the classroom as a community charged with the task of developing knowledge, and this knowledge is inseparable from the activities that produced it; therefore, knowledge is transactional; learning is socially constructed and is distributed among the students.

Similar to Vygotsky's social constructivist pedagogy and Mezirow's transactional theory, Paulo Freire advocated critical literacy via a social constructivist pedagogy that encouraged critical reflection through a dialectical relationship, which he defined as

*praxis*. Freire (1993) conceived *praxis* as a process that asks one to examine action, reflect on that action and ultimately through dialogue evoke a transformative action, which he sees as a "...human activity [that] consists of action and reflection; it is praxis, it is transformation of the world" (p. 125). Education based on praxis is one where people act on their material surroundings and reflect on them with a view to transforming them through conversation. However, Freire argued that action on its own, isolated from reflection would result in mindless activism, or reflection on its own, apart from action would constitute empty theorizing (Mayo, 2004). Action is the final component of the transformative learning process and the most important element that relates to urban preservice education.

After critical reflection and discourse, a person may take "immediate action, delayed action or reasoned reaffirmation of an existing pattern of action" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 24). This transformational theoretical perspective becomes necessary since aspects of the research questions for this study encompass how beginning teachers have transformed as teachers through critical reflection of their preservice teacher education combined with experience in the classroom.

To examine the perspective transformation in beginning teachers, Mezirow (1991) defined perspective transformation as:

The process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally making choices or otherwise acting on these new understandings. (p. 167)

The transformational learning process for preservice teachers begins during their teacher education and internship and is then furthered as a classroom teacher. Through these

experiences, beginning teachers transcend their teacher education, critically reflect on their use of and effectiveness of theory and methods, and transform their perspective based on discourse among co-teachers, administrators, professors, and students. Taylor (1997) in a review of literature on Mezirow's transformative theory, found specific characteristics emerge as a result of transformative learning such as an increase in personal power, spirituality, a transpersonal realm of development, compassion of others, creativity, a shift in discourse, and a new connectedness with others. These characteristics mix perfectly with the desired outcome of the English education program graduates.

The overarching goal of Freire's critical literacy praxis, Mezirow's transformative critical reflection, and Vygotsky's social constructivism is a democratic and emancipatory education that empowers not only preservice English teachers but also their future students. Freire's critical literacy is framed by his desire not to give the individual empowerment but social empowerment. Freire stated, "Even when you individually feel yourself most free, if this feeling is not a social feeling, if you are not able to use your recent freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude toward empowerment or freedom" (Shor and Freire, 1987, p.109). Emancipatory education helps the learner become aware and critical of the presuppositions that shape their beliefs and empowers learners to challenge presuppositions, explore alternative perspectives, transform old ways of understanding, and act on new perspectives (Mezirow, 1990). Key to both Freire's praxis and Mezirow's transformative learning is action and knowing how and when to act upon new perspectives; however, transformative learning does not prescribe the specific action to

be taken but provides a set of rules and criteria for judging and weighing the options, a crucial trait to have as a teacher.

At the Conference on English Education's Leadership and Policy Summit in May of 2005, the document, *What is English Education?* (2005), outlined the framework for understanding the mission and goals of English education:

Central to the task of English educators is the preparation and support of teachers who, in turn, prepare learners to be creative, literate individuals; contributors to the cultural, social, and economic health of their communities; fully participating and critically aware citizens of our democracy in a complex, diverse, and increasingly globalized world. (p. 1)

This study on a preservice English teacher preparation program hopes to shed light on the aspects of an English teacher preparation program that graduates find most useful in their classroom while also examining how beginning teachers' perspectives on their preparation, the classroom, and teaching as a profession change through experience. Mezirow's transformative theory, Freire's critical literacy praxis, and Vygotsky's social constructivism all frame and support the research questions, design, and methods for the proposed study through their ideology of democracy, critical reflection, perspective transformation, and thoughtful action.

#### Overview of the Research Design

This qualitative study was conducted at a large research-intensive university located in a large urban area in the southeastern United States. Beginning teacher participants were recent graduates (cohorts 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008) from the university's Master's level English education program. Graduates were initially contacted through email with a short introductory letter explaining the research along with the open-ended questionnaire and informed consent letter. To help recruit

participants, graduates were offered a ten dollar gift card from Target for completing the questionnaire.

Data collection began in January 2009 and continued through May of 2009. After beginning teacher participants completed the open-ended questionnaire sent through email and responses were analyzed, two selected teachers were asked to take part in open-ended, in-depth interviews and observations at their schools. The purpose of the interviews and observations of selected participants was to present to the reader the experiences of these beginning teachers in enough detail and depth that those who read this study will “connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects” (Seidman, 2006, p. 41). The interview section of the study was organized around Seidman’s (2006) “Three Interview Series” where the first interview examines their experience or life history, the second interview examines details of their present experience, and the third interview has participants reflect on the meaning of their experience. The interviews typically lasted an hour and were semi-structured, phenomenological, in-depth interviews (see Appendix C). Typically, after the initial interview we scheduled our next interview and observation at a time convenient for them. To follow up, I would thank them for their time and remind them of the next scheduled interview.

The interviews were conducted in their classrooms either after school or during their planning period. The initial interview was open-ended in format, and the purpose of this interview was to obtain richer, more specific information based on the emailed questionnaire (Bogdan & Biklin, 2003). After each observation of the study, I conducted an interview with participants to discuss the theories and methods used in their classroom

during the observation period (see Appendix D). This allowed participants to elaborate on the rationale and logic behind the implementation of specific methods or theories used and to discuss perceptions of their teaching. The second and third interview also focused on the “card sort” activity/interview where participants discussed their Master’s level English and education classes based on a chosen card from the stack of cards which had projects and classes from their program. The interviews were then transcribed, examined, and coded for emerging and recurring themes. Next, the two selected participants were observed teaching in their classroom to see what methods and aspects of their preservice program they used on a consistent basis. These observations occurred when the participants stated a specific time and date.

Finally, all questionnaire participants’ school administrators/department chairs were asked to respond to an administrator/department chair questionnaire concerning their perception of the quality of preparation of these beginning teachers and whether or not they perceive these teachers as improving student achievement.

Overall, data sources consisted of two open-ended questionnaires: one from teachers and one from school administrators/department chairs, semi-structured phenomenological interviews with selected teachers, verbatim transcriptions of the interviews with selected teachers, non-participant observation of teaching of selected participants, field notes from observations, teacher made materials, photographs of student projects and select teachers’ classrooms, and the researcher’s reflective journal. Data analysis followed a constant comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and themes were developed inductively.

## Conclusion



To improve student success in the classroom, policy makers must understand the key role well-trained teachers play in achieving this goal. Several studies examine the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs on student achievement; however, what is missing from the literature is an examination of the connections to quality teacher preparation programs, the program's impact on daily teaching both with recent graduates and graduates with teaching experience, how well these teachers' initial training helped them develop a more democratic language arts classroom for their students, and school administrators'/department chairs' perspectives on how these beginning teachers' training has assisted them in helping their students achieve. This study hopes to fill that gap and provide more insight into how to educate successful teachers through the examination of an English teacher preparation programs' daily effect and impact on their graduates and an examination of school administrators'/department chairs' perception of these graduates' performance in the classroom.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To raise student achievement in all schools, policy makers must understand that this goal is dependent on developing and effectively training teachers to meet the heightened standards required in today's classroom. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) illustrated the point: "What teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what teachers can accomplish. New courses, tests, curriculum reforms can be important starting points, but they are meaningless if teachers cannot use them productively. Policies can improve schools only if the people in them are armed with the knowledge, skills and supports they need" (p. 5). More importantly, urban schools urgently need highly qualified and competent teachers who understand more than just the standards dictated by federal and state governments; urban schools need teachers who not only have the pedagogical skills and subject knowledge to draw from but are also able to think critically and reflectively about their practice and are committed to ensuring social justice and educational equality through the English/language arts classroom and through the development of youth literacies.

Pamela Grossman (1990) argued that professional preparation, such as methods courses and fieldwork, is better equipping teachers to work with a variety of students

stated, “Teacher educators can counter the movement toward waiving and limiting pedagogical coursework not by arguing for the commonplace but by creating exemplary programs and courses and investigating their effects on prospective teachers” (p. 147). With connections to Grossman’s research, this study examined the impact of an exemplary English teacher education program on the daily teaching habits of beginning teachers. This study also examined the program graduates’ preparedness and ability to improve student learning from school administrators’/department chairs’ point of view.

This chapter examines relevant literature and explores factors that contribute to the development of successful teachers, such as the structures of teacher education programs, the impact methods courses and field experiences have on preservice English teachers’ practices, and the influence of teachers’ educational background on learning to teach. In addition, this chapter will examine the history of urban education, the importance of understanding critical race theory, and aspects of teaching in urban settings. However, to balance the examination of quality teacher education programs and its components, this review of literature will also focus on some of the dominant criticisms of teacher education that both policy makers and even academics view as weaknesses in colleges and schools of education.

### The Structures of Teacher Education Programs

When normal schools opened in the 1800’s, many of the teachers knew little more than their students since this was a time in American history when the workforce did not require a highly educated population but one that needed large numbers of people with simple, basic skills such as reading and writing (Wise & Leibbrand, 2000). In the early to mid 1950’s, lax preparation and entry standards into teaching were the norm, and by

the 1950's teaching was viewed as a job one could "fall back on" if nothing else worked out (Wise & Leibbrand, 2000, p.613). However, in 1983, *A Nation at Risk: An Imperative for Educational Reform* was published, which many believe altered the education landscape and initiated influence on today's standards movement in public education. In 1987, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) was redesigned and required schools of education to develop and articulate a framework upon which all courses and knowledge were situated (Wise & Leibbrand, 2000). An emphasis on clinical practice arose as an outcome of the standards based initiative, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) developed performance assessments to judge whether teachers had met specific standards of practice. However, even with this developing emphasis on teacher quality, policy makers struggled with why many American students still scored poorly on national and international standardized tests. These concerns over student achievement have manifested into a focus on the academic quality of teachers and teacher preparation programs.

Arends and Winitzky (1991) identified five structural types of teacher education programs other than the traditional four-year undergraduate model: (a) the extended and integrated five-year program leading to a bachelor's degree, (b) the extended and integrated five-year program leading to a bachelor's and master's degree, (c) the fifth-year program leading to a master's degree, (d) the six-year program leading to a master's degree, and (e) alternative certification programs. However, the emergence of extended five-year and graduate programs has evolved as a response to upgrade the status of teacher education in higher education and the status of teaching in society. Because this study will focus on a fifth-year graduate program that leads to a master's degree, this

section of the review of literature will focus on five year integrated bachelor's programs and fifth-year master's programs.

#### *Five-Year Teacher Education Programs*

In a comparison of four- and five-year bachelor teacher education programs, Andrew (1990) examined graduates of both types of programs (four- and five-year) at the University of New Hampshire using two data sources: (a) random samples of four and five-year program graduates from 1976 to 1986 and (b) yearly program evaluation questionnaires sent to all students at the end of their four or five-year programs between 1981 to 1982 and 1988 to 1989. Comparisons were made between the two programs of the entry and retention rates of graduates, their career satisfaction, and their evaluations of their teacher education programs. The findings indicate that graduates of the five-year program entered teaching at a higher rate than the four year graduates (93% vs. 86%). Retention was also higher for graduates of the five-year program (74% vs. 56%). The study also found significant differences in career satisfaction of graduates. Only 56% of four-year teacher said that they would choose teaching again compared to 82% of five-year teachers, and 75% of five-year graduates planned to be teaching in ten years compared to 54% of four-year graduates.

In a similar study, Andrew and Schwab (1995) and Baker (1993) reported the results of a study of a consortium of 11 teacher education institutions, with seven of these institutions having five-year extended bachelor's programs that joined together to study the outcomes of their programs. In this report, 1,390 surveys of graduates were analyzed from 1985 to 1990, and each institution identified a random sample of 300 graduates. The study found 49% completed four year programs, 36% graduated from integrated

five-year programs, and 14% completed fifth-year graduate programs. Of the 72% who were currently teaching, 25% were in urban districts, 27% in rural districts, and 48% in suburban districts. The results revealed that 90% of five-year graduates (both bachelor's and master's) entered teaching compared to 80% of four year program graduates, and at the time of the study, 87% of five-year graduates were still teaching compared to 78% of four-year graduates. School principals of the graduates were asked to rate the performance of the graduates compared to teachers of similar teaching experience and found that "graduates of five-year programs clustered at the top of the principals' ratings" (Baker, 1993, p. 32).

Darling-Hammond (2006) in "Assessing Teacher Education: The Usefulness of Multiple Measures for Assessing Program Outcomes" evaluated program outcomes in the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP) and examined how the successfulness or "efficaciousness" was evaluated of preservice teachers enrolled in the STEP program. Darling-Hammond used surveys, interviews, data from pretests/posttests, performance assessments, work samples, employers' surveys, and observations of teaching practice to examine how well graduates were performing in the classroom. Darling-Hammond emphasized throughout her article the need for multiple measures that allow for a more comprehensive view of the program studied. Each measure of teacher effectiveness used in the study had some limitation, and she illustrated how the use of numerous research tools can shed more light on a specific outcome. Darling-Hammond concluded that even when examining specific aspects of a teacher education program, the use of multiple measures must be used to obtain a comprehensive view of the teacher candidates and what the program contributes to their performance. In relation to this study, multiple

measures of data collection were used to garner a comprehensive view of the connections graduates made to their classrooms from various aspects of their English teacher preparation program.

#### Impact of Teacher Preparation Curriculum and Field Experiences on Teacher Practices

Randi Dickson et al. (2006) examined the roles of methods courses and field experiences in English education programs and asserted that programs should be as coherent as possible in terms of the following: courses within the program and within English, educational foundations and other disciplines that contribute to students' preparation; experiences and relationships with school-based mentors; organizations that connect students with larger institutions; and other experiences that comprise the educational experience of students in university programs. However, Dickson et al. (2006) felt most programs contain a "cafeteria style" approach that offer different courses but lack a cohesive curricular whole. These authors argued that programs must construct "a coherent teacher education program in which teacher candidates' experiences are deliberately structured to enable conversations about teaching and learning to be carried on so that their consideration of praxis may be consciously and continually mediated by a range of related experiences" (p. 315). One area the university programs must address is the gulf that exists in teacher preparation programs between teacher education programs and the actual practices and policies that exist in schools (Dickson et al., 2006). The writers even suggested empowering instead of disconnecting mentor teachers by involving them in the process of program design.

In examining the impact of field experience on preservice teachers, Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) argued that at least three questions must be asked about

the role of any practicum: What is the preservice teacher learning about being a teacher, about students, classrooms, and the activities of teaching? How does this experience relate to the central purpose of teaching or helping students learn? To what extent does this experience foster preservice teachers' capacity to learn from future experience? These three questions are crucial in helping design practicum experiences for preservice teachers that constructively contribute to their development as teachers.

John Dewey (1938) argued that not all practicum experience is good experience. He stated: "The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are miseducative. Any experience is miseducative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (p. 25). One aspect the practicum should enforce is the need for teachers to take control of their own professional development and learn how to continue to learn (Zeichner, 1996). Dewey (1904/1965) criticized the tendency of teacher education in his day to place too much emphasis on the immediate proficiency of the teacher and too little emphasis on preparing students of education who have the capacity and disposition to keep on growing. Dewey argued:

Practical work should be pursued primarily with reference to its reaction upon the professional pupil making him a thoughtful and alert student of education, rather than to help him get immediate proficiency. For immediate skill may be got at a cost of power to go on growing. Unless a teacher is...a student of education he may continue to improve in the mechanics of school management, but he cannot grow as a teacher, an inspirer and director of soul-life. (p. 151)

A worthwhile practicum experience responds to Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann's (1985) questions along with instilling in the pre-service teacher the importance of professional



growth and lifelong learning. These components will strengthen the preservice teacher as a career educator and diminish the tendency of quick fixes in teacher preparation and alternative teacher preparation.

In examining English teacher education programs, a factor to consider is how methods courses and field experiences taught in the university setting correspond to the “real world” of teaching. Weaver and Stanulis’ (1995) examined a middle school student teacher who was placed in an environment that modeled and reinforced what was taught in the methods course; however, she specifically struggled with the writing workshop approach. The authors explained that she did not know how to manage the paper load, and she anticipated a first-year teaching position that would not provide her with either the resources or the support for implementing a writing workshop.

In a longitudinal study which followed three teachers through the preservice program into the classroom, Grossman (2000) provided evidence that teachers who completed a program with a strong theoretical base for writing instruction struggled with practical application; however, within the first two years of teaching, that theoretical base shaped their writing program. A teacher who did not actively resist the program but struggled with practice was more able to adapt the district-mandated curriculum package into a theory-based practice by her second year of teaching.

Renee Clift (1991) analyzed preservice English teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge through the use of case studies. Her study focused on the social context of learning to teach English and the construction of practical knowledge and how formal teacher preparation is not structured to take into account the dynamics of learning to teach. Much of the discussion in Clift’s article revolved around three representative

problematic events that occurred during Lesley's (case study) student teaching: teaching a novel she was unfamiliar with, confronting a student early in teaching, and being alone in the classroom during her first week. Clift used interviews, field notes, and journal entries to describe the situation and Lesley's reflections on the events. Three related conclusions came from Clift's case study. First, multiple schemata are called upon simultaneously when an English teacher interacts with students in the classroom. Second, there are gaps of knowledge when teachers are required to integrate across schemes; and lastly, teacher preparation curricula are not designed to integrate knowledge across schemes.

The limited area of research in English education and English teacher preparation has provided a background that asks professionals to examine the connections found in university based programs and actual classroom protocol. The literature has illustrated that pedagogical background is necessary to succeed in the classroom, but graduates from these programs need to understand some of the contrasts and ultimate adaptability from a theoretical base is needed to promote student learning. However, teacher educators must move beyond teaching specific skills that are later applied to the classroom and, instead, explore teacher beliefs and their origins to the English education curriculum; teacher educators cannot ignore that learning to teach is a journey of self-discovery. Britzman (1991) asserted:

Learning to teach is not a mere matter of applying decontextualized skills or of mirroring predetermined images; it is a time when one's past, present, and future are set in dynamic tension. Learning to teach – like teaching itself – is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become. (p. 8)

### Influence of Teachers' Backgrounds on Learning to Teach

Feiman-Nemser (2001) discussed in "From Preparation to Practice: Designing a Continuum to Strengthen and Sustain Teaching" how typical preservice programs are generally weak interventions compared to the influence of teachers' own schooling and their on-the-job experience. Feiman-Nemser (2001) stated that with weak induction programs, beginning teachers are forced to "sink or swim" which encourages them to rely on pedagogies that enable them to survive whether or not they represent "best practices" for that situation (p. 1014).

Initially, as preservice teachers begin their preparation programs, they view themselves as future teachers who present information, answer questions, and give explanations to attentive students who sit quietly in their seats riveted by every word spoken by the teacher (Ball & McDiarmid, 1990; Calderhead & Robson, 1991). Lortie (1975) defined this phenomenon as the "apprenticeship of observation," where familiarity with schooling offers preservice teachers preconceived notions of teaching and pedagogy that they received from their experiences as a student. Lortie (1975) argued that those students' perceptions of teaching offer only a limited view of teaching because students have contact only with teachers' actions and not their thought process or logic behind their pedagogy.

Grossman (1991) detailed how subject-specific methods courses, through modeling and "overcorrection," assist preservice teachers in acknowledging their preconceived notions of teaching and help them develop a more sophisticated professional knowledge and technical language for the English/language arts classroom. Drawn from Grossman's (1990) earlier study of differences in pedagogical content

knowledge held by English teachers with and without teacher training, six first-year English teachers were interviewed on their knowledge and beliefs regarding the teaching of English and were observed in their classrooms in order to obtain actual classroom practices. The three teachers who graduated with a degree in English teacher education had taken an English Curriculum and Instruction class which specifically addressed the students' apprenticeship of observation. Grossman stated that throughout the semester, the professor drew extensively on the students' own schooling by asking them to recall assignments, activities, and books; the professor implicitly acknowledged the power of the apprenticeship of observation in shaping the students' conceptions of teaching. However, the professor did juxtapose the students' own schooling experiences with the perspectives of new theoretical frameworks he introduced and allowed students to see their assumptions while building upon them.

In this article, Grossman (1991) extended Lortie's theory of apprenticeship of observation by stating that there is a tendency of preservice and beginning teachers to use themselves as "implicit models" for their students (p. 349). Grossman stated, "Prospective teachers recall their own academic interests and abilities to inform their judgments of the interest level or difficulty of academic tasks they plan to assign to students. In using themselves as models, teachers often express surprise when their students complain over the difficulty of a task they remember as being relatively easy" (pp. 349-350).

Fox (1993) suggested offering preservice teachers opportunities to express and explore their "conceptions of teaching and learning, as well as their visions of English as a discipline and a subject for study in school." In addition, listening to preservice

teachers' voices can assist English teacher educators in understanding how literacy instruction is acquired and modified (p. 349). Through two case studies, Fox examined the developing attitudes and perspectives of preservice teachers as they progressed through an English teacher education program and into their first year of teaching. Both participants worked in the same local junior high school and experienced brief periods of success but both left their student teaching positions frustrated and disappointed. Fox (1993) asserted that preservice and beginning teachers can find their voices among conflicting discourses through consistent opportunities to express their thoughts on English pedagogy and opportunities to work collaboratively with other teachers or members of their cohort. Fox (1993) stressed that context should always factor into learning to teach.

#### Working Toward a Democratic Society: Teaching in Urban Schools

History illustrates that urban or inner city schools and the children who attend them have tremendous obstacles to achieve the same type of education as their peers in typically higher achieving suburban schools (Anyon, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Noguera, 2003; Oakes, 1985). Darling-Hammond (1995) stated in "Academic Achievement: Approaches, Theories, and Research," that funding, continued resegregation of neighborhoods, and the organizational arrangements of school administrations contribute to the continued depression of urban school districts (p. 608). These factors, along with poorly prepared teachers, foster the obstacles that prevent equity in schooling and successful learning in the English/language arts classroom. However, to understand the impact social and cultural factors have on the teaching of urban students, we must understand the history of schooling in urban areas, the

importance of examining education through a critical race theoretical lens, and the necessity of implementing multicultural education to help urban students succeed.

Looking back in history to the 1960's and following the path of the civil rights movement, the government, through federal laws and court decisions, sought change in the education of inner city children. Cases such as the 1954 *Brown* decision forced schools to desegregate in hopes of offering all students the access to an equal education; however, enforcing the Supreme Courts decision became difficult, not only for the South, but for much of the country. In the 1967 decision of *Hobson v. Hansen*, the court found that black and poor children were denied equal educational opportunities in Washington D.C. because of segregation and unequal spending and ordered a reallocation of resources ranging from school construction to textbooks to teachers. The 1973 case of *Keyes v. School District No. 1 in Denver, Colorado*, the Supreme Court found school officials adopted a variety of policies such as zoning, selection of school sites, and staffing that perpetuated segregated education. Surprisingly, in Boston, Massachusetts, where the common school was established with hopes of equal education for all, the federal court ruled in *Morgan v. Hennigan* in 1974 that the city must desegregate schools, but the school committee openly opposed the federal court's mandates (Urban & Wagoner, 2004).

Unfortunately, despite attempts to improve the education of youths in urban settings, urban schools are still falling behind, with dropout rates above 50% and college bound students below 10%; thus, poorer communities are forced to accept subpar education (Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2005). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) asserted that the results of schools are quite predictable: "This is true largely because the

nation's poorest young people are the most likely to be denied access to a quality education and then to be blamed (implicitly and explicitly) for their academic failures" (p. 4). Urban education must take into consideration and develop partnerships with communities that will provide students the opportunity to be successful while also maintaining their urban identity (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez (1992) suggested that urban education should focus on designing urban school culture, curriculum, and pedagogy that embraces the culture and communities of urban students.

#### Critical Race Theory in Today's English/Language Arts Classroom

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) asserted that race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States and that we must view education through a critical race theoretical perspective to better examine and address the inequities present in today's educational system. In their article, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) contended that race, unlike gender and class, remains untheorized: "By arguing that race remains untheorized, we are not suggesting that other scholars have not looked carefully at race as a powerful tool for explaining social inequity, but that the intellectual salience of this theorizing has not been systematically employed in the analysis of educational inequity" (p. 50). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) also believe that class and gender-based explanations are not powerful enough to explain all of the differences in school variances and performances. They elaborated saying, "Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that even when we hold constant for class, middle-class African-American students do not achieve at the same level as their white counterparts" (p. 50).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) admitted the need for multicultural education but felt it has been reduced to trivial examples and “artifacts of cultures such as eating ethnic or cultural foods, singing songs or dancing, reading folktales, and other less than scholarly pursuits of the fundamentally different conceptions of knowledge or quests for social justice” (p. 61). They feel multicultural education in today’s schools is “mired in liberal ideology” and should reject the paradigm that attempts “to be everything to everyone and consequently becomes nothing for anyone” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 62). Multicultural education should instead incorporate critical race theory to challenge and question the status quo and dominant culture; and to reform today’s urban schools, educational leaders must become equipped to identify, develop, implement, and support pedagogy that investigates and draws from the social context of the lives of urban youths (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

### Teaching in Urban Settings

Haberman (1991) described the basic mode of teaching in schools serving poor, urban students as the “pedagogy of poverty” where teachers give information, ask questions, give directions, make assignments, monitor seatwork, review assignment, give tests, review tests, assign homework, review homework, settle disputes, punish noncompliance, mark papers, and give grades. According to Haberman (1991), none of these functions are considered poor pedagogy, but, “taken together and performed to the systematic exclusion of other acts they have become the pedagogical coin of the realm in urban schools” (p. 291). This pedagogy of poverty contradicts the best practices that typically involve students engaging with issues important to their lives, explaining human



differences, applying ideals to their world, redoing, polishing, or perfecting their works, and accessing technology in meaningful ways (Haberman, 1991).

In “Real Teaching for Real Diversity: Preparing English Language Arts Teachers for 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Classrooms,” Boyd et al. (2006) suggested that today’s language arts teacher’s main goal in the classroom is to create literacy learning opportunities that reflect our pluralistic society. However, to achieve this goal, teachers must acknowledge and understand the dynamics of power which tends to sway children and adolescents toward conformity; and if all children regardless of background are to succeed in school and society, they must have the critical literacy skills necessary to understand the codes present in the curriculum and in the culture (Boyd, et al., 2006). Further, Boyd et al. stated:

Indeed, if learners do not come to understand that the language they are learning or learning about is – or can be – their own language to use as they deem necessary, then they will continue to be mere serfs to those who do “own” the language and culture of power. (p. 331)

Urban schools have the power to transform society through equal educational opportunities; however, this remains a dream but one that must be attempted in order to truly adhere to the purposes of education in America. As educators and teacher educators, we hold this power of transformation; and although progress is being made, we must continue research and work toward providing an equitable education for all American students.

#### Criticisms of Teacher Education

Arguments against formal preparation for teachers have a long-standing history. Lasley, Bainbridge, and Berry (2002) argued that teaching has always been viewed as

being a “semi-profession, due to its truncated training and unenforced standards, an irrelevant coursework, ill-defined body of knowledge, and less autonomy of practice” (p. 17). While there is an almost endless list of criticism on teacher education, this section will focus only on those criticism that surround this research such as: “anyone can teach – they just need to have majored in that subject”; “ subject specific methods courses are easy, common sense, and useless”; “ the best way to learn how to teach is not in a university but in the classroom”; “teaching abstract concepts before preservice teachers have an understanding of context is illogical”; and “teacher education and teacher education research is removed from the ‘real world’ of teaching.”

*“Anyone Can Teach - They Just Need to Have Majored in that Subject”*

Many policy makers stand by this major criticism of teacher preparation programs. In 2001, a rhetorical debate played out between the Abell group and the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF). The Abell group wrote a report discrediting the idea that licensed teachers are more effective than non-licensed teachers which debunks the research evidence. Katie Walsh of the Abell group wrote, “...the backgrounds and attributes characterizing effective teachers are more likely to be found outside the domain of schools of education. The teacher attribute found consistently to be most related to raising student achievement is verbal ability...usually measured by short vocabulary tests...” (2001, p. 6). Linda Darling-Hammond (2001), in response, wrote a 50 page retort saying:

Walsh then tries to dismiss all studies that find evidence that knowledge about teaching also makes a difference for teacher performance, or to claim that studies finding positive effects of teacher education or certification are either too old, too small, too highly aggregated, or dependent on evidence about teacher performance other than student achievement or are not really about certification

after all, even if their authors say they are. She often does this by misrepresenting the studies' actual methods and findings.... (p. 6)

David C. Berliner (2000) in his article, "A Personal Response to those Who Bash Teacher Education" addressed this issue of having only subject matter preparation saying, "But if they come into teaching without preparation, during the few years they will need to become smart about the contexts of teaching and the complexity of classroom life, they will deny their students the benefits that accrue to teachers who have acquired more and better contextual knowledge through a high-quality, field-based teacher education program" (p. 360).

*"Subject Specific Methods Courses are Easy, Common Sense, and Useless"*

Berliner (2000) suggested high-quality teaching methods courses are necessary when they emphasize techniques and principles that help translate subject matter knowledge in forms that are useful and accessible to students. Berliner makes a convincing argument that students with degrees only in their subject area such as math, physics, or English literature have seen only university level teaching with no connection to pedagogical issues relevant to middle or secondary learners.

Several studies have explored the disconnect between subject-specific faculty (such as English literature specialists) and education faculty. Friedman and Wallace (2006) in their article, "Crossing Borders: Developing an Innovative Collaboration to Improve the Preparation of High School English Teachers," wanted to answer the question, "What happens when English, education, and high school faculty cross borders to prepare secondary English teachers to teach in urban schools?" The researchers found that collaboration challenged biases of stakeholders, enhanced the quality of teacher

preparation, and revised instructional practices of university English and education faculty.

In a similar query, “Teaching as We’re Taught: The University’s Role in the Education of English Teachers,” James Marshall and Janet Smith (1997) discussed the relationship, or lack thereof, between university English departments and departments of education. Many teachers, when entering the classroom, forget or don’t incorporate effective teaching strategies learned in education classes but end up teaching English the way they were taught; therefore, the researchers feel university English professors should emulate best teaching practices for their students.

*“Teaching Abstract Concepts before Preservice Teachers have an Understanding of Context is Illogical”*

Unfortunately, many teacher education programs do teach students factual knowledge of the field without students gaining enough experience to fully understand the context (Berliner, 2000). However, many teacher education programs are increasing the field experience and have students placed in schools more quickly and for longer periods extending from the beginning of a school year until the end of the school year. The English teacher education program used for the current study has a strong field-based program where students enter the field at the beginning of the school year to experience the opening of school and stay throughout the year till spring semester ends. This extended practicum experience intends to ensure students’ understanding of propositional and procedural knowledge in real-world contexts (Berliner, 2000).

*“Teacher Education and Teacher Education Research is Removed from the ‘Real World’  
of Teaching”*

An issue that has been at the forefront of teaching and teacher education is the gap between research and practice and the strong need for teacher researchers and teacher practitioners to build a joint community. In the late 1800’s, John Dewey pointed to a gap between theory and practice in education. In 1896, John Dewey established the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago that firmly grounded and widened the scientific method of education to include all aspects of the child and all aspects of the school environment including teacher development. The Laboratory School at the University of Chicago was designed as a place to test educational hypotheses and work out practical techniques. Dewey (1915) explains that:

...to learn from experience is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence. Under such conditions, doing becomes a trying, an experiment with the world to find out what it is like, the undergoing becomes instruction – discovery of the connection of things. (p. 89)

Dewey’s Laboratory School incorporated not only his philosophical beliefs but also allowed teachers the intellectual freedom to begin testing their own hypotheses of teaching methodology and student learning in the classroom – the beginnings of teacher inquiry in the classroom. The school encouraged teachers to inquire within their own classroom, and teacher reports document the experimentation by teachers that took place at the Laboratory School. Mayhew and Edwards, two teachers at the Laboratory School, explained in their book *Dewey School* (1936) that “All the teachers in actual daily contact with children of all ages furnished, in these reports, the data for further inquiries and conclusion” (p. 374).

Durst (2005) in her article “ ‘The Union of Intellectual Freedom and Cooperation’: Learning From the University of Chicago’s Laboratory School Community, 1896-1904” stated that teachers at the Laboratory School practiced theoretical inquiry with the intention that teaching and learning would be deepened and enhanced by the collective inquiry these reports fostered. The teacher reports not only provided an opportunity for teachers to articulate their reasons for specific approaches to subject matter and instructional methods but documented the outcomes of these practices with the children for other teachers to see and use in their own classrooms (Durst, 2005). The Laboratory School not only paved the way for educational and philosophical testing but initiated educational research into areas such as teacher inquiry, best practices, and teacher training.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the focus was often on the question of how practice can be better linked to valuable research outcomes. Today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the attention is more focused on how research outcomes can be better linked to practice (Korthagen, 2007). Eraut (1995) suggested that classroom teachers need prompt and concrete answers to situations which give them little time to think which is opposite to the more abstract, systematized, and general expert-knowledge researchers develop. According to Fenstermacher (1994), formal knowledge develops in teachers as they participate in and reflecting on their own actions and experiences in the classroom which situates the knowledge.

### Conclusion

This chapter examined relevant literature and explored factors that contribute to the development of successful teachers in quality teacher education programs. This

chapter also briefly examined the history of urban education, the importance of understanding critical race theory, and aspects of teaching in urban settings. Finally, to balance the examination of quality teacher education programs and its components, this review of literature focused on some of the dominant criticisms of teacher education that surround and frame this study. However, more research is needed to understanding the significance of urban teacher preparation for the English/language arts classroom and the effects teacher education programs have on both its teacher graduates and their students. The study attempts to address a gap in educational research literature by examining the perceptions of preparedness of graduates of an urban English teacher education program along with examining the school administrators' perceptions of these beginning teachers' preparedness and ability to improve student achievement.

The next chapter will examine the research design and methodology that will be used for this study. I will present an overview of the research design for this study and also discuss specifically the context, participant selection, data collection procedures, and plans for data analysis.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine specific aspects of an urban English teacher preparation program that beginning teachers implement and rely on in their classrooms on a consistent, daily basis. Also, this study examined how administrators view the knowledge base of graduates from the urban English teacher preparation program and if school administrators perceive these teachers as assisting students in reaching and excelling in the [state] Performance Standards and improving overall student achievement. In the previous chapter, I discussed the relevant studies and literature that provided a backdrop for understanding this proposed study. In this chapter, I will discuss and describe the details of the proposed study. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do beginning teachers perceive their preparation for teaching in the urban English Language Arts classroom?
2. How do school administrators perceive the teaching ability of graduates from the urban English teacher preparation program?

By focusing the research on these guiding questions, "...hypotheses and analysis emerge from the interaction of the kinds of questions asked and the kinds of data generated" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 64). The two research questions listed above guided the study



through the data gathering and data analysis process as well as provided the framework for the conclusions of this study.

### Design of the Study

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) describe qualitative research as “multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach to its subject matter...qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 2). Creswell (1998) explains “qualitative research is complex, involving fieldwork for prolonged periods of time, collecting words and pictures, analyzing this information inductively while focusing on participants views, and writing about the process using expressive and persuasive language” (p. 24). Through this process, the researcher is able to “build a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Creswell, 1998, p.15). This qualitative approach enabled me, as the researcher, to develop a high level of detail about the participants and their experiences. Since several viewpoints are shared, I examined all vantage points each participant holds and created a complex, holistic picture from the detailed reports of the individuals involved in the study (Creswell, 1998).

This study focused on understanding the meanings beginning teachers have constructed from their teacher preparation program and their reliance upon what they reported they learned in the program. Multiple means of data gathering were utilized such as two open-ended questionnaires, in-depth interviews, classroom observations, photographs, and teacher-made artifacts in order to offer a rich description of the phenomena that occurred. Schwandt’s (2000) interpretivist design states that the social

world encompasses meaning and that people respond to others through their interpretations of reality. The researcher and the participants are interactively linked, and together they construct, interpret, and refine meaning until consensus is achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the researcher and the select beginning teachers are interactively linked through dialogue that occurred during the interviews and also during the observations.

### Context

Southern Urban University's (pseudonym) fifth-year Master's degree program in Secondary English Education was developed as a nontraditional approach to English teacher education at the graduate level and is based on current research in teacher education (Program Document, 2007). With a socio-constructivist framework, which suggest human beings construct knowledge through interaction with other humans and their environment, the Master's English teacher education program participants are organized as a cohort that encourages and supports planning, teaching, and reflection with colleagues who are committed to excellence in English education (Program Document, 2007).

The program awards a Master's degree and initial teacher certification in secondary English (grades 6-12) within four semesters (summer, fall, spring, and summer), which includes 45 hours of graduate-level courses in both education and English. Graduates typically finish their coursework in the second summer and begin teaching in the fall. Typically, the curriculum for preservice teachers is divided into four segments: general education, which refers to the study of subjects and ideas to be of value to all persons; the study of content in the academic area in which the preservice

teacher plans to teach along with the study of how to teach that content; professional/pedagogical studies which refer to the study of what teachers should know about teaching and learning; and integrative studies which allow the student to apply all that they have learned in an off-campus teaching experience (Cruickshank, et al., 1996).

One determinate of quality teacher education programs in colleges of education is accreditation by The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Considered the top accrediting agency for colleges of education, NCATE states that teachers prepared at accredited institutions should: know the subject matter, demonstrate knowledge of effective teaching strategies, reflect on their practice and adapt their instruction, teach students from different backgrounds, integrate technology into instruction, and have been supervised by master teachers (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2005). Not only was Southern Urban University's fifth-year Master's degree program in Secondary English Education fully accredited by NCATE, but it also received a *Distinguished Program in Teacher Education* statewide award for excellence in teacher education (only one statewide award is bestowed annually in this state).

In this study, the curriculum examined follows both the NCATE guidelines and traditional units of study. Since this study examined a Master's degree program, students enter the program with an undergraduate degree in English or a related area such as journalism or communications or the equivalent of the undergraduate degree in English (24 hours of upper-division credit in English including a minimum of three semester hours in each of American Literature, British Literature, Written Composition, and Structure of the English Language). Applicants must also demonstrate an entering

overall grade point average of 2.5 or higher, three letters of recommendation (one personal, one work-related, and one university/college faculty); a statement of career goals and reasons for wanting to be an English teacher; a passing score on Praxis I (which is usually taken early in undergraduate years to facilitate entry into a teacher education program and evaluates basic skills in reading, writing, and math) or the [state] Assessment for the Certification of Educators which also assesses basic skills of prospective teachers; and a minimum combined Verbal and either Quantitative or Analytical GRE score of 800.

To successfully complete the degree, students must complete 45 hours of graduate-level coursework with an overall grade point average of 3.0, which includes twelve graduate hours in English/Folklore at the 6000 level or above; nine practicum and student teaching hours at a middle and secondary school level; core classes in instructional technology for teachers, the instruction of the exceptional child, psychology of learning, multicultural education, methods of research in education; and four methods courses in English education (introduction to secondary teaching, principles of English instruction, and theory and pedagogy of English instruction, literacy in the content area).

Many of the major projects that students in the program are asked to complete consist of writing unit plans, teaching lessons, integrating technology into their planning and teaching, completing an e-portfolio and planning and writing on a daily basis. The e-portfolio is a capstone project that demonstrates the students' growth throughout the program. To exit the program, students must also demonstrate passing scores on the [state] Assessment for the Certification of Educators or Praxis II examinations in

secondary English. This program curriculum description above provides a frame for the reader, one that former students referred to throughout the research process.

### Participants and Participant Selection

Participants in this study were graduates of Southern Urban University's fifth-year Master's degree program in Secondary English Education from the past three years (cohorts 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008) and their school administrators/department chairs. To obtain participants in this study, permission from each school district to work with their beginning teachers and administrators/department chairs had to be granted before the study could proceed. Permission from three school districts in the area of Southern Urban University was secured, but gaining access to only three school districts out of a potential seven also eliminated other participants because permission to conduct research was not granted or was not applied for in all school districts in the area.

After receiving permission from the school districts and permission from Southern Urban University Institutional Review Board to conduct this study, a list of program graduates and the most recent school where they were teaching was generated from the SUU's College of Education. The list contained all graduates from the program from the last three years. Next, a new list was developed after separating the graduates who were teaching at a school district that granted permission from the districts that did not grant permission or permission was not sought. This final shorter list contained all eligible potential participants and their schools. Next, school websites were scanned for each participant's school email address. This step also eliminated graduates who no longer taught at the school listed on SUU's generated list, left the teaching profession, or

changed schools. As a result, SUU's initial list of 100 graduates from the last three years was trimmed down to 40. All graduates on the final, refined list were then emailed a short introductory letter explaining the research, the informed consent letter, and the open-ended Beginning Teacher Questionnaire. Beginning teachers were emailed these items a maximum of three times at two-week intervals. Several participants appreciated the reminder while other did not respond at all. After the third email without a response, I did not contact that beginning teacher again. All completed questionnaires by recent graduates from the final list were used as data. A total of 13 graduates participated in the study, for a return rate on the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire of 33 percent.

The purpose of the interviews and observations of selected participants was to present to the reader the experiences of these beginning teachers in enough detail and depth that those who read this study will "connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects" (Seidman, 2006, p. 41). To determine participants for the interviewing and observational phase of the study, purposeful sampling was used to achieve maximum variation (Patton, 2002). This sampling technique allowed for the widest range of readers to connect with what they are reading (Seidman, 2006). To determine the number of participants for the interviewing and observation phase of this research, I took into consideration two criteria: sufficiency and saturation of information (Seidman, 2006). This method allowed the number of participants selected to reflect a wide range of perceptions so that others might connect with the beginning teachers' experiences. Since the interviews and observations phase of the study was to represent a wide spectrum of perceptions of the urban English teacher preparation program, two participants were selected from their responses on the open-

ended questionnaire. These two participants suggested either that the program did not prepare them well for the classroom or that the program did an excellent job preparing them for the classroom. To determine this, I used participants' responses from question four on the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire which asked, "On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being defined as "exceptional," how well did SUU's initial teacher preparation program prepare you for the English/language arts classroom? Please explain your answer." Participants who rated the program the highest and lowest on this question were chosen and asked to participate in the interviews and observations section of the study.

To better understand in depth how the teacher education program was perceived by school leaders, administrator/department chairs were contacted who had direct knowledge of how well a program graduate is performing as a beginning teacher were invited to complete a questionnaire focused on the quality of program graduates. The questionnaire asked administrators'/department chairs' perceptions of how well program graduates were performing in the classroom and how well they were improving student achievement. There was a potential conflict of interest in working with both beginning teachers and their administrators; however, I reiterated with both the teachers and administrators/department chairs involved in the study that the questionnaire was not meant to identify and reprimand specific teachers regarding their performance in the classroom, but to better understand how well program graduates are performing in the classroom and improving student achievement. Thus, the overall goal was to gain information about the teacher education program for program improvement.

### Positionality of the Researcher

After graduating from an English teacher preparation program with a Master's in English Education, I began teaching high school English. My preparation program was similar to the one examined for this study, which included classes both in education and English; however, the program I attended did not have a practicum experience nor a capstone project such as the electronic portfolio. For ten years, I taught all levels of high school English ranging from ninth-grade literature and composition, honors ninth-grade literature and composition, tenth-grade literature and composition, honors British literature, senior technical writing, Pacesetter English, American literature and composition, and journalism. One year I worked intensively with beginning teachers in a program called "Model Teachers" where we modeled lessons, mentored, and assisted beginning teachers. From my experience as a high school English teacher, along with my work with beginning teachers, I feel I am uniquely situated to conduct this study. Not only do I have the understanding, background, and training of an English teacher, but I am also qualified to examine and understand how to assist beginning teachers in their first years as a teacher.

My involvement with Southern Urban University's English teacher preparation program has varied throughout the past several years and included positions such as supervisor of student interns during their practicum experience, teaching assistant for two methods classes (teaching writing and teaching literature), placement of student interns in their practicum schools, and completion of interviews of prospective program candidates. As the researcher, I am aware of my own biases, values, and understandings concerning the program, the students, and the faculty (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Because of the



variety of positions I have held, I have an insider's perspective on the program but, depending on the position of my job, the degree of involvement has varied from semester to semester. As I conducted this study, I was aware and mindful of the degree of my relationship with any former students, cognizant of my perspective of the phenomenon, and aware of any bias. As the principal investigator of this study, I utilized member checking to help examine my biases to contribute insight into the successful preparation of not only middle/secondary English teachers, but all teacher preparation programs and their graduates.

#### Data Sources and Data Collection Methods

Data sources consisted of a Beginning Teacher Questionnaire; Administrator/Department Chair Questionnaire; three in-depth, semi-structured interviews; verbatim transcriptions of the in-depth, semi-structured interviews with teachers; field notes from the three in-depth, semi-structured interviews; three non-participant observations of teachers' classrooms; the "card sort" activity/interview; field notes from the three observations of the select beginning teachers' classrooms; peer debriefing notes; and the researcher's reflective journal. Data were collected throughout the inquiry process, beginning with the initial open-ended questionnaire and continuing through interviews and observations. All data were collected, labeled, and organized in a researcher's notebook which was maintained throughout the data collection process as a means of documenting what was collected, when, and why. The researcher's notebook housed all hard copies of data including the open-ended questionnaires (from teachers and administrators), transcriptions of interviews, interview tapes, emails from participants,

photographs of teacher's classrooms, and classroom observation notes. Additionally, all data were simultaneously transcribed and saved on a password-protected computer.

Data were analyzed using Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method that involves repeated reading and reviewing of data such as interview transcripts and observational field notes and comparing them to other data. Creswell (1998) defines constant comparative method of data analysis as the "process of taking information from data collection and comparing it to emerging categories" (p.57). Therefore, themes were developed inductively through a careful process of qualitative data analysis and interpretation. Data analysis began with the first collection of data and intensified as the study progressed. Data analysis for this study involved a repeated, recursive process of reading and re-reading all data sets, conducting open coding through notes/memos in text margins, development and refinement of coding, the establishment of categories, designing of visuals and charts, and finally the development of propositions or hypotheses. Throughout the research process, all data were continuously analyzed paying close attention to triangulating data and comparing data across and within participants. Additionally, member checking and peer debriefing were employed. In the following paragraphs, I will describe each data source and my extensive process of data analysis in more detail.

### *Questionnaires*

Data collection first began with the distribution of an open-ended questionnaire to Southern Urban University's program graduates in secondary English education (see Appendix A). Along with an introductory letter explaining the study and the informed consent letter, this questionnaire was emailed to the last three years' program graduates

(cohorts 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008). This questionnaire was used to collect baseline data on graduates' perceptions of their preservice teacher preparation program along with aspects of the program graduates consistently use in their daily teaching.

To fully examine school administrators'/department chairs' perceptions of how well graduates of SUU's Master's level English teacher education program perform in the classroom, a second questionnaire was sent through email along with an introductory letter explaining the study to graduates' school administrators/department chairs who had knowledge of how well these beginning teachers were performing in the classroom (see Appendix B). As previously stated, this questionnaire sent to administrators was in no way meant to single out or identify specific graduates regarding their performance in schools, but used as a research tool to better understand how well the Master's level English teacher education program prepares beginning teachers for the classroom.

### *Interviews*

After completing the questionnaire, two purposefully selected beginning teachers were interviewed three times in their classrooms. The three interviews typically lasted one hour each and were semi-structured, phenomenological, in-depth interviews (see Appendix C). The purpose of the interview and observation stage of this research was to gather rich, thickly descriptive data in order to present to the reader the experiences of these two beginning teachers in enough detail and depth that those who read this study will "connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects" (Seidman, 2006, p. 41). The interview section of the study was organized around Seidman's (2006) "Three Interview Series" where the first interview examines the participants' experience or life history, the second interview

examines details of their present experience, and the third interview has participants reflect on the meaning of their experience. For example, Interview One included questions asking about their educational background, previous work experience, and elaborating on their answers from the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire. Interview Two asked questions derived from observational notes from the first classroom observation and questions about their present teaching situation. Interview Two also included the Card Sort Activity that asked participants to sort through the cards that contained classes and projects from the Master's level English teacher education program according to their influence on their teaching. Interview Three asked questions from observational notes from the second classroom observation and concluded the Card Sort Activity. Much of Interview Three revolved around participants discussing the courses and projects from their teacher education program.

Typically, after Interview One, the beginning teacher and I scheduled our next interview and observation at a time convenient for the beginning teacher. To follow up, through email, I would thank them for their time and remind them of the next scheduled interview. The interviews were conducted in their classrooms either after school or during their planning period. After each observation, except for Observation Three, I conducted an interview with participants to discuss the theories and methods used in their classroom during the observation period (see Appendix D). This allowed participants to elaborate on their rationale and logic behind the implementation of specific methods or theories used and to discuss perceptions of their preparation for teaching. After each interview, field notes were completed and reflected on in the researcher's notebook. Each interview was transcribed verbatim, coded and analyzed.

### *Card Sort Activity/Interview*

The Card Sort activity/interview was adapted from Grossman's (1990) study of differences in pedagogical content knowledge held by English teachers with and without teacher training. Grossman utilized the Card Sort activity/interview to prompt six first-year English teachers during interviews on their knowledge and beliefs regarding the teaching of English. In Grossman's study, teachers sorted the courses taken in undergraduate and graduate school according to how the course influenced and impacted their knowledge of teaching English and English as a discipline. The participant teachers in Grossman's study were also given the titles of courses and the practicum experience on cards to sort and discuss.

For this study, the Card Sort activity/interview included courses, major projects, and experiences from the Master's level English teacher education program. The names of classes, projects, and experiences were written at the top of a color coded index card. These cards were placed on a table in front of each select participant. The select participant then examined all of the cards and chose one particular card at a time as a spring board for discussion and reflection.

### *Classroom Observations*

The same participants who were chosen from the SUU's Master's level English teacher education program to be interviewed three times were also observed on three different occasions in their classrooms to further examine what methods and/or aspects of their preservice program they rely on frequently in the classroom. Field notes were taken of each class session in order to better understand and analyze the beginning teachers' perceptions of their preparation program's impact on their teaching. Merriam (1998)

stated that observations provide “some knowledge of the context or provide specific incidents, behaviors, and so on that can be used as reference points for subsequent interviews” (p. 96). The observation/interview process occurred in this manner: after the initial interview, selected participants were observed three times, and after each observation, an interview followed to discuss the theories and methods observed in their classes and to conduct the card sort activity/interview. Similar to the interviews, selected participants were contacted, and an observation time most convenient to them was established. A follow up email was sent thanking them for their time and reminding them of the upcoming observation date and time.

#### *Artifact Collection*

During the interview and observation phase of the research, I inquired with the two select participants about any teacher-generated texts or examples of instructional methods or approaches learned in the teacher education program that were in the participants’ classrooms. All artifacts collected were intended to be used as data. One major student-generated project, a “body biography,” was collected, but secondary students’ names were not visible. This student project was an example of a collaborative project and illustrated how beginning teachers collect their resources for teaching through SUU’s Master’s level English teacher education program. All other artifacts were teacher-generated.

#### *Researcher’s Reflective Journal*

Throughout the study, a detailed researcher journal was kept to document impressions about the data gathered through the questionnaires, the interviews, and the classroom observations. The Researcher’s Reflective Journal was also used to help

reflect on the research process and any challenges or obstacles that arose. This detailed documentation occurred after every data-gathering incident and was written in detail and recorded any questions, concerns, ideas, or themes that occurred during the inquiry process. Through writing, the Researcher's Reflective Journal also helped in the analyzing process by allowing reflections on the research process and the activity at hand.

#### *Member Checks*

During the research process, I presented my findings formally to all participants to provide an opportunity for participants to give feedback (once after all observations and interviews; once after the questionnaire for administrators); however, informal member checks occurred throughout the research process. I provided feedback to school administrators who completed the questionnaire after all administrative participants completed the questionnaire. However, to avoid a conflict of interest between teachers and administrators, member checks were addressed for specific participant groups.

#### *Relationship of Data Sources to Research Questions*

Table 1 provides an overview of the relationship of the study's data sources to the research questions for the study. Each question has been covered thoroughly by using the most appropriate and revealing qualitative methods to gather data to best answer each question while also maintaining both trustworthiness and rigor.

Table 1

*Data Collection Matrix*


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Research Questions	Data Sources
1. How do beginning teachers perceive their preparation for teaching in the English/language arts classroom?	Questionnaire, Interviews, Researcher's Reflective Journal, Teacher Made Artifacts, Photographs, Card Sort Activity/Interview, Classroom Observations
2. How do school administrators perceive the teaching ability of graduates from the urban English teacher preparation program?	Administrator Questionnaire, Researcher's Reflective Journal

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## Data Management and Analysis

My home office served as a repository for data management. To organize all of the data, each participant's response to the open-ended questionnaire, transcripts of the interviews, and observation field notes were housed in a specific notebook. The Researcher's Reflective Journal was maintained electronically, but hard copies were produced and inserted into a separate hardbound notebook. All notebooks, audiotapes, and artifacts were placed in a locked filing cabinet. The total number of pages of raw data (e.g. transcripts, observation notes, researcher's notes/memos, teacher-made materials, questionnaires) exceeded two hundred pages.

All data such as questionnaires, interviews and observations were analyzed through a constant comparative method that allowed the researcher to build abstractions, hypotheses, and concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This inductive approach allowed for



several levels of data analysis (see Table 2). In the sections that follow, I describe in detail my overall approach to (1) analysis of the questionnaire data and (2) analysis of the interview and observation data.

Table 2

*Data Analysis Matrix*

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Data Sources	Beginning Teacher Questionnaire Administrator/Department Chair Questionnaire Verbatim Transcripts of Interviews with Select Participants Observations and Field Notes from Observation
Level 1 Analysis	Analytical Reading/Rereading Code Development Conceptual Memos/Notes
Level 2 Analysis	Code Refinement Category Development Poster Boards with Categories Cross Case Analysis Development of Charts/Visuals Conceptual Memos/Notes Overall Themes Writing and Revising of Chapters

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*Analysis of Questionnaire Data*

The first level of data analysis consisted of an analytical reading and rereading of all Questionnaires (Beginning Teacher and Administrator/Department Chair). While methodically reading and rereading the data, I began to carefully code the Beginning Teacher and Administrator/Department Chair Questionnaires by looking for “regularities and patterns as well as for topics that data cover, and then writing down words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.166). Miles

and Huberman (1994) define codes as “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (p. 56). Initial coding categories evolved from open codes written in the margins on copies of the Questionnaires. These jottings provided the basis for initial codes developed in my analysis of the Questionnaire data (see Appendix F). After initial coding, further refinement of codes occurred which then led to the development of categories (Creswell, 1998). The categories were then compiled onto large poster boards.

Merriam (1998) suggests that, “. . .the categories can be fleshed out and made more robust by searching through the data for more and better units of relevant information” (p.185). Therefore, the second level of data analysis for the Questionnaires consisted of transferring categories to large, individual poster boards. This allowed me to analyze the Questionnaires further and begin to develop categories for the beginning teacher and administrative responses.

For example, for question number one on the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire, participants discussed the courses and experiences that helped prepare them for the secondary English/language arts classroom. Some of the open codes from this question consisted of: “more time observing,” “English classes – comfortable with material,” “Faulkner class,” “writer’s lives,” “creating and sharing unit plans with colleagues,” “Shakespeare class,” “reading class,” “reading a variety of professional books,” “learned how to be a passionate instructor,” “grammar,” “instructional technology,” and “teacher identity.” Further analysis of the open codes elicited a refinement of the codes such as “practicum,” “English classes,” “more observation time,” “grammar,” “advanced grammar,” “practical grammar,” “introduction to secondary teaching,” “teaching

reading,” “teacher identity.” After refining the codes and continually revisiting the data, categories were developed such as “Grammar Instruction,” “English Department Sponsored Classes,” “Education Department Sponsored Classes,” and “Negatives.”

Charts and visuals were also developed which helped clarify the codes and categories that emerged from the Questionnaire data. Merriam (1998) discusses how producing visuals assists the researcher in linking the categories together in a meaningful way, “...even a simple diagram or model using the categories and subcategories of the data analysis can effectively capture the interaction or relatedness of the findings” (p. 188).

#### *Analysis of Select Beginning Teacher Data*

A separate stage of data analysis occurred with the select beginning teacher participants who were interviewed and observed. Following the same constant comparative data analysis structure used for the Beginning Teacher and Administrator/Department Chair Questionnaires, verbatim interview transcripts and observation field notes were first carefully read and reread. Open codes consisted of marginal notes, and refined codes were developed from critical readings of the interview transcripts and observation notes (see Appendix G). In addition, after each interview and observation, conceptual memos or notes were written in the Researcher’s Reflective Journal that recorded initial impressions. These conceptual memos/notes assisted in collecting data, initiating coding, developing categories and finally determining overall themes.

The second level of data analysis for the interviews and observations of select beginning teachers involved cross case analysis which Creswell (1998) defines as “a

thematic analysis across the cases” (p. 63). Again, using large poster boards with categories written, I looked for patterns and themes across both beginning teachers and summarized these themes in conceptual memos/notes (see Figure 1).



Figure 1

### *Categories Posters*

Charts and visuals were also incorporated to assist in clarifying and better understanding the emerging categories.

All data sources were continuously analyzed paying close attention to triangulating data and comparing data across and within participants. Data analysis and data collection occurred simultaneously to allow for adjustments in interview questions and classroom observation insights (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), but data analysis intensified as the study timeline progressed. Together, this recursive process of

collection and analysis allowed the researcher to refine the study as information emerged by testing potential categories and comparing them to subsequent data (Merriam, 2002).

### *Intensive Data Analysis*

Reviewing and analyzing the data did not end after one round through the data sources and levels, but was a constant spiral through the data analysis template by continually revisiting each data source and analysis level. Creswell (1998) explains, “Undeniably, qualitative researchers preserve the unusual and serendipitous, and writers craft each study differently, using analytic procedures that evolve in the field...one enters with data of text or images and exits with an account or a narrative. In between, the researcher touches on several facets of analysis and circles around and around” (p.142). Throughout the data analysis process, I was constantly revisiting the data and entering a “data analysis spiral” which contributed to the continual refinement of codes, categories, and conclusions.

After several trips visiting and revisiting the data, categories were identified from the refined codes, and the data were reviewed again so that “the categories can be fleshed out and made more robust by searching through the data for more and better units of relevant information” (Merriam, 1998, p. 185). File folders for each of the ten categories developed from the interviews and observations were established and any data supporting or relating to that category were inserted. After establishing the categories, I began writing the text from each file folder while constantly reviewing the data and memos/notes. LeCompte, Preissle, and Tesch (1993) define theorizing as “the cognitive process of discovering or manipulating abstract categories and the relationships among those categories” (p. 239). However, even at the writing/theorizing stage of data analysis, there

was a constant spiraling back and forth through the data to check and recheck my analysis and interpretation of the data.

#### *Timeline for the Study*

After gaining approval from my committee to proceed with the study, I concluded the Institutional Review Board requirements for informed consent and began the study. Beginning in January, 2009, I initiated email contact with graduates, and I continued to collect data through May, 2009. Final analysis, member checks, peer debriefing, writing of results, and presentation took place from May 2009 to May 2010. Table 3 presents the timeline for the study.

#### *Confidentiality and Ethics*

To ensure confidentiality, participants and their schools received pseudonyms or were not mentioned. Field notes, artifacts, and other sensitive data were not left at any research site and were contained in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home office. Also, my interactions with participants were only discussed with the specific participants and peer debriefers.

In conducting qualitative research using interviews and observations, there are both risks and benefits to participants. Stake (1994) observed, "Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (p. 224). As the researcher, I did not expose the participants to any harmful risks and provided the right for any participant to withdraw from the study at any time.

Table 3

*Timeline for Data Collection*

Task	1/09	1/09	2/09	3/09	4/09	5/09	6/09	7/09	8/09-1/10	2/10	3/10	4/10-5-10
Finalize approvals from school systems	X											
Submit IRB	X											
Gather and identify program graduates		X										
Email letter of purpose and initial questionnaire		X										
Email letter of purpose and administrative questionnaire			X									
Schedule and begin initial interview			X									
Schedule and begin observations			X	X	X	X						
Schedule and begin follow-up interview				X	X	X						
Data Analysis			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Informal member checks				X	X	X				X	X	X
Write up results									X	X	X	X
Peer Debriefers										X	X	X

### *Trustworthiness and Rigor*

In order to assure the reader of the trustworthiness and rigor of the study, the researcher must pay careful attention to the study's conceptualization; the way in which the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted; and the way in which the findings are presented (Merriam, 1998). Four measures were used to establish trustworthiness and rigor: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, careful consideration of the first category, credibility, ensures the last three categories; therefore, the following discussion will revolve more heavily around measures needed to establish credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility can be defined as whether the participant's construction of reality is accurately reflected by the researcher's representation of that construction (Schwandt, 2001). Lincoln & Guba (1985) have identified five major techniques to ensure credible findings and interpretations produced in this research:

1. Activities should increase the probability that credible finding will be produced such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation.
2. Activities should provide an external check on the inquiry process such as peer debriefing.
3. Activities should aim at refining working hypotheses as more and more information becomes available in the form of negative case analysis.
4. Activities should make possible checking preliminary findings and interpretations against archived raw data such as referential adequacy.



5. Activities should provide for the direct testing of findings and interpretations with the human sources from which they have come through member checking. (p. 301)

#### *Prolonged Engagement*

The researcher must be immersed in the context of the study in order to establish trust, obtain enough information to develop an emerging theory, and for any distortions to emerge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Since this research began in January 2009 and extended through the end of the 2009 school year, I feel this time period allowed for ample time and opportunity to fully understand my participants' perspective and provide a thick, rich description of the phenomena.

#### *Persistent Observation*

As a critical component of naturalistic inquiry, persistent observation requires the researcher to use initial data analysis to guide further collection of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While collecting and analyzing data simultaneously, themes and categories were developed, and through persistent observation the researcher determined whether or not future data fits emerging patterns which allowed for a closer examination of the data. All themes, along with confirmation or contradiction of themes, were recorded in the Researcher's Reflective Journal.

#### *Triangulation*

Using multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm emergent findings all constitute triangulation and assist the researcher in making accurate determinations about themes (Merriam, 1998). This research study used multiple data sources such as

two open-ended questionnaires, in-depth interviews, classroom observations, photographs, and teacher-made artifacts to examine the research questions.

### *Member Checking*

Merriam (1998) defined member checking as "...taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (p.204). This study incorporated two formal opportunities for member checking with beginning teachers, after each of the interviews and after each of the observations. For administrators, one opportunity for member checking was provided after the questionnaire. Again, to avoid a conflict of interest, I did not share administrators' and teachers' responses together; they were shared separately since the purpose of administrators' questionnaire was not to single out or identify individual teachers and their performance but as a research tool to better understand how well the English teacher education program prepares its graduates for the classroom.

### *Peer Debriefing*

One of the major concerns of qualitative research is the biases the researcher brings to the study. To address this concern, I clarified any assumptions, worldviews, and theoretical orientations at the beginning of the study; however, my peer debriefers assisted me in reviewing my findings and interpretations. Much of the contact with the peer debriefers was conducted through emails. We did meet twice over the research process to discuss progress and revisions. Notes were taken during each meeting with the peer debriefers and were used for reflection throughout the study.

### *Transferability*

The focus of transferability in qualitative research is to understand in depth a particular case or nonrandom sample; however, it is not to find out what is true of many (Merriam, 1998). The reader of the research is the only one who can know whether or not a qualitative study is applicable or transferable to another study or population. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that the researcher, "...can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility" (p. 316). To provide as much transferability as possible, I provided a rich description of the participants, settings, and circumstances of the situation along with providing supporting and relevant quotations all of which provide the reader a complete understanding of the phenomena.

### *Dependability*

Schwandt (2001) defines dependability as a focus "on the process of the inquiry and the inquirer's responsibility for ensuring that the process was logical, traceable, and documented" (p.258). To ensure dependability, an audit trail was provided through the use of notebooks housing questionnaire responses, transcripts of interviews, field notes and transcripts of observations, and any artifacts collected through photography. All items in the notebooks were backed up on a flash drive and stored at the researcher's home office in a locked filing cabinet.

### *Confirmability*

Confirmability calls for "linking assertions, findings, interpretations, and so on to the data in readily discernible ways" (Schwandt, 2001, p.259). To establish

confirmability, this research included an audit trail, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking.

### Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to discuss and describe the specific methodological details of how I designed this study to answer the following research questions: How do beginning teachers perceive their preparation for teaching in the urban language arts classroom? How do school administrators/department chairs perceive the teaching ability of graduates from the urban English teacher preparation program? Since this study focused on understanding the meanings beginning teachers have constructed from their teacher preparation program, multiple methods of data gathering were utilized such as two questionnaires, multiple interviews with focal participants, multiple classroom observations, photographs, and teacher-made artifacts in order to gather sufficient data to analyze in order to offer a rich description of the phenomena that occurred.

Chapter Four will examine and discuss categories derived from the data analysis that focus on the connections between beginning teachers' perceptions of preparedness and the curriculum of the Master's level English teacher education program.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BEGINNING TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PREPAREDNESS: EXAMINATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM COMPONENTS AND CONNECTIONS TO THE ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

#### Introduction

The intent of this qualitative study was to examine closely the specific aspects of an English teacher education program that beginning teachers implement and rely on in their classrooms on a consistent basis. This study also investigated perceptions of school administrators/department chairs to determine their views of these same beginning teachers' preparation for the classroom and their views on how well these beginning teachers influence student achievement. The two research questions that ground this study ask: How do beginning teachers perceive their preparation for teaching in the urban language arts classroom? How do school administrators perceive the teaching ability of graduates from the urban English teacher preparation program? Both research questions are explored and examined through participants' responses on the Beginning Teacher and Administrative/Department Chair Questionnaires.

#### Categories/Themes

Forty beginning teachers from three school districts in a large metropolitan area in the southeastern United States who graduated within the last three years (2005-2008) from Southern Urban University's Master's level English teacher education program

were contacted and invited to participate in this study. All graduates were emailed an introductory letter, an informed consent letter, and a beginning teacher questionnaire. After emailing potential participants once every two weeks for a maximum of three times, thirteen or 33% of approved graduates responded to the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire. To illustrate and present the data accurately and to better authenticate the results, participants own words will be used frequently.

*Courses and Experiences that Helped Prepare Beginning Teachers for the English/  
Language Arts Classroom*

Through data analysis, four categories or themes were determined that illustrated the courses and experiences that helped prepare beginning teachers for the English/language arts classroom: grammar/writing instruction, English department sponsored classes, education department sponsored classes, and impartial (see Figure 2). Beginning teachers found from the education department Dr. [professor] Introduction to Secondary Teaching class that emphasized the teaching of writing and grammar helpful in preparing them for the English/language arts classroom. From the English department, Dr. [professor] Advanced/ Practical Grammar class was helpful in preparing them for their own classroom. Beginning teachers reported that these classes helped them better understand grammar and the writing process and through this understanding were able to teach specific grammar rules and apply structure to the teaching of composition. One participant stated:

I also enjoyed Dr. [professor] writing class, but more for my own benefit. I think I have a better appreciation for the challenges students face when writing and can be more empathetic. I wish I had more time to focus on writing, but it seems like everything is rushed in the classroom. I also took a grammar class in the English

department that I rely on everyday; I am amazed at the students' lack of grammar skills. (BTQ, 712-716, 2009)

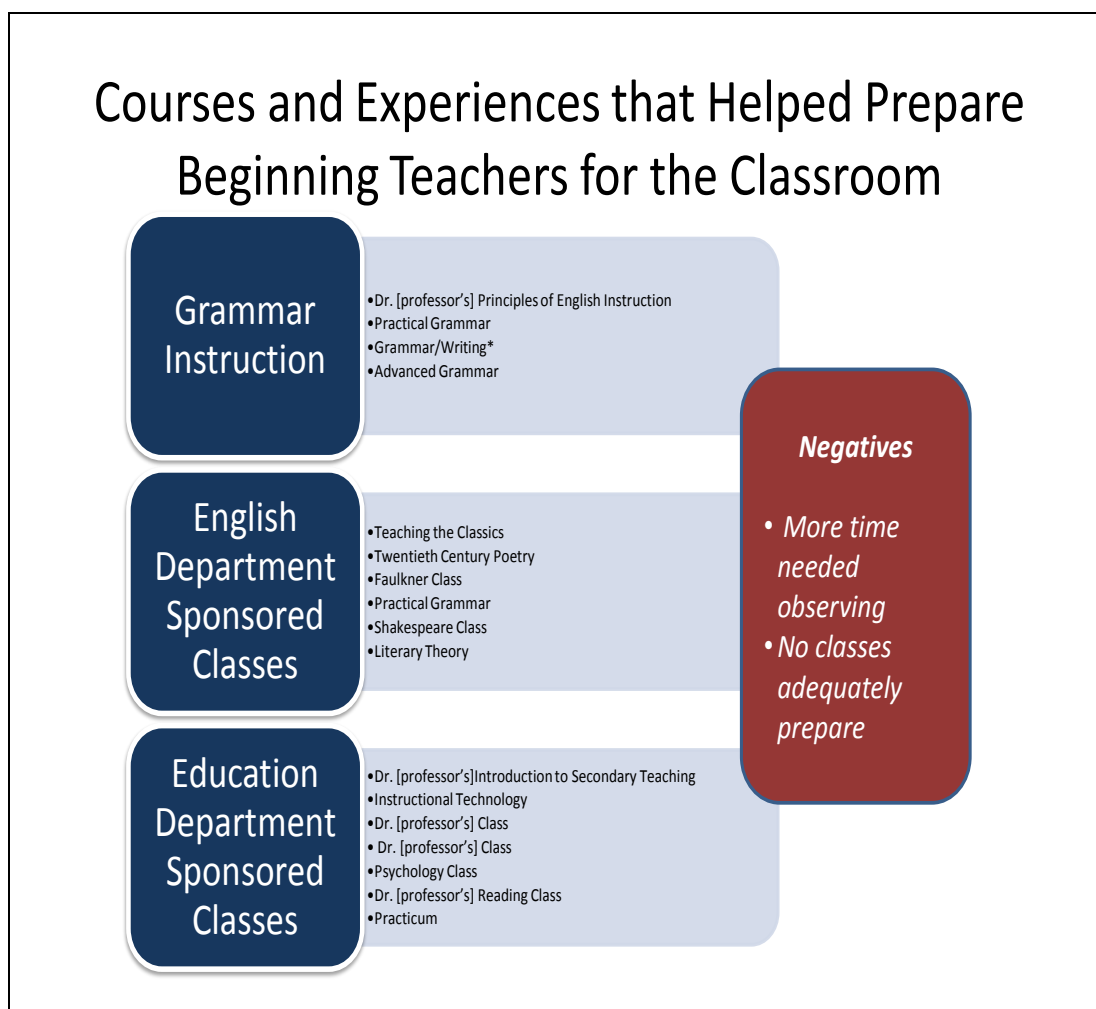


Figure 2

#### *Courses and Experiences*

Participants in the study also reported that Dr. [professor] class helped them in preparing students for the writing portion of the [State] High School Graduation Writing Test (GHSWT): “Writing instruction is very challenging, especially teaching at the 11<sup>th</sup> grade level, because my students must pass the [State] High School Graduation Writing Test. I believe that this class prepared me well for these pressures” (BTQ, 787, 2009).

Another participant also had a similar response: “Dr. [professor] EDCI 6600 was very helpful in preparing me to teach writing and grammar, while also teaching me the benefits of collaborating with other teachers and studying professional texts for use in the classroom”(BTQ, 550-552, 2009).

The second major category of courses and experiences that helped beginning teachers in their classrooms was English department sponsored classes, and from participants’ responses, it is evident that beginning teachers have an enthusiasm for reading, writing, and discussing literature. The participants’ responses included descriptors such as “love,” “passion,” and “comfort” to explain their enjoyment of exploring and writing about texts and a desire to pass on to their students this love of literature and writing. One beginning teacher stated: “The best classes were the English classes – if you know what it is you are teaching and are comfortable with the material, then you come across and feel more confident. Students can tell when you get excited about something, and it’s contagious” (BTQ, 637-639, 2009). Another beginning teacher explains how she is able to be a passionate instructor through a love of literature:

I took a class on Faulkner which I absolutely love. I developed an interest in this class in examining the work of one author and understanding on a grand scale the influence of an author’s life in his work. I also learned what it is to be a passionate instructor and how that passion can inspire even when the literature does not. (BTQ, 890-893, 2009)

Another beginning teacher said, “...I loved my literature classes at SUU (Southern Urban University). Talking about literature, and writing about it is what we expect from our students; if we can’t do it, how can we ask them to?” (BTQ, 717-718, 2009).

The third major category to emerge was education department sponsored classes. Participants listed several professors along with the theories and projects they presented



in classes. Participants typically did not remember the class name or course number but referred to them by professor and their emphasis. For example, one participant reflected:

I don't remember the numbers of the classes, but I know they were taught by [professor], [professor], and [professor]. [Professor's] class was Middle School instruction and what was best about that class was the variety of professional books we got to read. Through the group presentations, we got the gist of each book without having to read them which was a really fast way to get a perspective on different teaching methods. I remember that [professor's] class was on writing instruction and we got to map our lives as writers which was neat. I think [professor's] class ended up being the most useful because she had us write our 'teacher identity,' which was pretty much our stance on different educational issues. This was most helpful because I was able to give it to perspective employers so that they could get an idea as to who I was and my teaching style. (BTQ, 5-14, 2009)

Another beginning teacher made the following comments, "I've taken a bit from each class. I appreciate [professor's] emphasis on connecting to the students' prior knowledge/experiences before beginning a unit or lesson; if students are not 'hooked' from the beginning it's hard to keep their attention for the next 4 weeks..." (BTQ, 709-712, 2009). Another participant also had a similar response:

I enjoyed several classes in the [English Education MAT] program; I thought that [professor's] Introduction to Secondary Education was valuable because it introduced the concepts of mini-lessons and working with standards. It was a labor-intensive class, but I still use many of the ideas, materials, and textbooks from that class. (BTQ, 784-787, 2009)

Finally, the last section, impartial answers, presented the view that no courses can prepare one for the classroom, and only experiences in actual classrooms can prepare one adequately to teach. One participant reflected that he felt so overwhelmed in his first year of teaching that he forgot much of what he learned in the program:

I don't think any of the classes adequately prepare anyone for the classroom. That's not to say th(ey)aren't beneficial; however, the classroom is a living organism that changes day to day. I got great ideas and read interesting books about practices, approaches, and theories that I have used and helped me along the

way to ground myself, but those truly have only served as enrichments to the teaching process, which as I think, that's what they are suppose to be. I have felt sometimes that I felt lost in the whirlwind that is the classroom, and I forget some of the ideas that I came across in [Master's level English teacher education program], but when I realize that I got back to them and that has helped. (BTQ, 958-965, 2009)

One participant asserted that he thought the internship prepared him for teaching and that nothing except actual hands on experience can prepare one for the classroom:

I found that the internship was very helpful, though I wish it had been closer to my home and where I would be working. Overall, the internship was what really prepared me as you don't really know what to expect until you are in a classroom and are facing the students. When doing an internship you are asked to observe, teach, and grade papers. All of these things are what prepare a teacher for what to expect. Actually, some more time observing might be a good addition to the [English Education MAT] program, or even some more time talking with current high school teachers. (BTQ, 292-298, 2009)

*Specific Projects, Theories, or Experiences that are Frequently Incorporated into  
Beginning Teachers' Classroom*

Three distinct categories were determined—projects, theories and experiences—that beginning teachers transferred into their English/language arts classroom (see Figure 3). Many of the projects learned from the Master's level English teacher education program that beginning teachers reported they incorporated into their classrooms are: the Shakespeare project, multimedia and technology, double entry journals, graphic representations, focused study project on books, graphic organizers, "I am from..." poems, mini-lessons, and multi-genre projects. One project that several participants mentioned that they use on a daily basis was the mini-lessons. One beginning teacher stated the following:

I really enjoy using mini-lessons in the classroom. Since I teach standard, 55-minute classes (with countless interruptions), these mini-lessons allow me time to teach concepts that may not be part of the 'main' lesson of the day. For example,

my high school has a daily grammar program, and I will often teach a grammar mini-lesson before launching into a lecture of discussion on the current class novel. (BTQ, 800-804, 2009)

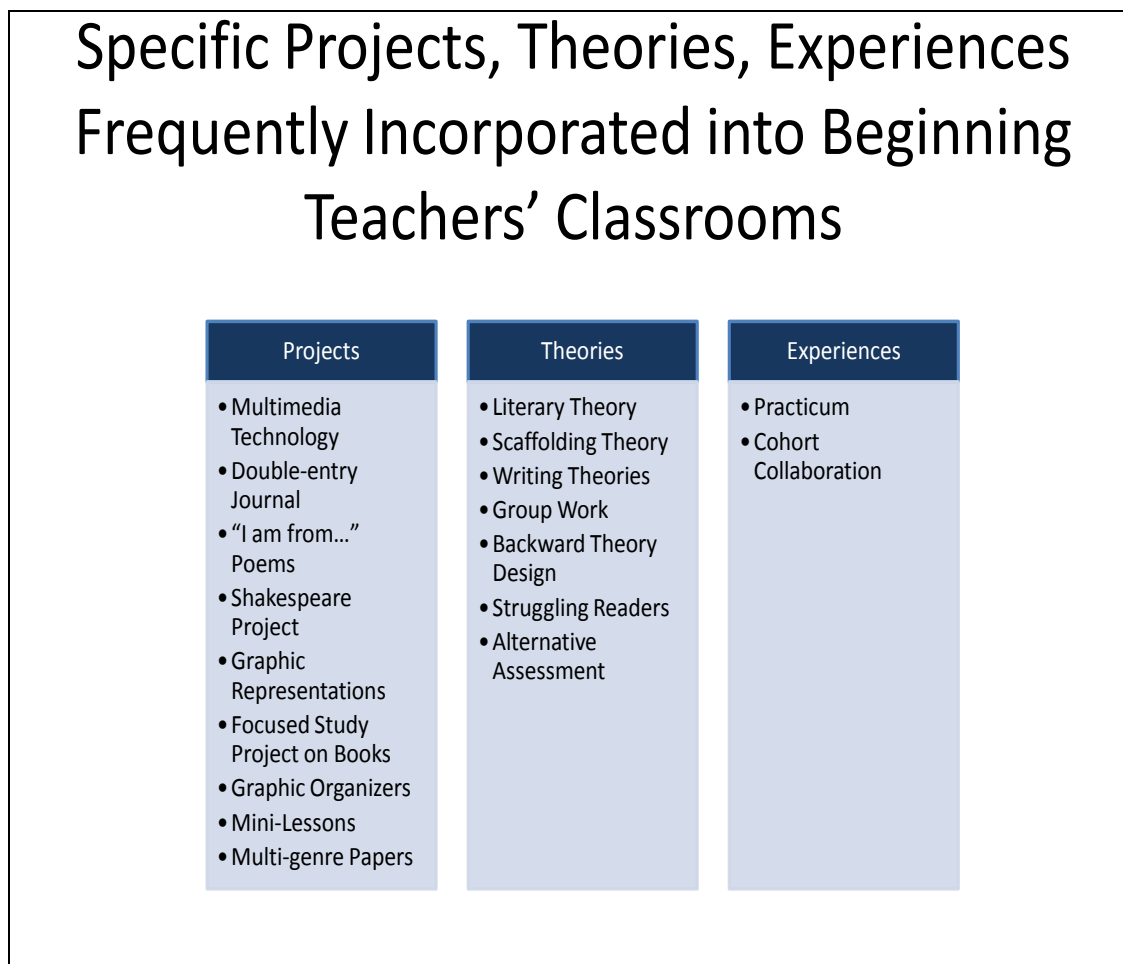


Figure 3

### *Projects, Theories, and Experiences*

One participant listed several projects from the Master's level English teacher education program that she uses on a consistent basis in her classroom: "I use technology and the techniques I learned in the tech classes on a daily basis. I have also used portions of the Shakespeare project and the readings about multi-genre papers. Recently, I have been using the student-created rubric method shown to us by [professor]" (BTQ, 1034-1036,

2009). Several participants mentioned how they use many of the visuals, graphic organizers, and technology presented in the Master's level English teacher education program. One participant stated that, "I employ a lot of multimedia into the classroom, but I rarely if ever use the picture books, etc. I do use a great deal of technology (streaming video, movie maker, online discussion boards)" (BTQ, 219-220, 2009). Another participant similarly stated, "I also use graphic organizers and have students respond to literature through artistic means" (BTQ, 308-309, 2009).

Many participants reflected on several of the writing projects they were presented in the Master's level English teacher education program such as the multi-genre essay and the "I am from..." poem: "I have used the multi-genre essay every year. The kids really like the idea of writing about one theme in a variety of genres. I get some great work out of them. Some of the genres include: essays, short stories, poems, recipes, children's books, etc" (BTQ, 19-22, 2009). Another participant stated the following:

...I have used 'I am from...' poems in the classroom, I have used/created mini-lessons on grammar and literary terms based on our projects/experiences the first summer of [Master's level English teacher education program], and I incorporated journaling/writer's notebooks and many other ideas from *Inside Out*. I've also used double-entry journals (we call them reading response logs) during novel studies. (BTQ, 559-563, 2009)

The theories learned from the Master's level English teacher education program that beginning teachers mentioned they regularly integrated into their classes were scaffolding theory, literary theory and criticism, writing theories, constructivism (group work), backward design theory, working with struggling readers, and assessments. One participant discussed how she frequently incorporated scaffolding theory in her classroom:

I know I use the scaffolding theory in my classroom quite a bit. I will teach a particular concept, like analyzing poetry and then I will analyze a poem with the class. Afterwards they will work with a partner to analyze a poem and only then will I ask them to analyze the poem on their own. So, I am building their ability and confidence before asking them to work solitarily on a new concept. (BTQ, 304-309, 2009)

Finally, the experiences beginning teachers found that they could integrate into their classroom were the practicum and collaborating with members of their cohort. One beginning teacher elaborated on how having a cohort helped her make sense of the materials studied throughout the Master's level English teacher education program. She shared, "...honestly, the best thing about the program was the connections you make and the support given by others in the cohort who understand what you are going through as a [Master's level English teacher education program] student and a beginning teacher" (BTQ, 403-406, 2009). Many participants reflected on the practicum experience saying it provides actual, hands on experience with students and managing the classroom. One participant wrote the following:

As per experiences, the most valuable aspect and most frequently incorporated practice that I use is the Practicum. The valuable weeks and months of time in the classroom prepared me the most for teaching. It allowed me to get a sense of the responsibilities, challenges, and rewards with the help of an actual teacher to guide me and allow me to better my teaching practices. (BTQ, 969-973, 2009)

*The Impact of Experience on Beginning Teachers' Understanding and Incorporation of Aspects from the Master's Level English Teacher Education Program in Their English/Language Arts Classroom*

Featherstone (1992) found that teacher educators can prepare preservice teachers to learn from experience and that ideas resurface when answers to questions are found in classroom experience. Featherstone's research suggests that "the voices of teacher

educators sometimes echo forward into these first years of teaching; the novice sometimes rehears, with a new ear, propositions which have seemed to make little impact on them at the time they were offered” (pp. 17-18). Once the first year or “survival stage” is over, beginning teachers have the opportunity and time to be more reflective, not only about what they remember from their teacher training, but also about the ways in which knowledge, learned during their teacher education program, begins to make sense and to be of value in the context of their new experiences in the classroom (Dickson, et al., 2006). Featherstone’s theory suggests that after a year or two of classroom experience, the beginning teacher can better use the theories and techniques learned from their preservice program. One participant wrote,

My teaching experience has allowed me to understand that some of the theories and practices that I received from the [Master’s level English teacher education] program are [are] wonderful theories and ideas; however, they cannot be taken verbatim and applied in the classroom. The classroom is a place for constant adaptation and adjustment, and I have taken this skill of adapting and adjusting theories and ideas so that I can incorporate them in the classroom. (BTQ, 976-980, 2009)

Another great example of how information learned in preservice programs can echo forward and teachers not truly understand how to incorporate specific theories and practices into the English classroom until after they have gained classroom experience to situate their learning is from a third year teacher participant who stated,

Now, in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year, I feel like I have more time and more experience to work on incorporating different aspects into my class. I do not feel like I had that time in my 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years for true reflection. I reflected, but I don’t feel that I had the time to change my lessons as much as I would have liked. All I can think about is the Shakespearean Banquet we did as a project in our Shakespeare class. Now that I am teaching an honors class, it would totally fly. But not with some of my regular classes. (BTQ, 475-480, 2009)

One participant beginning teacher stated how she had to find her own “teacher self” saying, “I learned that I cannot be all of my professors at once. After teaching for a bit and trying to be all of them, I realized I simply had to pick and choose what I used, and that in the end I had to find my own blend” (BTQ, 655-657, 2009).

Many graduates of teacher education programs do not understand the logic behind much of the curriculum and activities embedded in the program, illustrated by one beginning teacher:

Being in the classroom has put the idea behind [Master’s level English teacher education program] into perspective. Not only did I learn the content and information, but I am able to carry the resources that I built in the program (lesson plans, theories, colleague support) over into my career. I did not realize at the time that the work that I was doing would benefit me after (I) graduated as well. (BTQ, 412-416, 2009)

Several beginning teachers offered suggestions and ideas on projects and aspects of the program they felt would have helped them more in the classroom. One beginning teacher stated her frustration of developing “unrealistic” lesson plans that would never work in a real classroom setting: “When I was in the [Master’s level English teacher education program] program, practice lessons were often ‘ideal’ lessons. My fellow graduate students and I hadn’t been in high school in many years, and I believe that the lessons we created were occasionally unrealistic for the general-level high school classroom” (BTQ, 815-817, 2009).

Another beginning teacher expressed some of the difficulties she had as a beginning English teacher and stressed that having a class on “teaching the basics” would have been helpful as a new teacher:

For example, we never really touched on teaching poetry and I would love to have a class on how to teach poetry and figurative language. Persuasive writing is

critical for student to pass the GHSCT (state mandated writing test). Students still need help with the basic writing skills: structure, thesis, paragraphs, etc. and I think the [Master's level English teacher education] program focused more on voice and ideas. I'd love to have a class on teaching the basics. The research process is heavily emphasized in high school and is part of the GPS (state curriculum); this is a tremendously difficult skill to teach to students, especially ninth graders. (BTQ, 730-736, 2009)

An aspect of the program that beginning teachers felt was not adequately discussed but is encompassing more components of being a teacher was national, state, and district standardized testing. One frustrated beginning teacher wrote, "...the program does not prepare teachers for state and county mandated tests and the time constraints placed upon the teachers. As a new teacher, it was hard for me to figure out how to make up for lost instruction time without sacrificing the quality of the instruction" (BTQ, 251-254, 2009).

*Beginning Teachers' Perceived Preparedness for the English/Language Arts Classroom*

Beginning teachers were asked to rate how well the English education program prepared them for the classroom between 1 and 10 with 10 being defined as "exceptional." Participants ranked the program in terms of preparation for the classroom between 6 and 10. Specifically, 17% gave the program a 6, 33% gave the program a 7, 33% gave the program an 8, 17% gave the program a 9, and 1% gave the program a 10. Overall, participants were complimentary on their preparation but then suggested areas they felt weak in when entering the classroom (see Figure 4). Several beginning teachers discussed their lack of classroom management skills. One participant explained:

I would say 7. Mostly this because I was given many different concepts and ideas that helped me to plan lessons and even some ideas on classroom management, but I was not prepared for the type of student I was going to encounter and how specifically to deal with certain behavior issues in the classroom.... I found that I did not have a lot of background in classroom management. I remember reading a



book that vaguely taught some classroom management, and I remember watching a clip from *Dangerous Minds* in class, but that was about it. I think that more could be done in that area, such as giving teachers suggestions for when and how to call a parent conference. Also, assertive ways to deal with highly energized students. It might be effective to bring in current teachers and have them talk about their own experiences. (BTQ, 342-355, 2009)

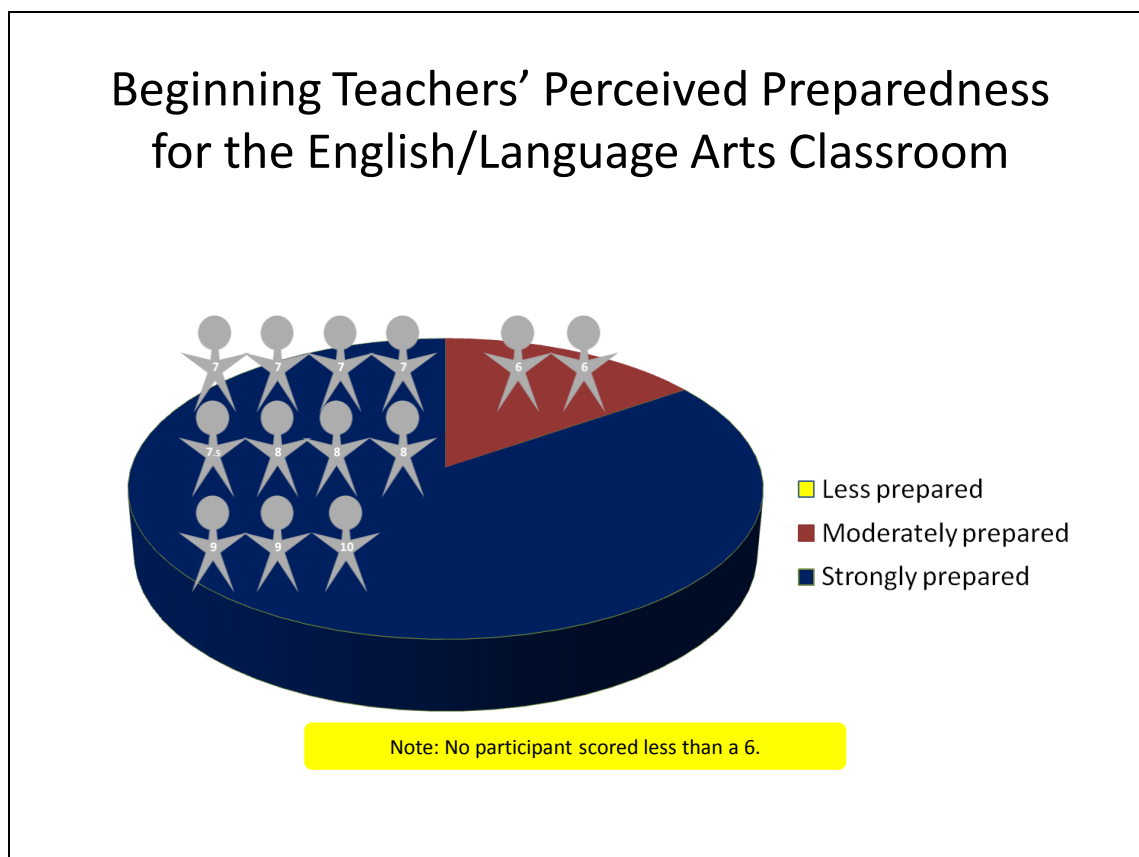


Figure 4

#### *Perceived Preparedness*

Another participant ranked the program high, giving it an 8, but then also commented that she lacked classroom management skills:

I would have to give the [Master's level English teacher education] program an 8 overall. I believe that it prepared me extremely well for content matter, but I wish I had more exposure to "real-life classroom management skills." I think we discussed it frequently, but the best advice came from students who were currently teachers. Also, my student teaching experience was a completely

different experience than my current teaching position and I am surprised on a weekly basis with a classroom management issue. (BTQ, 740-746, 2009)

Although classroom management skills were frequently mentioned, many beginning teachers felt the program prepared them well; and they gave specific examples of program components that helped them transition into their own classrooms. One participant beginning teacher explained, “I’d say around 7 or 8. Dr. [professor’s] case study assignment was particularly helpful. I happened to choose a student from Romania. Studying her responses and the quality of those responses to assignments as well as her reactions in class helped prepare me for my classes that have a disproportionate number of ESL students” (BTQ, 258-261, 2009). Another beginning teacher ranked the program at 8 and stated, “I felt very prepared for teaching in the classroom as a result of the [Master’s level English teacher education] program....I felt I learned cutting edge and helpful lesson ideas, learned how to plan effective lessons (from beginning to end), and was exposed to a number of valuable professional texts that I still refer to and use today” (BTQ, 580-583, 2009).

Several beginning teachers complimented the program saying it did an excellent job of combining theoretical foundations and actual classroom practice, and that these elements gave them “a realistic picture of day-to-day life as an English teacher.” However, one theme that became apparent from this question was how influential actual teaching experience was in helping them become English teachers. One participant stated, “The classes themselves introduced me to pedagog[ical] theories and modern thought about education, but what helped me the most in the classroom was the student teaching experience” (BTQ, 33-35, 2009). Several beginning teachers felt the Master’s

level English teacher education program did an excellent job preparing them for the classroom but asserted nothing can replace actual classroom teaching experience. One teacher stated,

Designing lessons, confidence in focusing on higher order thinking skills in literature analysis, etc, are some of the things I took away from the courses that are indispensable. While [Master's level English teacher education program] delivered exceptional opportunities and facilitated growth as a teacher, the best experience is actually found in the classroom – and that over a number of years. (BTQ, 912-916, 2009)

Another beginning teacher asserted a similar viewpoint:

I highly value the experience and knowledge that I received in the [Master's level English teacher education] program. I would not have been as effective as I was without it. I would give the program itself an 8. It gave me ideas and actual classroom experience that has made me a better teacher, but again nothing can substitute experience. (BTQ, 984-987, 2009)

A few participants stated that the Master's level English teacher education program did not prepare them for the classroom at all and attributed their pedagogical learning to teacher personality, their school colleagues, and professors from the English department. One beginning teacher wrote,

[Master's level English teacher education program] offered me a valuable opportunity to network and do student teaching. I had supportive mentor/teachers that helped me prepare, but I still feel that a lot of where I am today is the result of my first two years as a teacher...I think it's a great program and will recommend it to anyone, but I believe teaching preparedness is largely in part of a teacher's personality, his or her background, his or her ability to reflect and adapt, and his or her ability to punt. (BTQ, 487-493, 2009)

Another beginning teacher reflected on how no teacher preparation program can prepare one to become a teacher; only experience can prepare someone to become a teacher:

I think [Master's level English teacher education program] provides the framework for overall instruction, but I do not believe any experience can replace being in your own classroom and that is not possible in a teacher preparation program...The curriculum in [Master's level English teacher education program]

does not really address the variations of students in the classroom. (BTQ, 139-145, 2009)

One participant reflected on how the English department needed more input into the teacher preparation program and that there was a lack of English department classes specifically designed for teacher preparation:

Honestly, I would give it a 6. I would have actually given it a lesser grade if not for the quality of the teachers I had for my English classes, particularly Dr. [professor]. My reason for this is that I felt the 'English' side of the program was not fully integrated properly. We were given a limited selection of classes to take and not all focused on the incorporating the works into the classroom. Luckily, for me, Dr. [professor] made a concentrated effort to construct our class assignments to be included in the classroom. Even though I may not have been able to use the particular text in my classroom, the lesson plans or the thought behind them were valuable. Most of what I teach in the classroom came from either those classes with Dr. [professor] or the collaboration with my colleagues at my school. (BTQ, 1049-1050, 2009)

One beginning teacher brought up a unique aspect from the Master's level English teacher education program that few referred to but obviously made an impact on this new teacher. This participant reflected that she felt guilty at times for not having all of her student succeed. She wrote,

The program was great, but it did get a little daunting at time with the overall image of a successful English teacher. So many times, the message was that if a student was unhappy then it was the teacher's fault. That's a lot of pressure when you're beginning to teach in your own classroom. I now realize that for all of the 'English Teacher Villains' out there reported on by one student, there is another student for whom this teacher was a boon and changed his/her life. Many times it felt like only one side of this argument came out. This was not an intentional part of the program, but it was a side-effect that really did take its toll my first year. Other than that, most parts were great, and I have used them in some aspect or other. (BTQ, 662-671, 2009)

#### *Positive Aspects of Teaching Secondary English/Language Arts*

Most participants discussed how helping students, seeing them grow as a person and as a student, and being a part of their lives was the most positive aspect of teaching

secondary English. One participant reflected on how she enjoys seeing students grow both as students and as people. She wrote, “Helping students become more reflective and sharing with them some of my favorite pieces of literature. I like seeing them grow as people” (BTQ, 674-675, 2009). Another beginning teacher asserted that she cannot think of anything that is not positive and “feels blessed to be part of their lives” (BTQ, 360-361, 2009).

As mentioned earlier, many participants have a passion for literature and desire to share that passion with students, so it was not surprising that many participants stated that the most positive aspect of teaching English was the ability to share and expose their students to new ideas and help them gain an appreciation for what literature can offer them. One beginning teacher asserted, “...to be able to show them how literature connects to our world today. I love it when the students come back in and reflect on something they learned in class and see it in their world” (BTQ, 497-499, 2009). Another beginning teacher stated, “...It is also gratifying when the students realize the importance of literature to their daily lives, especially when I point out that some of the movies and/or music they like are based on literary characters” (BTQ, 266-269, 2009). One participant said that seeing students’ comprehension improved due to time in their classroom and “...knowing that he/she will be better able to understand the world around them and, thus, hopefully improve their life in some way, makes it all worth it” (BTQ, 1061-1063, 2009). Another beginning teacher stated that they loved pushing students to exceed their own expectations to experience success:

Kids come into my classroom with a self-applied perception of what they can or can not achieve. They leave my classroom exceeding their expectations. I hold my kids to standards similar to those to which I was held as a college student, only

with more daily support. It is reward(ing) to see them experience such victories. (BTQ, 920-923, 2009)

Several beginning teachers say being with the students and seeing them grow both as a student and person keeps reminding them why they went into education. One beginning teacher stated:

I really enjoy watching the kids experience and make meaning of a new text for the first time. It's so rewarding to watch the light bulbs come on and to hear "Ooohhh, I get it!?! I also love seeing how they progress as writers throughout the year – it makes all the hard work worth it. (BTQ, 588-591, 2009)

Another participant wrote that he does not like many of the issues present in education but that "the kids trump everything." He continued:

The most positive aspect of teaching English language arts I see interaction with the kids and seeing their learning taking place right in front of you. Does this happen everyday? No, but when it does, it's the best feeling. Seeing the enthusiasm kids have when they get something or think something is cool is a wonderful feeling that reinforces, no matter how stressed I may get, why I chose this profession. (BTQ, 998-1001, 2009)

One beginning teacher said that every now and then students remind her in small ways why she chose this profession: "...they'll be excited about the story we're reading; they'll express their pride in a paper they've written; they'll display depth and thoughtfulness during a class discussion. They inspire me" (BTQ, 837-839, 2009).

#### *Surprising Aspects of Teaching English/Language Arts*

Three themes were determined in this category: (1) the enormous amount of time and energy that goes into teaching secondary English; (2) the amount of non-classroom related responsibilities found in teaching; and, (3) the students' weak foundation in reading, writing, and grammar (see Figure 5). One participant in the study felt that the amount of time and energy that goes into even attempting to be a good teacher is

overwhelming. She stated, “...the amount of flexibility you must have in your classroom to adjust to the obstacles of the day – I’m still working on that, I hate to break my plans” (BTQ, 434-436, 2009). One beginning teacher strongly asserted that English teachers are misunderstood especially in the current economic crisis. She wrote, “...I am astounded

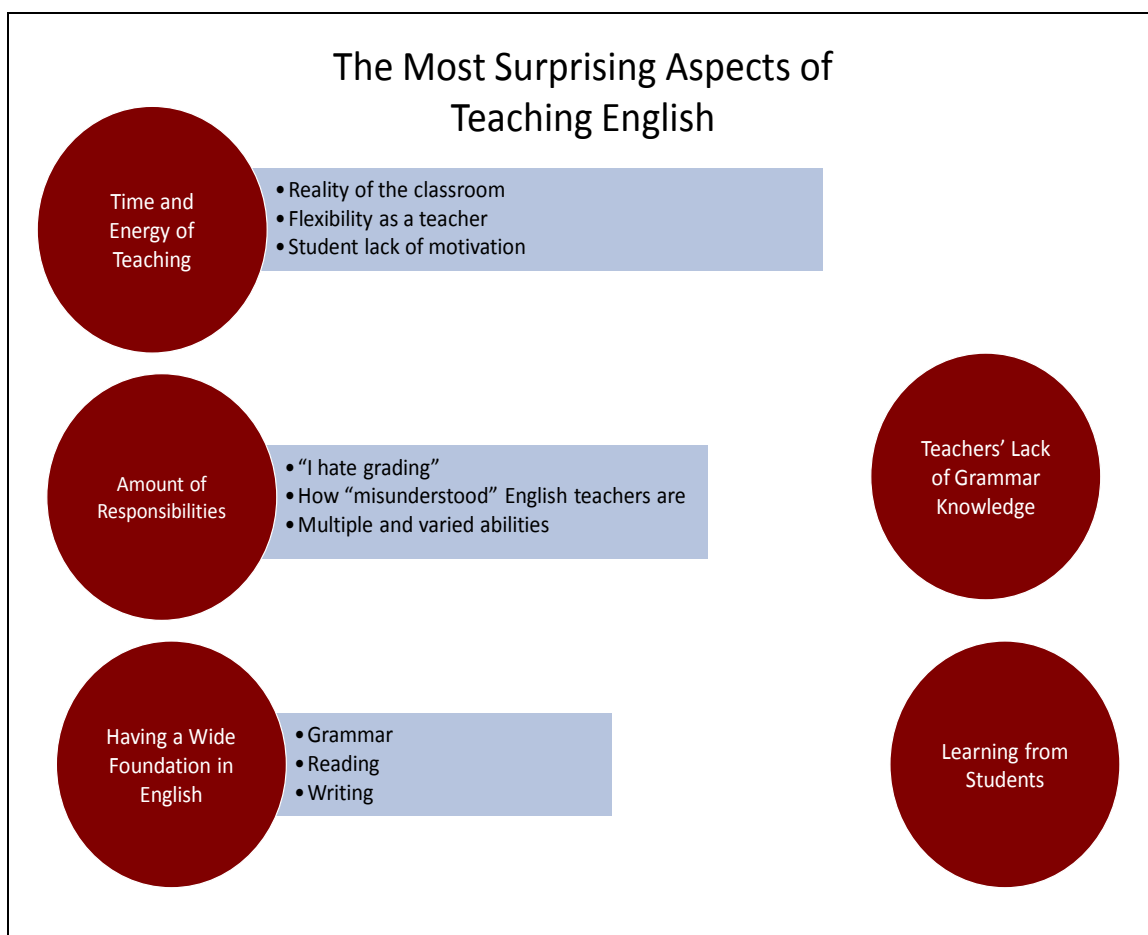


Figure 5

*Surprising Aspects*

that Governor [Republican] would marginalize English teachers in favor of math and science teachers – we teach LITERACY that student use in all content areas!!!” (BTQ, 504-506, 2009). Another participant was overwhelmed with the amount of energy

needed to motivate students to become interested in a text. She stated, "...students are not nearly as motivated as I would have hoped. Sometimes it's like pulling teeth to get students to recognize the relevancy of the ancient text we have to teach, or at times to even engage with it enough to make their own meaning" (BTQ, 927-930, 2009).

Several beginning teachers were inundated with the amount of responsibilities found in teaching that are not related to teaching or the classroom. One beginning teacher expressed her disbelief, "I always joke that if I could just plan and teach then my job would be awesome! But the amount of time I spend grading and doing administrative work is unbelievable!" (BTQ, 596-598, 2009) Another beginning teacher also expressed the same incredulity of how much time is taken away from actual teaching: "...the reality of the classroom and how it seems that there is so much that goes on at a higher level that takes away from actual teaching. The duties of a teacher are not that of simply teaching unfortunately" (BTQ, 998-1001, 2009). One participant wrote a similar answer: "The amount of auxiliary tasks (homeroom, duties, mentoring, meetings, meetings, meetings) assigned to teachers and how difficult it can be to actually find time to 'teach.' Initially, I was worried about not having enough stuff to fill all of the time; now, I'm worried about not having enough time for all of my stuff" (BTQ, 847-850, 2009). One participant's response reflected a similar dismay: "There just isn't enough time. Between testing and other demands, sometimes you go so fast you don't get to enjoy it or you just have to skip stuff which makes me sad" (BTQ, 45-46, 2009).

Finally, several participants were surprised at the lack of grammar knowledge of other teachers, veteran teachers' reluctance not to teach certain grammar instructions, and the participants' surprising lack of thorough knowledge about literature. One beginning



teacher was disappointed in how many English teachers lack basic grammar knowledge: “The lack of fundamental grammar instruction many teachers have before getting their own classroom” (BTQ, 1065-1067, 2009). Another beginning teacher saw the importance of understanding grammar: “I have discovered the importance of grammar (including sentence diagramming in a language arts curriculum. I am surprised at the resistance from the veteran teachers against using the daily grammar practice curriculum” (BTQ, 272-274, 2009).

A few beginning teachers were surprised at not knowing as much about literature as they thought they initially knew. One participant reflected that, “I don’t know as much about literature in general as I thought I did. I can analyze a specific piece just fine, but as to knowing groups, movements, and trends – I was humbled” (BTQ, 679-681, 2009). Another beginning teacher stated that even though she has taught specific literature selections for years, she is always learning something new from her students: “...even through I have taught some of these texts for years now that the students always show me things that I had never considered before” (BTQ, 170-173, 2009).

*Obstacles and Dilemmas Encountered by Beginning English/Language Arts Teachers?*

Seven themes were determined from this category: grading, discipline issues, parents, confidence, workload, testing, and students’ lack of fundamental English skills (see Figure 6). The major theme that emerged from this question was how to streamline the grading process. The participants were inundated by the amount of grading required of a high school English teacher. One participant stated that, “The past two years, I have been OVERWHELMED by the amount of essay grading in addition to my other areas of responsibility” (BTQ, 510-511, 2009). Another participant put it very simply, “I hate

grading” (BTQ, 366, 2009). One beginning teacher wrote about how she was finally able to handle grading:

I got really bogged down in grading last year and started to realize that the grading was only hurting me and my time; it wasn't helping the students (grades or understanding). So I've started to learn what kinds of assignments are helpful for furthering understanding but don't necessarily need a grade assigned. (BTQ, 190-193, 2009)

Another beginning teacher reflected on the grading process and wanted to make sure she examined and graded the appropriate skill. She stated that, “I am still tweaking my grading policy to ensure that I properly assessing the skill I am seeking from my students. I also am trying to be sure to make grading more efficient so I am not so overwhelmed” (BTQ, 1073-1075, 2009).

Similar to the grading dilemma, many beginning teachers stated they struggled with the large amount of work required of teachers beyond the classroom. One participant wrote, “I'm overwhelmed at the workload, not only with the grading but with lesson plans, parent contact and student contact. No amount of training can prepare for this” (BTQ, 758-759, 2009). Another participant explained that trying to incorporate all aspects of the language arts curriculum was difficult:

The main one was trying to incorporate all the aspects of the LA into the calendar year, while following county guidelines. Trying to equally teach content, grammar, comprehension, writing, and terminology on an equal basis as required and ensure that each student at least grasps the ideas, was tough. (BTQ, 1069-1072, 2009)

As expected, many beginning teachers were troubled at the discipline/classroom management conflicts and motivational issues they encountered in their own classrooms.

One beginning teacher wrote:

The number one obstacle I have faced and continue to face is classroom behavior and student motivation. It is something that I would've loved to have more education on prior to getting in the classroom. I think any additional information about either of these topics would be extremely helpful. (BTQ, 1004-1007, 2009)

Another beginning teacher stated that discipline issues along with the administrative duties were dilemmas she faced in her own classroom. She wrote, "Discipline issues and the massive amount of administrative duties expected, both of which take time away from

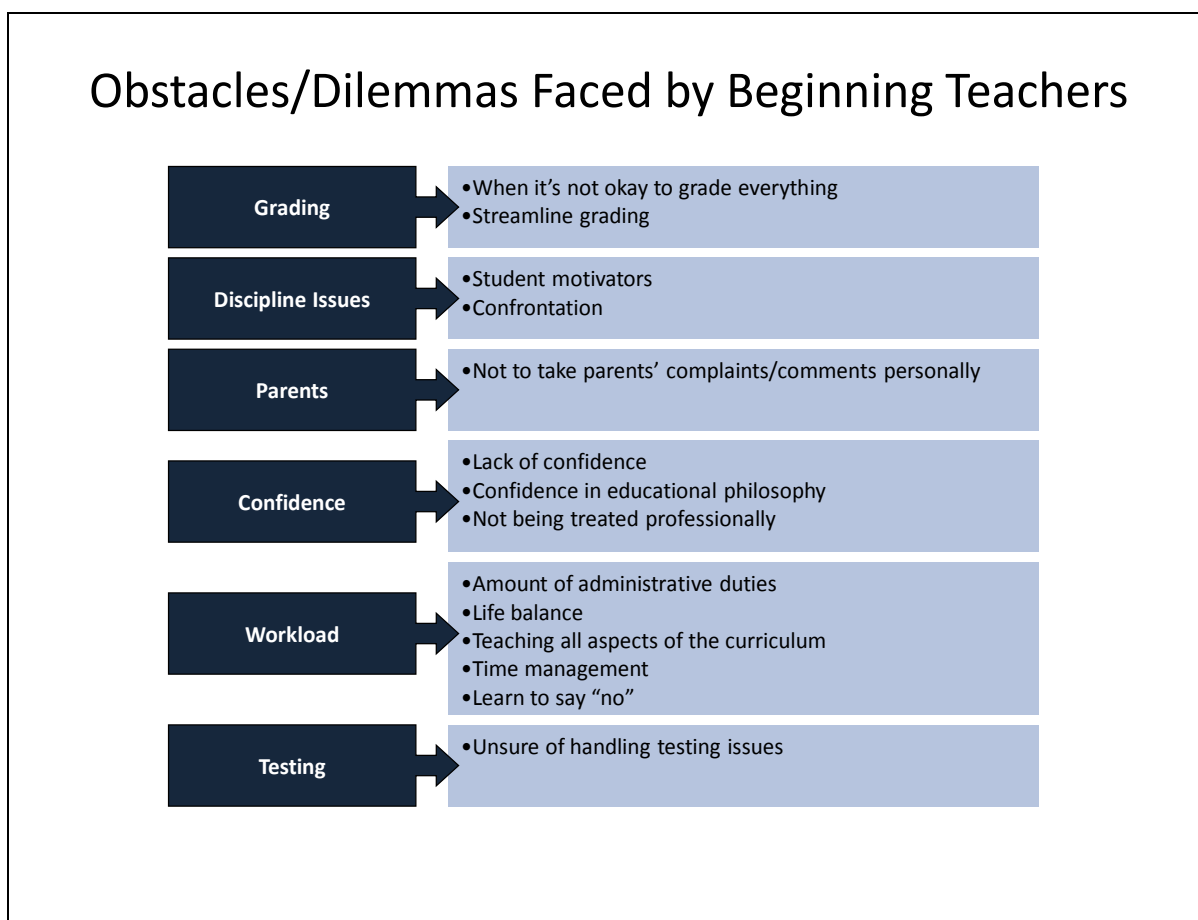


Figure 6

#### *Obstacles and Dilemmas*

why I'm here in the first place – to teach!" (BTQ, 441-442, 2009). One beginning teacher was frustrated with students' lack of motivation in just wanting the correct answer: "...I

guess I struggle with kids who just look for the answer in the book. When I ask about their opinion or what they think they just give me a blank stare like, ‘what am I supposed to think?’” (BTQ, 52-54, 2009).

Several beginning teachers teach at high performing schools and encounter a unique dynamic with parents who can become overbearing, demanding, and difficult.

One participant commented:

Parents can be wonderful teammates, but they can also be quite challenging to work with or against as the case sometimes calls for. In a high achieving school, parents cannot accept failure even when well deserved. It makes the job difficult at times to be defending myself when who I want to be focusing on is the struggling student. (BTQ, 935-938, 2009)

Another participant stated that she had to learn how not to take parent confrontation personally: “Learning how to not take parent complains/questions personally and be confident in my educational philosophies and practices” (BTQ, 512-514, 2009). One participant expressed how she is always questioning her teaching style: “I’ve often battled a lack of confidence in myself (constantly battling the feeling of ‘Am I doing this right? Are they getting it? What the heck am I doing?’)” (BTQ, 607-609, 2009).

Several participants wrote about how teachers in general are not treated professionally and are constantly being required to perform more duties on an already overloaded job description. One beginning teacher wrote:

Education seems to be in a transitional phase (perhaps it always is, and I’m just too new in the profession to realize it). Because of school, county, state, and federal requirements (assessed via an endless stream of standardized tests) – and the pressure to make sure that every student meets or exceed these requirements – teachers are rarely treated like professionals. Instead, more duties and requirements are placed on already heavily-burden(ed) shoulders; generally, these edicts are issued with the underlying attitude that teachers are underperforming. It’s seems as if the trend is toward mandatory units/lessons/ assessments, leaving teachers little control over their classes. (BTQ, 856-863, 2009)

*How the Master's Level English Teacher Education Program could Better Prepare  
Beginning Teachers to Address and Handle Obstacles and Dilemmas*

As expected, and expressed by most beginning teachers, participants commented that more instruction in classroom management or how to handle discipline problems emerged as the dominant theme in this question. Participants suggested more instruction in classroom management, role-playing discipline situations, and instruction on how to motivate students in the classroom. Other themes emerging from this category were developing a new teacher kit that would include how to organize the classroom, and addressing administrative and parental conflicts. Participants also suggested more instruction on how to teach grammar effectively, and again, several participants commented that the program could not prepare one for the dynamics and variability found in a classroom situation (see Figure 7).

Classroom management has always ranked high with beginning teachers as an obstacle in the classroom (Burnard, 1998; Martin, Linfoot, and Stephenson, 1999; Silvestri, 2001). However, the participants in this study agreed that what happens in one classroom would not always translate into an effective strategy for another classroom.

One participant wrote:

Explore both sides of what it means to be a teacher – the positive, supportive role model as well as the enforcer of guidelines and teacher of habits. Maybe they could have a workshop, at least, on classroom management because that's about all you really can do. What works in one classroom won't always translate into another. (BTQ, 689-693, 2009)

Another participant stated a similar opinion:

I think some of the classes could've had a focus on these elements, a class about dealing with different behavioral problems or situations or a class on finding a tool

to motivate kids. I think theoretical books could give new students in the program, at the very least, some background information on the topics, some tools to have at their disposal. I feel it would give those that need help a little bit of a boost in the classroom. (BTQ, 1010-1014, 2009)

One participant simply stated, “Though I don’t know how they would simulate real classroom experiences, I would’ve liked to have had more instruction/advice regarding discipline issues” (BTQ, 447-448, 2009). One beginning teacher also suggested role playing and observing more teachers during the practicum:



Figure 7

*How to Help Beginning Teachers Address Obstacles/Dilemmas*

...I'd like to see more role play as teachers in a preparatory program. I'd like to have more opportunities to prepare a lesson, teach it in front of 'students' with 'roles,' and test it out. I know we get that experience in student teaching, but maybe in front of a room, everyone has a chance to provide feedback. Sometimes, your mentor teacher can only offer their limited perspective. (BTQ, 58-61, 2009)

Several participants recommended having a panel of veteran teachers discuss many of the issues that beginning teachers are unaware of in education such as confrontational parents, administrative duties, unmotivated students, grading, and, of course, classroom management. One beginning teacher thought having current teachers discuss their own classroom management strategies would be useful: "...it might have been helpful to have more focus on classroom management. Perhaps more experience with students and having a current teacher talk with the class about their own experiences" (BTQ, 377-379, 2009). Another participant recommended a panel discussion to examine trends in education:

I think that having panel discussions, specifically about trends in education with current teachers would be very helpful. While in practicum, we focused so much on teaching the literature that we didn't see the many pressures and tasks assigned to our mentor teachers. Additionally each county and school has unique issues, so it would be good to get the input of teacher from many different locations. (BTQ, 872-876, 2009)

One participant proposed that the Master's level English teacher education program develop a New Teacher Kit that would expose beginning teachers to the hidden aspects of teaching that can burden a new teacher:

So much of teaching can't be prescriptive: what works for one teacher might not work for another. I have told my school that I would like to see a New Teacher kit: here's what to teach your first year. Hit these things (according to standards). Here are vocab quizzes, grammar quizzes, handouts, etc. I offer this idea because it's how I was indoctrinated into my training and it worked well for me – I was given a manual, I observed a class, I would teach the baseline material, and as I became more comfortable, I tweaked the material based on my personality, my understanding of the material, and my classroom experience. I believe that even

though it's prescriptive, teachers will take it and make it work (or not) for them. (BTQ, 518-526, 2009)

One participant thought more direct instruction on organizing and lesson planning would help:

We were simply told to make a lesson plan and given a template for assignment and made to fend for ourselves without much explanation. I think the program should offer as part of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester instruction on how to organize as a teacher (lesson plan, calendars, meeting county instructional calendar requirements, etc). This would allow students to use this information during their entire time in the [Master's level English teacher education] program. Then when they student teach, they could practice what they learned in the real world setting, instead of being taught on the fly by their mentor (as many of my cohorts claimed), and use student teaching as a way to tweak their operating procedures for when they got their first teaching job. (BTQ, 1079-1088, 2009)

Several participants in the study commented that no amount of preparation can prepare one for the classroom and the obstacles that beginning teachers face in their own classroom but pointed out the importance of growing as a teacher. One participant stated, "I'm not sure if any program could help with these issues. I love having a mentor at my school that helps me on a daily basis with strategies, examples, and just good old moral support! I think professional development is also key to these issues" (BTQ, 762-765, 2009). Another beginning teacher simply stated, "I think it's just part of the learning curve" (BTQ, 213, 2009).

#### *Program Changes or Additions*

Two major themes evolved in this category: classroom management and specific Master's level English teacher education program aspects (see Figure 8). For beginning teachers, classroom management has always ranked high as a topic of concern; for example, one participant wrote:



I would add a course (or a few weeks in a course) on classroom management and discipline issues – I think many of us were most concerned about how to handle different situations that arise when you get large number of big kids in one room. While I do think we learn best by doing (learning how to handle discipline issues as they arise), I think it would be very beneficial to teach [English Education MAT] students a number of strategies to help avoid many of the classroom management issues. (BTQ, 625-630, 2009)

Another participant stated, “Though I don’t know how they would simulate real classroom experiences, I would’ve liked to have had more instruction/advice regarding discipline issues” (BTQ, 447-448, 2009). One beginning teacher commented that many of the typical mistakes made the first year could have been prevented if the Master’s level English teacher education program had presented more information on classroom management: “A workshop on classroom management would have been great for that first year trial-and-error period. Looking back, there were several obvious things I did wrong that might have been prevented with a little aid” (BTQ, 697-699, 2009). Finally, one participant teacher emphasized more information on positive behavior management strategies: “I also believe continued instruction on positive behavior management strategies would be helpful. There are too many angry teachers out there. I think many, not necessarily [Master’s level English teacher education program] students, are ill equipped to begin their careers successfully” (BTQ, 540-542, 2009).

Another area that participants recommended to add or emphasize in the Master’s level English teacher education program is managing and appropriately handling administrators and parents. A beginning teacher stated, “I would have more emphasis on classroom management, talking to parents and dealing with the discipline issues in the classroom” (BTQ, 384-385, 2009). Another beginning teacher reiterated this concern: “I really do believe that a course on how to create dialogue between parents and teachers

and ways to handle conflict in the face of sometimes extreme adversity could better prepare teachers and give them confidence in these inevitable situations” (BTQ, 946-949, 2009).

A second area related to the classroom management category was working with reluctant learners in the English language arts classroom and motivating students. Research states that well-designed classrooms have fewer disruptions, but if beginning teachers cannot identify or understand how to address student motivation, reluctant

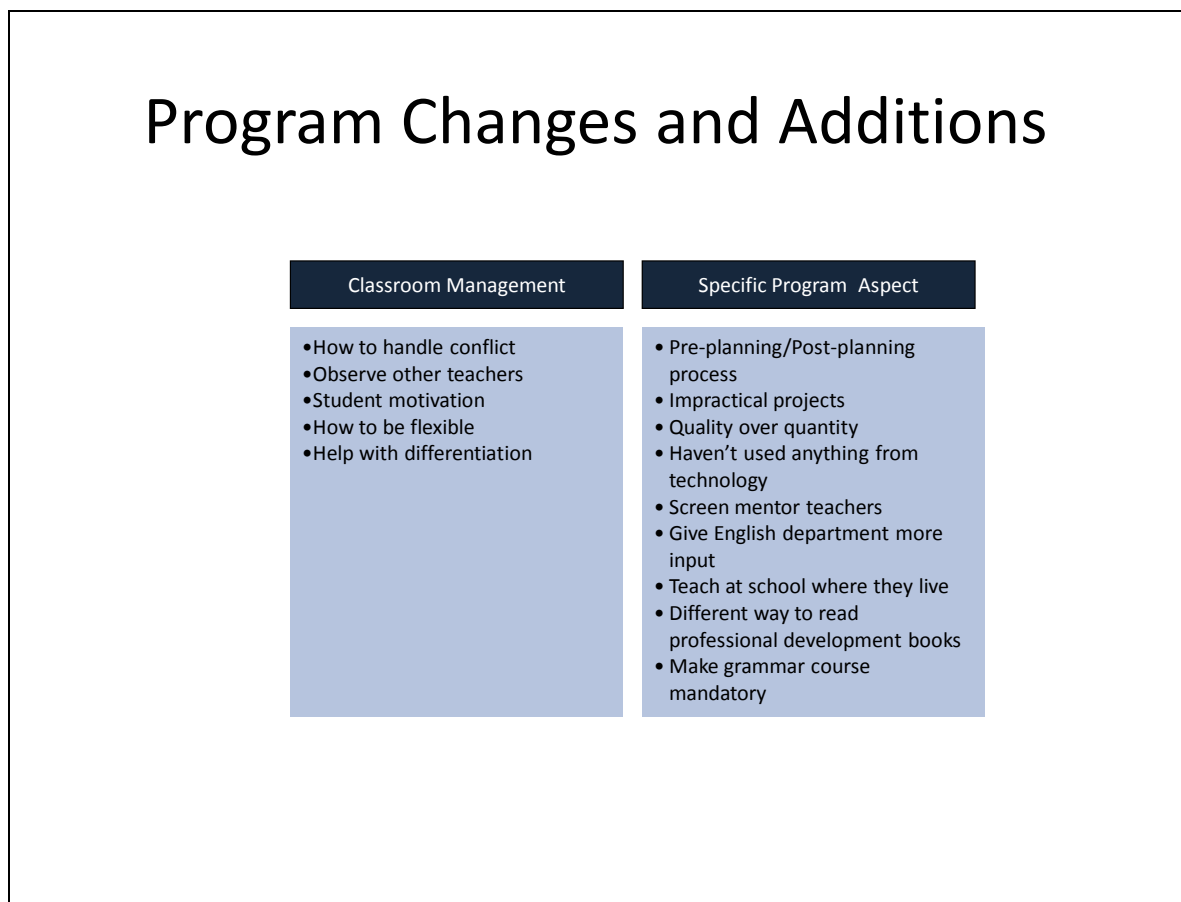


Figure 8

*Program Changes and Additions*

learners, and differentiation, then many students will not succeed in the English/language arts classroom:

...more focus on reluctant learners would have also been beneficial. Many of my students, no matter how much I know or care or nurture, are simply not interested in English or literature. A focus on these would have been great. It seemed a lot of our practices and methods were centered around somewhat reasonably motivated learners. (BTQ, 699-704, 2009)

Another participant stated that, “One thing I think would be beneficial is more emphasis on differentiation, what it looks like and how it’s done. That is something I struggle to find time for and accomplish” (BTQ, 1023-1025, 2009).

An area of the Master’s level English teacher education program to which participants suggested improvements was the practicum. Although within the practicum experience, students are encouraged to observe other teachers, many do not take advantage of that opportunity. One beginning teacher wrote, “...I would strongly encourage the observing of other teachers. I did a little of it at the middle and high school practicum, but it’s an enormous help to see how other teachers tackle similar issues” (BTQ, 1017-1020, 2009). Also, one participant recommended that the Master’s level English teacher education program match students with teachers who illustrate and incorporate the Master’s level English teacher education program’s educational philosophy in their classrooms:

I would probably screen the mentor teachers for practicum a little more carefully. Many of our mentor teachers were not examples of committed educators, for various reasons. When I began at my current school, I was assigned a very talented and hard-working mentor teacher, and she was an invaluable resource for me. (BTQ, 881-884, 2009)

The Master’s level English teacher education program now implements a year-long practicum experience that allows the student teacher to experience the pre-planning

aspects of teaching that is an important element in preparing for a successful school year.

One participant discussed that important aspect which was not present in the Master's

level English teacher education program when she attended:

One item I've noticed is that student teachers from [another local university] program come in at the beginning of school – they get to see what a teacher needs to do with pre-planning. That would have been VERY valuable to me. I'd like to suggest that the student teacher experiences capture the pre-planning process at the beginning of the year. This way, student teachers can also see how students 'settle in' to the year as well. (BTQ, 533-538, 2009)

Along with the practicum experience, many participants suggested more instruction on developing lesson plans. Although how to design lesson plans was discussed and implemented in the Master's level English teacher education program, participant teachers gave suggestions on how to better teach this important aspect of pedagogy. One participant suggested:

I think also something that could be implemented in some form is a way to 'teach' the art of adapting and modifying lesson/unit plans. I'm not sure what that would look like, but I learned very quickly that ideas I had on paper may not actually work, so I had to restructure them. (BTQ, 1020-1023, 2009)

Another beginning teacher recommended collaborating more on designing and developing lesson plans: "Collaboration is a crucial focus at my school. I wish we were able to collaborate on some of our big projects (i.e. [professor's] class). We did complete group projects, but I'd rather collaborate on lesson plans" (BTQ, 770-772, 2009).

Finally, many beginning teacher participants gave suggestions on different aspects of the Master's level English teacher education program. Several participants suggested incorporating more practical aspects of technology that teachers are more likely to have access to at their schools. One beginning teacher stated:

...I have not used anything I learned from the technology class. I wish we were taught how to create a simple, user-friendly teacher's website that I can update in minutes! Also, students use Facebook and other social networking sites on a daily basis – how can we incorporate that technology into our classes? Most public schools do not have the technological resources that this class assumed and I wish I had more practical experience. (BTQ, 772-777, 2009)

Finally, several participants in the study gave suggestions on how to better the program through involving the English department more in the designing the curriculum for the Master's level English teacher education program, exploring professional reading through a book that covers more than one aspect of teaching, and assigning practical versus impractical projects. An aspect of the Master's level English teacher education program that participants of the study suggested was giving the English department more input in the curriculum and design of the program. One participant suggested,

...I did not feel the content side of our education was met. Granted we dealt with content in the undergraduate course, but unless those are specific education classes, you will not be working on how to incorporate them into the classroom when you leave the program. All the theory in the world is worthless if you do not know what you are talking about. (BTQ, 1092-1096, 2009)

Another participant thought having a year to complete the whole program was daunting and suggested using a professional reading book that covered more than one issue found in teaching:

I would suggest maybe a professional reading book that deals with more than one teaching issue so that you are exposed to more things in one book. That might cut back on the amount of reading but still focus on the main ideas. You could do more discussion and assignments on one book instead of one assignment on 4-5 different books and the rigor and knowledge obtained would be the same. (BTQ, 65-69, 2009)

Finally, one participant felt the assignments, at times, emphasized quantity over quality and were not adaptable in the classroom. She states, "In retrospect (and almost 3

years removed), I still feel like some of the classes assigned impractical projects and it felt (at times) like quantity over quality” (BTQ, 768-770, 2009).

#### Themes/Categories from Administrators’/Department Chairs Perceptions of Preparedness

Since this study hopes to fill the gap and provide more insight into how to educate successful teachers through the examination of an urban English teacher preparation programs’ daily effect on their graduates, an examination of school administrators’/department chairs’ perception of these graduates’ performance in the classroom was deemed necessary. As mentioned, forty beginning teachers who graduated from Southern Urban University’s Master’s level English teacher education program were invited to participate in the study with 33% responding. Many of the eligible beginning teacher participants taught at the same school, which, in turn, presented twenty-seven department chairs to send administrator/department chair questionnaires. As with the beginning teachers, department chairs were emailed an introductory letter, informed consent letter, and the administrator/department chair questionnaire. After I emailed the department chairs a maximum of three times, nine percent or three eligible department chairs returned the questionnaire. Again, to illustrate and present the data accurately and to better authenticate the results, quotes from the participants are used frequently.

#### *Perceived Strengths of Beginning Teachers Who Have Graduated from Southern Urban University’s Master’s Level English Teacher Education Program*

A 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher is defined as someone who is adaptable, a communicator, a visionary, a learner, and a collaborator (Sawchuk, 2009; Williams, Foulger, & Wetzel,

2009; Yost, Sentner, Forlenza-Baily, 2000; Education Commission of the States, 1999). The department chairs used many of these descriptors to characterize the teachers who graduated from SUU's Master's level English teacher education program. One department chair participant who has several graduates teaching at his school explained that, "I think the [Master's level English teacher education program] teachers are generally strong in their ability to collaborate well with other professionals. I also see a willingness to experiment with various educational strategies. As a group, they seem aware of the fact that modern teachers must differentiate their instruction to meet the learning styles of a diverse population" (ADCQ, 6-9, 2009). Another department chair also connected 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher characteristics with another Master's level English teacher education program graduate. She stated, "The teacher to whom you refer is one of the most effectively, relevantly creative and well versed instructors in our department" (ADCQ, 71-72, 2009). Finally, one department chair connected the characteristics of subject knowledge and teacher confidence in one graduate who, "...is a self-assured, self-discipline, and controlled. She was an inexperienced teacher who seemed far beyond her years. She was very capable of handling her students and knew the material she was teaching" (ADCQ, 108-110, 2009).

*Perceived Weaknesses of the Master's Level English Teacher Education Program*

*Graduates*

Two department chairs suggested that they could not detect any weakness or suggest any weakness since they are not familiar with the program and its standards. One department chair stated, "I detect no true weakness; and am not sure I could align any with your program" (ADCQ, 76, 2009). Another department chair stated that the only

true weakness with graduates from the [Master's level English teacher education] program was not having much experience in the classroom saying, "I can't say that I see any weakness except experience" (ADCQ, 114, 2009).

One department chair went into detail on how many new and "modern" teachers lack the ability and knowledge to effectively teach and evaluate writing:

I believe that [Master's level English teacher education program] teachers share one weakness that so many of the new language arts teachers seem to have: an inability and/or reluctance to really evaluate student writing. Being an English teacher require much time and effort outside the classroom in terms of effectively evaluating student work. The writing process is difficult to teach. It requires challenging assignments, considerable time spent individually assessing the product, and extensive feedback to the student. Many "modern" teachers appear unwilling and/or clueless in terms of accomplishing these roles. (ADCQ, 116-122, 2009)

*Administrator/Department Chairs' Perceived Preparedness for the English/Language Arts Classroom of Southern Urban University's Master's Level English Teacher Education Program Graduates*

Of the responses from department chairs, all except one gave the program an 8 for preparing graduates for the classroom. They suggested that the teacher education program gave the teachers confidence in their abilities, the teachers were well-versed in their knowledge of subject matter, and the teachers understood how to incorporate appropriate instructional strategies into their instruction. One department chair stated, "As a group I would give them an 8 [out 10]. Generally speaking, they are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. They interact well with their students and understand the importance of rapport. They are well-versed in terms of subject matter and have been well-trained in instructional strategies" (ADCQ, 31-34, 2009). Another department chair expressed a similar stance on the degree of preparation graduates from the Master's level English



teacher education program: “Highly prepared; [beginning teacher] needed very little outside help or tutoring in skills of teaching in the classroom. I appreciated her ability to take charge with feelings of confidence” (ADCQ, 119-121, 2009).

*Administrators/Department Chairs’ Perceptions on How Graduates from the Master’s level English Teacher Education Program Could Be Better Prepared for the English/Language Arts Classroom*

The department chairs who completed this questionnaire did not elaborate much on this category. For example, one participant stated, “Not sure how to suggest if she is an example as she was highly qualified” (ADCQ, 126, 2009). However, one participant did go into more detail on what the Master’s level English teacher education program could do to better prepare graduates for the classroom emphasizing that the program needed to incorporate more grammar/mechanics and the teaching of writing. The participant stated, “Perhaps an increased emphasis on grammar/mechanics and an integration with the writing process would improve that aspect of their preparation” (ADCQ, 40-41, 2009).

*Administrators/Department Chairs’ Perception on How Effective Master’s Level English Teacher Education Program Graduates are Impacting Students’ Achievement in Language Arts*

Again, participants perceived the English teacher education graduates as highly influential in their ability to impact student achievement in the English/language arts classroom. One participant rated her beginning teacher’s ability a 10 on impacting student achievement: “...10 – her knowledge, her presentation, her rapport w/students, her classroom management make her a superlative teacher” (ADCQ, 95-96, 2009).

Interestingly, several of the department chairs paralleled student achievement with high test scores. For example, one participant gave their teachers an 8:

The [Master's level English teacher Education program] teachers are generally successful in preparing their students for achievement assessments. Most of them have been involved with a [local] County "benchmark" testing initiative, along with other barometers such as the [local county] Gateway Assessment, and the state-generated GHSGT and EOCT assessments. While I have not isolated the [Master's level English teacher education] teachers' results from others in our department, our students have consistently achieved at or above expectations. (ADCQ, 50-55, 2009)

Similarly, another department chair stated, "A [Master's level English teacher education program] graduate evidently prepares the student in many areas of subject matter, testing, and the [state] Performance Standards" (ADCQ, 133-134, 2009).

*Administrator/Department Chair Perceptions of Employability of Master's Level English Teacher Education Program Graduates*

Every student who enters the Master's level English teacher education program has expectations that when they graduate they will have easy success in finding a teaching job. This category examined how desirable Master's level English teacher education program graduates are among the wider pool of applications for teaching middle/secondary English/Language Arts. Overall, administrator/department chair participants would immediately hire an Master's level English teacher education program graduate. One participant stated, "Yes, I have definitely been satisfied with the quality of the teachers which come from the program. Generally speaking, they have had a more practical/realistic approach to the profession than many graduates from other English education programs" (ADCQ, 60-62, 2009). Another participant simply stated, "Absolutely!" (ADCQ, 136, 2009). Similarly, another participants said that being a

graduate of the Master's level English teacher education program was a major factor among many that she would take into consideration when hiring a teacher: "I would be apt to consider that candidate's preparation as exceptional – would hire him/her dependent upon that (your program), interview, observations" (ADCQ, 101-103, 2009).

### Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to identify and discuss the courses and experiences that helped prepare beginning teachers for the English/language arts classroom; specific projects, theories, and experiences that are frequently incorporated into beginning teachers' classrooms; the impact of experience on beginning teachers' understanding and incorporation of aspects from the Master's level English teacher education program into their English/language arts classroom; beginning teachers' perceived preparedness for the English/language arts classroom; positive aspects of teaching secondary English/language arts; surprising aspects of teaching English/language arts; obstacles and dilemmas encountered by beginning teachers; how the Master's level English teacher education program could better prepare beginning teachers to address and handle obstacles and dilemmas; and suggested program changes or additions.

This chapter has also discussed and identified areas administrators/department chairs' perceive of the Master's level English teacher education program that need further emphasis, perceived strengths of beginning teachers who have graduated from the English teacher education program, perceived weaknesses of these beginning teachers, perceived preparedness for the English/language arts classroom, beginning teachers' effectiveness of impacting students' achievement in English/language arts, and perceptions of Master's level English teacher education program graduates employability.

Chapter five will examine in more depth the courses, experiences, and theories select beginning teacher have transferred and implemented in their classrooms, how they perceived their preparation for teaching high school English, and what alternative sources provided them classroom support during their first years of teaching.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TERRY AND ALLISON: AN IN-DEPTH EXAMINATION OF BEGINNING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PREPAREDNESS FOR THE SECONDARY ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

#### Introduction

This chapter will focus on two purposefully selected participants from the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire who represent a continuum of views of the Master's level English teacher education program from which they graduated. To determine participants, I examined responses from question number four from the beginning teacher questionnaire administered to beginning teachers who graduated from Southern Urban University's Master's level English teacher education program within the past three years (2005-2008). This question asked, "On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being defined as 'exceptional,' how well did the Master's level English teacher education program prepare you for the English language arts classroom? Please explain your answer." Of these two select participants, Allison rated the program a "10" and Terry rated the program the lowest at a "6."

One of the two research questions in the study asks, "How do beginning teachers perceive their preparation for teaching in the urban language arts classroom?" The purpose of the interview and observation section of this study was to inquire further from each selected participant how they perceived their preparation for teaching high school

English, what specific aspects from the program they implement in their classrooms on a consistent basis, and what alternative sources provided them classroom support. Through observing these teachers in action in their classrooms and through interviews, answers were provided to these questions.

#### Structure of Interviews and Observations of Select Beginning Teacher Participants

##### *Interviews*

The purpose of the interview and observation stage of this research is to present to the reader the experiences of these two beginning teachers in enough detail and depth that those who read this study will “connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects” (Seidman, 2006, p. 41). The interview section of the study was organized around Seidman’s (2006) “Three Interview Series” where the first interview examines their experience or life history, the second interview examines details of their present experience, and the third interview has participants reflect on the meaning of their experience.

Originally, the interviews were designed as structured but became semi-structured because the researcher did not stop participants from venturing off topic or elaborating on a subject that was not the central focus of the question. The researcher tried to make the interviews as conversational and relaxed as possible in order to develop an atmosphere that encouraged reflective and honest answers. The first interview asked participants about background information and clarified answers to the questions from the questionnaire section of the study. The second interview occurred after the first observation, and questions derived from observation notes, emerging themes, and the card sort activity/interview. The third interview had the same structure as the second but

tried to have participants reflect more on specific classroom activities. The interviews conducted with Allison were all after school, and the interviews conducted with Terry were during his planning period. Each interview lasted a little over an hour, but during all interviews with Allison and Terry, they were also working with students on missed work or tests or working with a group or club they sponsored.

### Observations

Merriam (1998) stated that observations provide “some knowledge of the context or provide specific incidents, behaviors, and so on that can be used as reference points for subsequent interviews” (p.96). The purpose of observations in this study was to see what theories, methods, or projects from Southern Urban University’s Master’s level English teacher education program graduates are using in their classroom. Both Allison and Terry allowed the researcher to see them teach a variety of ability levels and grade levels during various times of the school day. With Allison, the researcher observed her class one week, and the next week we had the interview. Only one time during the research process did we have to go more than a week before we had an observation. With Terry, we initially followed the interview one week and observation the next week pattern; but for the next two sessions, we had our observation before his planning period and then used his planning period for the interview. The intent was to accommodate their schedule and work load.

### Brief Background of Participants and Their Schools

#### *Allison*

Allison is a newly married white female in her mid- twenties who has been teaching for three years at North Central High School located in a large school district in

the metropolitan area. Before enrolling at Southern Urban University's Master's level English teacher education program, Allison graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from a small, private liberal arts school with a degree in English literature with an emphasis in British literature. After graduating with her BA, she decided to go into teaching. Allison obtained a long-term substitution teaching job at her present school while enrolled in the Master's level English teacher education program and was classified as a TAD or [Master's level English teacher education program] After Dark. Instead of being placed in a school with a mentor teacher for her practicum experiences, her long-term substitution classroom was her learning vehicle. Allison reflects on her first year teaching and TAD experience saying, "So, it wasn't like the other teacher could go and clean up my mess if I was the student teacher not going as deep as I should in one area. And it was a lot of pressure, as it should have been. I guess a good teacher is gonna feel that 'cause they are taking their job seriously" (I1, 490-493, 2.25.2009)

Allison has been at her school, North Central High School, since she was a student in SUU's Master's level English teacher education program. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (2008) reported that North Central enrolled 2,463 students in the 2005-2006 school year. Forty-six percent of students were White, 43% Black, 3% Asian, 6% Hispanic, and 3% Multiracial. Twenty-nine percent of students were eligible for free and reduced meals. Ninety-two percent of students met or exceeded standards, and according to the Performance Index Calculations, North Central has made Annual Yearly Progress three years in a row, which placed it in the Distinguished School category. In English Language Arts for 2006, 97.9% of students met or exceeded standards.



*Terry*

Terry is a married white male in his mid- thirties who has just adopted a new son. He has been teaching at Perimeter High School, located in a large school district in the metropolitan area. Before enrolling at SUU's Master's level English teacher education program, Terry graduated with a BA from a large public state university with a degree in communications. He worked in marketing for ten years before deciding to go into teaching. Before and during the Master's level English teacher education program, Terry held various jobs, including substitute teaching. During his practicum experiences, Terry went to work after school hours on the nights he did not have classes to attend. Terry reflected on the intensity of working and going to school, "Because not only am I trying to make plans for my students and trying to make plans and teach the class, I'm also working on a paper for the [Master's level English teacher education program] class I have got to take. Most people are working. I mean I know it's intense and you shouldn't work but even if you are not working you know you want to try and be an effective teacher..." (I1, 449-452, 3.9.2009).

Terry has been at Perimeter High School for three years since graduating from SUU's Master's level English teacher education program. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (2008) reported that Perimeter High enrolled 2,803 students for the 2005-2006 school year. Sixteen percent were White, 39% Black, 31% Hispanic, 10% Asian, and 3% identified themselves as Multiracial. Eighty-five percent of students met or exceeded standards; and according to the Performance Index Calculations, Perimeter High has not made Annual Yearly Progress. In English Language Arts, 94% of students met and exceeded standards.

### Themes from Observations and Interviews of Select Teachers and Their Classrooms

The interviews and observations of Allison and Terry were designed to examine more closely the specific aspects of Southern Urban University's Master's level English teacher education program beginning teachers use frequently and consistently in their classrooms; and through the examination of opposing views of the program, a clearer picture of these classroom connections developed. In this section, several themes emerged from Allison's and Terry's interviews and observations that allowed a glimpse of the individual teacher's classroom practice, influences on classroom practice, teacher identity, and reflection on practice. In addition, the interviews and observations explored in more depth how these beginning teachers are incorporating aspects of their preservice English education program in their classroom. Again, to bring the voices of these two beginning teachers alive and better understand their perspective of the English teacher education program they graduated from and how that program has influenced them as teachers, their own words will be used frequently.

#### *Southern Urban University's Master's Level English Teacher Education Program Curriculum*

To understand specifically how graduates from SUU's Master's level English teacher education program are transferring material learned in the program to their classrooms, Terry and Allison participated in a card sort activity/interview. This activity was a modification of a research technique Pamela L. Grossman (1990) incorporated in her research on teacher education in *The Making of a Teacher: Teacher Knowledge and Teacher Education*. Grossman had teachers sort through cards with the courses they had taken in college and graduate school according to how the courses had influenced their

knowledge and conception of English and of teaching English. For this study, I used the card sort activity/interview as a springboard for discussion. During the last two interviews, I asked Terry and Allison to pick a note card from the cards spread out on the table which had all the names of classes taken during their English teacher education program. After choosing a card, Terry and Allison would then describe their experiences in that specific class, what was emphasized, and whether or not that specific class affected or influenced their pedagogy or any aspect of their classroom. During the card sort activity/interview as with the interviews, I did not stop Terry or Allison from venturing off topic or elaborating on a subject that was not the central focus of the card sort activity/interview. Again, I tried to make this data collecting technique as conversational and relaxed as possible in order to develop an atmosphere that encouraged reflective and honest answers.

One concern that arose during the card sort activity/interview, and that was also present in the open ended questionnaire section of the study, was participants connecting classes with specific professors and identifying the content of a course with a specific professor and not a specific class. Also, since Terry and Allison went through the English teacher education program at different years, they had different professors for different classes; so there was some inconsistency in understanding exactly what was covered in each class. It was decided that the best approach in dealing with this dilemma was to report the data as it was presented during the interviews and observations and keep the comments on each class within that class category.

*Education Department Classes*

*Literacy in the Content Areas*

According to the Southern Urban University's catalogue course descriptions, Literacy in the Content Areas is described as a course where "students examine reading and writing instructional strategies and materials in the content area classroom. Emphases are on adolescent literacy development, the process of reading and writing in the middle and secondary schools, the role of textbooks and trade books, concept development, comprehension, vocabulary, and study strategies" (SUU, 2010). One project that stood out for both Terry and Allison was the Shakespeare Unit. Allison specifically talked about how she still uses her Shakespeare introductory PowerPoint saying, "...loved it. Forever on it! I did a play I knew I would be teaching. I did *Romeo and Juliet* with a group cause I knew I would be teaching it" (I3, 201-209, 4.16.2009). Terry mentions that he still uses the "how to teach Shakespeare" book in his classes and that even his neighbor teacher has borrowed the Shakespeare book. Terry emphasized how this class provided many hands on materials to teach reading:

...she had a lot more of the hands on instruction stuff. Like how to teach reading and how to do tests with the kids if you wanted to see what their literacy was. A lot more tools of the trade than theory. Taught a lot of cool stuff.... I remember when I started with the paragraph of nothing words, the kids have to figure it out. You know all that stuff on how to teach literacy. It was really cool, really neat. (I3, 348-358, 4.16.2009)

Allison discussed how the Literacy in the Content Areas class emphasized technology and helped shape her philosophy on using technology in her classroom saying, "...it was a good class. The blogging thing. She's [the professor] very into technology, and I think that it's great that she is into the technology thing. We've had to

use it a bunch here too. It's been really good" (I3, 149-151, 3.25.2009). One of the assignments for this class asked students to keep a blog posted on line. Allison did not like the idea of posting her name and thoughts on the Internet for fear of an old boyfriend finding her:

...on a personal note it kinda griped me because I didn't want to put my name on line because I had my ex boyfriend on line trying to find me and he did. I didn't tell [the professor] because it was under a different name but I recognized his writing style and I went a looked on everybody else's blog and he hadn't done anybody else's...I was a little peeved about that but it wasn't her fault. It was my for not being careful or not talking to her about it because I didn't want to talk to her about it. That was my fault. So, technology you do have to be careful about that, really careful because we've gotten announcement before that this students is not suppose to have contact with Mom. (I3, 161-175, 3.25.2009)

Allison did discuss how she has tried using the Internet in her classroom but abandoned it since many of her students did not have access to a computer:

...I did the blogging as announcements and stuff. The second semester I unclicked the no comments thing and I let people make comments and nobody said anything. So, I haven't updated it or anything. It's still out there on the Internet somewhere. A lot of teachers have web sites and I just don't think it works out. It's kind of hard unless everybody has a computer reliable at home and they are going to be able to do assignments on the Internet only, so it has it uses. But at this moment in time it is pretty limited on what we can do with the Internet." (I3, 175-181, 3.25.2009)

### *Principles of English Instruction*

In this class, "students examine instructional procedures, teaching strategies, technology, and evaluation procedures for middle and secondary school English" (GSU, 2010). Terry mentioned how this class was one of the most practical he participated in during the English Education MAT program and that he "...learned a lot of stuff. She gave you ideas like rubrics type grade things.... Anything that had tools I could use in my classroom. I like that stuff" (I3, 370-373, 4.16.2009). One aspect of the class that Terry

thought helped during his practicum experience and during his first year teaching was being introduced and understanding the [state] Performance Standards. Terry stated:

No, they were very good about the standard training because I was actually at [county] county when GPS, we were there as it was transitioning. So, I was actually able to sit down. [county] county did every content people in every high school had to take two work days and work on lessons based on the GPS, and so I was actually able to...help them out. (I1, 341-346, 3.9.2009)

Allison also found this class had a lot of “technical stuff” (I3, 264, 3.25.2009) that she was able to use in her classes such as how to teach grammar using mini-lessons saying, “...the grammar mini-lessons were handy dandy. Those were good. And you were able to get everybody else’s” (I3, 249- 250, 3.25.2009). Allison recalled how part of their final exam in Principles of English Instruction was writing their teaching philosophy; and due to her classroom experience, an aspect of her philosophy, teaching grammar, had shifted. Allison stated:

Grammar is a hard thing for me to learn to teach. My first year of teaching I was all about diagramming sentences, I think its great. I asked one of my students after that first year, I think I saw a couple of years later, how did that work? She said, Oh, it helped, it helped. Well, good. But, still I was so unsure. I haven’t done it again. Just because I wasn’t sure exactly how much it really did help. (I1, 386-391, 2.25.2009)

### *Introduction to Secondary Teaching*

The Introduction to Secondary Teachings class “examines the nature of secondary students and schools. Explores instructional materials, teaching strategies, technology, and effective teaching. Includes experiences in reflective teaching and micro-teaching” (SUU, 2010). One facet of this class that Allison consciously incorporated into her teaching is helping students make connections with the literature: “If I know that they don’t understand I’ll tie it to something that they do. Like they are so tired of me saying

has anybody seen this movie? But I've learned that you got to play off of what they know and try to tie it in" (I2, 337-340, 3.11.2009). Allison described how she uses multiple modes of learning and literacy to build background knowledge and put into context British literature. She purposefully involves her students in tangible activities to help them better understand the time period and the literature:

If I can get them something to touch for them to see in 3D, I will. I've got a bust of my friend's head in the back of my car...we used it with a poem..just tie in something solid they can hold on to. We are doing the Victorian unit now. I have a couple of dresses and when I can remember going into my mother-in-laws and getting my hoop skirt and dresses...in fact, if I can find some male civilian clothes I will. Anything for them to hold on to. And that helps them and they are getting involved which crosses Dr. [professor]. Hers is good for building that background knowledge and putting it in context so that they can learn something new. (I2, 344-357, 3.11.09)

Terry described Introduction to Secondary Teaching as "middle school for adults" (I3, 485-486, 4.16.09) and found the theory presented in this class interesting but stated he was never able to transfer it to his classroom (I3, 455-461, 4.16.2009). Two projects from the class Terry mentioned that did influence his pedagogy was working with PowerPoint and designing and planning an entire six week unit. Terry stated, "Love her! Great class! I used PowerPoint...And I knew how to use PowerPoint but to do presentations and use PowerPoint, so I got tips from her on how to use PowerPoint. I learned more from her about PowerPoint than I did from the tech class" (I1, 377-381, 3.9.2009).

### *Social and Cultural Foundations of Education*

In the Social and Cultural Foundations of Education class, students analyze the roles of schools in the social order from the perspectives of the humanities and the social sciences (GSU, 2010). Allison said she "loved that class" (I3, 302, 3.25.2009), and Terry

said it was a “great class” (I2, 278, 3.25.2009) because they had “arguments” (I2, 278, 3.25.2009). Allison liked the class since it drew upon the history of education and mentioned how this aspect helped her when she was teaching the novel, *Hard Times*, by Charles Dickens. Allison stated, “In fact, an excerpt in our book, *Hard Times*, and I was able to talk with my students about education and where it has gone and where it has come from. And it helped me in my lesson too, more upfront than normal. And we talked about how it has changed and as far as I understand it, yeah, where it has come from” (I3, 306-310, 4.16.2009).

### *Psychology of Learners and Learning*

The Psychology of Learners and Learning class provided an overview of major behavioral, cognitive, and socio-historical approaches to learning with consideration of learning across the life span and sources for individual differences in learning (GSU, 2010). Terry said this class was a “cool class” and that he “learned a lot from that class” and found learning about Piaget was most beneficial saying, “...the Piaget stuff was cool. Like I never read that stuff before and that was the learner. That was a cool class. That worked out...worthwhile class. That class was worthwhile” (I2, 333-340, 3.25.2009).

When Allison drew this class from the card sort activity/interview, she described the class as:

how we process stuff. This is scaffolding which gets harped down everywhere... Vygotsky and a lot of stuff that teachers did...As far as how to approach kids in a non-threatening manner, how to deal with...she talked a little on how to diffuse about people just getting defensive how to address a child, um, things people do without realizing it.... (I3, 264 -275, 4.16.2009)

This class helped Allison reflect on her teaching and also helped her work with and understand her students better:



Her class I really liked just because it made me stop and think not only what am I doing but why. Am I missing something? And it helps a lot with me too because a lot of my students and I do not have the same home culture. So, I have to stop and a lot of the stuff I take for granted I have to remember... But that is something that helped a lot with my freshmen too. They are still middle schoolish mentality, and I work with them to just to kinda show and background info and how people think and differences and everything, so it was neat. How much we remember, how much we forget, how quickly we forget, to reinforcement. That helps a lot with my daily work and always review what we were doing and like a Venn diagram to organize their thoughts so that they can go back. If you can create it than you understand what it is enough to create it. So, a lot of times we'll study a poetic format and have them write their own. Just that application part of it. (I2, 278-289, 3.11.2009)

*Research Class: Methods of Research in Education / Action Research*

Students in SUU's Master's level English teacher education program have a choice of research classes. Students can take Methods of Research in Education that is described as a class where students study research methods, procedures, and designs, and students learn preparation of research abstracts in education and related fields; or Action Research, which is described as a course that provides an overview of the research methods and philosophy of practitioner self-study (SUU, 2010). Terry attended the Methods of Research in Education class that he described as a "worthless class" (I3, 375, 4.16.2009). Terry could not see any rationale for taking this class because he was not going to teach college or publish. Terry stated:

I have no clue why I had to take a research class. To me it was neat, I guess. I understand the research, but it wasn't about the research. It was cool research. Like, hey, look what we found out when we studied ten kids. I wasn't reading for that. I was reading about how do we find out what this thing is. I don't have the time in my day to plot research for my kids. You know. I'm interested in did you pass, or not pass? We need to figure out why. How do I figure this out? I know Action Research which I did not take... I think someone told me it was a better class. (I3, 379-387, 4.16.2009)

Allison attended the Action Research class that she heard was "...way better than the Methods of Research class..." (I3, 211, 3.25.2009). She described the class as "...alright. It was good. It basically, if you've got two pieces of common sense. Because that is what you are going to use. It's kind of almost a no brainer in that you should always be doing it, you should always be evaluating. Does this work? Does this not work?" (I3, 213-215, 3.25.2009). For her project in the Action Research class, Allison asked the question, can a text get too personal? She based this project off a student's response to a book called *After the First Death* about a girl who struggled with depression. Afterwards, the student came to Allison after school crying and explained that the writing was too close to hers when she was having a difficult time at home. Allison described her project where she used *Romeo and Juliet* as the text saying, "I had a survey that asked how personal is the text getting now? Do you understand it? So, I worked it into my current lesson" (I3, 217-221, 3.25.2009).

Allison described another project from the Action Research class where she was in a group that had to meet outside of class and bounce ideas off each other. She really liked this project because, "...it was kind of like working with your co-workers bouncing ideas off each other and things like that, so that was kinda good practice" (I3, 225-227, 3.25.2009). Allison learned from this class how to answer questions found in her classroom:

...the action research was good and that was just kind of learning how to systematically evaluate, not just if this is working or not. Cause if I had taken it earlier when I was really harping on sentence diagramming, I maybe could have found a way if it was not working for me or not. I could use that if I really, really wanted to. (I3, 227-230, 3.25.2009)

*Integrating Technology in School-Based Learning Environments*

In this course, students were provided the skills and knowledge to design and create technology-enhanced classroom environments and to design and create products for student-centered learning environments with various technologies (SUU, 2010). This course is a state legislation mandated technology requirement for all certified teachers. Allison did not discuss this class, but Terry did take and discuss this class. Terry took this class in his first semester as a Master's level English teacher education program student and became frustrated because the class asked students to develop lesson plans, and Terry had never been exposed to designing and writing lesson plans. He stated:

...we were taking the tech program, tech class the first time first semester, so I'm in this tech class and part of the tech assessment is the lesson plans and none of us ever had lesson plans...I never wrote a lesson plan before. So, I was getting points taken off on the lesson plans for my assessments because I didn't know what the heck I was doing. (I1, 261- 270, 3.9.2009)

During the interviews, Terry brought up a good point about the technology class saying that the class should illustrate to students how to use the technology most commonly found in high schools such as Microsoft Office which includes PowerPoint, Excel, and Word but also teach the basics of how to use a SMARTBoard, which are being seen more frequently in classrooms. Terry said:

...and someone had a Smartboard, but it wasn't in our tech class. Like they had the availability of a Smartboard. That would be kinda cool. Cause what they did is teach us Publisher. I mean Publisher. I don't even use it. I don't have time. PowerPoint important. Excel important. Word important. If you don't know how to use Word at this point, you should. If they can get one Smartboard to teach the basics of Smartboard technique, get one. Maybe they have one...you know teach that kind of stuff. (I3, 324-332, 4.16.2009)

### *Practicum*

The Practicum experience is described as “a supervised practice in an approved instructional setting” (SUU, 2010). Allison did not take the Practicum classes because she was a provisionally licensed teacher already employed at a school as a long-term substitute; Allison’s substitute position became her practicum experience. Terry felt that the Practicum was the best experience out of the whole Master’s level English teacher education program: “Practicum that was awesome. This was worth the money I spent. This was worth the money I spent!” (I3, 389-391, 4.16.2009). Terry mentioned how his mentor teachers were great, “Mrs. [mentor], K. [mentor] because of those people it was awesome. I heard some bad stories of people who had bad times with some of their teachers. My two teachers were awesome. They were so good” (415-417, #3).

Terry talked about how influential his high school mentor teacher, Mr. [mentor], was on his classroom practice saying, “I learned that [discipline] from Mr. [mentor]. Just keep, I watched him keep his class in order. They may not have learned it cause they didn’t care to, but he was getting across what we had to do” (I2, 115-118, 3.25.2009). Terry continued discussing how Mr. [mentor] influenced his classroom management and teaching style: “Mr. [mentor], watching him teach, um, not as much teaching as his classroom management. I’m a little more boisterous than he was, but his demeanor and his way of handling the kid. I learned a lot from him about that” (I2, 92-94, 3.25.2009).

### *Electronic Portfolio*

Although this was not a class, students in the Master’s level English teacher education program complete an Electronic Portfolio as a capstone project. Terry described his experience with the E-Portfolio, “God, that was hell!” (I2, 348, 3.25.2009)

and when Allison was asked about the E-Portfolio, her first words were. “Oh, dear Jesus!” (I3, 118, 3.25.2009). Allison commented that she liked that there were several revision opportunities: “I was really happy we had several revisions that we could do and by the end of it I was very proud of it” (I3, 122-123, 3.25.2009). When asked if this project helped her with her own classroom she said, “Well, yes, it did cause it made you not just, it gave you some basis for decision making, um, the artifacts having to get that all together as proof. It made you stop and ask what is it that I’m doing for real” (I3, 127-129, 3.25.2009). Terry commented that the Electronic Portfolio was a difficult project to complete: “...the first thing that comes to mind is arduous. Just a lot. And even though you built it up as you went along...Arduous, but I don’t think I’ve used a piece of it yet” (I2, 352-357, 3.25.2009) (see Figures 9 & 10).

#### *English Department Classes*

In the Master’s level English teacher education program, students are required to take 12 graduate hours in English/Folklore at the 6000 level or above. Both Allison and Terry discussed in the interviews how much they learned and enjoyed the English department classes. Allison said she “loved them” (I3, 73, 3.25.2009), and Terry appreciated these classes because they provided “weapons for being on the front line” (I1, 59, 3.9.2009). Both Terry and Allison mentioned that in their classes, the English department professors were very aware that Master’s level English teacher education program students were in their classes and provided alternative assignments that allowed program students to connect the literature to the secondary/middle school classroom. Allison commented on a specific English class:

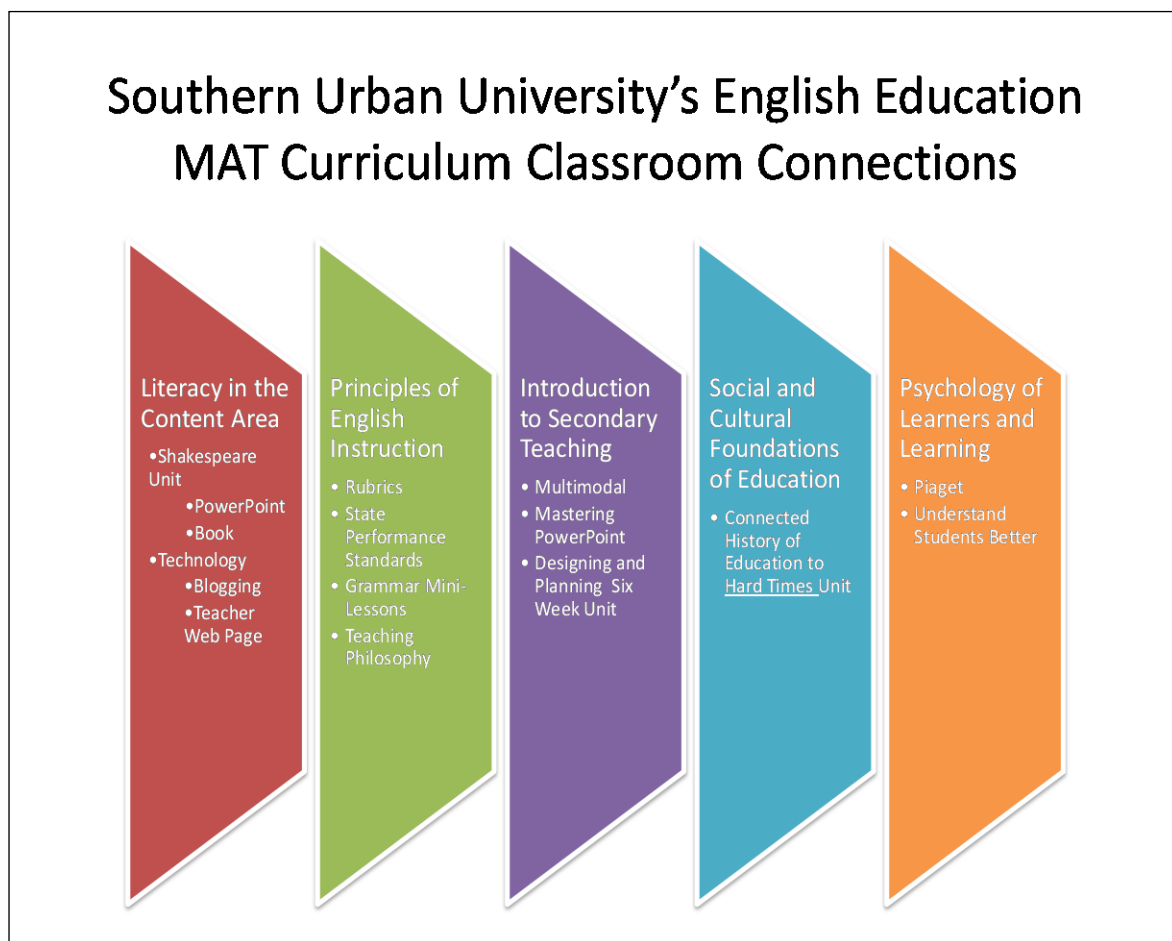


Figure 9

### *Curriculum Classroom Connections 1*

But the professors, one thing I was always impressed with, the professors were very much aware of the [Master's level English teacher education] program in their classroom because even Dr. [professor] had as the final you could either do a final essay or you could do a final teaching project...all the professors seemed aware of that even if it wasn't a specific [Master's level English teacher education program] class. (I3, 77-87, 3.25.2009)

Terry discussed how the English department professors were very conscious to bring in classroom application:

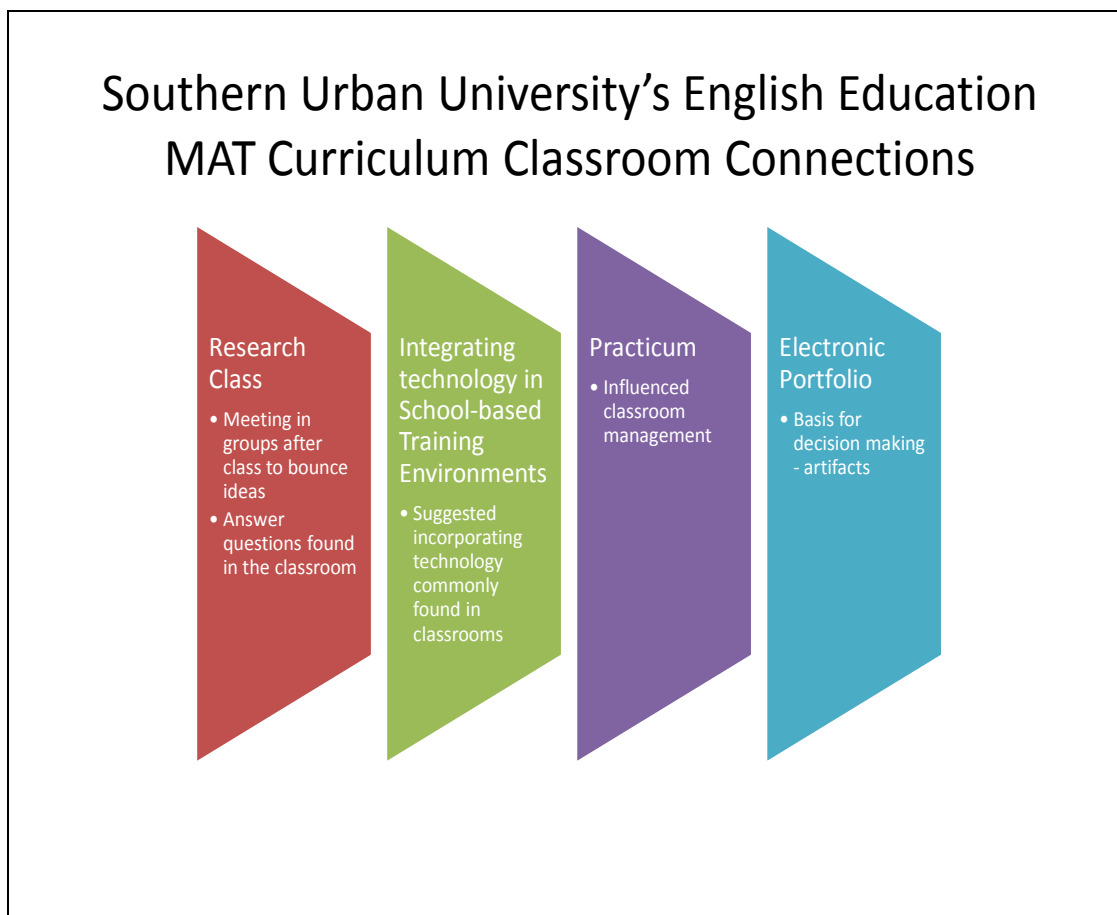


Figure 10

### *Curriculum Classroom Connections 2*

Like each book we read we drew up. We had some kind of lesson plan, some kind of teaching activity we had to take it and transfer it. You know in a group effort or an individual effort...how would I teach cubism when teaching Faulkner? We read the work and went into it but also looked at how we could teach it. (I1, 39-44, 3.9.2009)

### *Allison's English Classes*

The English classes Allison took during the Master's level English teacher education program were Advanced Grammar, Composition and Pedagogy, 18<sup>th</sup> Century Women Writers, and 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> Century Literature. Allison discussed how the Advanced

Grammar class emphasized sentence diagramming and that during her first year of teaching she stressed this grammar technique:

The diagramming is good for your visual kids, but a lot of them it ended up being more of a distraction. I mean for me I use diagramming cause Dr. [professor] taught it to us and I am very visual, so it helps. So it helped me I know, but it may not I just wasn't sure. Originally, I was coming in flaps in the air blazing, guns going saying yeah sentence diagramming, and it was in my portfolio...so grammar I struggle and I think that is for everybody. (I3, 137-143, 3.25.2009)

Allison stressed how the Composition and Pedagogy class influenced her teaching and saved her sanity when grading composition papers saying, "Hers was good for grading papers and knowing how not to get overwhelmed" (I3, 85-87, 3.25.2009).

Allison said she learned in this class how to stay focused on one or two aspects of composition:

One thing I learned with the [Master's level English teacher education] program that helped me and sometimes I forget and get overloaded... To really, explicitly teach something like we are focusing on satire and we were doing a satire paper. It was taking the place of research. So I focused on satire and research and suddenly I freaked and worried that I didn't teach them how to do a thesis statement that they learned when they were juniors...my department chair reminded me. Well, what were you focusing on? Satire and research...But Dr. [professor] class helped and that it helped me not get overwhelmed with I forgot to do this. (laughter) I didn't feel so bad, okay that wasn't my focus.... (I2, 27-48, 3.11.2009)

Another English class that stood out and influenced Allison's teaching was Later Shakespeare: "Um, the Shakespeare one, it was good for philosophy. Dr. [professor] had a lot of philosophy in that. The place and selves. We went through a lot of philosophy behind it. He really likes his arts verses nature debate....I found out that I would be teaching seniors. He let me do my project on Macbeth" (I3, 99-102, 3.25.2009).



*Terry's English Classes*

The English classes Terry took were 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poetry, Advanced Grammar, Dr. [professor] Drama Class, and a Composition Class that Focused on Audience. Dr. [professor] Drama class stood out for Terry because he really enjoyed taking classes from Dr. [professor]: “I’m very biased. I love Dr. [professor]! I took her drama class, teaching drama, and I love drama, I’m a theater person, but she looked at how to teach it, it was very interesting as well” (I1, 116-118, 3.9.2009). Terry also emphasized how he enjoyed the English classes since the English professors were very cognizant to include pedagogy in their classes and projects:

...those classes where the English teachers took the time to have you look at pieces, and as a lover of English you want to learn about it, but I like that split down the middle with how to learn to love it and understand it and how to explain that to a middle schooler. That helped me out more than say my theory classes. (I1, 119-122, 3.9.2009)

Although Terry could not remember the title of the English class, he took a composition class that focused on audience. While taking this class, Terry and the professor discussed how Master’s level English teacher education program students needed more exposure to composition and writing classes:

...she said this is great for you to have but y’all should have more writing classes. She was another one of the English professors who obviously wished that we were able to have more English classes than we did...she was also, I’m going to do as much as I can, this is great, but you all should have more. You all teachers should have more writing classes...So, you know it’s like it should be a mandatory writing class. There should be a mandatory writing class.... (I3, 182-193, 4.16.2009)

*Beginning Teachers' Perspectives of the Secondary English/Language Arts Classroom*

As transcripts and observation notes were read, reread, and analyzed from Terry and Allison’s interviews and observations, several noticeable themes kept emerging from

the data which centered on Terry and Allison's perceptions of the secondary English/language arts classroom which included their discussions of how they view themselves as a teacher, their discussions and demonstration of their pedagogy, and their reflections of their work as a teacher. All themes contain aspects of their Master's level English teacher education program along with other influences, such as professional development and colleagues.

*Influences and Support from Professors and Colleagues*

After examining Terry and Allison's teacher identity, another theme that emerged from the data examines the professors and colleagues who either influenced these beginning teachers' practice or had supported and assisted them with shared pedagogy or advice. Allison said she likes to give and not take so much and discussed a few specific projects that she has incorporated into her pedagogy from other teachers:

I never understood why people would be kinda stingy with their stuff cause if I have a great idea, I share it with everybody, I'm excited...I'm being a hypocrite because I am not as willing to take stuff from other people. I like sharing, but there are times I won't take. Now this got around, *Frankenstein*, a teacher had done a creative project for *Frankenstein* and which is...a body biography (see Figure 12). (I1, 671-680, 2.25.2009)

Allison discussed throughout the interviews professor and colleagues who have influenced her teaching. One professor from the education department was an influence on her pedagogy because Allison suggested that their personalities were similar: "...I think Dr. [professor]'s class fitted my personality the most because it was more artsy centered, it was more let's go out and PowerPoint!" (I1, 330-332, 2.25.2009). Allison recalled one colleague from her school whose classroom philosophy stood out to her during her first year, "My first year of teaching there was this guy, the kids loved him.

They would come in class, Mr. [great teacher] did this, I got tired of hearing that man's name; but he made a good point with me. He said if you can't tease them, if you can't pick on them and have fun with them then what's the use?" (I1, 912-915, 2.25.2009).

Allison gave a great example of how she uses this philosophy in her classroom: "The fifth period we have gotten were we just have a blast. We come in, and alright, you know this and that, they are the ones who if I say who wants to share their poems, nobody in that class is shy. They all jump, I want to share!" (I1, 915-917, 2.25.2009).

A gifted teacher from Allison's school shared with her a teaching strategy, concept attainment strategy that could help with Allison's dilemma over teaching grammar effectively:

...It's where you basically put up positive examples and negative examples and through these one at a time the kids form a hypotheses and then they alter it slowly as you show them examples until they get to the right one or they get close enough where you feel like you can explain it and go on because it is the idea if you establish what it is if you discover it, it is yours. (I1, 351-355, 2.25.2009)

Allison also mentioned that during her long term substitute position, she learned how to handle the paper load through a "check" system:

...the check system, I learned that from a long term subbing position, the position that actually made me want to be a teacher...And basically on a weekly basis or if its goes to an amount of time that is too small, I'll combine weeks and its an amount of checks. And the amount of checks they get versus the amount that were assigned that percentage is their grade. (I2, 15-20, 3.11.2009)

Terry described himself as a "...hands on don't read the manual kind of person. Just give me the controller and I'll figure out how to make it work. That's how I learn" (I1, 142-144, 3.9.2009). So, much of what Terry incorporates into his classroom are teaching techniques he said he has learned from colleagues: "...I could talk theory all day

until you see the actual application. The application is the important part. I've learned more from the front line people than I do anybody else" (I1, 157-159, 3.9.2009).

Terry mentioned numerous colleagues who have influenced his classroom pedagogy, but two of the most influential were Mr. [practicum] from his secondary Practicum experience and Mrs. [department chair], co-department chair at his school. (see Figure 11). Again, Terry thought Mr. [practicum] was "...great, he was awesome...my mentors were awesome people" (I1, 470-471, 3.9.2009). One aspect of Terry's teaching that he felt was directly influenced by Mr. [practicum] is his classroom management style:

I'm still working on tweaking my management, but I definitely try to keep my house, my room, as straight as possible. Like I don't have time to deal with it, discipline anymore. I'm not going to deal with you if you are not going to do it. Go, I've got thirty kids doing a lot of work, they can go. I learned that from Mr. [practicum]. (I2, 113-115, 3.25.2009)

Terry also discussed how he often reflects on his 9<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher and tries to emulate his classroom management style:

Like my 9<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Mr.[tough teacher] was the toughest man in Catholic school, and I learned more from him than I did from anybody else in that school. Like he was TOUGH! I learned more from him because he didn't let anyone cut crap. He was like here's how you are going to do it. You know, so I learned from him, that's kind of helped me be a little more rigid. (I2, 108-112, 3.25.2009)

Terry credited Mrs. [department chair] as an influence who has shaped his teaching style especially teaching composition:

...not style exactly, but how I present to the kids. My first year the floaters were the co-chairs of our department. She was a floater and she would come in my room in my planning period and half the time she didn't care...she didn't care if I stayed, but I would watch her...She taught me helped me learn how to teach writing. I can write, but the teaching's the part. (I2, 95-103, 3.25.2009).

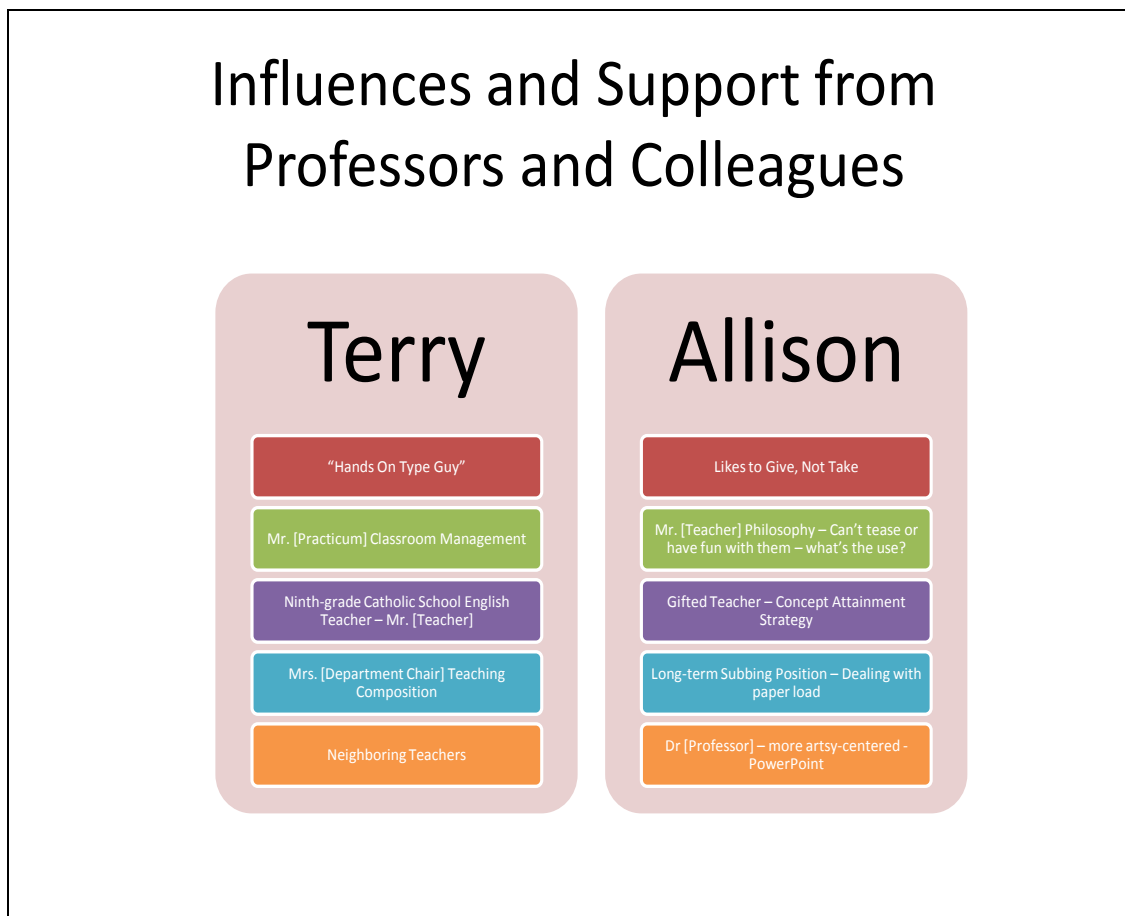


Figure 11

### *Influences and Support from Professors and Colleagues*

Terry also credited his neighboring teachers as a source for information or classroom pedagogy ranging from borrowing grammar ideas to creative takes on stale education mandates such as a competition to prepare for standardized testing to calendar templates

### *Influences of School District Staff Development on Beginning Teachers*

*Beginning teacher induction and the Wong book.* Because Terry and Allison teach in the same county school district, they discussed many of the same staff development sessions. One mandatory staff development class they took was a

beginning teacher induction that lasted their entire first year of teaching. Terry talked about the structure of the beginning teacher induction:

We had to do a collaborative on Mondays, like it is mandatory. It was either academic collaborative with your level or a faculty meeting with your department on one Monday. Two Mondays a month your level of your department and then department/whole faculty meeting. Then sponsor support groups or the people giving testing. Different groups doing PR support groups. That kind of stuff. Every Monday it is required, um, if you are a new teacher your support group is the new teacher support group. (I2, 152-158, 3.25.2009)

Both Terry and Allison were given Harry Wong's book *The First Days of School* at their schools, and they talked about how that book has influenced their teaching and classroom atmosphere. Allison discussed how Wong's book has affected her pedagogy and classroom:

I read *The First Days of School* by Wong. His was great because he said the first day of school here's some basic attitudes that you need to get established and I think that was the important thing was what kind of attitude do you want your room to have. How do you go about getting that attitude? Do you want your classroom to be kind and nurturing? You can do the grandma thing. If you are more concerned with rigor and with you know pushing them to their limits, go for the grim witch. Me? I want them to get a kind of ethic we are going to work. I'm not going to kill you but I do expect you to work. I'm a little bit more concerned with quality not quantity. (I1, 631-640, 2.25.2009)

Terry elaborated on how the Wong book provided him technical and "day to day" information to use in his classroom: "I don't know any program that it is taught [classroom management]. You have to hit the classroom to know to learn...well, yeah, you can kind of, you know, the Wong book that they gave us when we got here. That kind of stuff we need to get a heads up about. The day to day stuff that you can use. Like discipline" (I2, 135-141, 3.25.2009). Allison discussed how she implemented Wong's suggestions in her classroom:

I did what he said do, they came in, I made sure I shook hands with them at the door. They came in, the assignment was on the board, and before the bell rang, I told them, I said the assignment is on the board. You can go ahead and get started before the bell rings. Now they did not technically have to but it set a tone for the expectation. And it went real well. The second semester seniors Harry Wong doesn't have a prayer, but first semester we got some things done, and we started really well. I had a stopwatch and we would come in everyday. There was a notebook entry on the board. I would pass out their notebooks... five minutes after that bell rang I had a stopwatch, they could hear it click. The first five minutes of my classes were total and a hundred percent silence. (I1, 644-655, 2.25.2009)

*School district's writer's institute.* Allison mentioned that since she had been teaching, she had tried to have a focus for her content knowledge or her classroom pedagogy each summer:

Each summer I have a focus I want to do. But last summer it was reading a lot of British history, so I would know a lot more of the background stuff. The first time there were certain areas where my history knowledge had gaps. So, I went through and read, and that is why I made all my Monarchs (see Figure 12)... I boned up on my British history last summer. This coming summer and I said this for several summers is work on getting my grammar lessons going. I want to get a format that works a lot of different ways where I can say OK guys we are going to do this...I want to come up with some format that works for me....(I1, 417-426, 2.25.2009)

Allison also discussed a writer's institute that the county school district offers during the summer that has influenced her teaching of composition. Allison talked about how the writer's institute has helped her, specifically in a concerned area, grammar. Interestingly, Allison makes a connection between what was taught in the staff development with what she learned in the Master's level English teacher education program:

You had to sign up and go to it. There were only three slots and myself and two other coworkers went. Good stipend. It was about two weeks long. The first two weeks of summer...but it had a guy come in and he specifically addressed this issue of grammar. It was really cool because he talked about only providing positive examples in model sentences and they are supposed to create their own

sentences of that model sentence instead of showing them a wrong example to fix. And it was an interesting way to do it. And I was thinking back to *The Power of Grammar* and they actually kind of do the same thing. (I1, 403-427, 2.25.2009)

Another aspect from the school district writer's institute that influenced Allison's teaching was journaling:

We each had pulled out something different, which was pretty cool. I pulled out journals, big time. Just the way that my journals are over there. Just the journals were, they weren't just reflective, they could be used to help be predictors, to be reviewed, to do next to world, to create their own model examples, like we did Beowulf they used their journals and created an adventure myth, that kind of stuff. So, I took out journal...it 's just trying everything they teach you. (I1, 433-440, 2.25.2009)

*County benchmarks meeting.* Terry mentioned that he would like to attend the writer's institute that is offered as staff development in their county school district:

"There is a writing institute I keep wanting to go to but I'm not positive until the end of the school year...I really haven't had a chance to get to because of my son" (I3, 198-200, 4.16.2009).

Although not technically staff development, Terry discussed that he was interested in learning more about the county benchmarks that were being established within his school district and that there was a meeting to discuss benchmarks correlating to testing.

Terry discussed his experience:

See, I'm really interested in it, and it was hey we're having this meeting to discuss benchmarks. We were told. So me and my level chair, department chair went and walked in there and realized it was not teachers. It was AP's. It was the benchmark contact APs. So, here I am sitting there me, teacher and there was all this discussion about how the county's fault that the benchmarks aren't good. Basically, it was the county blaming the AP's who in turn blame teachers. (I3, 61-69, 4.16.2009)





Figure 12

*Wall of British Monarchs*

*Classroom Pedagogy*

*Allison's pedagogy.* Allison incorporated a multimodal perspective in her pedagogy to help students make connections with the literature and better understand the literature. When Allison was teaching *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley to her seniors, she wanted them to connect *Frankenstein* with the Greek myth Prometheus. Allison said, "...so I had this marked so that they could see in the novel itself that secondary title of the modern Prometheus, so I wanted them to tie together so they read the myth, they read the excerpt from *Frankenstein* where the monster is finished and then Victor freaks out and leaves the room" (I1, 75-78, 2.25.2009). Allison then used an excerpt from a graphic novel of *Frankenstein* but then realized that it had confused many of her students:

And in the same scene in the graphic novel form which is kinky cause he tinkered with it to destroy it a little bit ... and then this is just a visual aid to them as some of them made me think I would have been better off by not putting it in there cause it threw them off they thought it was something else they were suppose to take into account, and it was just mainly just to give them a visual aid cause this is a lot a different texts going on. (I1, 82-91, 2.25.2009)

Nonetheless, Allison tried to integrate several modes of literacy for her students to better understand the literature selection.

In a similar example of classroom pedagogy and drawing from a professor in the Master's level English teacher education program, Allison had her students draw symbols for William Blake's poems:

So a lot of her [professor] stuff dealing with not just writing a poem every single time...sometimes we would do visual representations, show all the symbols, draw the symbols of this poem...William Blake's poems take less than a minute to read, so we read about four of them, they are short and you could read more but you can't digest more. So I passed out plain computer paper; they folded it in half and then half again, and with each of the four squares, they had to draw the symbol and what it related to. And so one would draw like a tiger and an angry god, and draw a man with a cross and in Infant Sorrow, and angry infant. Stuff like that. (I1, 168-176, 2.25.2009)

Allison also discussed how she used a "[Master's level English teacher education program] like approach" to help students review for the [state] High School Graduation

Tests:

They are not going to learn anything new...you can't let a whole week go by and not do anything in class, so I'm stuck. I realized we couldn't learn anything new, but it doesn't mean we couldn't review anything old. So, I took a very [Master's level English teacher education program] like approach. I brought some painter's canvas and cut it up, and I brought some plain poster paint. And they had to basically look through the units and give me, they had to paint on the canvas the summary of that unit, symbols either from history, or important authors, or symbols from stories that we read. (I1, 192-198, 2.25.2009)

Another multi-modal activity Allison incorporated into her teaching was having students recreate a face based on the poem “Ozymandias” by Percy Bysshe Shelley using Crayola Fun Foam. Allison explained:

So, the idea is we read a poem and I did it for my college prep classes I brought a bust of my friend’s head in just for something physical for them to look at, novelty....I went out and got this Fun Foam and my honors kids what they did was we read “Ozymandias” which the central figure is a broken statue of Ramses the second and you know it was stern faced and kind of reflects it is in contrast to the bleak desert around him, and so what they were suppose to do is they were suppose to recreate his face from this broken statue face. They recreated it via fun foam and I did not mean to get those hot, out of space physical colors. It just happened that way. I thought it was white. Anyway, on the front they were suppose to write words that he thought about himself or the things he thought because there was this quote , ‘Look on my works you mighty and despite.’ And we thought that this guy really thinks he is hot stuff. So, they wrote on the front of the mask what he thought about himself and then they were suppose to flip it over on the back and write the reality...I was really pleased at how this one turned out. (I3, 20-37, 3.25.2009)

Finally, in the last observation of Allison’s college prep senior British literature class, Allison had a handout on how to analyze poetry. I asked her about the handout in the interview because so many of her students were able to understand and begin to analyze literature in a clear, concise method. Allison answered:

Well, nobody ever taught me analysis like straight up this is how you do it. They said this is some of the way but you can’t do that. And it is kind of like the classroom management comments where there is no one way to do it. But I wanted to at least give them some steps for jumping off, so I wrote the analysis steps based on my own experience or based on a very methodical way of doing it.... You know we break this down this way and that way so I just did it based on my experiences just as far as the analysis stuff. (I3, 45-50, 3.25.2009)

*Terry’s pedagogy.* Terry also incorporated multimodality into his pedagogy. On a shelf in his room were small boxes with pictures of Greek gods on them, so I asked Terry about that project and he answered:

Yeah, that was the god model...yeah, they are pretty cool. We are not going to do them next year, that's fine...Those are actually last year's honors class. Instead of doing the strict mythology, last year we did a instead of straight Greek mythology we did a comparative project where we compared Greek mythology to Roman mythology. So, they had the boxes. It was kind of cool. It was fun for them. But they, yeah, it's just too much...they couldn't get it. They don't understand. I've got kids who had boxes that weren't even boxes. It was strange. (I2, 192-208, 3.25.3009)

Terry was fortunate enough to have a SMARTBoard installed in his classroom:

“Science got them, and then two of us got them cause they had some money to spend, and um, I asked for it, and two of us on my hallway have them. I want to say math beside math and science only a smattering three or four here per level or two per level, per department, not a lot” (I2, 67-70, 3.25.3009). Every time I observed Terry's teaching, he used the Smart Board either for a grammar warm-up or vocabulary. When asked about how frequently he used the Smart Board, he replied, “...depends. A week? I say at least once a week with this novel (*To Kill a Mockingbird*), not as much because it is a lot of reading straight up reading. I don't do them as much anymore Daily Grammar Practice.... Every day I use the Smart Board for that. Um, I use it for other stuff. I would say everyday.... I'm not going to use it for the novel because it is a lot of reading” (I2, 286-292, 3.25.2009).

On the final interview/observation day with Terry, he had his classes listed in rows in the top right corner of the white board with percentages beside them. To help prepare students for the End of Course test, he borrowed an idea from one of his colleagues saying, “Yeah, that is stolen from [teacher at his school]. The women are more creative than I am...her blackboard has thermometers and the kids can find their names attached to the thermometers...I'm not that creative and I'm not doing my board

so I'll just put it up there. So, yeah, the numbers are really sad" (300-304, #3). The class with the highest percentage of passing grades on the End of Course review test will be awarded a prize or party. Terry explained, "We may watch a movie or do pizza, I don't know. I'll figure it out. If I am nice to them they are happy" (I3, 308-309, 4.16.2009).

The final unit for the school year Terry covered with his 9<sup>th</sup> grade literature and composition students was *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Terry passed out to students a study guide which included themes, literary terms, character chart, time line, and chapter questions. I asked Terry where he got the materials for this unit and he explained, "I made that myself... I lied. I got that off the Internet and added questions. I got it from an Internet source. Some other man, some guy's work that he did and I tweaked it a little" (I3, 247-249, 4.16.2009).

#### *Theory and the Reality of the High School English/Language Arts Classroom*

The final theme to emerge from the data surrounding Terry and Allison focused on the realities and frustrations they encountered in their secondary English/language arts classroom. Both Allison and Terry discussed many of the surprises, joys, and frustrations they have experienced and discovered teaching high school English along with how aspects of their teacher education program either addressed or did not address these aspects.

#### *Educational Theory Versus Secondary School Reality*

Throughout the study, Terry frequently emphasized that the education theories taught and discussed in the Master's level English teacher education program were either not applicable to his specific classroom setting or completely useless and inapplicable to any classroom situation. Terry discussed often in the interviews that many of the

educational theories presented in his preservice program would not work in certain high school English classes. Terry was looking for a more “tools in the toolbox” approach to learning and understanding pedagogy and educational theories. In a reflective moment of frustration during an interview, he explained, “Groups! And book read! And pretty pictures! No, no I’ve got two kids fighting and one kid’s bashing the kid’s head against the wall. What PowerPoint thing am I going to do for that? You know. I’m doing groups and one kid from another gang is in his group, he’s dating this girl, how do you do that?” (I1, 383-385, 3.9.2009).

Terry pointed out several instances, either an example from the program or an example from his classroom, where the educational theory taught in his teacher education program would not work in an actual high school English classroom. At one point during the interview process, Terry discussed a class taken through the education department that had teaching assistant (TA) who was a twenty-year high school English teacher veteran. Terry said that the TA garnered an enormous amount of respect from the preservice teachers because of the actual teaching methods she discussed from her classroom. Terry explained, “...she [TA] talked about how to do journals all this stuff, you know, again, they helped me out because it gave me... I understand you have to have theory, but to be completely honest, I don’t use half those theories...it doesn’t work in certain environments” (I1, 103-106, 3.9.2009).

Allison also expressed some frustration with some of the educational theories taught in her teacher education program: “everything is nice in theory” (I1, 372, 2.25.2009). Allison gave an example of when she was a long-term substitute and taking classes at SUU:

We were reading a book in [professor's] classroom and it talked about if the pedagogy is good then classroom discipline won't be a problem. Unfortunately, I had a fight in my room that day so that was the last thing I needed to read. So when we had to do our little reaction journal, double notebook entry thing. I don't know what they are called, I ranted on that and just tore it apart. I was so livid. (I1, 619-623, 2.25.2009)

Allison mentioned how having effective discipline in the classroom is essential and that the theory of good pedagogy equals little classroom disruption can be difficult to incorporate into the classroom. Allison explained, "...if you are doing what you are supposed to be doing, classroom management shouldn't be a problem. Well, yes it should when they come into your room fighting about on My Space. Then yeah, it's a problem. And it happened before your pedagogy had a chance to breathe" (I1, 628-631, 2.25.2009). Allison discussed further how having engaging pedagogy still does not ensure effective classroom management:

There are going to be students who cut up no matter how fantastic you make a lesson. My seventh period today, fantastic lesson. I was so excited. They came in and I all but yelled at them because they would not settle down, so hyped up. It had nothing to do with me and that was the thing too. Literature is not always the key to everything and good pedagogy, you gotta get started first.... (I1, 837-842, 2.25.2009)

### *Reluctant Learners*

Terry and Allison discussed in the interviews how much of the pedagogy introduced in SUU's Master's level English teacher education program focused on motivated learners and did not address the reluctant learner. Allison discussed how the teacher education program introduced them to exceptional children and children with disabilities, but it did not discuss students who do not have disabilities and are just unmotivated learners:

Literally, I had a student put her head down today and suck her thumb. They don't prepare you for stuff like that in [Master's level English teacher education program] or anywhere I would venture to say...It seems to assume you got a lot of your students all paying attention like when you want, you can do as many mini-lessons as you want to but when Johnny's texting in the back and not even looking up, the mini-lessons are for naught and when the student just doesn't get or doesn't want to try, you can present it as many ways as you want to. (I1, 710 - 722, 2.25.2009)

Because Allison had close to three years of teaching experience, she asserted that much of the pedagogy taught is suited for gifted students: "A lot of the [Master's level English teacher education program] stuff I'm noticing since taking my gifted class, especially [professor's] class, a lot of it was more gifted..." (I1, 49- 50, 2.25.2009). Allison discussed the Shakespeare Unit, which both she and Terry still use in their classrooms, as being designed for honors students. Allison explained:

She [professor] had us design a three week Shakespearian unit and even then I knew that wasn't going to happen. Not unless you have honors or you've got gifted and you can just fly through it. Well, technically I could do Macbeth but I could not start to finish. We could read the play within three weeks, we could not do anything else. You could not do it justice...I remember thinking, 'Go home and read Act II tonight!' And nobody ever said anything to us about the realism of some of these classes. It was here's a time limit this is what you need to do in this time limit. And it was kinda hard to say, 'They are not going to read all of Act II tonight. That's not going to happen. No way.' Like a lot of my college prep classes didn't do any of MacBeth at home because of the language. (I3, 188-196, 3.25.2009)

Terry mentioned how cooperative learning was emphasized in the Master's level English teacher education program and that he could only do cooperative learning with his honors classes. Terry discussed his frustration saying, "...not nearly as much as the [Master's level English teacher education] program thinks I should or evidently probably should be doing, but you can't! Not in this environment. Not with these kids cause they



don't take it seriously. These groups only my honors kids got to choose groups..." (I2, 210-212, 3.11.2009).

### Conclusion

The purpose of the interview and observation section of this study was to inquire further from each selected participant how they perceived their preparation for teaching high school English, what specific aspects from the program do they implement in their classrooms on a consistent basis, and what alternative sources provided them classroom support. Several themes were developed from Allison's and Terry's interviews and observations that allowed a glimpse of the individual teacher's classroom practice, influences on classroom practice, teacher identity, and reflection on practice. In addition, the interviews and observations explored in more depth how these beginning teachers are incorporating aspects of their preservice English education program in their classroom. Through observing these teachers in action in their classrooms and through interviews, answers were provided to these questions.

Chapter six will discuss the overarching themes found from Beginning Teacher Questionnaire, the Administrator/Department Chair Questionnaire, and the interviews and observations of select participants along with a discussion of the significance of the study and implications for future research.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Introduction

The intent and purpose of this study was to address the assertions that teacher education lacks substance and applicability to the classroom and examine the degree to which beginning teachers implement and apply the theories, methods, projects, and experiences from their Master's level English teacher education program. This study also examined administrator/department chair perceptions of these beginning teachers and their ability to improve student achievement. Data were collected with the following research questions in mind: (1) How do beginning teachers perceive their preparation for teaching in the language arts classroom? (2) How do school administrators/department chairs perceive the teaching ability of graduates from the Master's level English teacher education program? To address these research questions, several methods of data collection were used such as the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire, Administrator/Department Chair Questionnaire, interviews with select participants, verbatim transcripts of interviews, observations of select participants, field notes from observations, photographs of select teachers' classrooms, and teacher made artifacts.

Chapter Four has identified and discussed courses and experiences that helped prepare beginning teachers for the English/language arts classroom; specific projects, theories, and experiences that are frequently incorporated into beginning teachers'

classrooms; the impact of experience on beginning teachers' understanding and incorporation of aspects from the Master's level English teacher education program into their English/language arts classroom; beginning teachers' perceived preparedness for the English/language arts classroom; positive aspects of teaching secondary English/language arts; surprising aspects of teaching English/language arts; obstacles and dilemmas encountered by beginning teachers; how the Master's level English teacher education program could better prepare beginning teachers to address and handle obstacles and dilemmas; and suggested program changes or additions.

In Chapter Four, I also discussed and identified administrators/ department chairs' perceptions of areas of the Master's level English teacher education program that need further emphasis, perceived strengths of beginning teachers who have graduated from the English teacher education program, perceived weaknesses of these beginning teachers, perceived preparedness for the English/language arts classroom, beginning teachers' effectiveness of impacting students' achievement in English/language arts, and perceptions of Master's level English teacher education program graduates employability.

In Chapter Five, I examined specific aspects of the Master's level English teacher education program curriculum focal participants found most useful in their own classrooms; examined and illustrated the influence of professors and colleagues in beginning teachers' daily teaching; provided specific examples of beginning teachers' classroom pedagogy; and examined the contradictions between the theory taught in the university and the theory's application to an actual classroom setting. In Chapter 6, I will discuss the overarching themes found from the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire,

the Administrator/Department Chair Questionnaire, and the interviews and observations of select participants.

### Major Emergent Themes

#### *Balancing the Theoretical and the Practical Aspects of the English/Language Arts*

##### *Classroom within a University Based Teacher Education Program*

Overall, participants found that their Master's level English teacher education program they graduated from prepared them well for the classroom. Questions number four of the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire specifically asked how well participants felt prepared for the English/language arts classroom, with 10 being "exceptional." No participants rated the program below a six, and 93% of participants rated the program a seven or above. Participants remarked that they felt they had been introduced to "...cutting edge and helpful lesson ideas, learned how to plan effective lessons (from beginning to end), and were exposed to a number of valuable professional texts that I still refer to and use today" (BTQ, 190-191, 2009). Several beginning teachers complimented the program saying it did an excellent job of combining theoretical and actual classroom practice and that these elements gave them "a realistic picture of day-to-day life as an English teacher" (BTQ, 830-831, 2009). However, with these compliments of the Master's level English teacher education program also came criticisms of the program, and beginning teachers and administrators/department chairs suggested the following elements would improve the program further and better prepare middle/secondary English teachers: more classroom experience, a better understanding of student motivation and the reluctant learner, more classes on composition and grammar pedagogy, and more instruction on classroom management.

### *More Classroom Experience*

Several participants stated that the program gave them a theoretical framework for teaching, but that nothing can replace actual, hands-on classroom experience. Increased actual time spent in the classroom would also expose preservice teachers to many of the “realities” of the classroom that participants say they were unaware of before having their own classroom. An administrator/department chair stated in the Administrator/Department Chair Questionnaire that the only true weakness with graduates from SUU’s Master’s level English teacher education program was not having much experience in the classroom: “I can’t say that I see any weakness except experience” (ADCQ, 114, 2009). One beginning teacher wrote, “The classes themselves introduced me to pedagogical theories and modern thought about education, but what helped me the most in the classroom was the student teaching experience” (BTQ, 33-35, 2009). Another participant complimented the Master’ level English teacher education program saying it did an excellent job preparing them for the classroom but then asserted that nothing can replace actual classroom experience:

Designing lessons, confidence in focusing on higher order thinking skills in literature analysis, etc, are some of the things I took away from the courses that are indispensable. While [the Master’s level English teacher education program] delivered exceptional opportunities and facilitated growth as a teacher, the best experience is actually found in the classroom – and that over a number of years. (BTQ, 912-916, 2009)

In a similar statement, a beginning teacher asserted that the program prepared them well for the classroom, but that nothing can replace the value of experience in becoming an effective teacher:

I highly value the experience and knowledge that I received in the [Master’s level English teacher education program]. I would not have been as effective as I was

without it...It gave me ideas and actual classroom experience that has made me a better teacher, but again nothing can substitute experience. (BTQ, 984-987, 2009)

During the interview phase of the study, Terry frequently mentioned how he learned more from the practicum experience than any classes could provide, “Practicum that was awesome. This was worth the money I spent. This was worth the money I spent!” (I3, 389-391, 4.16.2009). However, Allison brought an alternative perspective to the practicum experience since she already had a classroom from a long-term substitute position. Allison did not have a mentor teacher as most Master’s level English teacher education program students did and instead implemented her pedagogy around the theories and experiences from SUU’s Master’s level English teacher education program without the assistance or guidance of a mentor teacher. Allison expressed how frustrating and difficult that experience was:

As far as the practicum stuff goes, sometimes it left me a little frustrated. Cause like Dr. [professor], we were doing blogging. My technical seniors they...they are not going to go home and blog or even blog with me....So it was kind of hard sometimes and sometimes I got a little jaded because it was technical seniors and they are sitting there saying you can do this and this and this, literature circles and groups and all sorts of stuff like that. You cannot get them to do this! Your theory and pedagogy...wap! Technical students they made me get a lot of respect from them and they are looking at stuff from a different point of view....I just had to learn that some of this stuff was great, some of it needed a little bit of bending. Some of it, smile and nod...having the TADS instead of the practicum [has helped] sift through some of the bunk, right on up front.... (I3, 279-293, 3.25.2009)

In a qualitative study of three beginning teachers, Bullough, Knowles, and Crow (1989) found that beginning teachers had adequate theoretical and pedagogical knowledge but lacked the useful and practical knowledge of the contexts of working as a teacher and understanding themselves as teachers. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) asked a pertinent question: “Are the effects of university teacher education ‘washed out’

by school experience?” (p. 8). With middle/high schools having the power to initiate and socialize beginning teachers into the teaching profession, it seems logical to place more emphasis on the role of the practicum and allow both the theoretical and practical to merge (Blase, 1985; Waller, 1932; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). In an article commissioned by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), Berry, Montgomery, and Snyder (2008) discussed how urban teacher residencies (UTR) combined with university-based classes are a promising response to recruiting, preparing, and retaining quality teachers for high-needs urban areas through submersion in local schools. UTRs are recruited in association with local school districts and involve an extensive preparation where UTRs take education coursework at a local university while participating in a yearlong student teaching experience. The Boston Teacher Residency (BTR) program offers a stipend and health insurance to participants and is very selective, accepting only 18-25 percent of applicants. Although the program is small, preparing 50-85 candidates per year, Boston plans to expand the program and prepare up to one third of new teachers for the Boston Public Schools.

One participant suggested in the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire that implementing a yearlong practicum experience would benefit beginning teachers:

One item I've noticed is that student teachers from [another local university] program come in at the beginning of the school – they get to see what a teacher needs to do with pre-planning. That would have been VERY valuable to me. I'd like to suggest that the student teacher experiences capture the pre-planning process at the beginning of the year. This way student teachers can also see how students 'settle in' to the year as well. (BTQ, 533-538, 2009)

Southern Urban University's Master's level English teacher education program began offering yearlong practicum experience after the cohorts used for this study graduated. The change reflected the view that ten to twelve weeks of classroom observation or student teaching experience is not enough for preservice teachers to fully understand or grasp the entire spectrum of a teachers' workload. The full academic year practicum or residency program emphasizes the importance of clinical classroom experiences in developing better prepared and effective teachers for the classroom. This type of experience not only exposes teacher candidates to all facets of being a teacher but also provides actual hands on opportunities to work with students while also visualizing and implementing aspects of the theoretical framework university classes introduce.

A school board member at a local county school district within the metropolitan area of this study had proposed collaborating with Southern Urban University's College of Education to require beginning teachers to receive more training in exchange for a better salary. The school board member stated, "One of the best ways to help them is to have more talent around them. If you get five or six really good additional teachers the school prospers" (mdjonline.com, 2009, p. 1) The board member suggested that student teachers clock an additional 200 hours of field experience, 20 hours of community service with the [southern part of the county]Community Task Force, and take a course on classroom management. If they made those commitments and agreed to teach four years at [schools in the southern part of the county], they would start out with a salary equivalent to that of a five-year teacher (mdjonline.com, 2009). The school board member stated, "It's more than most student teachers are asked to do, but then in the U.S.



military if you want to be in the Navy Seals, baby, you've got to go way above basic training" (mdjonline, 2009, p. 1).

*Understanding Student Motivation and the Reluctant Learner*

Another theme that was dominant in both the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire and the interview and observation of select participants was that many of the assignments and theories discussed in the Master's level English teacher education program centered on motivated students and did not address the unmotivated learner. For example, one beginning teacher was frustrated with students' lack of drive by just wanting the correct answer: "...I guess I struggle with kids who just look for the answer in the book. When I ask about their opinion or what they think they just give me a blank stare like, 'what am I supposed to think?'" (BTQ, 52-54, 2009) Another participant discussed how overwhelming it was to get students motivated and interested in a text, "...students are not nearly as motivated as I would have hoped. Sometimes it's like pulling teeth to get students to recognize the relevancy of the ancient text we have to teach, or at times to even engage with it enough to make their own meaning" (BTQ, 927-930, 2009). Another beginning teacher had a similar response and felt that much of the projects and coursework centered on motivated students:

...more focus on reluctant learners would have also been beneficial. Many of my students, no matter how much I know or care or nurture, are simply not interested in English or literature. A focus on these would have been great. It seemed a lot of our practices and methods were centered around somewhat reasonably motivated learners. (BTQ, 699-704, 2009)

Allison discussed that since she had her own classroom during the Master's level English teacher education program, she was able to see more clearly how many of the

theories and assignments/projects in the program were focused on highly motivated students,

My honeymoon ended a bit earlier....I looked around at these girls and said you realize they are training us to be the best AP teachers ever. Cause I was teaching technical seniors and freshman, dear God, so I was looking at a three week Shakespeare unit....I was like you know, some of this stuff is really not feasible. (I3, 271-277, 3.25.2009)

Another participant suggested, “One thing I think would be beneficial is more emphasis on differentiation, what it looks like and how it’s done. That is something I struggle to find time for and accomplish” (BTQ, 1023-1025, 2009). Also, another beginning teacher discussed her frustration of developing “unrealistic” lesson plans that would never work in a real classroom setting: “When I was in the [Master’s level English teacher education] program, practice lessons were often ‘ideal’ lessons. My fellow graduate students and I hadn’t been in high school in many years, and I believe that the lessons we created were occasionally unrealistic for the general-level high school classroom” (BTQ, 815-817, 2009).

According to Protheroe (2004), reluctant learners avoid challenges, do not accomplish tasks, and are content with “just getting by,” and suggested identifying the reasons students are reluctant to learn is just as important as engaging students through their interests and supporting their success. Shore (2001) suggested, “The essential point to remember is that a student’s motivation can vary, depending on the subject, setting, and teaching style” (p.20). All teacher education programs, especially middle and secondary, should emphasize, incorporate, and have preservice teachers develop “ideal” lesson plans but counter the lesson plans with alternatives that bring into account the diversity of learning styles and varied levels of intrinsic motivation that a classroom of

students encompasses. Sanacore (2008) concluded that when teachers can incorporate learners' interests into the curriculum, students are "more apt to be motivated and engaged, and their achievement is more likely to improve" (p.41). Tomlinson (2006) suggested "... modifying instruction to draw on student interests is likely to result in greater student engagement, higher levels of intrinsic motivation, higher student productivity, greater student autonomy, increased achievement, and an increased sense of self-competence" (p.155).

One participant from the program discussed how she learned from the Master's level English teacher education program to build on students prior knowledge, "I appreciate [professor's] emphasis on connecting to the students' prior knowledge/experiences before beginning a unit or lesson; if students are not 'hooked' from the beginning it's hard to keep their attention for the next 4 weeks..." (BTQ, 709-712, 2009). Teacher education programs must combine more discussion on student motivation and how to handle the low or unmotivated students with more intensive teacher residency programs like the Urban Teacher Residency program mentioned earlier. Beginning teachers will be better prepared to teach "ideal" lessons within the diversity of the English/language arts classroom with a combination of a solid theoretical background on understanding students' levels of motivation, time for discussion, role-playing of adapting ideal lesson plans for a variety of learners, and then actual, hands-on time in the classroom.

*More Classes on Composition and Grammar Pedagogy*

Both administrators/department chairs and beginning teachers commented that more instruction on how to teach and evaluate writing effectively would better prepare

teachers for the English/language arts classroom. One administrator/department chair discussed how many new and “modern” teachers lack the ability and knowledge to successfully teach and evaluate writing:

I believe that [Master’s level English teacher education program] teachers share one weakness that so many of the new language arts teachers seem to have: an inability and/or reluctance to really evaluate student writing. Being an English teacher requires much time and effort outside the classroom in terms of effectively evaluating student work. The writing process is difficult to teach. It requires challenging assignments, considerable time spent individually assessing the product, and extensive feedback to the student. Many “modern” teachers appear unwilling and/or clueless in terms of accomplishing these roles. (ADCQ, 16-22, 2009)

However, one administrator/department chair participant gave a specific suggestion on what the Master’s level English teacher education program could do to better prepare graduates for the classroom emphasizing that the program needed to incorporate more grammar/mechanics and the teaching of writing: “Perhaps an increased emphasis on grammar/mechanics and an integration with the writing process would improve that aspect of their preparation” (ADCQ, 40-41, 2009).

Several beginning teachers echoed the administrators/department chairs suggestion to have more instruction on composition pedagogy and effective assessments of essays, but several beginning teachers also complimented the Master’s level English teacher education program for the instruction on writing and composition they did receive:

I also enjoyed Dr. [professor] writing class, but more for my own benefit. I think I have a better appreciation for the challenges students face when writing and can be more empathetic. I wish I had more time to focus on writing, but it seems like everything is rushed in the classroom. I also took a grammar class in the English department that I rely on everyday; I am amazed at the students’ lack of grammar skills. (BTQ, 712-716, 2009)

One participant expressed some of the difficulties she had as a beginning English teacher and stressed that having a class on “teaching the basics of composition” would have been helpful as a new teacher:

For example, we never really touched on teaching poetry and I would love to have a class on how to teach poetry and figurative language. Persuasive writing is critical for student to pass the (state mandated writing test). Students still need help with the basic writing skills: structure, thesis, paragraphs, etc. and I think the [Master’s level English teacher education] program focused more on voice and ideas. I’d love to have a class on teaching the basics. The research process is heavily emphasized in high school and is part of the (state curriculum); this is a tremendously difficult skill to teach to students, especially ninth graders. (BTQ, 730-763, 2009)

Participants in the study reported that Dr. [professor’s] class helped them in preparing students for the writing portion of the [state] High School Graduation Writing Test: “Writing instruction is very challenging, especially teaching at the 11<sup>th</sup> grade level, because my students must pass the [state] High School Graduation Writing Test. I believe that this class prepared me well for these pressures” (BTQ, 787-789, 2009).

Another participant also had a similar response: “Dr. [professor] EDCI 6600 was very helpful in preparing me to teach writing and grammar...” (BTQ, 550-552, 2009).

Ganser, Rogers, Zbikowski, Sherlock, and Freiberg (2000) discussed critical issues in the induction of secondary school teachers in various disciplines and how beginning teachers, partly from the pressure of standardized testing, teach writing:

...emphasize the production of technically correct written products in specific formats in minimal time, regardless of whether students, producing them, acquire a sense of the connection between the form and the communicative purpose of the writing, an ability to solve rhetorical problems independently, or the ability to manage writing processes strategically. (p.7)

The article discussed how many English majors in English teacher education programs were initially attracted to English because of their love for literature, not language study

or composition, and these preservice teachers were all too eager to abandon not just the “drill” based teaching of grammar but any teaching of grammar since “grammar is boring” or “kids need to express themselves creatively” (Ganser, Rogers, Zbikowski, Sherlock, & Freiberg, 2000, p.11). Unfortunately, this “drill and grill” approach is still seen in the English/language arts classroom through the grammar textbooks and the amount of instructional time repetitive grammar drills are used in English/language arts classrooms, especially in middle schools (Ganser, Rogers, Zbikowski, Sherlock, & Freiberg, 2000).

The National Commission on Writing (2004) stated, “Writing is a ticket to professional opportunity” (p.3). Based on a survey of 120 major American corporations who employ close to eight million people, the National Commission on Writing uncovered that writing is a threshold skill needed to gain entry into a field and be considered for promotion (National Commission on Writing, 2004). The National Commission on Writing found that despite the efforts of many educators, writing instruction has been shortchanged in the school reform movement (National Commission on Writing, 2004; Colby & Stapleton, 2006). The National Commission on Writing asserts that preservice teachers must engage in the writing process themselves in order to be effective teachers and being a writer, preservice teachers understand more clearly the writing process and, therefore, the ability to model writing to students, teach writing strategies, and facilitate the writing process with students (Blau, 1988; Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1990; Colby & Stapleton, 2006).

All English teacher preparation programs, must institute classes with an emphasis on composition pedagogy and effectively teaching grammar/mechanics to ensure that

beginning teachers understand current theories of composition along with how to apply those theories to specific teaching situations. As this study illustrates, graduates from SUU's Master's level English teacher education program have established enormous positive connections to literature that they want to share with their students. However, literature is but one piece of the middle/secondary English/language arts curriculum, and proven pedagogical theories of composition and grammar/mechanics must be introduced and modeled to preservice teachers. Too many beginning teachers are falling back on stale and ineffective composition and mechanics pedagogy because they have not been exposed sufficiently to composition history, current theories of composition, and effective teaching of grammar/mechanics.

While it is important that preservice teachers engage in writing as writers themselves and understand effective composition pedagogy, a component that must be included is having preservice teachers participate in actual classroom settings and immediately begin incorporating and working with students on their writing and mechanics. Again, thoughtfully combining university and field based experiences promotes learning that would be difficult to accomplish independently, and as mentioned earlier, a deeper conceptual understanding occurs through this integration (Putnam & Borko, 2000; Colby & Stapleton, 2006).

#### *More Instruction on Classroom Management*

Beginning teachers have always lamented about their struggles with classroom management and the participants from this study were no different (Burnard, 1998; Martin, Linfoot, and Stephenson, 1999; Silvestri, 2001). Several participants mentioned how they needed more information and discussion on classroom management:

...I was given many different concepts and ideas that helped me to plan lessons and even some ideas on classroom management, but I was not prepared for the type of student I was going to encounter and how specifically to deal with certain behavior issues in the classroom...I found that I did not have a lot of background in classroom management. (BTQ, 740-744, 2009)

Another participant remarked that she lacked classroom management skills going into the classroom, "I believe that it prepared me extremely well for content matter, but I wish I had more exposure to 'real-life classroom management skills.' I think we discussed it frequently, but the best advice came from students who were currently teachers" (BTQ, 171-172, 2009). One participant mentioned that it would be difficult to simulate a real classroom experience but "would've liked to have had more instruction/advice regarding discipline issues" (BTQ, 811, 2009).

Several participants offered suggestions on how to introduce classroom management for the Master's level English teacher education program; these suggestions ranged from role playing opportunities, classroom management workshops, having a panel of veteran teachers, and designing a New Teacher Kit. One participant suggested role playing with preservice teachers having different parts to play in an effort to test both lesson plans and classroom management skills:

...I'd like to see more role play as teachers in a preparatory program. I'd like to have more opportunities to prepare a lesson, teach it in front of 'students' with 'roles,' and test it out. I know we get that experience in student teaching, but maybe in front of a room, everyone has a chance to provide feedback. Sometimes, your mentor teacher can only offer their limited perspective. (BTQ, 58-61, 2009)

One beginning teacher discussed an important aspect in their teacher identity that is the dual role teachers play in education: the positive supporter/ role model and the enforcer of rules and guidelines. To help preservice teachers understand more clearly



how to better handle this dual role, this beginning teacher suggested having a workshop to assist preservice teachers' with their classroom management:

Explore both sides of what it means to be a teacher – the positive, supportive role model as well as the enforcer of guidelines and teacher of habits. Maybe they could have a workshop, at least, on classroom management because that's about all you really can do. What works in one classroom won't always translate into another. (BTQ, 689-693, 2009)

Another participant who also discussed how the Master's level English teacher education program could better incorporate classroom management into the curriculum and suggested having a panel of veteran teachers discuss their own strategies for managing the classroom: "it might have been helpful to have more focus on classroom management. Perhaps more experience with students and having a current teacher talk with the class about their own experiences" (BTQ, 872-876, 2009).

Finally, one participant suggested a New Teacher Kit to preservice teachers that would not only address classroom management but also help with the transition into their own English/language arts classroom:

So much of teaching can't be prescriptive; what works for one teacher might not work for another. I have told my school that I would like to see a New Teacher Kit: here's what to teach your first year. Hit these things (according to standards). Here are vocab quizzes, grammar quizzes, handouts, etc. I offer this idea because it's how I was indoctrinated into my training and it worked well for me – I was given a manual, I observed a class, I would teach the baseline material, and as I became more comfortable, I tweaked the material based on my personality, my understanding of the material, and my classroom experience. I believe that even though it's prescriptive, teachers will take it and make it work (or not) for them. (BTQ, 518-526, 2009)

Beginning teachers in this study suggested more exposure to classroom management theories and techniques along with more exposure to students and, in turn, students' behaviors. One participant reflected, "While I do think we learn best by doing

(learning how to handle discipline issues as they arise), I think it would be very beneficial to teach [Master's level English teacher education program] students a number of strategies to help avoid many of the classroom management issues" (BTQ, 628-630, 2009). Le Page, Darling-Hammond, Akar, Gutierrez, Jenkins-Gunn, & Rosebrock (2005) contended that effective classroom management is a balancing act that "relies as much on developing relationships and orchestrating a productive learning community as it does on determining consequences for inappropriate behavior" (p.332). However, most beginning teachers have only read literature on establishing effective classrooms and have rarely encountered classroom situations that have challenged them as authority figures and their classroom management strategies and/or their educational philosophies. Again, preservice and beginning teachers need as much exposure to outstanding examples of classroom management both in the classroom and outside of the classroom.

#### *Revisiting the Theoretical Underpinnings*

This study examined the specific aspects of an English teacher preparation program that beginning teachers implement and rely on in their classrooms on a consistent basis. In addition, this study examined how administrators/department chairs view the pedagogical competence of graduates from the English teacher preparation program. The theoretical base that supported this study combined Mezirow's transformative learning theory, Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, and Paulo Freire's theory of critical reflection through a dialectical relationship or praxis. All three theories' suggest a change in perspective through social or conversational relationships and then through the transformative process understand how and when to act upon this new perspective. A measure of success in a teacher education program is to produce

graduates that have a strong theoretical background but have also learned to look critically and reflectively at their teaching practice and have adapted their pedagogy to the classroom situation. When teacher education programs foster this critical/reflective process through social interaction, beginning teachers have a better understanding of how to provide a democratic education that ensures success for all students

After I examined the responses from the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire, Administrator/Department Chair Questionnaire, and the interviews and observations of Terry and Allison, graduates from SUU's Master's level English teacher education program transformed from preservice teachers/graduate students to critically reflective and responsive beginning teachers. This transformation would not have happened if they were not provided opportunities to examine, explore, discuss, and reflect on relevant educational theories, their own pedagogical practices, and dominant teaching techniques. One beginning teacher elaborated on the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire how having a cohort helped her make sense of the material they studied throughout the program, "...honestly, the best thing about the program was the connections you make and the support given by others in the cohort who understand what you are going through as a[n] [Master's level English teacher education program] student and a beginning teacher" (BTQ, 403-406, 2009).

Another participant discussed how she was able to take the theories and practices from the Master's level English teacher education program and critically examine them and make the necessary adaptations needed to work in her classroom, "The classroom is a place for constant adaptation and adjustment, and I have taken this skill of adapting and adjusting theories and ideas so that I can incorporate them in the classroom" (BTQ, 978-

980, 2009). One beginning teacher discussed how she had to find her “teacher self” and that through critical reflection she was able to, “I learned that I cannot be all of my professors at once. After teaching for a bit and trying to be all of them, I realized I simply had to pick and choose what I used, and that in the end I had to find my own blend” (BTQ, 655-657, 2009).

Mezirow (1990) asserts that through this transformative process there evolves an increase in personal power, spirituality, compassion for others, creativity, a shift in discourse, and a new connectedness with others. However, to truly achieve this transformation into reflective/critical teachers, we need to understand the importance of teaching experience in the transformative process. Featherstone (1992) suggested that teacher educators prepare their students to learn from experience and that ideas resurface when answers to questions are found from classroom experience. Featherstone (1992) asserted, “the voices of teacher educators sometimes echo forward into these first years of teaching; the novice rehears, with a new ear, propositions which have seemed to make little impact on them at the time they were offered” (pp. 17-18). Dickson, et al. (2006) stated that after the first year or “survival stage” is over, beginning teachers can better understand and incorporate the knowledge learned in their preservice program in context of their experiences in the classroom. One beginning teacher discussed how the information learned in SUU’s Master’s level English teacher education program has echoed forward to her classroom:

Now, in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year, I feel like I have more time and more experience to work on incorporating different aspects into my class. I do not feel like I had the time in my 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years for true reflection. I reflected, but I don’t feel that I had the time to change my lessons as much as I would have like. (BTQ, 475-480, 2009)

Another beginning teacher discussed how overwhelmed he was his first year of teaching and that only recently was he able to understand and incorporate what he learned in the program into his classes:

I don't think any of the classes adequately prepare anyone for the classroom. That's not to say they aren't beneficial; however, the classroom is a living organism that changes day to day. I got great ideas and read interesting books about practices, approaches, and theories that I have used and helped me along the way to ground myself, but those truly have only served as enrichments to the teaching process. Which I think, that's what they are suppose to be. I have felt sometimes that I felt lost in the whirlwind that is the classroom, and I forget some of the ideas that I came across in the [Master's level English teacher education program], but when I realize that I got back to them and that has helped. (BTQ, 958-965, 2009)

An administrator/department chair participant responded that the beginning teacher in her English/language arts department at her school is "...self-assured, self-disciplined, and controlled. She was an inexperienced teacher who seemed far beyond her years. She was very capable of handling her students and knew the material she was teaching" (ADCQ, 108-110, 2009). However, the administrator/department chair did emphasize that the only true weakness with graduates from the Master's level English teacher education program was not having enough experience in the classroom, "I can't say that I see any weakness except experience" (ADCQ, 114, 2009).

Feiman-Nemser (2001) asserted that we need to radically reform teacher preparation and teacher induction, "The typical preservice program is a weak intervention compared with the influence of teachers' own schooling and their on-the-job experience" (p.1014). These are factors that we cannot work against but need to embrace and incorporate into the teacher training experience. Feiman-Nemser (2001) suggested that "...knowledge for teaching cannot remain in separate domains if it is going to be usable

in practice. An important part of learning to teach involves transforming different kinds of knowledge into a flexible, evolving set of commitments, understanding, and skills” (p. 1048).

Milner (2010) conducted a study to examine where classroom teachers and teacher educators stood on major issues in teacher preparation. Through a survey, Milner (2010) wanted to know if “...the stereotype of out-of-touch, misguided teacher educators” was accepted by classroom teachers, and how classroom teachers believed university programs were preparing preservice teachers (p.173). Milner (2010) suggested that although classroom teachers and teacher educators had differences 25 years ago on how teachers should be educated and what they should know, he believes that the gap has narrowed, and much of the decline is due to teacher educators working more closely with teachers in the field. Milner stated, “Teacher candidates spent much less time in K-12 classrooms in those days, and university teachers were in those classroom even less. Now teacher educators and classroom teachers often see themselves as part of a team, working together” (p.179). Today’s English teacher education programs must include all stakeholders of education in the training and educating of quality teachers such as university, school district, local schools, professional groups, and classroom teachers. Working in collaboration, preservice teachers can better develop the necessary framework for understanding teaching and learning while exploring and experiencing the realities of the classroom.

### Significance of the Study

This study attempted to address the concerns that teacher education lacks substance and applicability to the classroom and examined the degree to which first,

second, and third year beginning teachers used the theory, methods, and training received in a preservice English teacher education program. This study focused on the specific aspects from an English teacher education program that beginning teachers implement, adapt, and reflect on in a consistent manner. Several studies examine the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs on student achievement; (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond 2000; Sander & Horn, 1998) however, what is missing from the literature is an examination of the connections to quality teacher preparation programs, the program's impact on daily teaching both with recent graduates and graduates with teaching experience, how well these teachers' initial training helped them develop a more democratic language arts classroom for their students, and from school administrators'/department chairs' perspectives how these beginning teachers' training has assisted them in helping their students achieve. This study hopes to fill that gap and provide more insight into how to educate teachers through the examination of an English teacher preparation programs' daily effect and impact on their graduates and an examination of school administrators'/department chairs' perception of these graduates' performance in the classroom.

This study has provided specific and concrete examples of how influential a well-designed Master's level English teacher education program can affect its graduates in the classroom, and, in turn, affect student achievement. No other study has attempted to examine this phenomenon by looking at the specific elements of an English teacher education program beginning teachers transfer into their own classrooms. This study allows English teacher educators and all teacher educators to see clearly the sources and resources that beginning teachers rely on during their first years in the classroom.

This study also illustrates how experience in the field working with students and working in a school environment assists preservice and beginning teachers in better understanding the dynamics of an English classroom. Providing preservice teachers the most up to date theories of literacy, composition, grammar/mechanics, child development, student motivation, and classroom management is an obligation of a teacher education program. However, teacher education programs must also make available the context for the theories introduced by providing substantial opportunities to experience the classroom and work with students. More opportunities to experience the multiple factors that encompass a successful classroom and teacher will help avert much of the “shock and awe” beginning teachers experience.

#### Implications for Future Research

This study explored through the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire and the observations and interviews of Terry and Allison the impact of Southern Urban University’s Master’s level English teacher education program on beginning teachers’ daily teaching. This study highlighted the specific classes, projects, theories, and experiences that beginning teachers used in their classrooms along with examining aspects of the program that could be better emphasized or included to better prepare English teachers for the classroom. However, a weakness that this study encountered was the lack of participation from administrators/department chairs. The responses from the Administrator/Department Chair Questionnaire provided suggestions for improvement and complimented the teaching skills of graduates, but the responses did not highlight nor did they discuss specifically how these graduates affect student achievement. Assertions were made that graduates from SUU’s Master’s level English



teacher education program were assisting in student's achieving, but no specific comments were made to address this concern. Therefore, one area of research would be to examine data that illustrates how students are achieving under teachers who have graduated from SUU's Master's level English teacher education program.

Another avenue of research derived from this study would examine more than one teacher education program and look at a cross case analysis of English teacher education programs to see consistencies or inconsistencies, levels of perceived preparedness, and impact on student achievement. This comprehensive study could include a large metropolitan city that is home to several colleges and universities, or the study could include a specific state, or expand it to a region of the United States.

Although there is significant research examining university-based teacher education programs with alternative route teacher certification (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, and Heilig, 2005; Stoddart, 1992; Zumwalt, 1990) a study exploring the impact of Urban Teacher Residencies (UTR) on teacher performance and student achievement would offer more insight for these new "on-the-job" teacher training programs being introduced in large cities such as Boston and Chicago. With more emphasis on preparing teachers in a clinical setting, studies must examine the effectiveness of this avenue of teacher preparation.

#### Final Thoughts

This study attempted to address the concerns that teacher education lacks substance and applicability to the classroom and examined the degree to which first, second, and third year beginning teachers use the theory, methods, and training received in a preservice English teacher education program. This study examined the specific

aspects of an English teacher preparation program that beginning teachers implement and rely on in their classrooms on a consistent basis. In addition, this study investigated how administrators/department chairs view the pedagogical competence of graduates from the English teacher preparation program.

To improve student success in the classroom, policy makers must understand the key role well-trained teachers play in achieving this goal. Several studies examine the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs on student achievement; however, what is missing from the literature is an examination of the connections to quality teacher preparation programs, the program's impact on daily teaching both with recent graduates and graduates with teaching experience, how well these teachers' initial training helped them develop a more democratic language arts classroom for their students, and from school administrators'/department chairs perspectives how these beginning teachers' training has assisted them in helping their students achieve. This study hopes to fill that gap and provide more insight into how to educate successful teachers through the examination of an English teacher preparation programs' daily effect and impact on their graduates and an examination of school administrators'/department chairs perception of these graduates' performance in the classroom.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### Questionnaire for Master's Level English Teacher Education Program Graduates

1. As you reflect on your courses and experiences in the English education program, what specific classes would you point to that really help prepare you for the classroom?
2. Again, reflecting on your courses and experiences in the English education program, what specific projects, theories, or experiences do you frequently incorporate into your classroom?
3. Do you feel teaching experience has influenced how you understand and incorporate aspects of the English program in your class? If so, could you give an example?
4. On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being defined as "exceptional," how well did the English education program prepared you for the English language arts classroom? Please explain your answer.
5. What has been the most positive aspect of teaching English language arts that you have discovered?
6. What has been the most surprising aspect of teaching English language arts that you have discovered?
7. What are a few obstacles or dilemmas you've faced as a beginning English language arts teacher?
8. What could the English education program have done to help you better handle these obstacles or deal with these dilemmas? What suggestions would you offer?
9. If you could change anything about or add anything to the English education program, what would you change or add? Why?

## APPENDIX B

### Administrator/Department Chair Questionnaire

1. What are some of the strengths you perceive in the teacher(s) who have graduated from SUU's Master's Level English Teacher Education Program?
2. What do you feel are some weaknesses of the Master's Level English Teacher Education Program graduates as English/ Language Arts teachers?
3. On a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being very unprepared and 10 being highly prepared, how prepared are the Master's Level English Teacher Education Program graduates for the English/ Language Arts classroom? Please explain.
4. How could the Master's Level English Teacher Education Program graduates be better prepared for the English/ Language Arts classroom?
5. On a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being little or no affect and 10 being highly affective, how are the Master's Level English Teacher Education Program graduates impacting students' achievement in language arts? Please explain.
6. Would you hire another graduate from SUU's Master's Level English Teacher Education Program?

## APPENDIX C

### Initial Interview Protocol

Focus will be on extracting more detailed description from the Beginning Teacher Questionnaire and information regarding their personal background and classroom teacher experience.

1. Could you elaborate on the specific classes and experiences that helped you prepare you for the English language arts classroom?
2. What kind of projects/classes could have helped better prepared you for the English language arts classroom?
3. What are some aspects of teaching English that you felt were surprising to you when you started?
4. Is there anything that the English teacher education program could have done to better prepare you for the English classroom?
5. How beneficial was the practicum experience in preparing you for the classroom?
6. How supportive was your mentor teacher? How crucial of a role did she/he play in your implementation of methods and theories in your own classroom? Where there any philosophical differences between you and your mentor teacher? If so, how did it affect your teaching philosophy?
7. How useful was the year-long practicum vs. a 10-12 week practicum?
8. What do you think could be incorporated into the program to expose English teacher education program students to less discussed aspects of teaching such as administrative work and working with extracurricular activities?
9. Discuss in more detail how you feel your experience as a teacher has impacted your understanding and implementation of aspects learned in the Master's level English teacher education program? How has your teaching philosophy changed since you have been teaching?

## APPENDIX D

### Second Interview for Select Master's Level English Teacher Education Program Graduates

In the second interview, select participants will begin the Card Sort activity/interview, discuss questions derived from observation notes, and discuss their present teaching situation.

1. Written on these cards are all of titles classes taken during the Master's level English teacher education program along with cards that have "English" written on them which represent the English classes taken during the program. Sort the cards according to their influenced on how you think about teaching English.
2. Next, sort the cards into categories that are meaningful to you and your teaching philosophy/style? How have you grouped them? Discuss each pile.
3. Now, let's go through the course titles individually and discuss what you got out of each one.

## APPENDIX E

### Third Interview for Select Master's Level English Teacher Education Program Graduates

In the third interview, select participants will continue the Card Sort activity/interview, discuss questions derived from observation notes, and discuss and reflect on their teaching experiences.

1. Let's finish going through the course titles individually and discuss what you got out of each class.

APPENDIX F

Coding for Beginning Teacher Questionnaire

Question	Open Codes	Refined Codes	Categories
<p>1: As you reflect on your courses and experiences in the English education program, what specific classes would you point to that really helped prepare you for the classroom?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forgotten ideas learned, then came back</li> <li>• Grammar</li> <li>• Shakespeare</li> <li>• Writing instruction</li> <li>• Labor-intensive class</li> <li>• Looked at the big picture</li> <li>• Composition class</li> <li>• Practicum closer to home</li> <li>• More time observing</li> <li>• Faulkner class</li> <li>• Learned how to be a passionate instructor</li> <li>• English classes – comfortable with material</li> <li>• Provided ideas on how to approach</li> <li>• Practical Grammar</li> <li>• Shakespeare class</li> <li>• Instructional Technology</li> <li>• Reading Class</li> <li>• Create and share unit plans with colleagues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicum</li> <li>• English classes</li> <li>• More time observing</li> <li>• Dr. [professor's] class – teacher identity</li> <li>• Dr. [professor's] class – reading</li> <li>• Grammar</li> <li>• Advanced Grammar</li> <li>• Practical Grammar</li> <li>• Instructional Technology</li> <li>• Teaching the classics</li> <li>• Psychology class</li> <li>• Faulkner class</li> <li>• Intro. to secondary teaching</li> <li>• Negatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grammar instruction</li> <li>• English department sponsored classes</li> <li>• Education department sponsored classes</li> <li>• Negatives</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taught benefits of collaboration</li> <li>• Teacher identity</li> <li>• Map out lives as writers</li> <li>• Reading a variety of professional books</li> <li>• Emphasis on students' prior knowledge</li> <li>• Love literature classes</li> </ul>		
<p>2. Again, reflecting on your courses and experiences in the English education program, what specific projects, theories, or experiences do you frequently incorporate into your classroom?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicum</li> <li>• Multimedia</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Literary theory</li> <li>• Mini-lessons</li> <li>• Grammar</li> <li>• Don't fear technology</li> <li>• Where I'm From poems</li> <li>• Echo-forward</li> <li>• Scaffolding theory - analyzing poetry</li> <li>• Graphic organizers</li> <li>• Backward Design Theory used in lesson development</li> <li>• Literary criticism</li> <li>• Grammar approaches</li> <li>• Alternative assessment</li> <li>• Visual arts</li> <li>• Building on background knowledge</li> <li>• Gauging struggling readers</li> <li>• Focused study projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scaffolding theory</li> <li>• Multimedia</li> <li>• Literary theory</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Practicum</li> <li>• Shakespeare project</li> <li>• Multigenre papers</li> <li>• Student-created rubric method</li> <li>• Professors: literary criticism, grammar, mini-lessons, alternative assessment, visual arts teaching, background knowledge, struggling readers</li> <li>• Graphic organizers</li> <li>• Focused study projects on novels</li> <li>• Group work</li> <li>• Writing theories</li> <li>• Cohort collaboration</li> <li>• Journaling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects</li> <li>• Theories</li> <li>• Experiences</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group work</li> <li>• Writing theories</li> <li>• Cohort collaboration</li> <li>• Literary theory – <i>A Doll's House</i></li> <li>• Journal/writers notebook</li> <li>• Double entry journals</li> <li>• Multi-genre essay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Backward design theory</li> <li>• “Where I’m From...” poems</li> </ul>	
<p>3. Do you feel teaching experience has influenced how you understand and incorporate aspects of the English program in your class? If so, could you give an example?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideas need to be molded</li> <li>• Always sought assistance from others</li> <li>• “ideal” lessons but not realistic</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Echo-forward</li> <li>• Shakespeare banquet would only fly with honors</li> <li>• Creating clay model of our thoughts</li> <li>• Psychology of Learners</li> <li>• Multicultural education</li> <li>• Reading out loud</li> <li>• Pick and choose professor</li> <li>• Reality of technology</li> <li>• State mandated tests</li> <li>• Didn’t realize work would benefit after graduation</li> <li>• Collaborative relationships with teachers</li> <li>• Mini-lessons</li> <li>• Others are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. [professor’s] class</li> <li>• Multicultural education</li> <li>• Psychology of Learners</li> <li>• Must mold</li> <li>• Practicum</li> <li>• Find blend</li> <li>• Mini-lessons</li> <li>• Teaching the basics</li> <li>• Shakespeare Banquet</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Reality of technology</li> <li>• Lack of preparation for testing</li> <li>• Reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Echo-forward theory</li> </ul>

	<p>“wishful thinking”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love a class on teaching the basics</li> </ul>		
<p>4. On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being defined as exceptional, how well did the English education program prepare you for the English/ language arts classroom? Please explain your answer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly value experience and knowledge received</li> <li>• Provides framework</li> <li>• Don't address differentiation</li> <li>• Theoretical foundations and classroom experience</li> <li>• Teacher personality</li> <li>• Need more classroom management</li> <li>• Best experience found in classroom</li> <li>• English teacher villain</li> <li>• Case study</li> <li>• Always room for improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2=6</li> <li>• 5=7</li> <li>• 3=8</li> <li>• 2=9</li> <li>• 1=10</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less prepared</li> <li>• Moderately prepared</li> <li>• Strongly prepared</li> </ul>
<p>5. What has been the most positive aspect of teaching English/language arts that you have discovered?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The kids – enthusiasm</li> <li>• Can't think of anything that isn't positive</li> <li>• Blessed to be part of their lives</li> <li>• Student excitement</li> <li>• They inspire me</li> <li>• Expose kids to new ideas</li> <li>• Be a positive influence</li> </ul>	<p>Students – growth, exceeding expectations, interpretations of text, expose to new ideas, progress as writers, learn from them, make meaningful connections, “I get it,” develop own ideas, express themselves, become more reflective, better comprehension, knowing students on personal level, importance of literature to their lives,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning from students</li> <li>• Reward to see them experience victories</li> <li>• Seeing them grow as people</li> <li>• “I finally get it!”</li> <li>• Importance of literature</li> <li>• Learning from them</li> <li>• Making meaningful connections</li> <li>• It makes all the hard work worth it</li> <li>• Students develop their own ideas and opinions</li> <li>• Cool</li> <li>• Students interpretation of text</li> </ul>	importance of literature in their lives	
6. What has been the most surprising aspect of teaching English/lang. arts that you have discovered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reality of classroom</li> <li>• Learning from students</li> <li>• Amount of responsibilities</li> <li>• Weak reading</li> <li>• Weaknesses from early childhood</li> <li>• Misunderstood as teachers</li> <li>• Grading</li> <li>• I hate grading</li> <li>• Learning from students</li> <li>• Freedom to design my classes</li> <li>• Freedom to express my voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time/energy</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Amount of responsibilities</li> <li>• Lack of student motivation</li> <li>• Misunderstood</li> <li>• Weak foundation</li> <li>• Learning from students</li> <li>• Freedom</li> <li>• Teacher’s lack of grammar knowledge</li> <li>• Reality of classroom</li> <li>• Grading</li> <li>• Poor writing skills</li> <li>• Multiple and varied abilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time and energy of teaching</li> <li>• Amount of responsibility</li> <li>• Having a wide foundation in English</li> <li>• Learning from students</li> <li>• Lack of grammar knowledge</li> </ul>

	<p>through teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't know enough about literature – groups, movements, trends</li> <li>• Importance of grammar</li> <li>• Resistance from veteran teachers against daily grammar practice curriculum</li> <li>• Time and energy into attempting to be a good teacher</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Amount of responsibilities</li> <li>• Student lack of motivation</li> <li>• Not enough time</li> <li>• Poor reading and writing skills</li> <li>• Managing wide range of abilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't know enough in English</li> <li>• Grammar</li> </ul>	
<p>7. What are a few obstacles or dilemmas you've faced as a beginning English language arts teacher?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom behavior</li> <li>• Student motivation</li> <li>• Balancing job and life</li> <li>• Healthy balance</li> <li>• Not being treated professionally</li> <li>• Little control of what is taught in classroom</li> <li>• Streamline grading process</li> <li>• Productive students</li> <li>• Not taking parent complaints too</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom management</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Grading</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Educational philosophy</li> <li>• Workload</li> <li>• Not being treated professionally</li> <li>• Teaching all aspects of the curriculum</li> <li>• Student motivation</li> <li>• Life balance</li> <li>• Confrontations</li> <li>• Saying "no"</li> <li>• Testing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grading</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Confidence</li> <li>• Workload</li> <li>• Testing</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>personal</li> <li>• Not confrontational</li> <li>• Parents can't accept failure when deserved</li> <li>• Saying no and sticking to it</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Testing</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Testing issues</li> <li>• Excessive administrative duties</li> <li>• Lack of confidence</li> <li>• Grading everything</li> <li>• Students lack of English skills</li> <li>• Student motivation</li> <li>• Overwhelming workload</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student's lack of English skills</li> </ul>	
<p>8. What could the English education program have don't to help you better handle these obstacles or deal with these dilemmas? What suggestions would you offer?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• Learning curve</li> <li>• Panel discussions</li> <li>• Input from teachers at different locations</li> <li>• Role playing</li> <li>• New Teacher Kit</li> <li>• Classroom management</li> <li>• Panel of current teachers talking about their own experiences</li> <li>• Course to address administrative and parent conflicts</li> <li>• Explore all sides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No instruction on amount of grading</li> <li>• More instruction on discipline</li> <li>• New Teacher Kit</li> <li>• More role playing</li> <li>• Program can't help</li> <li>• Professional development key</li> <li>• Panel discussions</li> <li>• Address parents/administrative conflicts</li> <li>• Lesson planning</li> <li>• Organizing as a teacher</li> <li>• How to motivate</li> <li>• Teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom management</li> <li>• Teaching grammar</li> <li>• Program can't help</li> <li>• New Teacher Kit</li> </ul>

	<p>of what it means to be a teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop on classroom management</li> <li>• Seminar on behavior control</li> <li>• More instruction on “real classroom experiences”</li> <li>• Discipline issues</li> <li>• Got good experience and advice on grading</li> <li>• Focus on grammar and making it fun</li> <li>• Professional development</li> <li>• Mentors at school</li> </ul>	grammar	
<p>9. If you could change anything about or add anything to the English education program, what would you change or add? Why?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe other teachers</li> <li>• Teaching the art of adapting and modifying lesson plans</li> <li>• Differentiation</li> <li>• Instruction of positive behavior management strategies</li> <li>• Screen mentor teachers – committed educators</li> <li>• Pre-planning process</li> <li>• Classroom management</li> <li>• Talking with parents</li> <li>• Discipline in the classroom</li> <li>• Teach at schools closer to them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom management</li> <li>• Preplanning process</li> <li>• Impractical projects</li> <li>• Quantity over quality</li> <li>• Designing web site</li> <li>• Technology useless</li> <li>• Screen mentor teachers</li> <li>• Handling conflict</li> <li>• Giving English dept more input</li> <li>• Observing other teachers</li> <li>• Differentiation</li> <li>• Flexibility as a teacher</li> <li>• Student motivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom management</li> <li>• Specific Program Aspects</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dealing with conflict “extreme adversity”</li><li>• Workshop on classroom management</li><li>• Reluctant learners</li><li>• Make grammar class mandatory</li><li>• More instruction on discipline</li><li>• Add a course on classroom management</li><li>• Professional development</li><li>• Redesign reading professional materials</li><li>• Impractical projects</li><li>• Quantity over quality</li><li>• Learn collaboration</li><li>• Need more practical experience</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grammar mandatory</li><li>• Work near practicum site</li><li>• Reading professional books differently</li></ul>	
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## APPENDIX G

### Coding for Select Beginning Teachers

<b>Terry Codes</b>	<b>Allison Codes</b>	<b>Categories</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poetry</li> <li>• Advanced Grammar</li> <li>• History of the English Language</li> <li>• Provided weapons for the “front line”</li> <li>• Drama Class</li> <li>• Heard English dept. not meshing with Education dept.</li> <li>• Writing class that focuses on audience</li> <li>• Wanted more English classes – grammar/composition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jane Austin class</li> <li>• Composition and Pedagogy</li> <li>• Loved them!</li> <li>• Later Shakespeare</li> <li>• 18<sup>th</sup> Century Women Novelists</li> <li>• 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> Century Lit.</li> </ul>	<p>English Department Classes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9<sup>th</sup> grade Catholic school teacher</li> <li>• Practicum experience – classroom management style, awesome, great, kept class in order</li> <li>• Middle school practicum</li> <li>• Shared grammar book with neighbor</li> <li>• Colleague’s calendar as a template to organize</li> <li>• Colleague’s timer</li> <li>• Testing competition – colleague</li> <li>• Colleague - teaching composition</li> <li>• Colleague - reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. [professor]</li> <li>• Notebooks</li> <li>• Frankenstein</li> <li>• Check system – long term subbing</li> <li>• Likes to give, not take</li> <li>• Learning from being in the classroom</li> <li>• Body biography</li> <li>• Paper load</li> <li>• Concept attainment strategy</li> <li>• Staff development</li> </ul>	<p>Apprenticeship of Observation/ Professors and Colleagues Influence</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not serious</li> <li>• Doing everything possible</li> <li>• TKAMB study guide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had student suck thumb</li> <li>• 7<sup>th</sup> period never settles down</li> <li>• Designing Shakespeare unit</li> <li>• Beowulf example</li> <li>• Feel like an entertainer</li> <li>• Lessons designed for honors</li> </ul>	Reluctant Learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E- portfolio</li> <li>• Literacy in the content area</li> <li>• Shakespeare Unit</li> <li>• Methods of Research</li> <li>• Dr. [professor's] class</li> <li>• Principles of English Instruction</li> <li>• Dr. [professor's] class</li> <li>• Social/Cultural Foundations of Education</li> <li>• Technology Class</li> <li>• Literacy in the Content Areas</li> <li>• Principles of English Instruction</li> <li>• Practicum</li> <li>• Multicultural</li> <li>• Theory of Pedagogy</li> <li>• Psychology of Learning and Learners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-portfolio</li> <li>• Literacy in the content areas</li> <li>• Shakespeare Unit</li> <li>• Action Research</li> <li>• Principles of English Instruction</li> <li>• Social/Cultural Foundations of Education</li> <li>• Teaching Grammar</li> <li>• Journaling</li> <li>• Multimodal</li> <li>• Cooperative groups</li> <li>• Mini-lessons</li> <li>• Example lesson</li> <li>• Psychology of Learning and Learners</li> <li>• Introduction to Secondary Teaching</li> </ul>	Education Department Classes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not notified of acceptance</li> <li>• Not organized</li> <li>• Asked design lesson plans before taught</li> <li>• Practicum unorganized</li> <li>• Pacing guide/ instructional calendar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More classroom management</li> <li>• Effective pedagogy = good classroom management</li> <li>• Didn't think professor had seen a classroom</li> </ul>	Negatives of Master's Level English Teacher Education Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning Teacher Induction</li> <li>• County meeting for benchmarks</li> <li>• Wants to take Writer's</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writer's Institute</li> <li>• Has a focus each summer</li> <li>• British History</li> <li>• Grammar</li> </ul>	Staff Development

Institute but can't		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like teaching on the loose</li> <li>• Yell down the hall a lot</li> <li>• Giving kids “the biz”</li> <li>• Grades dropped because not participating</li> <li>• Open door policy</li> <li>• Retest policy</li> <li>• Disciplinarian</li> <li>• Gruff</li> <li>• Hates reteaching</li> <li>• Kid’s failure not his fault</li> <li>• “I’m not a nice person.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. [colleague] – gotta to have fun with them</li> <li>• Worry daily work too easy</li> <li>• Feedback from students</li> <li>• Socratic seminar</li> <li>• Skits</li> <li>• Groups</li> <li>• Identified weakness in knowledge</li> <li>• Connects well with students</li> <li>• Active in staff development</li> <li>• Concerned about student success</li> <li>• Goofy</li> <li>• Control – letting go</li> <li>• Tough love teacher</li> <li>• Teacher’s fault</li> <li>• Softy</li> </ul>	Teacher Identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does a lot of pre-reading</li> <li>• Reteaching</li> <li>• Not my best year</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Frustration</li> <li>• Dr. [professor’s] influence on writing</li> <li>• Work on teaching/grading writing</li> <li>• Philosophy of grading/not grading</li> <li>• Pass or not pass</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching grammar first two years</li> <li>• Dr. [professor’s] frame of mind</li> <li>• Sentence diagramming</li> <li>• Teacher research</li> <li>• Writing /grammar</li> </ul>	Reflection on Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group work</li> <li>• Problems with groups</li> <li>• E-portfolio – no way to do all that stuff</li> <li>• Testing</li> <li>• Only honors can do group work</li> <li>• Time spent on group work</li> <li>• Group and disorganization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wong book</li> <li>• Reality of Wong’s book</li> <li>• Testing influences on the classroom</li> <li>• Everything is nice in theory</li> <li>• Pedagogy good = no classroom disruptions</li> <li>• Theory</li> <li>• Student centered v.</li> </ul>	Theory versus Reality

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict over worksheet teacher v. group work</li> <li>• Wong book</li> <li>• Wong book – hit the ground running</li> </ul>	<p>teacher centered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long- term subbing position</li> <li>• Technical Seniors</li> <li>• What is taught is more for gifted</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greek god mythology project</li> <li>• TKAMB – teacher made handout</li> <li>• SmartBoard</li> <li>• Competition between classes on testing practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frankenstein – multimodal</li> <li>• William Blake – multimodal</li> <li>• Testing - took multimodal approach</li> <li>• Ozymandias – Crayola Fun Foam</li> <li>• Poetry Analysis steps</li> </ul>	Presentation of Materials